

# Joyous Jersey from A to Z

Antonia Windsor has combed the beaches and surfed the shores in search of Jersey's finest elements, from beautiful ballet to secret bays



Brave the causeway or take an amphibious vehicle to Elizabeth Castle, a 16th-century fortress, in time for the firing of the noon cannon



## Arboretum

Sometimes called the forgotten forest, because it was literally forgotten for several decades, the Val de la Mare Arboretum in St Peter is full of trees you wouldn't expect to see in the Channel Islands, including giant American redwoods, Australian bottle-brushes and Japanese cypresses, which were planted by the Moores family in the 1970s in memory of their son, who died prematurely. It's a great place for early-morning walks to hear the dawn chorus.

## Ballet

Last year, the island welcomed its first professional ballet company with the formation of Ballet d'Jèrri ([www.ballet.je](http://www.ballet.je)), which is dedicated to pushing the boundaries of traditional ballet and creating exciting, innovative performances for an international audience. The company will eventually be based at the Jersey Opera House, which is undergoing an £11.5 million renovation and is due to open in 2024.

## ‘A delicate *mille-feuille* of Jersey Royal potato is served with Champagne sauce’

### Callum Graham

At the helm of Art Deco-style Bohemia restaurant, at The Club Hotel & Spa in St Helier ([www.theclubjersey.com](http://www.theclubjersey.com)), Callum Graham has ensured the restaurant has hung onto the Michelin star it's had for nearly 20 years. His signature tasting menu starts with a plate called 'A homage to the humble potato', but there is nothing humble about the dish. A delicate and perfectly crisp *mille-feuille* of Jersey Royal potato is served with creamy Champagne sauce and local wood sorrel, which the sommelier pairs with a Forget-Brimont Blanc de Blancs Champagne.

## Dolmens

Jersey is littered with Neolithic sites, including one of the best-preserved passage graves in Europe at La Hougue Bie. However, there are a further 11 dolmen sites to explore, such as Les Monts Grantez, a passage grave with asymmetrical chamber in St Ouen and La Sergenté in St Brelade, which dates from 4,500BC and is perhaps the earliest dolmen on the island.

## Elizabeth Castle

This impressive 16th-century fortress sits on a tidal island, reached by an amphibious vehicle that can make the crossing even if the tide is high. The building was ordered



Celebrating liberation from the Nazis in bronze: a statue in the island's capital, St Helier

by Sir Walter Raleigh when he was governor of the island at the beginning of the 17th century and Charles II stayed briefly during the Civil War. Try to get there in time for the firing of the midday cannon, which is part of an enthusiastic historical re-enactment that includes the firing of muskets.

## Foraging

Jersey is an island larder of free, nutritious food, if you know how to find it. At low tide, you can collect yourself a seafood platter of clams, razorfish, winkles, limpets, shrimps

and crabs from the rock pools and you'll find wild samphire and other edible plants on common ground around the island. If you need some guidance, book a guided walk with Kazz Padidar from Wild Adventures (<https://wildadventuresjersey.com>).

## German occupation

Jersey spent five years of the Second World War under German occupation and concrete bunkers and watchtowers are a visual reminder. Visit the War Tunnels, an attraction that uses nearly a mile of underground tunnels built by slave workers to bring to life the experience of locals living under German command.

## Honesty boxes

You don't need to know your plants to find food in the hedgerows in Jersey. Instead, look out for upturned crates sheltering bags of Jersey Royal potatoes, courgettes, tomatoes or other surplus produce that farmers want to sell. Pop your pound notes in the honesty box and off you go. Perfect for the lazy forager.

## Ice cream

Jersey ice cream is famous for its rich yellow colour and creamy texture. That's because it's made from the milk of Jersey cows, which has a much higher fat content than other whole milk. Buy whipped Jersey ice cream with a flake at kiosks and vans around the island or try a scoop of luxury Jersey ice cream in your cone, from the van by St Helier's Maritime Museum, perhaps cappuccino or dark cherry.

## Jèrriais

Jersey has its own language, Jèrriais, classified as 'threatened' by the Endangered →



Don't miss the ice cream, richer than any other, at The Hungry Man Café, Rozel Bay





Saviour for sailors and inspiration for photographers, La Corbière lighthouse has drawn the eye since it was constructed in the 1870s

Languages Project. It's a Norman language, a hangover from the days when Jersey was part of the Duchy of Normandy and the island is working hard to stop the language from dying out completely. Schools are encouraging children to learn Jèrriais poems and a band called La Badlabecques sings in the language.

### Kempt Tower

There are seven cylindrical Martello towers in Jersey, built mainly during the Napoleonic wars when Britain feared French invasion. Some of these are now private property, but several have been restored by Jersey Heritage into unusual holiday lets. Kempt tower, right on the seafront in St Ouen, sleeps up to 12 guests in an open-plan living space.

### La Corbière lighthouse

The lighthouse at Corbière was the first one in the British Isles to be built entirely of concrete when it was constructed in the 1870s and the elegant white structure rising from a base of dark rocks is one of the most photographed sights on the island. You can walk to it at low tide along a tidal causeway—a siren will sound alerting you to head back to the mainland before the tide turns.

