

Isle of Wight

Overview:

The Isle of Wight is a diamond-shaped island located in the English Channel, separated from the mainland by 4 km (the Solent channel). A part of England, it is a county unto itself, and elects one Member of Parliament to the British House of Commons.

Territory:

Land: 38 km (23 mi.) x 20 km (13 ½ mi.). Highest elevation 240 m (787 ft).

Location:

Located 6.4 km (4mi) off the South central coast of England, 2 hours from London.

Latitude and Longitude:

50 67 North Latitude and 1 31 West Longitude.

Time Zone:

GMT

Total Land Area:

381

EEZ:

Climate:

Mild winters, mild summers. Is sunniest location in Southern England, averaging 5 hours/day of sunshine, peaking with 8 hours/day in summer months. Average annual rainfall 30.39 inches (77.2 cm). Mean maximum temperature in July and August: 20.56 Centigrade/69 F; January and February 7.78 Centigrade/46 F.

Natural Resources:

The land, which attracts tourists and provides farmland.

ECONOMY:

Total GDP:	
1998	1,774,000,000.00 USD

Per Capita GDP:	
1998	13,834.00 USD

% of GDP per Sector:			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

% of Population Employed by Sector			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2001	1%	17.5%	81.5%

External Aid/Remittances:

Growth:

The island GDP grew an average of 1.5%/year between 1990 and 2000.

Labour Force:	
2003	58,000

Unemployment	
Year:	Unemployment Rate (% of pop.)
2001	3.2%
2003	2.7%
2002	3%

Industry:

Tourism (with approximately 2.5 million tourists visiting annually, is the source of approximately one-quarter of jobs and GDP), composites (specialist materials), associated technology, aviation, marine and electronics, horticulture.

Niche Industry:

Aircraft manufacturing, yachting. The island has a strong high-tech industry, centred on its history of aerospace manufacturing. Besides building aircrafts, such as the Britten-Norman line, there is a strong composites sector – GKN Aerospace is scheduled to open an Advanced Composites Facility, dedicated to designing and manufacturing technologies for large composite aerostructures, in March 2005. The island’s composite sector is also involved in other capacities, such as creating turbine blades for wind farms. High-tech firms are attracted to the island by its relatively low-wage economy, as well as assistance from the Isle of Wight Economic Partnership, whose services include the Innovation Centre, a “business incubator” which provides high-quality office space for new businesses, with easy access to expert advice and up-to-date research and technology aid. Another major draw for the island economy is the yachting industry. The Isle of Wight is an internationally recognized yachting centre, with the majority of activity occurring between April and October. The town of Cowes is home to the Royal Yacht Squadron, founded in 1815, as well as 5 other major yacht clubs. Cowes Week is considered to be the largest sailing regatta in the world, with over 8,000 participants and 200,000 visitors, as well as the oldest, having occurred annually since 1826, with notable aberrations occurring during the two world wars.

Tourism:

The Isle of Wight tourism sector, which drew a record high 2.7 million visitors in 1999, accounts for 1/4 of the island's GDP and employs a similar portion of the working population. It is widely recognized that the island's environment is a major draw – the top tourist site is the Needles Park, with its rugged rock formations on the coastline – thus there is considerable support for the many protective measures. The tourist industry is trying to recreate its image as a summer destination to that of a year-round resort. The seasonal nature of the industry has led to a transportation crisis, as the majority of tourists disregard public transit and clog the existing roadways, a problem aggravated by the concentrated peak season.

Imports and Exports:	
Tot. Value of Imports	0.00 ()
From Eu:	
Import Partners (EU:)	
Partners Outside EU:	
Import Partners:	
Tot. Value of Exports	()
To Eu:	
Export Partners:	
Partners Outside EU::	
Export Partners:	
Main Imports:	
Main Exports:	

TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS**External:****Number of Airports:**

No scheduled air services. There are two airports, both located on the eastern tip of the Isle of Wight. Sandown, which has a single grass runway, 884 x 40 m (2,900 x 131 ft), and Bembridge, which has two concrete runways, 837 x 23 m (2746 x 75 ft). Both airports operate charter flights and are home to a variety of resident businesses.

Number of Main Ports:

All goods and passengers arrive via ferry. Ferries travel from Lymington to Yarmouth, Southampton and Cowes, and Portsmouth to Fishbourne. Hovercraft transportation is provided from Southsea to Ryde and a passenger catamaran is available from Portsmouth to Ryde and Southampton to Cowes. The ferries take approximately 30-35 minutes to cross the Solent, the catamaran takes 15 minutes, and the hovercraft under 10 minutes.

Internal:**Air****Road:**

There are 489 miles of roads. In 2001 75.4% of households owned at least one car/van. Electric railway operates from Ryde Pier to Shanklin. Bus companies provide service across the island and to the mainland. Numerous taxi and tour companies exist.

