

WEEKENDER

# JERSEY

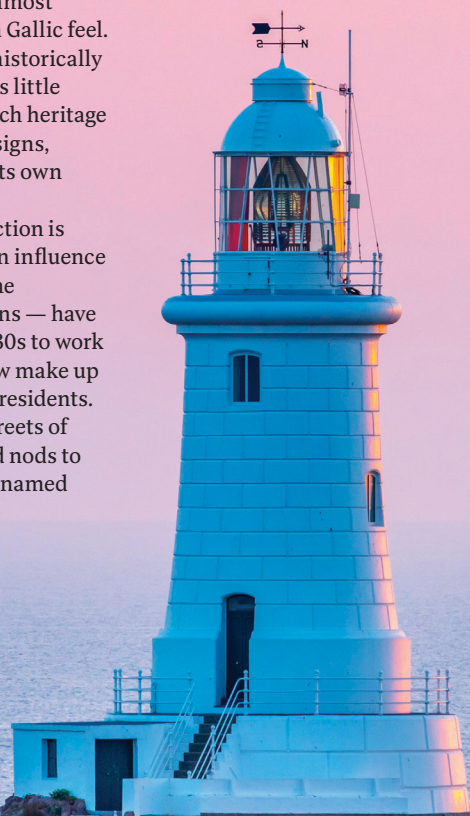
**A true cultural crossroads, the largest of the Channel Islands offers a packed weekend escape, with coastal walks, colourful festivals and a thriving food scene. Words: Antonia Windsor**

It's no surprise that the southernmost outpost of the British Isles has a Gallic feel. Just 14 miles from France, and historically part of the Duchy of Normandy, this little island has fiercely retained its French heritage — something glimpsed in its road signs, cideries, petanque clubs and even its own language, Jèrriais.

But while Jersey's French connection is well-known, it's not the only foreign influence firmly established on the island. The Portuguese — notably the Madeirans — have been coming to Jersey since the 1930s to work in agriculture and tourism, and now make up around 10% of the island's 100,000 residents. Wander the pretty, bunting-clad streets of the capital, St Helier, and you'll find nods to the country in the Rue de Funchal (named

after Madeira's capital), as well as a raft of Portuguese restaurants and cafes. It's this intriguing, vibrant mix of cultures — stirred in with Jersey's own wealth of traditions — that makes it a cosmopolitan place to be.

Stray beyond the cafes and bakeries, however, and the island's bucolic charms unfurl: a rolling green landscape threaded by quiet country lanes, nature reserves and pristine beaches beloved by surfers. There are ancient sites dotted across the island, too, and a calendar of quirky festivals celebrates everything from cider-making to the written word. It's food-lovers who are perhaps most spoiled for choice here, with a trio of Michelin-endorsed restaurants, and local producers working both land and sea to preserve the island's distinct food heritage.



The Watersplash, a popular hangout with the local surf set  
LEFT: La Corbière lighthouse, on the island's southwestern tip

## DAY ONE SURF & SUNSETS

### MORNING

If you're up with the seagulls, head to Le Braye, on the west coast, for an early yoga session with Delia from Bunker. The covered terrace opens onto the wide seascape of St Ouen's beach, and classes run whatever the weather, held against a backdrop of the dramatically ebbing and flowing tide. Refuel in the cafe downstairs and watch the surfers catch the first waves of the day — or, if you'd rather join them, hire a surfboard from the slip (and don't be surprised if you see Delia again, as she also runs the Jersey Surf School). Afterwards, round off the morning with a walk through the nearby dunes, carpeted with tall grasses and speckled with yellow gorse — a hallmark of the Jersey National Park, which hugs the coast.

### AFTERNOON

A short drive from La Braye is the free-to-enter National Trust for Jersey Wetland Centre, overlooking La Mare au Seigneur (better known as St Ouen's Pond). As well as making the most of the observation room, you can zoom in on wildlife using the interactive camera provided or learn to identify bird calls on the multimedia touchscreens. Continue the natural theme as you head up the coast to Kempt Tower to meet Kazz from Wild Adventures. Something of a survival skills expert, Kazz learned his trade from his grandparents, who lived under German occupation during the Second World War. Join him on a foraging tour to discover the bitter-lemon taste of pink sorrel or the spiciness of pepper dulse seaweed.

### EVENING

It's time to rejoin the surfers at their primary hangout, The Watersplash bar and diner, midway along St Ouen's Bay and just a 15-minute walk along the beach from Kempt Tower. It was here that several European surf championships took place in the 1960s, when Jersey was the surf capital of Europe (in 1968, five out of six of the British surf team in the Puerto Rico World Championships were Jersey locals). When the sun's out, you'll find the al fresco tables packed with people winding down after a day on the waves. Take note: a single beer might turn into several if a gig is taking place indoors. Alternatively, head for dinner at Corbiere Phare, a restaurant with dramatic views of La Corbière lighthouse, on the island's southwestern tip.

