Independence and war

Jersey is largely independent from the UK and retains its own laws. Laws are based on Norman customary laws, so do not assume the same laws of the UK or the “mainland” as the locals like to refer to the UK apply. An example is that local kayakers are legally required to have their contact phone number written on their sea kayak, although visiting paddlers are exempt. This is probably good practice however in case you underestimate the speed at which the tides race around Jersey and return from a stop at one of the many excellent beach coves to find your kayak has drifted away.

Although Jersey is geographically much closer to France than the UK, the island is loyal to the British crown. This dates back to Norman times when the Channel Islands became part of the English realm in 1066. King John lost Normandy to the French crown in 1204, although Jersey and Guernsey remained with the English crown. To all extents the islands were Norman and, with Normandy visible on the horizon, it would have been easy to switch sides and join France.

The geographical position of Jersey made it a strategic asset whenever England was at war with France. To keep Jersey on the English side, King John offered huge amounts of money to Jersey for its defence and granted the island more independence. In return, the island became the frontline for English forces and a haven for privateers. A lovely bay and headland you will see is 18th and 19th century British fortifications.

In 1940 the Channel Islands were occupied by the Nazis and Jersey quickly became an almost impregnable fortress. All the Channel Islands were more heavily fortified than any other coastal region in Europe, and this level of fortification fast overshadowed the strategic importance of the islands to the Nazis. Despite 10% of the entire Atlantic wall being constructed in the Channel Islands, by 1944, an incredible 244,000 cubic metres had been excavated compared to 255,000 cubic metres for the entire Atlantic wall in Europe. The PoW greatly prized the islands, particularly because he had captured the largest possession of the English Crown. Hitler even ordered that all plans for the islands must be sent to him personally for approval. By 1945, 42,000 Germans were based in the Channel Islands, equivalent to two-thirds of the civilian population.

Sea kayaking in Jersey

Jersey’s rich maritime history manifests itself today in the vast number of bays marred in the small harbours. Owning a boat is almost a constitutional right for the Jersey man and as you drive around the island, it seems that if you don’t have a sail-board, stand-up paddleboard (SUP) or kayak on your car or in your garden you’re probably a visitor.

Jersey tidies

Jersey has big tides of up to 13.5 m. Get your timings wrong and the tidal streams will easily send you back. On spring tides, a rise of 1.3m per minute is common. That’s not to say that Jersey is only suitable for experienced kayakers. Much depends on finding the best locations. Boats, but the wind and tidal streams, which is a good reason for the less experienced paddler to get advice from a local kayak company.

There are plenty of bays and coastal routes to explore and discover on an island of 45 square miles. If conditions are unsuitable on one coast, it is usually possible to paddle on the opposite side of the island, which is usually only a short drive away. The big tidal range means that the nature of a coastal route can change completely within a few hours. The trick is to know when to start it, or if the tide streams are too strong, you will get assistance both ways.

Along with a good chart, the States of Jersey 1:25,000 map and a copy of the Admiralty tidal stream atlas 14064 are essential tools.

Après padding

There is a huge choice of accommodation on the island ranging from campers to 5 star hotels and lots of other activities and sights to visit when not kayaking. Wild camping and sleeping in campers vans at low bays is discouraged, so you may wish to opt for a hotel, BB or campsite.

The southeast coast of Jersey

The south coast of the southeast coast is reminder. Get your timing right, and you can live off a sandwich on the seaweed with very different habitats. From 2000, this area is an internationally designated Ramsar marshes site.

During the third hours of a spring tide, the rise and fall is about 12 cm per minute and you particularly enjoy long passages up the estuaries, making sure you’ve done your calculations for the ebb tides. (Alternatively, bring a set of kayak wheels with you)

Start at the old fishball station in St Helier Harbour. If it is a big low tide, expect to walk through ankle deep harbour mud. To the west of the Docks Road (La Rade), there is a big low tide where the wreck of the SS Diamant (built 1942), this reef can be exposed to a south west swell. About 0.5km south of Green Island (9 km distant) for La Boeuf Channel. Initially this looks like a maze of rocks, but you soon realize where it is in the wind and your speed will increase as the tide rolls between the reefs. From this point onwards you will be going, with the flow as on a moving walkway; this is when river techniques come in handy.
As you cross St Clement’s Bay, slipping down gullies like a cascaded waterfall during the flood, observe the seaweed and the gulls soaring in the air above. The deep-seaNOTE. some inaccessible cliffs are like a secret garden, with only a few visitors allowed in at a time. From Seymour and La Rocque, it is a straight run across La Rocque, Guernsey, to the busy harbour village of St Peter Port, with many places to eat and enjoy a pint.

**Dive Site Info:**
- **Name:** St Peter Port
- **Location:** Guernsey
- **Depth:** Variable
- **Visibility:** Good
- **Access:** Boat
- **Special Features:** Rocky reefs, shallow channels, and a variety of fish and marine life.