Sea:**Other Forms of Transportation:****Economic Zones:****Energy Policy:**

Year	Total Energy Production (Mwh)	Type			Total Energy Consumption (Mwh)	Sector				
		Thermic (Mwh)	Geothermic (Mwh)	Other (Mwh)		Domestic (Mwh)	Commercial (Mwh)	Public Service (Mwh)	Industry (Mwh)	Public Lighting (Mwh)

Official Currency:

British pound

Banking and Insurance:

Number of Banks and Credit Unions:

Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:

Number of Insurance Companies:

Isle of Wight is fully integrated into Great Britain's banking system. There are 19 banking outlets and 1 credit union on the island. There is a wide assortment of local and international insurance brokerages.

Financial Services:

Isle of Wight is open to foreign investment.

Communications/E-Commerce:

Outward and open. Government and private web sites on economy and tourism extensive. Isle of Wight Council website is impressive, allowing one to apply for license, parking permits, reserve a microfiche reader for family history, request birth certificate, or even pay for Council services online. There are three radio stations, a weekly newspaper, the Isle of Wight County Press, and a local television station, Solent TV.

Public Ownership:

Many responsibilities, such as waste management, have been privatized on Isle of Wight. Government retains responsibility for such areas as local education, health care, and the justice system.

Land Use:

Freehold – private land, ownership transferable. One-half of the island (approximately 189 sq. km) is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which protects the land from development (see Important Legislation section for more information). The Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has 5 wildlife reserves on the island – Arreton Down, Eaglehead & Bloodstone Copses, St. Lawrence Bank, St. Lawrence Undercliff, Swanpond Copse – totalling 91.3 acres. The National Trust owns and manages 1 National Nature Reserve at Newton. It also manages 6 Local Nature Reserves – Afton Marsh, Rew Down, Sibden Hill, Batts Copse, Dodnor Creek, and Shide Chalk Pit. A seventh Local Nature Reserve – Alverstone Marsh LNR – is leased to the Wight Nature Fund by the Isle of Wight Council. There are approximately 40 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (that is, areas recognized for their national biological or geological interest) covering approximately 11% of the island. Some of this is private land, but large parts are owned by the National Trust, while others are owned by local conservation bodies. The Countryside Section of Isle of Wight Council directly manages 6 SSIs and is involved in managing others. Another 10% of the total island is designated Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation.

Agriculture/Forestry:

According to a 1991 census, 257.963 sq. km (99.6 sq. mi) of farmland is under cultivation. Self-sufficient in milk and vegetables; the majority of produce is sent to the British mainland.

Marine Activity:**Fishing:**

Maritime surroundings controlled by Britain.

Marine Life:**Critical Issues:**

Critical issues: Widespread shortage of skilled workforce, aging population, below average school performance results, seasonal nature of many jobs. Critical needs: Improved roadways to handle mass influx of summer visitors via automobile.

JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES**Capital:**

The administrative centre/county capital is Newport.

Political System:

Part of Great Britain's parliamentary democracy. The Isle of Wight elects 1 seat in Great Britain's 659-seat Parliament. Isle of Wight Council created in 1995 as a unitary authority responsible for local government activities, replacing the former Isle of Wight County Council and the two borough councils of Medina and South Wight. Composed of 48 seats. If over one-half of Councillors belong to a given party (or alliance), their leader or nominated representative is Leader of Council; if there is no majority a 'hung council' is declared, and the Leader is usually nominated by the party with the most elected Councillors. Councillors are responsible for ensuring Council's services meet the islanders' needs, which they accomplish by establishing policies and strategies. The full Council meets once a month at the Council Chamber at County Hall in Newport. Council is responsible for education, social care, housing, highways, coastal protection, leisure, waste collection and disposal, fire and rescue. The Isle of Wight Council is not responsible for health care or police services. In addition, there are 27 town and parish councils with limited powers. Supreme Court: The Isle of Wight does not have an independent court system.

Political Parties:

Currently governed by Island First, an alliance of Liberal Democrats and Independents. Also represented in Council are Conservative and Labour candidates. Elections: Councillors are elected every four years by universal adult suffrage.

Important Legislation:

Act to confirm a Provisional Order of the Local Government Board relating to the Isle of Wight, 26 August 1889. Established the administrative County of Isle of Wight, separate from Southampton. Isle of Wight Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Designation) Order, 1963. Created Isle of Wight AONB, which covers approximately 189 sq. km, or one-half of the island. Composed of 5 parcels of land. AONB conserve and enhance natural beauty and heritage throughout England and Wales (there are 41 in total) in areas that do not fit National Park's recreational purpose. AONB legislation is a constraint to development and public body operations and policy within these areas, and is a lever for additional funding from the exchequer via a number of funding streams to assist in the conservation, enhancement, and management of these areas. Local Government Act, 1972. Reaffirmed Isle of Wight's status as a separate administrative county. Was preceded by considerable lobbying, after it was learned that this status would, in all likelihood, be lost.

