



Everybody's free to feel fine

A holiday in Jersey leaves **Antonia Windsor** liberated – having been helped along by artisan gin, good food, jazz and a meeting with dolphins

Cristian Benta indicates the exquisitely presented gin flight before us. “These are the botanicals and the tonics we recommend to enhance the flavours of each gin,” he says.

Six apothecary’s bottles with handwritten labels stand in front of little bundles of ingredients: chilli and coriander for Martin Miller’s gin, slices of crisp green apple for the saffron gin, and blackberries and basil for Elephant gin. Behind are six bottles of tonic.

“We think the lightness of the low-calorie tonic works well with Williams Elegant gin, which has apple and elderflower notes,” explains Cristian. “And the cucumber and watermelon tonic helps to enhance the saffron.”

We are in a members’ club decorated in the industrial-chic aesthetic – plenty of exposed bricks, tungsten bulbs and copper leaf on blue-painted walls. But we are not in Soho; we are in St Helier, the capital of Jersey, and this is Project 52, a public bar run by 52 member partners.

It’s certainly a surprising find. As we had walked down narrow, cobbled Waterloo Lane passing the kitchen doors of neighbouring restaurants, it had seemed increasingly unlikely that we would find the island’s latest concept in hospitality. We had stopped outside a door displaying a taverner’s licence and the simple



sign: “Bar open”. We had hesitated. Then the door had swung open and a friendly woman said: “You must be looking for a drink. Come in.”

It feels clandestine, as though we are seeking out gin in Prohibition-era New York, and helps to put us in a decadent mood, which we need in order to work our way through six unique gin and tonics before dinner. The celebratory atmosphere in Project 52 puts us in a jubilant frame of mind and we continue our evening with dinner at Roberto’s Jazz Bar in The Savoy Jersey. Plates of delicious Jersey plaice with pea puree are eaten to the sounds of Jersey’s best jazz

Good life
Swim, paddle or simply sunbathe in the shelter of St Brelade’s Bay

musicians playing Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis.

Next morning I wake first and step out on to our balcony at St Brelade’s Bay Hotel. The entire bay is laid out in front of me, palm trees and lawn meeting vanilla-coloured sand. The sea is still and blue and the sun is already warming the beach. My husband obviously wants to remain with his dreams of gin and jazz, so I head down for a swim in the sea. The water is bracing and invigorating and I return to the hotel energised and ready for an adventure.

“Shall we try something different today?” I say to my husband over our

lavish buffet breakfast. Yesterday we had hired bikes and cycled past a sign at La Haule advertising jet-ski tours. “Fancy trying a jet ski?”

When we get down to the Jersey Sea Sport Centre, we are in luck – they have a jet-ski tour scheduled, although they tell us it’s usually best to book in advance. We could have just hired a jet ski to take out into the bay for half an hour, but the tour will take us from St Aubin’s Bay all the way round Noirmont Point, past Portelet and St Brelade’s Bay to Corbière at the western tip of the island – and back again. I’m a little nervous to be at the helm of such a powerful machine but

we get a thorough briefing (the company is the only one in Europe to allow 12-year-olds on their own because it is so well supervised).

It is so exhilarating to be bobbing along on the water with the sea spray in my hair, passing interesting rock formations and getting a unique perspective on the coastline. Geoff, our leader, signals for us to turn off the gas and points ahead. Suddenly the fins of two dolphins emerge about 100 yards in front of us. They are playing in the water, as are we. And in that moment I feel as alive and free as these beautiful creatures with which we are sharing the sea.



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