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# Exploring the Isle of Man

THERE'S A LOT HAPPENING IN BETWEEN IRELAND AND ENGLAND. BY JORDAN ANDREW

**T**he majority of large-scale maps show the area between Ireland and the United Kingdom as little more than the Irish Sea. Take a closer look, however, and there is much more to be found than the choppy waters of the Irish Sea.

Less than 60 miles west of the Lancashire coastline rests the Isle of Man, which is roughly 227 square miles. This island is a unique self-governing kingdom, belonging to neither the UK nor the European Union. The island has its own language, Manx, and currency, though English is the spoken tongue and both euros and pounds are accepted everywhere. Perhaps its most definitive trait is the very agreeable and relaxed pace of life its residents practice, a welcome atmosphere for those looking for a stress-free getaway.

The island revels in its relative seclusion, with 40 percent of which is uninhabited and a population of only 80,000. Yet to call the Isle of Man secluded does not mean that it is devoid of interesting sights and attractions. The island takes pride in its beautiful natural surroundings, providing numerous walking paths around and through its lush landscape. Its many waterways allow for a nice way to cool off, as well as providing great spots for fishing. Sea kayaking and sailing along the scenic coastline are also popular attractions.

Visitors can also explore the past through the many castles on the Isle of Man. One of the most popular is Castle Rushen, which has been intricately restored and converted to house a museum chronicling the history of the island.

For cinema lovers, the Isle of Man has also played host to several major motion pictures, including the comedy *Waking Ned* to the family film *Thomas and the Magic Railroad*. More than 30 films have been shot on the

island, and the Isle of Man Film Commission provides a map highlighting many of the locations used for these productions.

Those more interested in the city life will find a multitude of opportunities in the island's capital, Douglas. Situated next to Douglas Bay, this city offers several opportunities—museums, theatres, restaurants, nightclubs and shopping centres are at your fingertips. There are even several places designed for children as well, including the Wet-Zone water park and the interactive hi-tech Manx Museum.

But what is a relaxing holiday without a game of golf? The Isle of Man has the golfer in the family covered, featuring nine courses all within an hour's drive of the other. The challenge and enjoyment these courses provide are top-notch, and the surrounding majesty of the Irish Sea and the beautiful landscape of the island only enhance the experience.

Possibly the most renowned of the golf courses on the Isle of Man is also one of the oldest in the United Kingdom: Castletown Golf Club. Established in 1892, the legendary golf course designer Mackenzie Ross re-imagined the links in the late 1920's and early 30's, creating the 6,711-yard, par 72 course known by golfers today. Located in the southeast section of the island, Castletown is surrounded on three sides by the Irish Sea, providing a panoramic view of the ocean from every hole. The course has played host to many championships, including the prestigious PGA Cup between the UK and United States in 1979.

While Castletown may be the most recognized of the Isle of Man's golf courses, it would be a great mistake to ignore the other choices offered around the island. On the northernmost tip of the island lies the Isle of Man's newest golf course, Glen Truan Golf Links, which boasts a clear view of Scotland in the distance. Visitors are encouraged to take in the scenery as they explore the course, crafted over the heath and dunes of the Ayres Nature Reserve and featuring 6,454 yards for the men and 5,676 for the ladies. Though Glen Truan is comparatively new, it is rapidly growing in popularity due to its wonderful sights and experiences on the course.

