

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS & ISLE OF MAN

with **Jonathan Hodgson**

19 days

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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 Touring

The Isle of Wight is steeped in history and for a brief spell was as an independent kingdom in the 15th century. Our island touring today will include a visit to Sandown, with its glorious position on sweeping Sandown Bay. With a wide variety of exceptionally maintained gardens and vineyards, the Isle of Wight is a paradise for garden and nature lovers. Battery Gardens are situated on the scenic cliffs overlooking the bay. The Romans called the island Vectis, and not quite a thousand years later the Isle of Wight became the southern stronghold of the Danes, and from the 14th to 16th centuries -- like all settlements on these waters -- the island constantly feared invasion from France. The original reason for English forts being built in places such as Sandown was because of the fear of French invasion.

The picturesque old town of Shanklin is characterized by thatched cottages, and is favoured by local artisans. Here we will have plenty of time to stroll the narrow lanes aligned with their studios. Shanklin has the edge for its setting of golden cliffs and its scenic "chine", a steep ravine whose mossy, fern-filled woods have been embellished with fairy lights and thatched teashops. Later we will make a detour from Shanklin to visit Godshill. This small well-kept village has thatched stone houses, a Methodist chapel dating from 1838, a small natural history museum and the medieval St. Lawrence's Church. The church contains the tombs of members of the Worsley family, and a 15th/16th century fresco in the South Chapel. The painting "Daniel in the Lion's Den" is probably the work of Rubens or one of his pupils.

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Overnight on the Isle of Wight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Isle of Wight: Osborne House & Carisbrooke Castle

Our island touring today will start with a tour of 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.

Today we will also visit 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.

Our touring today will end 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.

Overnight on the Isle of Wight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Isle of Wight - Ferry to Bournemouth

Today we catch the ferry from Yarmouth on the northwest coast of the Isle of Wight to Lymington, in the County of Dorset, and then drive towards Bournemouth. Along the way we will make a stop in Christchurch where we visit the Priory Church. The present building dates back to 1094 but there has been a church on the site since 800ad. Reputed to be the longest church in England. The site also contains the ruins of Christchurch Castle. We will also make a stop at the Red House Museum and Gardens Heritage Museum. Built as a parish workhouse in 1764, this historic building now houses outstanding collections of local and social history.

Bournemouth is one of southern England's most lovely and vibrant towns. This south coast resort at the doorstep of the New Forest didn't just happen: it was carefully planned and executed, a true city in a garden. Flower-filled, park-dotted Bournemouth contains a great deal of architecture inherited from those arbiters of taste, Victoria and her son, Edward. The area was developed back in Victoria's day, when seabathing became an institution. One of Bournemouth's most distinguished features is its 'chines' -- narrow, shrub-filled, steep-sided ravines along the coastline. Bournemouth's Gardens are split into three areas of Victorian beauty -- starting with the Lower Gardens, adjacent to the sea and leading to the Central Gardens in the town centre and then the Upper Gardens.

Overnight Bournemouth.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

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

Today we travel by Fast Ferry from England to the Channel Islands.

The Channel Islands enjoy a unique and interesting status: they are not sovereign, nor are they colonies; they are not part of the United Kingdom, rather they are a British Crown Dependency, and they are only partly admitted to the European Union. In fact, the very name itself, Channel Islands, is misleading, as they are not situated in the English Channel, but lie scattered along the Gulf of St Malo, off the coast of Normandy in France. Known as les Iles Normandes in French, the islands have a strong French flavour to them. In fact, during the Hundred Years' War between Britain and France, the islands were subject to frequent invasions. The most recent invasion however, was by Germany

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during the Second World War when the islands were held for almost five years.

Guernsey is the second largest of the Channel Islands, and our arrival is in St Peter Port -- the capital. This, the most ancient town in the Channel Islands, is also the most attractive. Guernsey was once a staging post in the wine trade when ships bound from England and the Mediterranean used it for shelter and replenishment. Later in its history, wine was laid down here to mature. St Peter Port likely started as a fishing village. It lacked the physical features to provide a natural harbour, but its roadstead, protected by the nearby islands, attracted mariners and, therefore, traders, and the fishermen were joined by merchants, resulting in the growth of a seaport from a humble fishing haven. The narrow streets and alleys climb steeply from the harbour to the highest point of the town. The architecture of the town is mainly Regency-style, which gives St Peter Port an old-world air.

