

# Join the girls in the Channel Islands



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## Celebrity Suitcase

### Rory Underwood

The former England and British Lions rugby legend, record England try scorer and Royal Air Force pilot shares his packing and travelling tips

Rory Underwood is probably best known for his international rugby career. Not only for scoring a record 49 tries for England (85 caps, 1984 -1996) but also for winning six caps for the British Lions touring Australia (1989) and New Zealand (1993). Additionally, Rory played first class rugby at Leicester Tigers for 14 years and is now on the club's board as a non-executive director. In 1992 he was awarded the MBE for his services to rugby.

Throughout this record-breaking rugby career Rory amassed 18 years flying as a pilot in the Royal Air Force. He was responsible for introducing Crew Resources Management (CRM) training into the RAF, thereby developing a culture where personnel look at how teamwork and decision making is affected in time limited stressful situations.

Rory's specific interest and expertise in the areas of effective communication and high performance leadership within teams resulted in the creation of his company 'Wingman Performance Consultants'. His experience and insight gained through his rugby and RAF career has allowed him to bring a different perspective into the performance of teams.

Rory, who has visited the Channel Islands many times on business and in his role as a former rugby player, was in the island recently to lead a High Performance Team Workshop for the Guernsey Training Agency.

"I have come over to the Channel Islands with the England rugby team in the past and for Wooden Spoon and Lord's Taverners dinners. I got to know Jon Ravenscroft at Cenkos through my Leicester Tigers connections and things developed from there," explained Rory. "I like the Channel Islands. Most of the time I come here the weather is fantastic and the last two days have been excellent."

In addition to his rugby career, Rory spent 18 years with the RAF, where he enjoyed piloting a variety of aircraft from the Hawk to Tornado and Canberra. Unlike his brother and former England player Tony, who flies commercial jets now, Rory no longer flies.

"My love was low level flying at 420 knots, which is approximately 500 mph, at 250ft or 80m off the ground – that was my bread and butter, so to now fly a Cessna would be like going from a Formula One car to a Hackney cab," he explained. "I miss the challenge and excitement of low level flying but for me flying is now more functional, plus it's pretty expensive to fly a private aircraft."

So with such a varied background, we asked Rory what sort of traveller he makes...

#### What's in your hand luggage?

It's quite business based, so a laptop and my Blackberry and I tend to pick up the Telegraph. If I'm travelling for pleasure I like to have a book with me. As I have got older I've really enjoyed history books – I'm reading about Pol Pot at the moment and I really enjoyed A Short History of Nearly Everything by Bill Bryson - I like his writing style.

#### What is your favourite destination? Is there anywhere you would like to visit that you haven't?

As a family we go to Spain quite a lot and, of course, I like the Channel Islands. I come from Malaysia so I like to go back there. Now my daughters are aged 19 and 20, my wife and I will be travelling a bit more on our own so we are looking forward to the opportunity to do something new and go to other places. I'd really like to go to the Maldives and stay in one of the villas over the water.

#### What is the most unusual destination you have ever flown to?

I have actually flown myself into Nice Airport in an RAF Canberra having come down through the Alps onto the runway between all these big jets. I also once had to land in a place in Turkey right in the middle of all these cranes that were all over the place – so that was interesting!

#### Are you a last minute packer? Have you ever forgotten something important?

Yes, I do tend to pack at the last minute and I have once forgotten my passport. I was going to catch the Eurostar to Paris and, it being a train, I completely forgot about my passport. I had to get a train back to Peterborough and meet my wife with the passport and catch a later Eurostar. To be honest you really only need your passport and your wallet when travelling these days.

#### Are there any flights that stick in your mind?

I have a clear image of a flight in the early 90's when we were doing missions in Scotland. It was 8am, the sky was clear and five minutes after taking off from Lossiemouth I was flying at low level down a massive valley. The loch was mirror clear so I could see my reflection and that of the waterfalls and trees. Because it was autumn they were all browns and yellows and purples. I was flying at 420 knots and I remember saying to myself "I cannot believe I'm being paid to do this!" It epitomises everything I enjoyed about low-level flying and what I miss about it. ■

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