

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS & ISLE OF MAN**19 days**

Created on: 19 Aug, 2025

Day 1 Arrive in London (Heathrow Airport)

Today we arrive in London and transfer to our hotel.* The balance of your day is free for you to enjoy London.

* As we do not include any London area sightseeing on this program, tonight's accommodation will be in the vicinity of Heathrow Airport, which is convenient for tomorrow's journey to Portsmouth.

Overnight in London (Heathrow).

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 London - Portsmouth - Ferry to Isle of Wight

This morning we travel from London to Portsmouth before embarking on our ferry to the Isle of Wight. The industrial town of Portsmouth, situated on the "island" of Portsea, owes its importance to its magnificent natural harbour. For centuries, from the time of the Armada onwards, it was the principal base of the Royal Navy, while in more recent times, Portsmouth has also become the most important naval port in Great Britain.

The Romans, who built a fort at Portchester, recognized the strategic importance of this site on the Channel. Situated on a promontory just west of Portsmouth, this is the only Roman fort in Britain or northern Europe that was never destroyed (though frequently captured). The Normans took over the Roman fortress, and Henry II later strengthened it. Richard II had the site extended and built a fortified palace adjoining the keep. In 1415 Henry V assembled his troops here before setting sail for France. In the Second World War Portsmouth's strategic importance as a naval base led to large parts of the town being destroyed.

This afternoon we will visit HMS Victory, Lord Nelson's flagship at the battle of Trafalgar. The Victory was built in 1765 and is almost 60m (197 feet) long with five decks and 104 cannons. The ship was lifted from the sea in 1921 and restored to its present condition. We also view Henry VIII's flagship, the Mary Rose. After our visit in Portsmouth we will take the short ferry ride (45 minutes) across to the Isle of Wight.

With over half its land mass designated an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', and with a naturally mild climate, the Isle of Wight has been a popular holiday destination since Victorian times. The stretch of water between the mainland and the Isle of Wight is known as the Solent; a vitally important commercial waterway.

Overnight on the Isle of Wight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Isle of Wight: Ventnor Botanic Gardens & The Needles

Our island touring today begins with a visit to Ventnor Botanic Gardens. Nestling in the microclimate of The Undercliff, these botanical gardens have a subtropical and exotic plant collection unrivalled elsewhere in the UK. Plants, which would normally be found in protected glasshouses, thrive and naturalize in geographical plantings based on the Mediterranean zones of the world.

This afternoon we travel to one of the Isle of Wight's most iconic landmarks - The Needles. These dramatic white chalk stacks rise majestically from the sea at the island's western tip, creating one of Britain's most recognizable coastal formations. We'll have the opportunity to take the chairlift down to Alum Bay, famous for its multi-colored sand cliffs that display nature's palette in brilliant stripes of red, yellow, and purple. The views from the clifftop are spectacular, stretching across the Solent toward the Dorset coast.

We also visit Godshill, this small well-kept village with thatched stone houses, traditional tearooms, and interesting small shops. The medieval All Saints Church dominates the village and is visible for miles around - one of the most visited country churches in England. The village also features a small natural history museum and charming narrow streets perfect for browsing local artisan studios.

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Overnight on the Isle of Wight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Isle of Wight: Quarr Abbey, Carisbrooke Castle, Osborne House & Godshill

This morning we begin with a visit to Quarr Abbey, a working Benedictine monastery set in beautiful and peaceful surroundings near Ryde. This Grade I listed abbey, home to a small group of monks who dedicate their lives to prayer and contemplation, offers visitors a chance to discover the peace, beauty and tranquillity of monastic life. We'll explore the striking red brick abbey buildings and serene grounds, with time to visit the abbey's tea shop.

We continue to Carisbrooke Castle, the island's only medieval castle. It is said that 'he who held Carisbrooke held the Isle of Wight'. King Charles I was even imprisoned here before being taken to Whitehall for his trial and execution. Set on a sweeping ridge, Carisbrooke commands a perfect military location with majestic views over the surrounding countryside. During our time here we will visit the castle's beautiful chapel and the 800 year-old Great Hall with its fascinating museum. Don't miss the famous donkeys who still work the medieval well, continuing a tradition that spans centuries.