### Mont Orgueil Castle

This pink granite fortress is one of the best surviving examples of a medieval castle in

the UK. Rising high above Gorey Harbour, it has dominated this eastern corner of the island for 800 years.

### National Park

Jersey's coastal area was protected from development by the creation of a National Park in 2011 ([www.jerseynationalpark.com](http://www.jerseynationalpark.com)). It now covers 2,145 hectares (5,300 acres), about 16% of the island, including beaches, offshore reefs, cliff paths and woodland trails. A sea-bird protection zone runs from Plémont Headland to Le Douet de la Mer to make sure the rare Atlantic puffins don't die out.

## 'Schoolchildren learn Jèrriais poems and a band sings in the language'

### Oysters

You'll find Jersey oysters on the menu at all the smart restaurants in the island, but you can also sample them on the beach at low tide. Seymour Oyster (<http://seymourshellfish.co.uk>) farms 14 million oysters on the east coast of the island and offers Champagne and oyster tours, which take you down to the beds and teach you about the life cycle of these delicious bivalves.

### Plémont Bay

This hidden-away cove on the island's north coast is reached by walking down a steep set of steps, but you're rewarded with a sandy beach to lounge on, rock pools to pootle in and the island's largest caves to explore. Lifeguards patrol the beach from mid May to mid September in case anybody is in danger of getting stuck as the tide comes up.

### Queens Valley

Most of Jersey's water supply comes from the water held at Queens Valley reservoir ([www.jerseywater.je](http://www.jerseywater.je)), the largest in the island, holding enough water to supply the population for about 48 days. There are several routes around the reservoir for walkers and runners and the full circuit is just under two miles.

### Royals

Jersey's most popular export is the golden, buttery Royal potato ([www.jerseyroyals.co.uk](http://www.jerseyroyals.co.uk)). If you fly over the island, you'll see sections of land sparkling in the sun like swimming pools. These are fields covered in polythene to produce early new potatoes, which reach the supermarket shelves as early as late March.

### Seafaris

Jersey Seafaris ([www.jerseyseafaris.com](http://www.jerseyseafaris.com)) is a RIB tour company that can take you to discover Les Écréhous, an archipelago of tiny islands that is actually considered →





*Above:* Eight centuries of imposing history: pink granite Mont Orgueil Castle. *Below:* Just chillin': a Sumatran orangutan at Jersey Zoo

part of the Jersey parish of St Martin and was previously known only to fishing folk. It's a great place to spot dolphins and seals and you can wander among the tiny houses and enjoy a sundowner before heading back to the mainland.

## Tides

Jersey has one of the world's largest tidal movements, with the island almost doubling in size at low tide. On the east of the island, the tide disappears so far that you can't even see it on the horizon. Instead, an eerie lunar landscape of rock formations is revealed, which is majestic by moonlight, when you may also spot bioluminescence on the exposed sea bed.

## UNESCO-aspiring Geopark

Jersey currently has more than 20 sites of recognised geological significance, including La Cotte de St Brelade, a cave that contains one of the best records of Neanderthal behaviour from more than a quarter of a million years ago. It's now registered as an aspiring Geopark, with the application process expected to take at least four years to complete.

## Vineyard

You'd be forgiven for not knowing that Jersey has its own vineyard, because nearly all of the 20,000 bottles produced at La Mare Wine

Estate ([www.lamarewineestate.com](http://www.lamarewineestate.com)) are consumed in the Channel Islands. Jersey's only working vineyard is situated in the parish of St Mary and you can take a tour that includes tastings of the wine, apple brandy and gin produced here.

## Walking

Jersey's coastal path is a 48-mile circuit of the island's striking coastline. The most dramatic section is along the north-coast cliffs, where you'll find grassy paths amid wildflowers, heather and gorse. On a clear day, you can see across to the other Channel Islands and, every few miles, the walk is



interrupted with a drop into a sheltered cove, where you can grab an ice cream or cool off with a swim in the sea.

## X marks the spot

Jersey is closer to France than the UK, with only 14 miles separating it from the French coast, against 85 miles from England's.

## Yachting

Jersey is a great place for sailing, with three clubs: the Royal Channel Island Yacht Club in St Aubin ([www.rciyc.je](http://www.rciyc.je)), which offers dinghy sailing and a great club house; the St Helier Yacht Club, a real sailor's rest in the heart of St Helier Marina ([www.shyc.je](http://www.shyc.je)); and St Catherine's Sailing Club ([www.sscsc.org.je](http://www.sscsc.org.je)), which is perfect for the dinghy enthusiast. They say that, if you can navigate the waters around Jersey, then you are capable of navigating just about anywhere in the world.

## Zoo

Gawp at gorillas, laugh at lemurs and hang out with the howlers at Jersey Zoo ([www.durrell.org](http://www.durrell.org)). There's a small museum dedicated to its founding conservationist, Gerald Durrell, as well as two good restaurants, keepers' talks and an adventure playground, together with a diverse array of inhabitants from all over the world. 🦋

*For further information about Jersey's castles, museums and other attractions, visit [www.jerseyheritage.org](http://www.jerseyheritage.org)*