Principal Taxes:**Associated Power:**

Great Britain, a county (unitary authority) of

Citizenship:

British

Paradiplomacy:

Treaties: Handled by Great Britain.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
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Population (by age): <16: 24,149; 16-74: 93,393; >74: 15,189; (2001).

Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
2001	24,149	0	0	0	15,189

Migration:

Crude Birth Rate:	
1999	8.9%



Life Expectancy:

Crude Death Rate:	
1999	14.1%

Ethnicity:**Class Division:****Languages:**

English

Religion:

(Census 2001): Christian (73.7%), Buddhist (0.2%), no religion (17.3%).

Literacy:

According to a 2003 survey conducted by the Learning and Skills Council for Hampshire and Isle of Wight, 9.3% of respondents listed their reading skills as low or basic.

Education System:

School attendance is mandatory for students between the ages of 5 and 16. The Isle of Wight is a Local Education Authority of the United Kingdom. It follows the National Curriculum, but has the power to adapt it according to local needs/interests. There are 69 schools maintained on the Isle of Wight. There are 46 primary schools (ages 5-9), 16 middle schools (9-13), 5 secondary (high) schools (13+), and 2 special schools. A recent study indicates that in 2002 77.3% of year 11 "leavers" continued their education. The only local post-secondary educational institute is the Isle of Wight College located in Newport. Offers a variety of professional skills training programs, including Beauty and Holistics, Childcare, and Engineering, Composites (course designed in conjunction with local companies to help alleviate labour shortage in this area), and Electronics. The Isle of Wight College is not funded by the Local Education Authority.

Total Pre-schools:(2002)	
Total Primary Schools	
First Level:	46
Second Level:	16
Third Level:	2
Total Secondary Schools:	5
Total Professional Schools	1
Universities:	

Number of Schools per Island:

	Pre-school		Elementary			High-school		Prof.	University	
	Pub	Priv	1	2	3	Pub	Priv		Pub	Priv

Students Enrolled:

Year:	Pre-School	Elementary	High-school	Prof.	University

Teachers

Year	Pre-School	Elementary			High-School	Prof.	University
		1	2	3			

Medical Services:

Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Trust is the sole provider of healthcare on the island. Provides acute, community, mental health and learning disabilities, and ambulance services to the Isle of Wight. The district general hospital is St. Mary's Hospital, with 499 beds (including mental health and rehabilitation). Located in Newport, it provides general services, surgeries, and specialist services in urology, orthopaedics, cardiology, gastroenterology, rheumatology, maternity and paediatrics. Additional services are provided by visiting consultants from the mainland. There are 26 General Practitioner clinics located throughout the island.

HISTORY AND CULTURE**History:**

The Isle of Wight was conquered by the Romans, under Vespasian, in 43 AD. During the Roman occupation of Britain it was known as the Island of Vectis, a name that fell out of use and was replaced by the current name in the 5th century AD. Given the lack of fortifications from this period it is suspected that the Romans peacefully co-existed with the island's agriculturally minded inhabitants. The Saxon chief Cerdic established the kingdom of Wessex in 495; shortly thereafter he conquered the Isle of Wight, and upon slaying much of its population, repopulated it with Jutes and Saxons. The island switched hands a few times over the next 200 years before Caedwalla, a descendent of Cerdic, took possession of the island in 686. Since the Isle of Wight was the last part of England to Christianize, Caedwalla intended to repopulate the island with Christians. Residents who accepted the faith were permitted to stay, while all others were rooted out. Beginning in 787 and lasting for the next two centuries, the Isle of Wight was raided numerous by Danish pirates who sought to use the island as a post-raid hideaway. William the Conqueror took control of England in 1066. William granted lordship over the Isle of Wight to his relative William FitzOsbern. In 1101 the title of lordship passed on to the De Redvers, who maintained this until Countess Isabella de Fortibus sold the island to Edward I for 6,000 marks in 1293. During the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) fought between England and France the Isle of Wight was pillaged several times, most notably in 1377 when the French plundered its northern towns and lay siege to Carisbrooke Castle. In the late-1880s the British government proposed sweeping reform of local governments through the creation of local councils, as articulated in the Local Government Bill of 1888. The Isle of Wight was initially slated to be included within the County of Southampton, raising fears among locals

that their concerns and interests would be buried beneath those of their mainland counterparts. A fierce lobbying campaign commenced, and the island residents prevailed in 1890 when the island was designated its own county, granting a degree of local autonomy. There were fears in the early 1970s that the Isle of Wight would lose its status as a county, but a renewed lobbying effort managed to retain the status quo, cemented in the Local Government Act 1972.

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Recent Significant Events:

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

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