This afternoon we tour Osborne House, the country retreat of Queen Victoria and her beloved Prince Albert. We will tour the Royal Apartments and the intimate family rooms, including Queen Victoria's bedroom. You will marvel at the awe-inspiring Indian décor and exquisite gifts in the Durbar Room, and take a peek at life 'below stairs' in the Table Deckers' Rooms. We will have time to walk in the spectacular grounds with their stunning views across the eastern Solent. Nearby is the Victorian Walled Garden with flowers, triumphal arches of Victoria plums and hot houses full of exotic plants.

Overnight on the Isle of Wight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Isle of Wight - Ferry to Bournemouth

The morning ferry from Yarmouth carries us across the Solent's historic waters, where Viking longships once prowled and warships assembled for D-Day. As the Isle of Wight's gentle hills fade behind us, we dock at Lymington in Hampshire's ancient New Forest territory, beginning our journey toward Dorset's celebrated coast.

Our route takes us through Christchurch, where we discover one of England's most remarkable ecclesiastical treasures. The Priory Church, stretching an impressive 98 metres (321 feet), claims the title of England's longest parish church. Though the present Norman structure dates to 1094, Saxon foundations reveal continuous worship here since 800 AD. The adjacent castle ruins, built by the Normans to guard this strategic river crossing, remind us of medieval England's constant vigilance against invasion.

We explore the Red House Museum, originally constructed as a parish workhouse in 1764. This Georgian building now houses fascinating collections that illuminate centuries of local life, from smuggling tales to Victorian social reform. The contrast between its harsh original purpose and today's welcoming galleries reflects society's evolution toward compassion.

Arriving in Bournemouth, we encounter Victorian England's most successful planned resort. Unlike ancient towns that grew organically, Bournemouth was deliberately crafted as a "city in a garden," its pine-scented valleys and clifftop promenades designed to rival continental spas. The town's distinctive chines—narrow, fern-filled ravines carved by streams—create natural gardens that tumble toward golden beaches. Tonight we rest in this flower-filled resort, where Victorian ambition created lasting beauty.

Overnight Bournemouth.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Bournemouth, England - Ferry to St Peter Port, Guernsey

The fast ferry cuts through English Channel waters that have witnessed a thousand years of island history. These are not truly "Channel Islands" at all, but fragments of the ancient Duchy of Normandy scattered along France's Cotentin Peninsula. As British Crown

Dependencies, they maintain their own parliaments and laws while owing allegiance to the Crown—a unique constitutional arrangement born from medieval politics.

Approaching St Peter Port, Guernsey's capital reveals itself as one of Europe's most picturesque harbours. Regency terraces climb steeply from the waterfront, their elegant facades reflecting centuries of prosperity built on privateering, wine trade, and later, finance. The town began as a humble fishing village but grew rich serving as a staging post for merchant vessels plying between England and the Mediterranean.

We explore the award-winning Guernsey Museum, nestled among the camellias and subtropical plants of Candie Gardens. Here, Neolithic burial chambers tell stories of island inhabitants from 5,000 years ago, while Roman coins and medieval manuscripts trace the evolution of these isolated communities. The museum's collections reveal how Guernsey's strategic position made it a crossroads of European culture—Norman French foundations overlaid with British governance and continental influences.

The afternoon brings leisurely exploration of St Peter Port's cobbled streets, where granite houses built from local quarries speak of maritime wealth. The town's character reflects its complex identity: neither fully French nor entirely English, but uniquely Channel Island. As evening settles over the harbour, we understand why Victor Hugo and countless other visitors found inspiration in these waters where history flows like changing tides.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Guernsey: Cornet Castle & Hauteville

Castle Cornet commands the harbour entrance from tidal rocks, its massive walls witnessing eight centuries of conflict. Built in 1150, this fortress survived French sieges, Civil War bombardments, and World War II occupation. Museums within chronicle the Royal Guernsey Militia, maritime adventures, and wartime resistance through artifacts and interactive displays.