### TOP 5

## Local producers



### LA MARE WINE ESTATE

Most of the wine produced on Jersey each year is consumed within the Channel Islands. Head to La Mare Wine Estate to try red, white, rosé and sparkling varieties, as well as apple brandy, gin, vodka and cider. [lamarewineestate.com](http://lamarewineestate.com)

### LA ROBELINE CIDER COMPANY

Using a 100-year-old press, La Robeline Cider Company produces a medium and dry Cidre de Jèrri in the Normandy style, with the fizz coming from secondary fermentation in the bottle. [larobelinecider.je](http://larobelinecider.je)

### SEYMOUR SHELLFISH

Seventeenth-generation farmer John Le Seelleur and his wife Shannon nurture 14 million oysters across 13 hectares. Join a tour to discover more about oyster production and its history. [seymourshellfish.co.uk](http://seymourshellfish.co.uk)

### JERSEY HEMP

The organic hemp cultivated at Warwick Farm is now used to produce everything from CBD oils, nutrient-dense hemp-seed oil and hemp-seed protein powder. [jersey-hemp.com](http://jersey-hemp.com)

### JERRIAISE D'OR GOAT FARM

Don't miss this farm's Fluffy Fuhka, an award-winning goat's cheese made with Golden Guernsey milk. Buy it from the roadside honesty box in St Lawrence. [facebook.com/goatsjersey](https://facebook.com/goatsjersey)



TOP 3

Portuguese pit stops



FOR ESPETADAS

Sit shoulder-to-shoulder at Funchal Paradise, a tiny restaurant that feels like stepping into a Madeiran guesthouse. Among the specials are *espetadas* (hanging skewers of grilled meat and fish), served with *milho frito* (cubed and fried cornmeal), rice, chips and salad. It's as popular with the Jersey locals as it is with the Madeiran expats. [facebook.com/funchal-paradise](https://facebook.com/funchal-paradise)

FOR CATAPLANA

Mano's Bistro is an airy restaurant tucked in the corner of West Centre in St Helier (look out for the life-size bronze sculptures of Jersey cattle). Most of the customers are drawn here for the hearty Portuguese dishes like *cataplana* (a seafood or meat stew) or *picadinho* (a meat casserole cooked with garlic and bay leaves). [manos-bistro.com](https://manos-bistro.com)

FOR PASTÉIS DE NATA

At Alfonso Bakery & Coffee Shop, the tempting display of pastries and cakes includes these classic custard tarts, as well as *malassadas* (yeast doughnuts) and *bolo rei* (also known as Christmas king's cake, a ring-shaped treat topped with candied peel and icing sugar). Alfonso also runs a nearby supermarket, where you can stock up on the likes of *piri-piri* sauce and *bacalhau* (salt cod). *41 The Parade and 59 Bath Street, St Helier.*

DAY TWO SWIMMING & SHOPPING

MORNING

Start the day at shingly Archirondel Beach, on the east of the island. The iconic white-and-red painted tower that dominates the bay is a Jersey Heritage let — ideal if you want somewhere memorable to stay. Take a dip with the locals (who swim here year-round), then warm up with a mug of hot chocolate from the Driftwood Cafe. Head on to Mont Orgueil Castle, an 800-year-old fortress that looms over Gorey harbour and is regarded as one of the best surviving examples of a medieval castle in the British Isles. Entry includes a tour with a local guide, who'll share their enthusiasm for the exhibits, including the curious wheel of urine — a medieval chart that helped doctors diagnose illnesses.

AFTERNOON

Make your way into the capital, St Helier, for lunch. For something light, try one of the cafes in the Victorian covered Central Market, where you can sit and watch the florists and fruit vendors ply their trade. Gourmets, meanwhile, will want to book ahead for a table at chef Callum Graham's one-Michelin-star Bohemia, with its affordable lunchtime set menu. Nearby King Street has two independent department stores — Voisins and De Gruchy — that are ideal for VAT-free purchases (you'll pay just the 5% GST here). For a distinctly local souvenir, pop into Maison de Jersey for a jar of black butter, a conserve traditionally made with the apple pulp left over from cider-making.

EVENING

Start your evening at hidden-away Project 52, accessed via an unmarked door on Waterloo Lane. If you find the speakeasy atmosphere of this bijou bar so enticing that you're tempted to spend your whole evening here, order a gin flight: a variety of gins served in apothecary bottles with complimentary botanicals and flavoured tonic waters. Alternatively, wander on to The Royal Yacht hotel, where you can choose between three popular restaurants for dinner: The Grill, for expertly cooked steak; Zephyr, for laid-back Asian fusion; and Sirocco, for Australasian-inspired fine dining. Afterwards, head to one of the onsite bars to drink and dance into the early hours.



