



A shore thing

With 48 miles of coastline, you could spend an entire weekend exploring different Jersey beaches and still not see them all. Antonia Windsor has the pick of the ones you really shouldn't miss

FROM craggy coves to sweeps of sand, each of Jersey's beaches has its own personality, often brought to life by a colourful cafe selling crab sandwiches, a looming tower left over from the Normans or sand tinged pink by the granite rocks. Head north for small fishing harbours framed by flower-strewn cliffs, west for wild waves, south for soft sand and east for dramatic low tides—but make sure you visit these five favourites.

Best for the morning sun

The large sandy expanse of Grouville Bay, in the east of the island, is best enjoyed at the beginning of the day, when the sun beats down on the majestic Mont Orgueil castle and bounces off the bobbing boats in the harbour to the north. The shallow water is good for paddling tots and, when they tire of tickling their toes, they can climb and swing in the seafront playground. The child-free might consider a round of golf at Royal Jersey Golf Club (www.royaljersey.com), which edges the sand.

There are two vans, evenly spaced along the beach, for a bacon roll or crab sandwich and if you get bored of lying on the powdery-soft sand, you can book waterskiing, wakeboarding or a speedboat trip from the concession on the beach. This is one of Jersey's most accessible beaches and you can book a free, specially designed wheelchair from Beachability (www.beachability.org). The No 1 bus from St Helier stops at the beach car park or further along at Gorey Harbour.

Guernsey's best beaches

With 27 beautiful beaches ranging from secluded coves to vast sandy bays, you'll have plenty to explore before you find your favourite. Cobo, Pembroke and Port Soif are particularly popular with families, who enjoy the soft sand, swimming at high tide or exploring the rock pools when the sea retreats. Each has nearby kiosks to enjoy lunch and light refreshments

For a slightly less sandy day by the sea, Les Amarreurs is a scenic beach with

a small jetty, located at the western end of L'Ancrese Common. This working fisherman's bay is home to colourful boats and a children's playground

Vazon Bay, Guernsey's largest beach, is popular for kayaking, kite and windsurfing, as well as being the home of the Guernsey Surf School

For ultimate social distancing, pay a visit to Le Jaonnet, a small cove with difficult access; Petit Port, at the bottom of 270 steps; or Baie de Port Grat, situated on the quiet north coast

Grouville Bay



Best for all-day fun

St Brelade's Bay, in the west of the island, is Jersey's prime pleasure beach. The boardwalk, lined with an attractive green railing, is packed with bars, restaurants, shops and hotels. The sand is dotted with deckchairs and speedboats traverse the bay, dragging waterskiers or banana boats. You'll feel safe in the water, with lifeguards on constant watch in the summer. At the corner of the bay is a picturesque little church, which is well worth poking your nose into (the Surrealist artists Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore lived nearby and are both buried here).

Best for watching the sun set

Five miles of glorious golden sand define Jersey's west coast at St Ouen's Bay. This has been a surfer's Mecca since the 1960s, thanks to the large Atlantic breakers, and the Watersplash bar, midway along the bay, hosted the British Surfing Championships in 1966. You can book surf lessons, hire a body board or even try your hand at kitesurfing. Or join the locals and head here, with a paper-wrapped bundle of fish and chips in hand, to watch the sun set dramatically over the ocean.



St Ouen's Bay



Beauport

Best for social distancing

The quietest beaches are always those that are the hardest to reach, but Beauport, in the sunny south of the island, will reward you for your effort. Once you have clambered down the many steps and traversed the sometimes slippery pebbles, you will be greeted with a golden curve of sand and your very own desert-island experience, where the shallow turquoise water is a joy to swim in. The only other people you will find will probably have also read this issue of COUNTRY LIFE. If you are coming by bus, you will have to walk along the cliffs from St Brelade's Bay.

Best for exploring by moonlight

Jersey has one of the largest tidal ranges in the world, which means that, twice a day, the sea almost completely vanishes from some beaches to reveal the rocky seabed. This is particularly true of the eastern beaches of La Rocque and Le Hocq. During the day, you can enjoy hopping from one rock pool to the next looking for crabs and prawns. At night, when the moon is high, the landscape looks lunar and eerily peaceful under the radiant sky. Keep your eyes peeled and you may even spot bioluminescence to make the evening more magical. Exploring a beach after dark always calls for prudence, but make especially sure you check the tides before you go, as the sea races back to the shore at an incredible speed and you don't want to get cut off. 🦋



Le Hocq