Climbing steep slopes above the port, we reach Hauteville House, where Victor Hugo transformed political exile into literary triumph. Expelled from France following Napoleon III's 1851 coup, Hugo fled first to Jersey, then Guernsey after his rebellious spirit proved too much even for Jersey's tolerance. Here he completed "Les Misérables" and other masterworks between 1856 and 1870.

Hugo's house reflects his theatrical personality—rooms decorated with carved furniture salvaged from island privateers, walls covered with his artwork, and a rooftop study where he wrote while gazing toward France. Every chamber tells stories of creative exile, from the Chinese dining room to the medieval-style bedroom. His response to banishment transformed personal loss into universal literature.

We continue exploring St Peter Port's cobbled streets where smugglers once traded and merchants built fortunes. The town church sits famously close to its neighbouring pub, symbolizing islanders' practical approach to life's necessities. The Guernsey Tapestry at St James Concert Hall weaves a thousand years of island history in brilliant threads.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Guernsey: Excursion to Herm

The twenty-minute ferry crosses waters where woolly mammoths roamed during the Ice Age, when rising seas isolated these granite outcrops into sanctuaries where time seems suspended. Car-free Herm preserves Britain's most pristine island experience on its tiny 2.4-kilometre (1.5-mile) length.

Stepping ashore, we enter a world where tractors replace automobiles and footpaths follow routes walked for millennia. Every field holds archaeological treasures: Neolithic burial chambers, Bronze Age settlements, and medieval foundations. The island's scale preserved it from development, creating perfect refuge close to civilization yet remote enough for contemplation.

We visit the 11th-century chapel, its ancient stones warmed by modern stained glass commissioned by recent tenants Peter and Jenny Wood. This continuity typifies Herm's character—where Neolithic farmers cleared fields still grazed today, where medieval monks established peaceful traditions modern visitors rediscover.

The north end reveals beautiful beaches backed by common land where prehistoric settlements lie buried beneath windblown sand. Archaeological excavations uncovered 12,000 years of continuous habitation. We discover Neolithic dolmens whose massive stones captured seasonal light, demonstrating sophisticated astronomical knowledge among Stone Age communities.

Walking coastal paths, we understand why smugglers chose these shores and Prussian royalty walked these cliffs in exile. As afternoon light streams across white sand beaches and crystal waters, we experience the timeless peace that draws visitors back across generations.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Guernsey: Rocquaine Bay

Rocquaine Bay stretches over three kilometres at low tide, revealing vast expanses of golden sand that disappear twice daily beneath advancing waters. This western shore faces France across treacherous currents that have claimed countless vessels over centuries, earning these waters the grim title of "ship's graveyard."

Fort Grey squats against the rocky shore like a granite mushroom, one of fifteen Martello towers built to repel Napoleonic invasion. Erected in 1804 during the height of fear over French conquest, these circular fortresses represented cutting-edge military engineering—their thick walls and minimal openings designed to withstand cannon bombardment while providing 360-degree defensive fire.

The fort stands upon earlier foundations, replacing Château de Rocquaine, a medieval stronghold that guarded this vulnerable coastline from the 17th century onward. Each generation recognised this bay's strategic importance and vulnerability, building successive layers of defence against seaborne threats. Today's peaceful waters belie centuries of conflict and constant vigilance.

The surrounding waters tell stories of maritime disaster and heroism. The notorious rocks of Les Hanois, visible at low tide, have wrecked ships from Roman galleys to modern vessels. Local lifeboats launched from this bay have saved thousands of lives, their crews displaying courage that earned international recognition. Memorial plaques along the coastal path commemorate both victims and heroes of the sea.

