

Enjoy the ride!

Electric Railways, be sure to pay a visit to the website [www.rail.im](http://www.rail.im).

If this journey whets your appetite to find out more about the Manx by an open car pulling an open trailer.

However, on warm days in the summer months, services may be operated by a closed motor car pulling an open trailer.

Most services are operated by a closed motor car pulling an open trailer. However, on warm days in the summer months, services may be operated by an open car pulling an open trailer.

Hand signal to the driver and stand clear of the rails.

want to board a tram at one of the intermediate halts, please give a clear the conductor, when you board, which stop you want to get off at. If you it is not possible to include each and every one by name. Remember to tell There are 69 halts along the way. While we will highlight the main stops, journey by pointing out some of the things to look for along the route.

We hope this Window Gazer Guide will add to your enjoyment of your The Manx Electric Railway was built between 1893 and 1899 and connects the Manx capital, Douglas, with Laxey in the east and onto Ramsey in the north. The 17.5-mile railway journey takes 75 minutes and will take you along some of the most scenic stretches of railway in the British Isles.

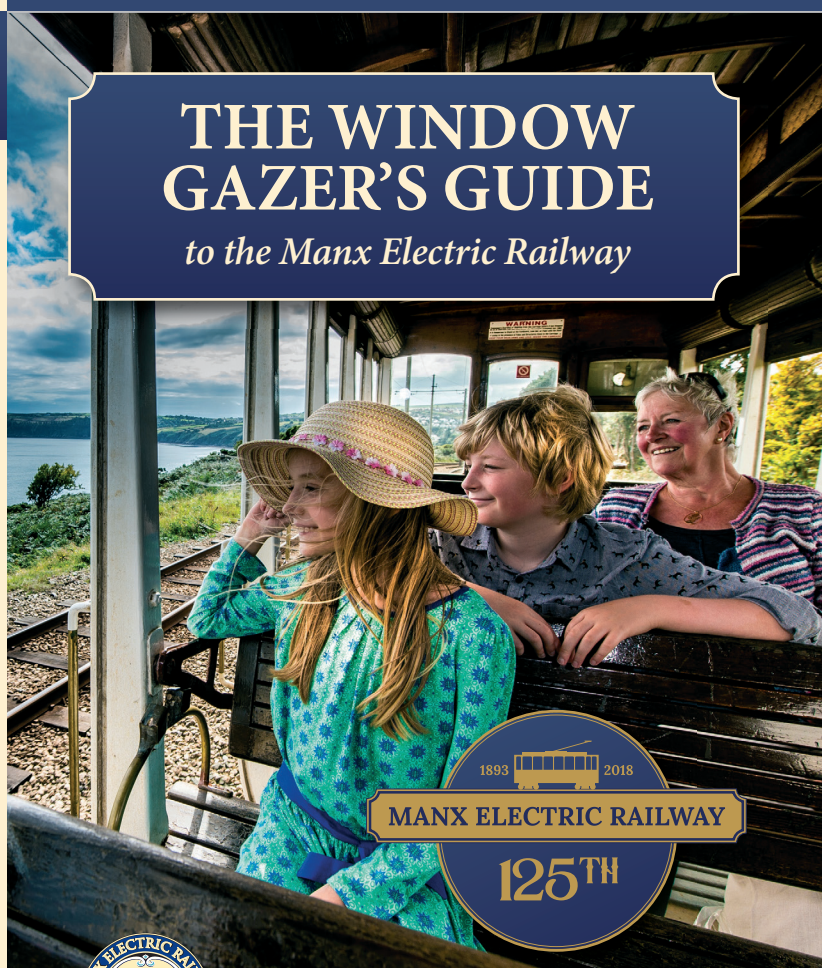
On one side you'll experience the beautiful Manx countryside, glens and picturesque villages and on the other you'll enjoy stunning views reaching out to sea.

The MER also links up with the Snaefell Mountain Railway at Laxey, while if you are alighting at Douglas, during the summer months you can take the horse tram along to the other end of the promenade.

You are embarking on an unforgettable journey along the east coast of the Isle of Man, with views that cannot be seen from anywhere else.

## Welcome aboard the Manx Electric Railway, which celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2018

# THE WINDOW GAZER'S GUIDE to the Manx Electric Railway



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## Trams in service

The Manx Electric Railway operates a number of different types of tram of both the closed and open varieties.

**Cars 1 and 2:** Built in 1893 for the MER opening. According to the Guinness Book of Records, they are the world's oldest electric trams still in continuous operation on their original line.

**Cars 5, 6, 7 & 9:** Built in 1894 by G. F. Milnes of Birkenhead. Known as Tunnel Cars due to their long narrow interior. Car 7 carries the line's original Prussian blue and ivory livery. Car 9 carries exterior illuminations for special night-time use.

