

TravelWatch Guide for Visitors to the Isle of Man.

Public Transport To and On the Island - or How to Visit with - or without Your Car.

Introduction.

This guide is aimed at potential and first-time visitors and provides basic information and links to relevant further sources. Whilst many visitors bring their cars to enjoy the island's uncrowded roads and generally free parking (www.gov.im/tourism), the island can also be enjoyed using the good public transport network. www.iombusandrail.info All information is given in good faith but passengers are advised to check with travel operators for any changes subsequent to the publication of this guide. (January 2012).

Where is The Isle of Man?

In the middle of the Irish Sea, approximately equidistant from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

How To Cross the Water By Sea:

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company www.steam-packet.com operates regular passenger / drive-on car ferry services from **Liverpool** http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/passinfo_lpool_0510.pdf and **Heysham** http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/passinfo_lancs_1108.pdf in NW England to the island's capital, Douglas. The following indicates the usual pattern of sailings but please check the timetable for the day you wish to travel.

- **Heysham services** operate year round with departures from Heysham Port at 02.15 and 14.15. and from Douglas at 08.45 and 19.45. Please note that Saturday/Sunday daytime services between November and March usually go from/to Birkenhead. Due to vessel maintenance requirements the overnight Sat/Sun service does not always operate.
- **Liverpool (Pier Head)** fast craft sailings operate between April and October departing Liverpool at 19.00 and Douglas at 15.00. There are also morning departures on certain days of the week.
- **Liverpool winter sailings** (November–March) operate to/from Birkenhead (Twelve Quays) on Saturdays and Sundays only leaving Birkenhead at 14.00 and Douglas at 08.00. Times may vary according to tidal and weather conditions.
- **Irish services** (Belfast or Dublin) usually operate up to three days a week between late May and early September with occasional services at Easter and Christmas.

Port location maps for motorists

can be found at <http://www.steam-packet.com/en/OurPorts>

Paid car parking

is available for passengers at Heysham and Douglas ports – but is not bookable in advance. There is no passenger car park at other Steam Packet ports.

Public transport connections for foot passengers:

Please be aware that weather and other operational reasons may delay ferry arrivals and that, in the event of such delay, connections are not guaranteed. Passengers booking railway tickets requiring travel by a specified train need to allow more than the indicated connection times.

- **Heysham** - Northern Rail <http://www.northernrail.org/> provide one daily service between Leeds and Heysham Port which provides connections at Lancaster to/from Virgin Trains <http://www.virgintrains.co.uk> and TransPennineExpress <http://www.tpexpress.co.uk/> for London, Birmingham, Manchester and Scottish services. This service is suitable for passengers travelling to Douglas on the 14.15 sailing and arriving at Heysham on the 08.45 sailing from Douglas.

- **Liverpool** – Main line rail services operate to/from Lime Street station – allow at least 60 mins from ship arrival to train departure and 75 mins from train arrival to ship departure (this includes 35 mins check-in time). CityLink C2 buses run every 20 mins between Lime Street station and the Pier Head until about 18.00.
<http://tinyurl.com/3k2jpty> Merseyrail services connecting with Lime Street and the Wirral run from James Street which is about 10 mins walk from the Pier Head.
- **Douglas** – Buses are the main form of public transport on the Island – with bus stops approx 200 yards from the Sea Terminal. Visitor information <http://www.visitisleofman.com/> and public transport timetables www.iombusandrail.info are available at the Welcome Centre in the Sea Terminal. There is pick-up for **pre-booked** hire cars, http://www.visitisleofman.com/travel/car_hire.xml , taxi rank <http://www.iomguide.com/taxis.php> , freephone for taxis, Foot passengers arriving late evening or departing early morning are advised to check bus times before booking.

How to get the best fares

Be flexible with dates and book as early as possible. Fares vary by season and are dearer at weekends. The TT (motor cycle races) period of late May to early June is peak. On busy sailings, consider reserving seats at £3 each. Special Offer fares are not flexible, but can be amended for a fee. The Steam Packet Company <http://www.steampacketholidays.com/SteamPacketHolidays/default.aspx> and other agents offer travel and accommodation packages.

Foot passengers have a choice of booking separate tickets for the ferry at www.steam-packet.com (where it is cheaper to book well in advance) and train if required, N.B. some of the cheaper rail tickets are not flexible so in the event of a ferry being delayed the rail ticket may not be valid. Brief guidance on rail tickets is given at http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/passinfo_railfares_0309.pdf

Combined **Sail and Rail tickets**, booked in advance at railway stations for journeys starting in UK – or on line, can represent good value, especially with railcards, and are flexible on trains, which is useful if sailings from the island are delayed. Sail and Rail can be booked via different ports, outward and return, and are priced on a zone basis (see www.seat61.com/Isle-of-Man.htm).