We explore the Shipwreck Museum within Fort Grey, where artifacts recovered from wrecked vessels reveal the bay's dangerous history. Charts show currents and hidden rocks that trapped unwary mariners, while photographs document rescue operations that became legendary. The contrast between today's tourist paradise and yesterday's maritime nightmare illustrates how perspective transforms with time and technology.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Guernsey & Sark

The approach to Sark reveals towering granite cliffs crowned by sloping common land called cotils, where seabirds wheel above pristine waters. In late spring, passengers sometimes spot puffins bobbing on the surface while dolphins play in the ferry's wake. This dramatic arrival hints at Sark's extraordinary character—Europe's last feudal state and the world's first International Dark Sky Island.

Landing at the tiny harbour, we board tractor-drawn "buses" for the steep climb to the village, following the only mechanised transport allowed on car-free Sark. With just 600 residents scattered across 5.4 square kilometres (2.1 square miles), the island maintains traditions lost elsewhere. No street lights dim the stellar display that earned Dark Sky status; no traffic disturbs the profound quiet that city dwellers find almost supernatural.

Our horse-drawn carriage tour follows narrow lanes between high hedgerows that have guided travellers for centuries. The pace encourages contemplation of landscapes unchanged since medieval times, when Sark's feudal system was established. Today's Seigneur still holds the island through ancient charter, owing homage to the Crown while maintaining judicial and administrative powers that make Sark unique in the modern world.

We journey to La Coupée, the dramatic knife-edge ridge connecting Big and Little Sark. This natural causeway, barely 3 metres (10 feet) wide with sheer drops on both sides, was once so treacherous that children crawled across on hands and knees during storms. The concrete path and handrails installed in 1945 made crossing safer, but the crossing remains breathtaking.

The views from Sark's coastal headlands encompass the entire Channel Island archipelago, from Jersey's distant outline to Alderney's northern cliffs. These waters, contested by Britain and France for a millennium, now host pleasure craft and fishing boats in peaceful coexistence. The island's tranquillity, achieved through deliberate rejection of modern transportation, offers visitors a glimpse of life's simpler rhythms.

Late in the afternoon we return to Guernsey for our overnight.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 11 St Peter Port, Guernsey - Ferry to St Helier, Jersey

The inter-island ferry crosses waters where Norman vessels once carried William the Conqueror's knights toward English conquest. These islands remained loyal to the English Crown when King John lost Normandy in 1204, beginning their unique constitutional journey as Crown Dependencies—neither fully independent nor entirely British, but something distinctly their own.

Jersey's silhouette grows larger as we approach, revealing the largest Channel Island with nearly 100,000 residents. St Helier spreads around the wide embrace of St Aubin's Bay, its modern developments climbing hillsides where medieval settlements first took root. The town commemorates Saint Helerius, a 6th-century Belgian hermit who sought solitude on these shores and found martyrdom instead.

Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of continuous habitation in St Helier dating to the 12th century, but human presence extends far deeper. Jersey's rich agricultural soil supported communities for millennia before recorded history began. The island's prosperity, built successively on wool, fishing, privateering, and finance, created the comfortable modern community we encounter today.

The harbour bustles with fishing boats, pleasure craft, and inter-island ferries, continuing maritime traditions that stretch back to Roman times. St Helier's strategic position made it a natural gathering point for vessels crossing the Channel or seeking shelter from Atlantic storms. The town grew wealthy serving travelers and traders, developing the cosmopolitan character that distinguishes it from rural parishes in the island's interior.

As evening settles over St Aubin's Bay, we observe tidal ranges that can exceed 12 metres (40 feet), among the highest in the world. These dramatic tides shape daily life on Jersey, exposing vast beaches at low water and transforming harbours at high tide. Understanding these rhythms proves essential for island living, as generations of Jersey families have learned through necessity.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Jersey: Island Tour

Samares Manor embodies Jersey's complex feudal heritage, where Norman Seigneurs maintained medieval privileges into modern times. The house showcases French craftsmanship through its fine walnut panelling and specially woven carpets, reflecting the island's cultural ties to continental Europe. We explore rooms where Seigneurs once exercised ancient rights, including the curious privilege of chasing rabbits across neighbouring lands.