**Car 14:** One of five open, crossbench cars built in 1898 by G. F. Milnes. Returned to service in 2018 following a three-year restoration. It is known as a 'ratchet', due to its traditional handbrakes; all other MER trams have air brakes. Only used in special events.

**Car 16:** A sister to Car 14, was re-equipped with new bogies in 1903. Known as a Paddlebox, as the stepped running boards resembled the coverings on boxes covering the paddles on early steam boats.

**Cars 19, 20, 21 & 22:** Built in 1899 by G. F. Milnes for year-round service. Known as Winter Saloons and in regular daily use. Car 19 carries the Douglas Laxey and Ramsey Electric Tramway livery of 1899; Car 20 has 1970s MER livery and Car 21 the green and white livery in which several of the trams were repainted following nationalisation of the MER in 1957.

**Cars 32 & 33:** Open, crossbench cars built in 1906 by the United Electric Car Company of Preston. The newest and most powerful trams in the MER fleet. Car 32 carries the 'nationalisation' green and white livery.

Most MER services consist of a tram hauling one of the different types of open crossbench trailer. There are also four closed saloon trailers including number 56, which can carry a number of wheelchair passengers, and number 59, the elaborate former director's saloon, which became known as the Royal Saloon after King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra travelled in it in 1902.

## GROUDLE GLEN

**Groudle Glen**, with its large wooded waiting shelter, was the original 1893 terminus of the MER. It is the stop for anyone wishing to walk through the beautiful glen – past the waterwheel and bandstand – and down to Groudle beach. It also serves as an interchange for Groudle Glen Railway, a volunteer-run railway that operates in the summer months from Lhen Coan out to Sea Lion Rocks, which has a cliff-top café and spectacular sea views. You can find out more about this railway and its timetable at [www.ggr.org.uk](http://www.ggr.org.uk)

As you begin your ascent up towards Port Jack, you will pass the tram car sheds and under the landmark 'Electric Railway' sign that can be seen across Douglas bay. Port Jack is also within walking distance of Onchan Park and the picturesque Port Jack Glen. The route takes you alongside King Edward Road into the residential area of Onchan Head offering great views out to sea and some glimpses of the Groudle Bay. As you round Howstrake, you will pass a stone shelter that used to serve the former Howstrake Holiday Camp. There is a stop by Groudle Old Road, convenient for reaching Groudle holiday cottages, which are between the bottom of Groudle Glen and a small shingle bay. The MER line then moves on to the next major stop.

**Derby Castle** at the northern end of the promenade is the start point of your journey if you are setting out from Douglas. The station is named after the former entertainment complex that used to occupy the site north of the station. The MER opened in 1893 under the banner of the Isle of Man Tramways and Electric Power Company Ltd, operating as the 'Douglas and Laxey Coast Electric Tramway'. The rustic ticket office, built in 1899, is one of the oldest buildings on the railway. In summer, you may choose to arrive using the horse trams, which travel along the length of the promenade from the Sea Terminal. The MER terminus is easy to find, with the Terminus Tavern nearby.

As we leave Groudle, the line turns to the right, along the sharpest curve of the railway to cross the glen on a stone viaduct. The river, 70 feet below, is hidden by the ancient trees.

We soon cross over the main Douglas to Laxey Road, one of three level crossings controlled by electric lights which are automatically switched on and off by the tram. Our journey takes us into the next significant stop.

# Map of line and places to visit

## BALDRINE

**Baldrine** serves the village of the same name. Its corrugated iron shelter is decorated with hanging baskets and tubs, tended by the community, and is one of the busier rural stops along the route. The route continues through the village and heads to Garwick Glen, once one of the busiest stops on the route, serving the nearby pleasure gardens. Sadly, both station and gardens are now closed. After crossing the main road once again, the line descends towards Laxey, with stunning views across Laxey Bay.

## SOUTH CAPE

**South Cape** serves Old Laxey and is the best stop if you want to explore the harbour and beach, with a number of cafes in the area. From here, we head into the main part of the village. There is a stop at Laxey Car Shed, which contains some of the MER's stored tram cars and its permanent way fleet. Immediately to the left is the old Laxey substation and its recent replacement which is the main source of electrical power for the MER and Snaefell Mountain Railway. The line turns to the right and crosses the valley on the Glen Roy Viaduct. This structure built in 1898 with its four arches and stonework capped with red brickwork, is the most impressive viaduct on the Isle of Man.

## LAXEY

**Laxey Station** is one of the busiest points on the network and a popular location for visitors. The station is also the interchange for the Snaefell Mountain Railway, which takes you to the summit of the Island's highest peak, Snaefell (2036 feet), offering spectacular views as it does. From the top you can see the five kingdoms of England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Mann. And you can refresh yourself in the Summit Café, which also hosts a number of events through the year. There is a section on the Mountain Railway at [www.rail.im](http://www.rail.im)

The station also has a building housing a booking office for both Manx Electric Railway and Snaefell Mountain Railway trips, along with a small cafe and toilets.