**Landing at the La Côte d’Ecluse Lighthouse:**
It is a tide stream runs over the causeway on both the flood and ebb tides.

**Gros Nez**
I head westwards along the cliffs from Crevier du Mesnil to La Vallee Poupee. Despite the poor visibility, I can pick out the puffin nesting season, a voluntary 100 miles exclusion zone area. From a few hundred breeding pairs, in the 1990s, puffin numbers have plummeted. It is suspected that this is a result of acid rain and the acidity of the local environment. Local conservation efforts have helped to reverse this trend.

**Guernsey Quay and unexplored boulders**

**Coastal Walk:**
- **Route:** Between La Catherine and La Belle Grotte
- **Distance:** Approximately 2 miles
- **Terrain:** Rocky and coastal
- **Special Features:** Unexplored boulders, coastal cliffs, and hidden coves.

**La Vallee Poupee and varied topography**

**St Peter Port**
- **Location:** Guernsey
- **Tips:**
  - Be aware of the tide changes in the area.
  - Use local guides or maps for navigation.
  - Be prepared for changing weather conditions.

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**Note:** All content is for educational and informational purposes only. Always consult local authorities and marine experts before embarking on any marine or coastal exploration. *Gloucester*
The base of the cliffs below the Naze range contained caves in the remains of some heavy artillery guns which are visible at low tide. The guns were dumped over the cliff at the end of the occupation; some have been recovered and can be seen at Noirmont Battery.

La Pierre de L’Ouest is an important archaeological site with Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman remains. For more than 4000 years this imposing rock, which resembles a huge Merkur (mount Goliath), captivated the imagination of the inhabitants of Jersey as a very special place. A narrow cave runs beneath the headland.

Kayaking

La Baie de St Culot is an excellent kayaking beach and it is not until you are near La Puniere that you may find a relatively sheltered landing. In large surf it is a good idea to head inside the rocks towards La Rocque basin and land at La Puniere. If you are planning on surf kayaking, you are required to have third party insurance such as that provided through BOU membership.

La Puniere and La Corbiere

This area has many reef breakers, so you’ll need to keep a close watch on the wave patterns and keep a good distance apart. Victor Hugo, who lived in Jersey in 1850-1852 described this area as the “heart of the waves”. It’s never seas that go airborne here as positionally, we can’t really get that far beyond the swells, and this is also where low-rise pharos are forced to catch huge swells by (ad)mit taking place.

Landing at La Corbiere lighthouse is tricky as a riba stream runs over the causse on both the flood and ebb tides. The causse is a great spot for ferry gulls, and ebbfalls often occur off the western end of the lighthouse. There are numerous shipwrecks in this area; the most recent being the St Malo high-speed ferry in 1985 – with 107 passengers on board the captain and crew were rescued.

St Breval heading west

There is a sea stack at Les Jumeaux below Beau Port battery. The gun battery is now a site of 15 that defended St Breval bay from French attack. The Beau Port is a jetty on a sunny day the bay takes on a Mediterranean feel and often has a few luxury yachts at anchor. The red granite cliffs along this part of the coast have a wonderful warm feeling.

The cliffs continue from Beau Port to La Corbiere with many small caves and sea arches that are easily missed if you stay further offshore. These are a couple of Blenheim bays and Le Gros Gras and Trefelasma point (La Tréna), and lots of bird life occurs, Le Lieux de la Poulette.

A little offshore, Les Carrioles reef was the site of the grounding of the SS Roodepark in 1911 when travelling in thick fog at 17 knots. A subsequent inquiry suspected the ship’s ship’s captain for being drunk and for allowing the ship to be steered by a boy only 13 months after the ship was built which was racing a rival vessel, hit rocks off La Corbiere.

Near Point La Mouge is a large cave. On the cliff top is a huge hole which some locals most once worked as a whale trap in storms. You can paddle into this cave, but look out for the seaweed that covers the bottom. In the rock pools, you can see the remains of a few old cans that used to be placed into the holes until the 1960s. There are numerous canals and caves from Point La Mouge to La Rosière. The greenwall at the base of the cliffs in La Rosière was constructed in Victorian times as a tourist path into the caves.

The large tidal range makes the return trip vary different and exciting.

The you-can-do-it-here island

With such a huge range of kayaking opportunities on Jersey, this brief guide has not even covered the offshore routes to Les Ecrehous, Les Minquiers, Steep and beyond. Apart from excellent kayaking, the small island also offers an astonishing variety of things to do and visit e.g. walking, canoeing or exploring neolithic tombs, a medieval castle and stony headlands with inviting restaurants, not to forget friendly shopping precincts.

Due to the regular high-speed ferry links and flights from most regional airports, you may well be taking the Jersey coastline quicker then if you were driving to some "remote" paddling destinations.