This afternoon we will visit the award winning Guernsey Museum, set among the green lawns and camellias of the Candie Gardens, high above the town. The Island of Guernsey has a unique and fascinating history stretching back thousands of years. The coastline of Guernsey was once the home of some of the earliest Neolithic settlers and the Island boasts at least six high status burial sites, which have produced some rare artifacts, these now take pride of place in Guernsey's Candie Museum.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Guernsey: Cornet Castle & Hauteville

Our sightseeing today we will start with a tour of Cornet Castle, situated at the entrance to the port. Dating from 1150, there are close to eight centuries of fortification here within the castle. Today the castle is home to several museums: the Royal Guernsey Militia Museum, the Guernsey Maritime History Museum, a Royal Air Force Museum, and the Art Gallery and Armoury. We will have ample time here to explore these museums.

From Cornet Castle we travel up the slopes of St. Peter Port to Hauteville, the decorative house in which Victor Hugo lived. A French writer famous for Les Miserables, Hugo spent fifteen years in exile on Guernsey. His house was largely furnished from the spoils of island privateers and contains mementoes of the poet. Hugo was just one of over 200 political refugees who fled to the Channel Islands in 1852 following the coup of Louis Napoleon III in France in December 1851. He started his exile in Jersey and might never even have made it to Guernsey had not that same defiant spirit so boisterously expressed in his house led to his expulsion from Jersey. He lived here from 1856 until 1870, during which time he created an interior that is nothing less than a triumph of the imagination.

This afternoon we will continue with our exploration of St. Peter Port. With its cobbled streets and picturesque seafront marina, it is easy to see why St Peter Port is considered one of Europe's prettiest harbour towns. Guernsey's capital has been a busy port since Roman times. St Peter Port's centerpiece is its beautiful church, which is believed to be the closest church to a pub in the British Isles. To learn more about the island's history we will also head to the Guernsey Tapestry at the Gallery in St James Concert Hall.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Guernsey: Excursion to Herm

A short 20-minute ferry journey this morning will bring us to the small island of Herm where we explore the island and its history. Its minute size has helped it remain untouched by modern technology and landscaping. It is also car free.

Most visitors will agree that Herm is a magical place, and as you step ashore on Herm you will take in the natural beauty and peacefulness of the island. Every inch of the island is steeped in history and mystery. The north end of the island is made up of beautiful beaches and the vast grassy common, where woolly mammoth roamed millions of years ago, Neolithic settlements have been found, and where recent digs uncovered evidence of a prehistoric beach. This is where smugglers landed with their wares hundreds of years ago, where pirates hung as a warning to others, and where Prussian princesses walked in regal beauty. The east coast beaches boast soft white sand and clean blue water.

During our time here we will visit the tiny 11th century chapel with its beautiful stained glass windows commissioned by Peter and Jenny Wood. We will also discover Neolithic tombs. Herm was first discovered in the Mesolithic period (between 10,000 and 8,000 BC), and the first settlers arrived in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. The first records of Herm's inhabitants in historic times are from the 6th century, when the island became a centre of monastic activity. There will be some free time for you to explore the islands trails and paths at your own speed,

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and enjoy a break for lunch. Later in the day we return by ferry to Guernsey.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Guernsey: Rocquaine Bay

Our destination today is Rocquaine Bay. At low tide the bay stretches for more than three kilometers, and towards the southern end of the bay, sitting squat against a flat rocky shore is Fort Grey. This is one of the islands true Martello towers. Like all of the Martello towers in the islands, Fort Grey was built as a defense against French invasion: it was erected in 1804. There was, however, a much earlier stronghold here. From the 17th century onwards there are references to a small castle known as Chateau de Rocquaine having stood on this site. The sea surrounding Guernsey's western tip is a ship's graveyard; which has seen countless vessels founder on the notoriously dangerous rocks of Les Honois.

