

The Isle of Wight: The Royal Island [B2]

L'isola di Wight si trova a soli sei chilometri a sud dell'Inghilterra, nel canale della Manica. Con più di 140.000 abitanti, è la seconda isola più popolata del Regno Unito.



The Isle of Wight was formed at the end of the last Ice Age, about eight to nine thousand years ago. Sea levels [rose](#) and then a huge tsunami from present-day Norway [flooded](#) the future [English Channel](#), [cutting the future Isle of Wight off](#) from the island of Britain and [mainland](#) Europe.

DINOSAUR ISLE

The island is popularly known as Dinosaur Isle. It is one of Europe's richest sites for dinosaur [remains](#) — twenty [breeds](#) can be found dating from 125 million years ago. There are organised fossil-hunting trips on the [cliffs](#) and beaches. Popular interest [led](#) to the island [hosting](#) Britain's first dinosaur museum. Other museums include one for [shipwrecks](#) and [smugglers](#), another for [dwellings](#) and artefacts dating back to the Bronze Age, the Stone Age and Roman period, and a third celebrating [steam](#) engines from

the 19th century. Most of the [railway network](#) actually closed in the mid-20th century. However, the island now has the smallest train operating company in Britain, with electric trains from the London Underground running on its fourteen-kilometre circuit. The old railway lines are now a series of [cycleways](#), whose 322 kilometres have won the isle a place in the top ten in the Lonely Planet guide's list of [top cycling locations](#).

ROYAL GLORY DAYS

The [steam](#) engines date back, in fact, to the island's glory days, with their connection to royalty. The former royal residence, Osborne House, was built between 1845 and 1851 as a holiday home for Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert. The presence of the British Royals [led](#) European royal families and famous Britons to visit or settle on the island, including Lewis Carroll, John Keats and Charles Dickens (who wrote part of David Copperfield there.)

BOOM IN TOURISM

Queen Victoria's holiday home produced a boom in tourism on an island previously known for farming, fishing and boat building. This boom produced another boom in urban development, especially in resort towns such as Ventnor, Sandown and Ryde. The [ultimate](#) Victorian [seaside](#) destination [led](#) in time to tourism becoming the island's main source of [revenue](#). Around two million people now visit annually for [sailing](#), wildlife and geology, walking, cycling and beach holidays.

INTERNATIONAL REGATTA

Tourism is also directly connected to the island's maritime traditions. Every August, the islanders hold a world-famous international [sailing](#) regatta. Cowes Week makes a major contribution to the economy, attracting a hundred thousand visitors every year. The Isle of Wight has a long industrial history associated with the sea, including boat building, [sail](#) making and the manufacture of [flying boats](#). The island was also the birthplace of the

world's first [hovercraft](#) in the 1950s. At the other extreme, it was also the location for the testing and development of Britain's space rockets during the Cold War.

ROCK MUSIC FESTIVAL

The isle's history has a strong connection to sound, too. The world's first radio station was [set up](#) there by Marconi in 1897, and the island is now the home of the National Wireless Museum. More than seventy years later, the sound was a little less sedate, as rock music reverberated around the island from one of the largest rock festivals the world has ever seen. The Isle of Wight Festival, in 1970, sold fifty thousand tickets, but an incredible six hundred thousand [attended](#) the concert, host to [acts](#) such as Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, Leonard Cohen and The Who. The population of the island then was only one hundred thousand! The festival was revived in 2002 and is now an annual event, attracting established [acts](#) such as George Ezra, Robbie Williams and Sophie Ellis Bextor.

AN ISLAND ALONE

The Isle of Wight is known colloquially as The Island by its residents. In the last few decades there has been an emotional debate about whether a bridge or a tunnel should connect the isle with [mainland](#) England. Most islanders, [deeply proud](#) of their local lifestyle and traditions, are completely uninterested in the idea. The Royal Island wants to [go it alone](#).

www.visitisleofwight.com

Glossary

- **smugglers** = contrabbandieri
- **cycleways** = piste ciclabili
- **seaside** = costiera, balneare
- **mainland** = terraferma
- **cliffs** = scogliere
- **dwellings** = insediamenti
- **railway network** = rete ferroviaria
- **led** = portare a
- **sailing** = navigare
- **sail** = vela
- **flying boats** = idrovolanti
- **attended** = assistere
- **flooded** = inondare
- **hosting** = ospitare
- **acts** = gruppi, artisti
- **deeply proud** = profondamente orgogliosi
- **cutting the future Isle of Wight off** = separare
- **breeds** = razze
- **shipwrecks** = relitti di navi
- **top cycling locations** = le migliori località ciclistiche
- **rose** = crescere
- **steam** = vapore
- **hovercraft** = aeroscafo
- **set up** = installare
- **go it alone** = andare per conto suo, farcela da so
- **remains** = resti
- **ultimate** = definitivo
- **English Channel** = canale della Manica
- **revenue** = reddito