

Manx for the memories



Picturesque ... a beautiful coastal scene on the Isle of Man

Go: Isle of Man

GETTING THERE: Flights with Aer Arann nationwide cost from £69.99, see aerarann.com.

STAYING THERE: Goldie's Loughan B&B is £30pppn (01624 897834 or goldiesloughan.co.uk).

Ghost tours: iomghosttours.com or call 07624 416824.

For details on all activities see visitisleofman.com.

By EMMA LITTLE

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THE bearded giant towered above the treetops by the mountain road, his wiry arms outstretched as if to scold bad drivers.

Although the TT riders had long departed the Isle of Man, I determinedly followed their route in a hired Ford Fiesta.

I took a tight corner at a snail's pace and was jolted by the sight of the 50ft man in the next field.

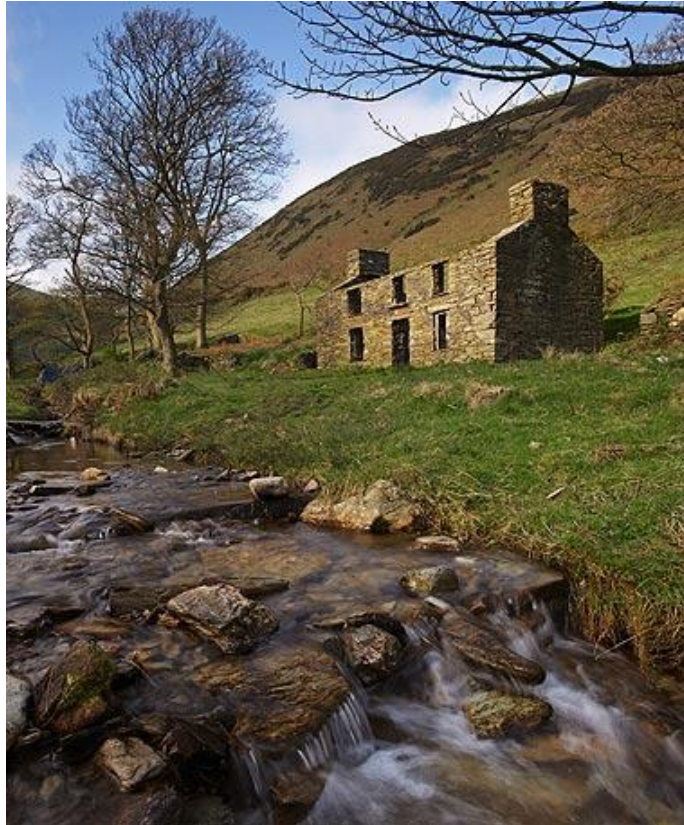
Terrified, I pulled over for a better look and realised he was made of wood.

He had been left behind after a New Age festival and a few yards farther on I passed one of his mates, a super-sized hag.

Sights like this were common throughout my stay in a place where myth, magic and the modern world meet.

The island still draws visitors from around the globe but you can tell locals a mile off.

They have a look of contentment that comes from living in such a beautiful haven.



Countryside ... you're never too far away from a stunning view

Many tourists stay in the capital Douglas, which is full of perfectly decent hotels and guest houses.

But part of Man's appeal is its compact size. No town or village is really much more than a 30-minute drive away.

Nestled in the unspoilt countryside for 160 years, Goldie's Loughan in Jurby East was once a traditional Manx cottage and has been extended to make a picturesque B&B.

Hosts Yvonne and Ross Marshall have created the most cosy and welcoming home.

Yvonne's cooked breakfasts or divine Manx kipper fillets served with local bread and butter will set you up for three whole days, let alone the morning ahead.

Goldie's is a decent drive from Peel, with its castle and striking sea views.

By day, the remains of the fortress and cathedral are a great place to explore, stopping off on the way up for "Queenies" from the seafood stall or an ice cream.