The manor's current Dame still attends L'Assize d'Heritage, Europe's oldest continuous court ceremony, where feudal tenants affirm loyalty to the Crown. This annual ritual, unchanged for centuries, demonstrates how Jersey preserved medieval traditions while adapting to contemporary governance. The ceremony's survival illustrates the island's genius for maintaining identity while embracing change.

Mont Orgueil Castle commands the eastern heights above Gorey harbour, its name "Mount Pride" bestowed by the Duke of Clarence, brother to Henry V. Founded in 1204 when King John lost Normandy, the fortress served as Jersey's primary defence for four centuries. Its ten towers and defensive positions evolved constantly as military technology advanced and French threats persisted.

We explore chambers where political prisoners endured harsh captivity, including William Prynne, whose Puritan writings earned Charles I's wrath. His punishment—ears severed, face branded with "seditious libeller"—exemplifies the brutal justice of earlier times. The castle's transformation from active fortress to historic monument reflects broader changes in warfare and society.

From the castle's highest tower, panoramic views encompass the French coast just 22 kilometres (14 miles) distant. This proximity to France shaped Jersey's history through centuries of invasion threats, cultural exchange, and economic opportunity. The island's strategic position made it valuable to successive rulers while exposing residents to constant external pressures.

The surrounding countryside reveals Jersey's agricultural wealth through fertile fields and prosperous farms. The island's mild climate and rich soil supported dense populations throughout history, creating prosperity that funded impressive architecture and cultural achievements. Today's tourism builds upon foundations laid by generations of farmers, fishermen, and merchants.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Jersey: La Hougue Bie & Durrell Wildlife Park

La Hougue Bie rises like an ancient sleeping giant, its earthen mound concealing one of Europe's finest Neolithic monuments. Built around 3800 BC, this passage grave predates Stonehenge and Egyptian pyramids, representing sophisticated Stone Age engineering that challenges assumptions about prehistoric capabilities.

We enter the burial chamber through its narrow passage, experiencing profound silence that has endured nearly 6,000 years. Massive granite capstones, some weighing over 20 tonnes, were positioned with mathematical precision to align with celestial events. This demonstrates Neolithic communities possessed advanced astronomical and engineering knowledge necessary for monumental construction.

The mound's name derives from Norse influences—"hougue" means hill in Old Norse—while "Bie" remains mysterious. Two medieval chapels crown the summit: Notre Dame de Clarté and the 12th-century Jerusalem Chapel, showing how sacred sites maintained religious significance across millennia of cultural change.

Our afternoon explores Jersey's dramatic western coast, where Atlantic swells crash against granite cliffs and hidden bays reveal wartime secrets. We visit viewpoints overlooking treacherous rocks where German forces built formidable Atlantic Wall defences during World War II occupation.

At coastal observation points, we examine Hitler's fortification remnants—concrete bunkers, gun emplacements, and tunnel systems that transformed Jersey into a fortress island. These installations, built by forced labour including thousands of European prisoners, represent history's most extensive fortification projects. Underground tunnels reveal complex wartime preparations where German engineers carved hospitals and command centres from living rock. The incomplete state of many projects reflects the war's changing course and ultimate German defeat.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Jersey Sightseeing Continued

The German Underground Hospital at Jersey War Tunnels represents one of World War II's most ambitious engineering projects, carved from solid rock by prisoners of war and forced labourers from across occupied Europe. What began as artillery storage evolved into a vast medical complex designed to treat casualties from Hitler's Atlantic Wall, the coastal fortification system intended to repel Allied invasion.

We descend into tunnels that stretch over one kilometre through Jersey's granite bedrock, their walls bearing tool marks from desperate workers who died by the thousands during construction. The hospital's sophisticated ventilation, electrical, and water systems demonstrate German engineering prowess applied to military medicine. Operating theatres, recovery wards, and morgues remain exactly as abandoned in 1945, creating an eerie time capsule of wartime desperation.

