

## FACTFILE

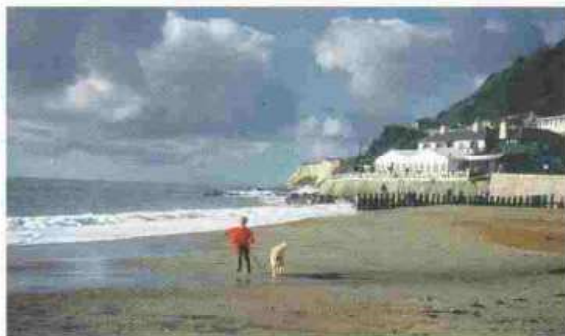


### The cost

We travelled with Wightlink, 0871 376 1000 or see [www.wightlink.co.uk](http://www.wightlink.co.uk) and stayed in Tuppence Cottage in Shalfleet, pictured, 01983 531204 or see [www.calbourneclassics.co.uk/holidays.php](http://www.calbourneclassics.co.uk/holidays.php). A one-week, self-catering break at Tuppence Cottage costs from £140 per person, based on four sharing, including return Wightlink car ferry crossings from Portsmouth or Lymington. Prices for a five-day return ticket are from £55 for a car and up to four passengers. For family self-catering breaks, Wightlink also recommends Niton Barns, one week from £145pp, Mersley Farm, one week from £78pp, and Gotten Manor, one week from £88pp. Prices are based on four sharing and include return Wightlink car ferry crossings. Two nights' B&B at The Brunswick from £90pp and The Seaview, two nights' B&B from £150pp. Prices are based on a family of four sharing and include return Wightlink ferry crossings.

### Where to go

For details on Blackgang Chine ring 01983 730052 or see [www.blackgangchine.com](http://www.blackgangchine.com), open March to October 10am to 5pm daily but with some seasonal variations. Robin Hill Countryside Adventure Park, ring 01983 527352 or see [www.robin-hill.com](http://www.robin-hill.com), is open March to October 10am to 5pm daily but with some seasonal variations. For Carisbrooke Castle, call 01983 522107 or see [www.english-heritage.org.uk/carisbrookecastle](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/carisbrookecastle) Adults £6.70, children £3.40, family £16.80. For Osborne House ring 01983 200022 or see [www.english-heritage.org.uk/osbornehouse](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/osbornehouse) Adults £10.20, children £5.10, family £25.50.



● The beach at Ventnor, Isle of Wight

# RED, WIGHT AND BLUE

The Isle of Wight is just 23 miles by 13 but there's a lifetime of fun to be had. And with more of us holidaying in England, Helen Geraghty rediscovers the tiny isle with the motto 'All This Beauty is of God'.

**A**s we rise, creaking, skywards on the well-used rollercoaster at Blackgang Chine, on the Isle of Wight's south coast, there is not a cloud to be seen. The sky and sea are brightest blue.

If you dare keep your eyes open as you near the top, you can see along the long, low exposed "shipwreck coast" as far as the Needles, the three pinnacles of chalk, 100 feet high on the island's westernmost tip.

The thinnest pinnacle, Lot's Wife, tumbled into the sea in 1764 and what remains look more like teeth than needles but the name stuck.

Then, with a great juddering and screaming, it's torn from view as we round the top corner of the rollercoaster and plummet back down.

Today's teenagers, hardened to attractions like Saw at Thorpe Park might turn up their noses at funny old Blackgang Chine, but I remember visiting it 38 years ago, with its old 'Crooked House' and the 'Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe'. They are all still there, a little tatty around the edges, but my daughters Rebecca, nine, and Tiffany, seven, love clambering around them as much today as I did then. 'Eccentric' doesn't even begin to tell the tale of Blackgang Chine. Where else can you hang over a bridge above a little stream while fairy flute music plays, see tiny working water mills and a collection of 'interesting' chimney pots, side by side with a haunted house, and snakes and ladders slides built into the cliff?

The whole thing is set within Victorian shrubberies and is a testament to all those wonderful members of the Dabell family who have operated a tourist attraction here since 1842. They must have woken up each morning and thought "what shall we build today?".

We'd left Kent at 6am to board a 9am Wightlink car ferry from Portsmouth and by 10.15, we were driving up the shingle drive of Tuppence Cottage, our self-

catering accommodation at Shalfleet, on a creek leading to the Solent.

This newly-built detached house, with three double bedrooms, two bathrooms and a downstairs loo is the baby of dairy farmer turned businesswoman Jill Cawood, originally from Brands Hatch, who settled at Three Gates Farm, Shalfleet, 30 years ago. Her Calbourne Classics food brand ranges from ice cream made with milk from her own cows to leek, bacon and walnut quiches. All are available at the shop at her farm, where you can also see the calves.

The visitors' book at the cottage pays testament to the standard of the produce and Jill always makes sure that the fridge has plenty of homemade treats waiting for new arrivals. Ours include a lemon drizzle cake, yogurt, muesli and flapjack, all produced at the farm.

The house is beautifully clean, spacious and warm, like living in a showhome, there's a huge television and DVD player, a dishwasher and a washing

machine and tumble dryer. The hot water never runs out. From Tuppence Cottage it is just 142 paces to the award-winning New Inn, built at the head of an old fishing creek, easily one of the best pubs on the island. Starters here include hot garlic shell-on prawns with crusty bread at £5.95. For main courses, a whole lobster is £31.95 and a crab £14.95. I settled for the fillet of local seabass with wilted spinach and white wine cream sauce at £14.95 and despite the pub being on the classy side they easily rummaged up some plain mash for the kids to have with sausages, rather than the advertised garlic mash.

Desserts include a creme brulee made with locally grown lavender, but I went for apple and cinnamon crumble with custard, which was enormous.

Oddly, it was 170 paces on the way home.

The creek at Shalfleet is a National Trust-run nature

Blondie, Pink, Jay-Z and The Strokes are due to appear in this year's Isle of Wight Festival from June 10 to 13. Wightlink is offering ticket and travel packages. [www.wightlink.co.uk](http://www.wightlink.co.uk)