Overnight on Guernsey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Guernsey & Sark

We travel today to the unique island of Sark, the smallest independent state in the British Commonwealth and the fourth smallest of the Channel Islands. To a certain extent, Sark remains in a time-warp. This island enjoys both peace and tranquility as it is completely free of cars (a handful of tractors do exist). Sark is one of the few remaining places in the world where cars are banned from roads. The island has a population of approximately 600.

As we approach by boat, our first sight of the island is the towering cliffs topped by steeply sloping common land, called cotils. Seabirds wheel over the bays, and sometimes in late spring boat passengers are able to see puffins bobbing about on the surface of the sea. Dolphins may also make the occasional appearance. When we land at its tiny harbour, we have tractor drawn "buses" to take us up the steep hill to the village. Sark is only 6 km (3.7 miles) in length, but it boasts some 54 km (33 miles) of coastline, cliffs and superb views.

The pace of life is leisurely and relaxed. The island provides a haven away from the noisy, everyday world; the perfect place to get away from it all. The views from the coastal headlands are magnificent. During our time on the island we will enjoy a scenic carriage ride, one of the best ways to explore Sark! We will travel through the quaint narrow lanes to places of outstanding natural beauty. We will sit back and enjoy Sark's Scenery whilst the history of the Island is narrated to us. During our touring we will be sure to view La Coupee, between big Sark and Little Sark.

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

Today we travel by ferry from Guernsey to St Helier, Jersey.

Jersey is the largest of the Channel Islands with a population of almost 100,000. St Helier, the main town, is magnificently situated on the wide St Aubin's Bay. The town's name has an ancient heritage: it commemorates the hermit Helerius, son of a Belgian nobleman who came to Jersey seeking an isolated location where he could devote his life to prayer. In the town archaeologists have found evidence of habitation dating to the 12th century. Today the town is home to a resident population of some 33,600.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Jersey: Island Tour

Today we will enjoy a full-day tour of the island.

To get a good sense of the history and character of Jersey we will visit to two of the island's most notable landmarks: Samares Manor and Mont Orgueil Castle. First we travel to Samares Manor where the Seigneur led a very different existence; here we will visit the house and grounds to see how the other half lived. Noteworthy features inside the manor include the fine French walnut panelling in the dining room and the drawing room, with its specially woven carpet of sage green.

The present Dame of Samares no longer has the privileges her ancestors enjoyed, such as chasing rabbits over the Town Hill, but she still has a duty in common with some other Seigneurs. Once a year she has to attend L'Assize d'Heritage. This is a sitting of the Heritage Division of the Royal Court, which certain Seigneurs attend and when the name of their fief is called affirm their allegiance to the Queen. This is the oldest court still attended in Europe.

Today we will also visit Mont Orgueil Castle, founded when King John lost Normandy to France in 1204. Mont Orgueil meaning "Mount Pride" was named by the Duke of Clarence, brother to Henry V. In the 17th century it served as a prison; William Prynne, whose writings incurred the censure of Charles I, was incarcerated here and fined £10,000. In addition, his ears were cut off and his face was branded with the initials S.I. (seditious libeller). Mont Orgueil's ten towers and two machicolated bastions -- where boulders and pitch could be poured through holes in the floor onto the invaders coming up from below -- were not in place or complete in the twelfth century. They were gradually added and modified through the next three centuries in increasing efforts to defend the island against the French.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Jersey: La Hougue Bie & Durrell Wildlife Park

Today we will visit La Hougue Bie, one of Europe's finest passage graves set in beautiful surroundings. Here we will learn about life in Jersey's Neolithic community 6,000 years ago. Often described as "one of Europe's finest prehistoric monuments," La Hogue Bie is dominated by the massive burial ground dating from 3800 BC. This site has been a focal point for religion in the island for thousands of years. This large burial ground is topped with two chapels, the Norman chapel of Notre Dame de Clarte and the Jerusalem Chapel. The huge mound which covers this ancient burial place has given it its name, as 'Hougue' is a corruption of haugr, the Norse word for mound. The meaning of the adjective 'Bie' is harder to trace, but the legend which purports to give its origin, shows the continuing religious tradition surrounding La Hougue Bie down to Christian times. Unlike many other dolmens you can actually stand inside the chamber of the passage grave and discover the heart of this place of worship.