Interactive displays reveal the human cost of occupation, when Jersey's population endured five years of German rule, food shortages, and brutal repression. Local resistance movements, deportation of non-native residents, and the gradual starvation of forced labourers illustrate how war transforms civilian life. The tunnels serve as both monument to suffering and testament to human endurance under extreme circumstances.

Maps display the intended extent of tunnel complexes that would have honeycombed the entire island with defensive positions, ammunition stores, and command centres. Only half the planned construction was completed before Allied victory ended the project, leaving Jersey

scarred by concrete fortifications and underground networks that required decades to clear or convert to peaceful purposes.

This afternoon brings free time to explore St Helier's Liberation Square, where crowds celebrated German surrender on 9 May 1945, ending the longest occupation of British territory since Norman conquest. The Liberation Monument commemorates this joyous moment while honouring those who died during the dark years of foreign rule.

We stroll through the town centre, where modern shops and restaurants occupy buildings that housed German administrative offices and barracks during the occupation. The contrast between today's prosperity and wartime hardship demonstrates Jersey's remarkable recovery and the resilience of communities that endured unprecedented challenges while maintaining their essential character.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Jersey, Channel Islands - Fly to Douglas, Isle of Man

Our northward flight carries us across the Irish Sea toward the Isle of Man, a Crown Dependency that shares the Channel Islands' unique constitutional status while maintaining distinctly Celtic character. The island appears below us as a mountainous jewel set in silver waters between England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales—a position that shaped its role as crossroads of Irish Sea cultures.

Douglas spreads along the eastern shore beneath the shadow of ancient hills, its Victorian promenade reflecting the town's 19th-century development as a popular resort destination. The capital grew from a small fishing village to accommodate thousands of holiday visitors who arrived by steamship from Liverpool, Glasgow, and Belfast, seeking healthful sea air and scenic beauty.

The town's elegant Victorian and Edwardian architecture tells stories of prosperity built on tourism, fishing, and later, offshore finance. The famous two-mile promenade, lined with boarding houses and hotels, welcomed generations of British visitors who found the island's combination of familiar culture and exotic independence irresistibly appealing.

Douglas Bay's sweeping curve provides natural shelter for fishing fleets and pleasure craft, while the hills rising behind the town offer dramatic views across the Irish Sea toward distant mountains of Ireland, Scotland, and the Lake District. This central position made the Isle of Man a natural meeting point for Celtic peoples and later, a staging post for Viking expansion westward toward Iceland and America.

We may begin exploring Douglas's maritime heritage, where the harbour reflects a thousand years of seafaring tradition. Manx fishing boats still work these waters, their crews maintaining skills passed down through generations of islanders who looked to the sea for survival and prosperity. The island's flag, bearing the three-legged triskelion symbol, represents the ancient Celtic belief in the power of three and the island's position at the centre of three kingdoms.

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Isle of Man: Excursion on the Snaefell Mountain Railway

The Snaefell Mountain Railway, opened in 1895 as the British Isles' first electric mountain railway, begins its scenic ascent through landscapes inspiring visitors for generations. Vintage tramcars, virtually unchanged since Victorian times, climb six miles through glen and moorland toward the island's only mountain.

Our first stop at Laxey reveals the Great Laxey Wheel, known as "Lady Isabella" after a former Lieutenant Governor's wife. Built in 1854 to drain lead mines, this 22-metre (72-foot) diameter wheel remains the world's largest working waterwheel. Its elegant engineering solved perpetual flooding problems, enabling deeper excavation that made Laxey one of the world's richest lead producers.

Continuing upward, the railway traverses moorland where Norse settlers grazed cattle, their presence recorded in surviving place names. "Snaefell" derives from Old Norse meaning "snow mountain," though snow rarely persists on the 621-metre (2,037-foot) summit forming the island's highest point.

From Snaefell's summit, clear weather reveals breathtaking panoramas encompassing six kingdoms: England's Lake District, Scotland's Southern Uplands, Wales's Snowdonia peaks, Ireland's Mountains of Mourne, the Isle of Man itself, and the heavenly kingdom above. This traditional description captures the summit's role where earthly and spiritual realms seem to converge.