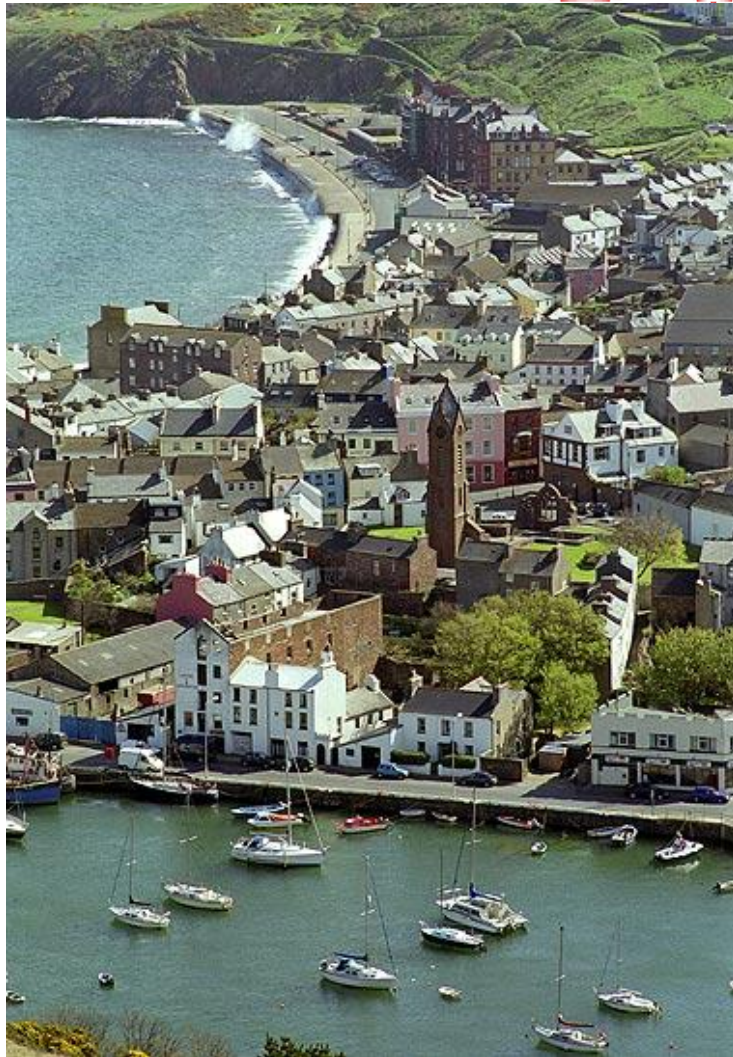
Full steam ahead ... a railway winds its way through wonderful countryside

The man serving us queen scallops had warned of spooky goings-on, grown men being "knocked down to the floor" by unseen presences.

There was an eerie air to many parts of the ruins and we both shuddered as we walked through.

When darkness begins to fall, the ruins are the scene of ghost tours. Groups of about 20 are taken up the castle stairs and into the enclosure.

Everyone is given crystals, dowsing rods or EMF detectors and allowed to roam freely searching for "paranormal activity". Expert ghost hunters provide guidance and spectral tales.



So a-Peeling ... Peel harbour is yet another attraction

No spirits introduced themselves to us - but the atmosphere was electric.

The House of Manannan museum sits near the quay and tells the story of Man from the Celts to the present day.

Just a short drive away lies Castle Rushen in Castletown, a magnificent sight which takes half a day to explore.

Douglas is famed for its shellfish, celebrated during our trip at the annual Food And Drink Festival at the grand Villa Marina, with visiting celebrity chef Gino D'Acampo.

The Isle Of Man Creamery and its chilli and cracked peppercorn cheddars have also scooped a handful of awards.

And the island's meat is famously flavourful.

When we had over-filled on the spectacular hog roast, we rested by taking a scenic trip on the Manx electric railway.

This incredible feat of engineering is still going strong after 100 years.



It creeps up to the top of Snaefell mountain, where you can view the "seven kingdoms" on a clear day.

The driver dutifully pointed them out: "There's Man, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England... and Neptune and Heaven."

I felt closer to the last place after just a few days on this enchanted isle.

Read more: <http://thesun.cluster.newsint.co.uk/sol/homepage/travel/3543127/Manx-for-the-memories.html#mySunComments#ixzz1MmdAVSws>