Rail (and Sail and Rail) tickets bought direct from train operators websites or at stations do not incur any credit card or administrative charges. **PLUSBUS** options to include bus travel on arrival in IOM can be added to tickets bought at UK railway stations (but not on line). http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/plusbus_0611.pdf

Luggage

Foot passengers may carry only hand baggage on board, but larger items (for which there is no charge) should be checked in at the terminal.

- At Heysham check-in and baggage collection are within 100 metres and at the same level as the train, although up a short flight of steps from taxi drop-off and car park. A ramped route is also available. There are lifts at Lancaster Station for those needing to change platform.
- At Liverpool passengers need to take luggage down a sloping ramp from road level to the terminal check-in. Baggage collection for arriving passengers is alongside the vessel after which passengers have to handle their own baggage onto a conveyor up the (sometimes steep) ramp to road level.
- At Douglas baggage check-in and collection are both at street level.

Passengers requiring assistance

Assistance should be requested **at the time of booking** as there steep steps and slopes to be avoided.

How to Cross the Water By Air:

The island's modern airport at Ronaldsway, <http://www.iom-airport.com/> is 8 miles south of Douglas, between Ballasalla and Castletown.

The main airlines serving IOM are:

Aer Arann www.aerarann.com

Services from Dublin and London City

Blue Islands www.blueislands.com

Services from Jersey & Guernsey

EasyJet www.easyjet.com

Service from Liverpool

FlyBe www.flybe.com

Direct services from Birmingham - Bristol - Brussels (via Southampton) - Edinburgh* - Geneva (winter) - Glasgow* - Jersey (via Luton) - Liverpool - London Gatwick - London Luton - Manchester - Southampton. Other airports are also available via Birmingham, London Gatwick, London Luton and/or Manchester.

Manx2 www.manx2.com

Services from: Anglesey - Belfast City - Blackpool - Cardiff - Gloucester (M5) - Leeds Bradford - Jersey - Newcastle

Many of the English airports are **rail connected** and most have **public transport** readily available – details are available via the following links:

- **London** http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/passinfo_london_0609.pdf
- **Liverpool** www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/passinfo_lpool_0510.pdf
- **Manchester** http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/passinfo_mcr_0508.pdf ,
- **Birmingham** http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/passinfo_bham_0910.pdf
- **Edinburgh** <http://www.edinburgh-airport-guide.co.uk/transport.html> ,
- **Glasgow** <http://www.glasgow-airport-guide.co.uk/transport.html>
- **Belfast** http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/passinfo_belfast_0910.pdf and
- **Dublin** http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/uploads/5/6/8/7/5687674/passinfo_dublin_0409.pdf .

In the **Isle of Man** the walk from aircraft to Arrivals is shorter than at most UK airports, but some steps are involved for departures. Luggage is generally transferred quickly. For details of airlines and timetables, see above and <http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/air-information.html> and www.iom-airport.com.

Facilities at Isle of Man Ronaldsway Airport include cash machines (dispensing UK notes) refreshments, car-hire desks <http://www.iom-airport.com/parking/carhire.xml?menuid=22778> (advisable to book in advance), taxi rank and bus shelter. <http://www.iom-airport.com/parking/buses.xml?menuid=22777>

There are frequent **direct bus services** to Onchan, Douglas, Castletown, Port Erin and Port St Mary, and limited direct services to Peel. Bus and railway timetables <http://www.iombusandrail.info> are also available at the Airport Information desk. Some tourist information may also be available, and comprehensive information is available at the Welcome Centre in Douglas Sea Terminal.

Passengers requiring assistance

Passengers who have difficulty managing stairs should always request assistance at the time of booking - this would cover getting on/off the aircraft as well as negotiating stairs in airports – particularly departure gates at IOM airport.

How to get the best fares

- Book on line, be flexible with dates and book as early as possible.
- Look out for extras (insurance and baggage charges) which you may not need being added before you complete your booking.
- The cheaper tickets are not flexible, and alterations incur substantial amendment fees. As air fares are not necessarily related to distance, the longer routes may offer better overall value.

Public Transport on the Isle of Man:

Bus Vannin provides a comprehensive bus network serving the island from/via Douglas. www.iombusandrail.info

Heritage railway services <http://www.iombusandrail.info/railtimetables.html> usually operate between Easter and early November but with services reduced outside the main tourist season.

The **Steam Railway** links Douglas with Port Erin in the south, and the **Manx Electric Railway** (MER) employs Victorian tramcars to link Douglas with Ramsey in the north. The **Snaefell Mountain Railway** runs from Laxey to Snaefell Summit usually from early May to early October.

Explorer runabout tickets, <http://www.iombusandrail.info/information.html> are available at the Sea Terminal Welcome Centre as well as bus depots, manned heritage railway stations and some retail outlets.

IOM Maps can be purchased from the Lexicon Bookshop, 63 Strand Street, Douglas IM1 2RL – 01624 673004 (www.lexiconbookshop.co.im)

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www.travelwatch-isleofman.org

Representing and Promoting the interests of Isle of Man Passengers

All information is given in good faith, but without warranty.

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