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Guernsey's Top 10

The Channel Islands of Guernsey, Herm, Sark and Alderney bask in a temperate climate off the French coast, combining British sensibility with continental sunshine in what is the last remnant of the Duchy of Normandy.



▲ **St Peter Port.** Explore this ancient port with its cobbled streets, colourful harbour and fine seafood restaurants. See page 14.



▲ **Castle Cornet.** Listen to the roar of the noon-day gun and explore the museums of this medieval castle. See page 19.

▶ **Hauteville House.** Take a tour of Victor Hugo's home in exile and discover that the French author was also an inspired interior decorator. See page 24.



▲ **German Occupation Museum.** See how the islanders lived during World War II, through recreated domestic scenes, documents, recipes and ration books. See page 45.



▼ **Herm.** Take a day or half-day trip to this tiny, car-free island and enjoy the walks, beaches and birdlife. See page 72.



▲ **Sausmarez Manor.** Tour the historic family manor, explore informal gardens and discover more than 200 works of art in the sculpture park. See page 41.



▼ **La Seigneurie, Sark.** Enjoy the formal walled garden and exotic shrubbery at La Seigneurie, home of the seigneur of Sark since 1730. See page 88.



▲ **Fort Grey.** Gripping stories of shipwrecks around Guernsey's western shores are the theme of the museum within the fort. See page 47.



▼ **St Anne, Alderney.** An engaging little town with cobbled streets, pastel-painted old houses and a fascinating small museum. See page 96.



▲ **Folk and Costume Museum.** Intriguing displays from rural 18th century life, housed in farm buildings around a central courtyard. See page 66.





White sands of
Mouisonniere Beach, Herm.

Overview

Guernsey

Guernsey and its tiny sister islands lie in the Gulf of St Malo and have a distinct Gallic twist. Expect beautiful bays, superb seafood and the sunniest climate in the British Isles.

When French novelist Victor Hugo was exiled in 1851, he thought long and hard about where to make his new home. Since he spoke only French, he wanted to live somewhere where French was understood. He finally chose the Channel Islands because they were 'morsels of France fallen into the sea and gathered up by England'.

If Hugo felt perfectly at home in the Channel Islands, so did the numerous British and Irish army officers and colonial servants who chose to settle here in the 19th century. The addition of new Anglian and Celtic ingredients to the existing French culture resulted in a mix that makes the islands feel reassuringly familiar, yet still exotic.

'Similar but different' is a phrase that could also describe the way that Jersey and Guernsey seek to differentiate themselves from each other. They each issue their own currencies, phonecards and postage stamps, none of which are valid on the mainland.



Letter boxes are different colours (red on Jersey, blue on Guernsey) and each claims its version of the classic knitted fisherman's jumper. Guernsey people rarely refer to Jersey by name: to them, it is 'the other island'. They refer to its inhabitants, only half in jest, as *crapauds* (toads) – because the toad is found on Jersey but not on Guernsey. With their slower pace of life Guernsey people are dismissed as *ânes* (donkeys) by their bigger-island rivals.

LOCATION AND CLIMATE

As a group the islands sit just off the Cherbourg peninsula. With an area of 24 sq miles (62 sq km), and a population of around 63,000, Guernsey is the second biggest of the Channel Islands after Jersey, but the more densely populated. The Bailiwick of Guernsey consists of Guernsey, the islands of Herm, Jethou, Sark and Alderney, and a number of scattered lighthouse rocks and islets, such as Burhou, Ortac and the Casquets. The tiny islands of Herm (20 minutes by ferry from



Walking down Pier Steps in St Peter Port.



Alderney's Mannez Lighthouse beam is visible 23 miles (37km) out to sea.

Guernsey) and Sark (45 minutes) are peaceful retreats, with sandy beaches and dramatic clifftop scenery. Sark's 450-year-old feudal system came to an end in 2008 when the Chief Pleas (legislative body) was reformed, the first general election was held and Sark became Europe's newest democracy. Alderney is the northernmost of the Channel Islands, just 8 miles (13km) from France. It was deliberately depopulated during the war, and used as a forced labour camp. Community life has been successfully rebuilt since the island's liberation in 1945; Alderney is now popular with ornithologists and beach lovers looking for privacy and a peaceful escape from the busy world.

The Channel Islands are mild in winter and sunny in summer, but strong winds can make temperatures feel cool. In the summer months the islands have a daily average of eight hours of sunshine and an average maximum temperature of 68°F (20°C). The Atlantic sea temperatures are cool for swimming, averaging 62.8°F (17.1°C) in summer.

BRITISH LINKS

Although they are not truly British, the Channel Islands have been linked with the British Crown for over 900 years. Self-government was granted to the islands by King John in 1204, as a reward for staying loyal to the English Crown after the rest of Normandy was conquered by King Philippe II of France. Ever since, the islands have pledged allegiance to the English Crown, and as the last remaining territories of the dukes of Normandy, they toast the Queen of England as 'Our Duke of Normandy'. The islands delegate matters of foreign policy and defence to the UK parliament, but in all other affairs – especially in taxation and financial policy – they guard their independence zealously. They are not part of the EU, except for purposes of free trade in goods, and Brexit is unlikely to impact on their historic relationship with the UK.

ECONOMY

Guernsey saw major changes during the late 20th century as the financial services industry took over from agriculture and tourism as the mainstay of the economy. The sector is now completely dominant, generating about 35

Guide to Coloured Boxes

Eating
Fact
Green
Kids
Shopping
View

This guide is dotted with coloured boxes providing additional practical and cultural information to make the most of your visit. Here is a guide to the coding system.

Tides

The islands have one of the largest tidal movements in the world; the change between high and low water almost doubles the size of the islands. Powerful tides expose huge areas of rock pools and clean, sandy and rarely crowded beaches. Fishermen forage along the foreshore for the lobsters, mussels, clams and oysters that end up being served as *plateaux de fruits de mer* in the island's many seafood restaurants.



The seawall protects the shoreline and town.

percent of the island's economic output. The almost complete absence of taxes on capital makes the islands very attractive to wealthy incomers, and to the banking community. Traditional activities such as dairy farming and fishing still continue and recent years have seen a surge in small-scale producers such as cheese-makers, organic farmers and specialist pig breeders.

Tourism saw its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s when railway workers flocked over with their free ferry tickets. Today the emphasis is on upmarket short breaks, plus heritage, gastronomy and traditional leisure activities. And Guernsey wants to keep it that way, with no theme parks and no Starbucks.

ENVIRONMENT

The coastal fringes have their own distinctive wildlife, from the puffins and gannets that nest on the offshore islets, to the sea kale, horned poppy and sea holly that grows on the dunes. On Guernsey the island of Lihou and nearby nature reserves have been designated as a Ramsar site (a wetland of international importance). This large intertidal zone has a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna.

Green lanes on Guernsey, called Ruettes Tranquilles, have reduced the speed limit on country lanes to 15mph (24kph) and encourage cyclists and pedestrians. On the other hand, Guernsey has one of the highest car ownership rates in the world, and the amount of traffic and parking problems may deter you from driving.



Cycling is the main form of transport on Sark.