Isle of Man

Location

The Isle of Man is at the center of the British Isles, in the Irish Sea, at the center, in fact; fifty kilometers from both the U.K. and Ireland. It is closest to Scotland. About three times the size of Washington D.C. the Isle of Man also include smaller islands; the Calf of Man, St. Patrick’s Isle, and St. Michael’s Isle (also called Fort Island). The latter two are uninhabited, and the Calf of Man, according to a 2006 census, is populated by two. Finally, the Isle of Man has three islets: Chicken Rock, Kitterland, and St. Mary’s Isle (also known as Conister Rock).

Geography

The main island, the Isle of Man, is 572 square kilometers in area at 51 kilometers long and 13 kilometers across, and a coast line of 160 kilometers. The main terrain of the island is two areas of mountains separated by a valley that runs through the central part of the island, between the towns of Peel and Douglas. Snaefell is the highest point, at 2034 feet high. There is no point below sea level on the whole island. At the northernmost part of the island there is a flat plain, to the south it is a more distinct pattern of hills and valleys. The longest river in the Isle of Man is the Sulby River, at 17 kilometers long.
**Climate**

Being in the midst of the British Isles, the Isle of Man is also affected by the Gulf Stream, and so, despite its northern latitude, the climate is temperate. With mild winters and cool summers, the maximum temperature recorded is 28.9 degrees Celsius. Average rainfall is somewhat higher than the rest of the British isles, the highest being at the peak Snaefell at about 1900 millimeters a year, and the lower averages being around 800 millimeters a year. Like much of the region around Great Britain, the Isle of Man is often overcast.

**History**

All around the island one can find traces of the earliest peoples of Man, Megalithic Monuments from the Neolithic Period, burial mounds from the Bronze Age, and artifacts from the earlier Middle Stone Age have been found. The Celts began influencing the island culture around the Iron Age, bringing the Irish Gaelic that seems to be the basis of Manx Gaelic and culture. The Vikings later took over the island and held control from around the 8th Century to the mid-13th Century when power was given to Scotland, leading to English rule in the 14th Century, the Island of Man gained and lost self-control over the next few centuries until 1866, when the parliament of the island gained more autonomy and the move to a full democracy was started. Currently the island is not part of the United Kingdom, though the Queen is Head of State and the Crown is responsible for foreign relations and defense. The parliament, called Tynwald, was founded in 979 AD and is the oldest parliament in the world and has it's own national day called Tynwald Day on July 5th.
**Important Dates**

Dates important to the Isle of Man are the same as other British Isles, Christmas Eve and Day (December 24\(^{th}\) and 25\(^{th}\)), Boxing Day (December 26\(^{th}\)), New Years (December 31\(^{st}\)/January 1\(^{st}\)), Good Friday (varies), Easter Sunday and Monday (varies), and May Day (May 1\(^{st}\)). On top of which is the Tynwald Day their National Day (July 5\(^{th}\)), and bank holidays for their Tourist Trophy Races (a motorcycle race).

**Population**

Despite the many pieces of land that make up the country of the Isle of Man, other than two people that live on the Calf of Man, the entire population lives on the main island; a population of 80,058 according to a census taken in 2006. Of that 80,058 total population, 26,218 live in the capital, Douglas. Less than half of the total population (47.6%) are native-born residents. Next prolific origin of birth being England herself (37.2%). Very few residents (about 6%) were born outside of the British Isles.

**Currency**

**Manx pounds and pence are the currency of the Isle of Man and are equivalent to Great Britain's pound.**

**Education**

Primary and much of secondary schooling is required by law for the youths on the Isle of Man. On the island there are 35 primary schools and five secondary school. The island also offers further education in the Isle of Man College located in the capital,
Douglas. The college offers both vocational education as well as intellectual skill-based learning.

**Language**

The Isle of Man has two official languages, English and Manx Gaelic. The English spoken there is of a dialect called Manx English. Manx Gaelic is a language similar to the Scottish and Irish Gaelic languages spoken in the British Isles, and the last native speaker of Manx Gaelic died in 1974. However, the people of the Isle of Man are trying to revive the language.

**Religion**

Like much of the surrounding area, the Anglican Church is what the majority of Manx subscribe to. There are also Roman Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians. Alongside these Christians, there is a small demographic of Jewish Manx, with a synagogue in the capital, Douglas.

**Agriculture**

On the isle of Man, they have an indigenous breed of sheep called the Loaghtan sheep that normally have four horns, rather than the usual two, though they can have only two, and even up to six horns. They have a brown wool, and a dark meat. The meat of the Loaghtan is used in cuisine all around the area, including Great Britain. Also farmed on the island are poultry and cattle. Cheese is produced and popular in the area. The government runs fisheries in the rivers for trout and salmon.
**Trade**

The Isle of Man trades almost exclusively with the United Kingdom. However, the island gets most of its economic influx from offshore banking, and tourism especially, though it used to be a more agrarian economy. The Isle of Man also encourages the island as a location for filming movies.

**Food**

The national dish of the Isle of Man is referred to as “Spuds and Herrin’,” being boiled potatoes and herring as it is a long-enjoyed dish of the farmers upon whose backs the country was formed. The traditional diet on the island, being an island and thus surrounded by an endless bounty thereof, consists of a lot of seafood. A local delicacy is kippers, a smoked herring, they also smoke salmon. Other things they gather commercially are scallops, crab, and lobster. More recently, however, a very popular creation of chips, cheese, and gravy has become considered a likely national dish, as it can be found at most any fast food restaurant on the island.

**Landmarks**

One of the biggest physical attractions of the Isle of Man would be the highest peak, Snaefell. At 2034 feet high, at the top of the hill you can see five different countries; Man, Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales. Unfortunately you can only see all five on a clear day, which, in the British Isles is a nigh impossible feat, do to a general state of overcast. The top of the mountain can be reached by a vigorous hike
from another landmark, ‘The Bungalow’ on the mountain road, or a ride on the Snaefell
Mountain Railway.

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