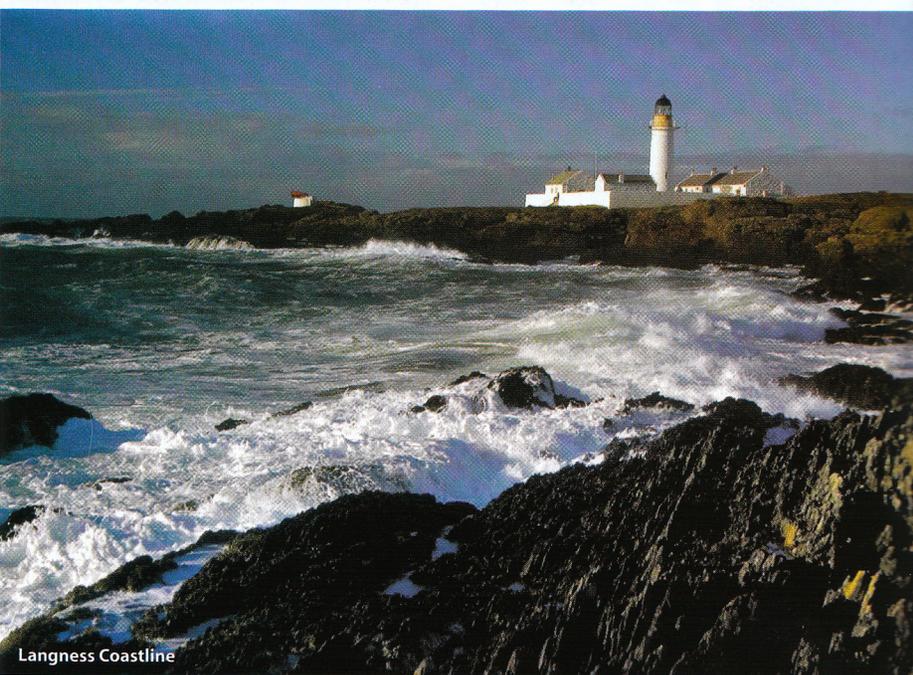
Also in the north near Skye Hill lies Ramsey Golf Club, which has a relatively flat walk over the green's rolling hills. The course is a par 70 at 5,982 yards long, yet the infamous Ramsey bunkers have ruined many good cards on the last three holes. Offering a mix of challenge and great scenery, Ramsey's links are an excellent addition to the island's courses.

Moving down the east coast will bring you to King Edward Bay Club, located just north of the capital, Douglas. Though relatively short at 5,284 yards, this par 67

course is superbly maintained and offers awe-inspiring views of the surrounding ocean and country from its perch on Onchan head. Don't forget about the course itself, though, as mastering these



Mount Murray



Langness Coastline

holes definitely requires full attention—particularly the 14th hole, a par 3 that requires a carry over heather.

Just outside of the capital lies Douglas Golf Course in Pulrose, one of the Isle of Man's "pay and play" courses started in 1891. Designer Alistair McKenzie, who created the world-famous Augusta National Golf Club links, also lent his skills to this project, crafting a par 69 course at 5,922 yards. Of particular note is the 17th hole, a par 3 that requires a 200-foot drop from the tee to the green.

Travelling slightly inland from Douglas will lead to the Mount Murray Hotel and Country Club, which implements Manx hedging, streams and lakes to make the 6,664 yard, par 72 course truly memorable. Having five par 5 holes adds a dimension of epic grandeur to the course, most notably the seventh hole; at 595 yards, it is the longest on the Mount Murray links, if not the entire island.

The only 9-hole course is Port St. Mary, located on the southeast coast of the island. Designed in 1936 by George Duncan, 1920 Open Champion, the course is extremely well established and playing 18 its yardage is 5,770. The links tout some of the finest views of the island, particularly from the sixth tee.

A short trip north from Port St. Mary will lead you to the links of Rowany Golf Club, situated in Port Erin. Though the course is just 5,803 yards and par 70, the course still offers plenty of challenging holes with diverse terrain; the first

few holes are relatively straight forward, while the back 9 changes to a hilly heath land style course.

The final course on the Isle of Man, Peel Golf Club, is located on the western coast of the island. Designed by James Braid, the 5,874 yard, par 69 course has a trademark hazard: a stream runs throughout the entire course, coming into play on the third, fourth, 16th, 17th and 18th holes. The stream adds even more beauty to the already-gorgeous links, parts of which have been cut through pine tree plantations. The 11th hole, featuring a dogleg par four layout, will definitely push any player to his or her limits.

With this wide array of golf courses, activities and attractions, it would be difficult to discover boredom on an Isle of Man holiday. After experiencing all of the marvels this island offers, a trip to the Irish Sea may just become a top priority.