Our sightseeing today will also include a visit to the world famous Durrell Wildlife Park, started by writer and naturalist Gerald Durrell as a conservation and breeding center for endangered species. The idea behind the park is to aid in the preservation of animal life, and The Durrell scientific trust has affiliates in the US and Canada. Unlike your 'typical' zoo, the Trust has set up a mini-university next door to the zoological gardens to instruct students from all over the world in methods of caring for the wild in captivity.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Jersey Sightseeing Continued

This morning we will visit the war tunnels and underground hospital used by the Germans when they occupied Guernsey during WWII. Having been renovated and researched, the hospital has been turned into a huge and impressive museum. A map detailing the planned extent of the tunnel complex shows that only about half of it was even completed and is a reminder that the Germans intended the Channel Islands to be permanently fortified outposts of the Third Reich.

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This afternoon you will have some free time to explore St. Helier before our last overnight on the island.

Overnight on Jersey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

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

Today we fly northward to Douglas, capital of the Isle of Man (possibly via Liverpool). We may complete some of our sightseeing in Douglas upon arrival (time-permitting).

Nestled along the island's eastern coast, Douglas serves as the island's largest town and main hub for commerce, entertainment, and government. The town is famous for its picturesque two-mile promenade, which offers stunning views of the bay and is lined with Victorian and Edwardian architecture. Douglas is also home to the Tynwald, the Isle of Man's parliament, one of the oldest continuous parliaments in the world.

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

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

Our day of adventure begins with a ride on the Snaefell Mountain Railway. Opened in 1895, the railway was the first electric railway in the British Isles and was specifically built to carry passengers to the summit of Snaefell, the island's only mountain. The railway's enduring charm lies in its vintage tramcars and the scenic six-mile route, offering breathtaking views from the summit where, on a clear day, you can see England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and the Isle of Man.

We start in Douglas, and our first stop is the quaint village of Laxey. Here, we can't resist admiring the Great Laxey Wheel, an iconic Isle of Man landmark and the largest working water wheel in the world! After soaking in the history, we continue our journey up to the summit of Snaefell, the island's only mountain. The views from the top are absolutely breathtaking, and we take a moment to enjoy the panorama. On a clear day, you can see all the way to England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Once we've had our fill of the stunning scenery, we hop back on the railway for our return trip to Douglas. To wrap up our adventure, we take a delightful ride on the Douglas Bay Horse Tram along the scenic promenade. It's the perfect way to end a fantastic day!

Overnight in Douglas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Isle of Man Excursion: Castletown & Cregneash Village

Today, we'll be touring the island in the comfort of our private coach. Our first stop is Castletown, where we'll visit The Old House of Keys, the former meeting place of the House of Keys, the lower house of Tynwald, the Isle of Man's parliament. This interactive museum offers us a fun and engaging way to learn about key events in the Isle of Man's political history. Next, we'll explore Castle Rushen, one of the best-preserved medieval castles in the British Isles.

After soaking in the history of Castletown, we'll head to Port Erin to enjoy the Isle of Man Railway Museum, where we can dive into the fascinating history of this unique railway, from its founding in 1873 to the present day. Our journey continues with a visit to Cregneash Village, one of the last strongholds of the Manx language and customs. To top off our adventure, we'll take the chance to travel back to Douglas on a steam train, experiencing a piece of the island's rich heritage firsthand.

Overnight in Douglas.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Isle of Man Excursion: Tynwald Hill & Peel

We'll start our journey by traveling by coach to St John's to visit Tynwald Hill, the traditional open-air parliament site, known as one of the oldest continuous parliaments in the world. After taking in the historical significance of Tynwald Hill, we'll continue on to the House of Manannan in Peel, where we will immerse ourselves in the island's Viking and Celtic past through the interactive exhibits. On our return to Douglas, we'll make a stop at the Manx Museum to further explore the island's fascinating history.

This evening we will enjoy our final dinner in conclusion to our tour to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

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