The world-famous Laxey Wheel (Lady Isabella) can be seen a little way up the valley. It has a diameter of 72 feet 6 inches and is the largest waterwheel in the world. It once pumped water from the Great Laxey Mine. The nearby Valley Gardens was once the Washing Floors for the mine where hundreds of men, women and boys once toiled, preparing the lead and zinc ore for sale. The former Snaefell mine waterwheel, named Lady Evelyn and which has a diameter of 50 feet, has recently been restored at the Valley Gardens. Information boards around the area recall the history of mining in Laxey.

The Valley Gardens are also the starting point for the restored Great Laxey Mine Railway, which operates on Saturdays through the summer. The railway was once used to carry lead and zinc ores from the mine further up the valley. You can find out more at [www.laxeyminerrailway.im](http://www.laxeyminerrailway.im)

As we leave Laxey village, the tram begins the longest continuous climb on the railway, heading upwards through farmland towards the cliffs at Bulgham. We cross the Minorca viaduct, with more views back to Laxey beach below. Sometimes trams can be seen on the opposite side of the valley at South Cape. At Ballaragh, there is a brief glimpse of Maughold Lighthouse on the rugged coastline to the north. Keep an eye out for wild goats who roam the area, and sometimes pay visits to the gardens of some home-owners!

The line now runs around the cliff tops of Bulgham Bay, with spectacular views across the Irish Sea and of the waves breaking onto the rugged coastline far below. The route turns to the left at Summit Corner, the highest point on the railway, 588 feet above sea level, before heading inland.

## DHOON GLEN

**Dhoon Glen** is the next main stop and shares its name with the glen below. The beautiful spot is a favourite for walkers, containing a waterfall and old mine workings. The glen leads down to the pebble beach below. During the summer a café is open at this station.

As we continue through the parish of Maughold there are dramatic views of the hills above, including the mighty North Barrule. Dhoon Quarry is now a storage area for the MER's permanent way department but was once extremely busy transporting stone from the two nearby quarries.

## GLEN MONA

**Glen Mona** serves the village of the same name. The tram briefly climbs uphill and then descends through the deep Ballagorry cutting, passing beneath the only overbridge on the line. To the left there is a brief glimpse of the former Ballaglass power station, now a private house, which once generated the electrical power for the Laxey to Ramsey section of the line.

## BALLAGLASS

**Ballaglass** serves another beautiful glen, which in spring is carpeted throughout with bluebells. The shelter has a gate to prevent sheep from becoming trapped inside! There are numerous walks in this area and you can follow the Cornaa river as it makes its way down towards the coast and visit the fish hatchery where salmon and trout are bred to stock the Island's rivers and reservoirs.



From Cornaa, the line climbs towards Ballaskeig where the sea once again comes into view. On a clear day the Cumbrian Coast and the mountains of the Lake District can be seen. Maughold Lighthouse is on the rugged headland across the waters of Port Moorar Bay.

## BALLAJORA

**Ballajora** is the most convenient stop for walkers to explore the Maughold area and the parish church with its ancient Celtic crosses. A footpath leads around the headland and it is possible to re-join a later tram at a stop further along the line. Ballajora halt also has its own post box, once emptied by MER conductors! We pass near the old Ballajora/Dreemskerry quarry before the line descends the longest continuous stretch of straight line on the railway, 1.25 miles long.

## LEWAIGUE

**Lewaigue** serves the popular Maughold Venture Centre. We then travel past the hamlet of Port-e-Vullen, which has stunning views across Ramsey Bay. On clear days, the coast of southern Scotland can be seen to the north. Queen's Pier, which volunteers aim to restore to its former glory, comes into view. Built in 1886, it is 2241 feet long and the sixth longest pier in the British Isles.

The line takes us across the Ballure Viaduct and to the edge of Ramsey itself. Queen's Drive is the nearest stop for Queen's Pier, before reaching our final destination.

## RAMSEY

**Ramsey Station** was formerly known as Ramsey (Plaza) Station, after a nearby cinema, which was demolished some time ago. Ramsey itself is home to many attractions, including Mooragh Park and boating lake, the vast seafront and beach, a bowling alley, a popular main shopping area and town centre, plus the Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve and, on its outskirts, the Grove Museum of Victorian Life and the historic Milntown House and its gardens.

We hope you have enjoyed your journey on the Manx Electric Railway. There are many places of interest along the route. You can find out about all of the Isle of Man's heritage railways at [www.rail.im](http://www.rail.im) and there is also a mine of information about the MER at [www.manxelectricrailway.co.uk](http://www.manxelectricrailway.co.uk) a website run by enthusiasts and experts who are dedicated to supporting the railway.