Market Street, St Helier, as viewed from inside the Central Market  
**RIGHT:** Floats taking part in the Jersey Battle of Flowers parade



FOUR OF THE BEST FESTIVALS

There's a packed calendar of events on 'the Rock', as Jersey is fondly referred to by locals, from celebrations of centuries-old local traditions to festivals dedicated to globally popular music and culture

JERSEY BATTLE OF FLOWERS

This florid festival was first held in 1902 to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. The two-day carnival and parade sees each of Jersey's 12 parishes enter an elaborate flower-themed float, with parishioners meeting throughout the winter to craft paper designs ready for the celebrations in August. The competition to create the most spectacular float is fierce, so they're carefully crafted in farm sheds and warehouses with cloak-and-dagger secrecy. Young residents also compete to be crowned Battle Ambassador. It's outrageously kitsch, but the explosion of colour and creativity makes it a highlight on the island's calendar. [battleofflowers.com](https://battleofflowers.com)

LA FAÏS'SIE D'CIDRE

Each October, Jersey celebrates its cider-making history in the grounds of Hamptonne Country Life Museum. Here, you can find out more about how black butter is made from leftover apple pulp, watch a horse-drawn granite cider press in action, bob for apples and, of course, swig a glass of local cider. Folk singing, dancing, craft activities and food stalls are all part of the programme. The festival is also a fantastic place to sample a Jersey wonder (a bow-shaped, deep-fried doughnut that's an island speciality). [jerseyheritage.org](https://jerseyheritage.org)

IMAGES: ALAMY; GETTY

JERSEY FESTIVAL OF WORDS

It's easy to see how the island's annual five-day literary festival — held each September — regularly manages to attract big-name authors. After all, the weather is generally still balmy and there's the promise of performing on the Jersey Opera House stage, which was once graced by Victorian actress Lillie Langtry, mistress of the future King Edward VII (locals believe the theatre is still haunted by her ghost). Visitors can enjoy readings, performances, workshops and competitions from all manner of wordsmiths. Previous authors to have appeared at the festival include Joanna Trollope, Lemn Sissay and Alexander McCall Smith. [jerseyfestivalofwords.org](https://jerseyfestivalofwords.org)

WEEKENDER

Dubbed the 'Channel Islands' great summer festival', this two-day, non-camping music event held in early September attracts some 10,000 attendees to the Royal Jersey Showground in Trinity. It's a family-friendly affair, with plenty of food stalls and live entertainment across the weekend. There's always an eclectic list of headliners, too: those due to perform at this year's festival, which has now been postponed to September 2022, included The Jacksons, John Newman and rapper KSI. [weekenderjersey.com](https://weekenderjersey.com)

GREEN WHEELS

Get around using one of the fluorescent-green EVie electric bikes parked at locations across the island. Download the app and check out a bike — you'll pay £1 per 10 minutes for the first two hours, then get hours three to six for free. [evieondemand.com](https://evieondemand.com)

MORE INFO

Bunker. [bunkerjersey.com](https://bunkerjersey.com)  
Jersey Surf School. [jerseysurfschool.co.uk](https://jerseysurfschool.co.uk)  
National Trust for Jersey Wetland Centre. [nationaltrust.je](https://nationaltrust.je)  
Wild Adventures. [wildadventuresjersey.com](https://wildadventuresjersey.com)  
Corbiere Phare. [corbierephare.com](https://corbierephare.com)  
Mont Orgueil Castle. [jerseyheritage.org](https://jerseyheritage.org)  
Bohemia. [bohemiajersey.com](https://bohemiajersey.com)  
Voisins. [voisins.com](https://voisins.com)  
De Gruchy. [degruchys.com](https://degruchys.com)  
Maison de Jersey. [maisondejersey.com](https://maisondejersey.com)  
Project 52. [project52.club](https://project52.club)  
The Royal Yacht. [theroyal yacht.com](https://theroyal yacht.com)  
Jersey Tourism. [jersey.com](https://jersey.com)

HOW TO DO IT

Condor Ferries sails to Jersey from Poole up to four times a week, taking around four hours. Longer crossings also operate from Portsmouth. [condorferries.co.uk](https://condorferries.co.uk)  
Alternatively, British Airways, EasyJet, Blue Islands and Jet2.com fly from airports across the country. [ba.com](https://ba.com) [easyjet.com](https://easyjet.com) [blueislands.com](https://blueislands.com) [jet2.com](https://jet2.com)  
Rooms at the Old Court House, overlooking the marina at St Aubin, start at £185, B&B. Rooms at the five-star Longueville Manor start at £200, B&B. [liberationgroup.com](https://liberationgroup.com) [longuevillem Manor.com](https://longuevillem Manor.com)