Our descent includes a delightful journey on horse-drawn trams that have clip-clopped along Douglas promenade since 1876. These patient Clydesdales maintain Victorian traditions while providing eco-friendly transport connecting past to present. The gentle rhythm of hoofbeats and ocean waves creates perfect harmony completing our mountain adventure.

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Isle of Man Excursion: Castletown & Cregneash Village

Castletown served as the Isle of Man's capital for over 600 years, its medieval Castle Rushen commanding harbour approaches with towers and walls ranking among the British Isles' best-preserved fortifications. Built by Norse kings and expanded by successive rulers, the castle witnessed the island's transformation from Viking stronghold to British Crown Dependency.

The Old House of Keys, former parliamentary meeting place, offers interactive insights into Manx democracy's evolution. The name derives from "Kiare as Feed"—Manx for "four and twenty"—the traditional number of representatives. This chamber hosted debates shaping island laws while maintaining independence from British and Irish influence.

We explore Castle Rushen's great hall, private chambers, and defensive positions that protected Manx rulers through centuries of external threats. The castle's strategic importance stemmed from controlling the island's best natural harbour, making Castletown the natural centre of political and economic power until Douglas displaced it through changing trade patterns.

Cregneash Village preserves traditional Manx rural life through maintained thatched cottages, working farms, and craft demonstrations. Here, the nearly extinct Manx language is kept alive through interpretation programs connecting visitors to Celtic roots. The village represents centuries of farming tradition adapted to challenging climate and terrain.

Our return journey aboard heritage steam train provides perfect conclusion, the rhythmic clickety-clack echoing life's pace that sustained island communities before modern transportation transformed rural isolation into accessible heritage.

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Isle of Man Excursion: Tynwald Hill & Peel

Tynwald Hill at St John's represents one of democracy's most ancient sites, where Viking settlers established parliamentary traditions that predate most European assemblies by centuries. The artificial mound, built from soil taken from each of the island's seventeen parishes, symbolises the unity of all Manx people under one democratic system that has functioned continuously for over a thousand years.

Each July 5th, Tynwald Day ceremonies recreate medieval practices when laws were proclaimed in both English and Manx, ensuring all islanders understood legislation affecting their lives. The outdoor parliament, conducted exactly as Viking tradition demanded, demonstrates remarkable constitutional continuity that survived conquest, occupation, and centuries of political change throughout Europe.

We journey to Peel, the island's western stronghold, where St Patrick's Isle connects to the mainland by causeway at low tide. This strategic position attracted Celtic monks, Viking raiders, and medieval bishops who built the impressive cathedral ruins that crown the island. The red sandstone walls glow in afternoon light, creating one of the British Isles' most romantic ecclesiastical sites.

The House of Manannan brings Celtic and Viking heritage to life through innovative displays that recreate the sounds, smells, and experiences of ancient life. Named for the sea god who supposedly shrouded the island in protective mist, the museum explores the myths and realities of Manx culture from prehistoric times through medieval Christian conversion to modern rediscovery of Celtic identity.

Interactive exhibits demonstrate how Vikings transformed Celtic society while adopting local customs and beliefs. The famous Manx crosses, combining Christian symbolism with pagan motifs, illustrate this cultural fusion that created distinctly Manx identity. Archaeological discoveries from recent excavations add new chapters to understanding how successive peoples adapted to island life.

Our final visit to the Manx Museum in Douglas provides comprehensive overview of island heritage from Ice Age hunters to modern

prosperity. The museum's collections span archaeology, natural history, and cultural traditions that survived centuries of external influence while maintaining essential Manx character. Tonight's farewell dinner celebrates our journey through these remarkable island communities.

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Departure

Departure from the Isle of Man (IOM).

There are about six daily flights connecting in various London area airports: LGW, LHR, and LCY.

SAFE TRAVELS!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast