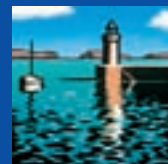




# THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

JERSEY · GUERNSEY · HERM · SARK · ALDERNEY



## Our “offshore” island neighbours.

We are conscious that all too often we mention that houses have views over the offshore islands without ever stopping to think that perhaps not everybody knows what islands we are talking about! In general most of them lie off the eastern coast but can be seen from many vantage points both north and south of that line. Only one island can be spied off the west coast and that is Lihou Island whilst to the extreme north we can see Alderney and to the far south, Jersey. So for the uninitiated, here is a little guide to the islands you will see around our coastline.



### JERSEY

At 9 miles by 5, Jersey is the largest of the Channel Islands and is located some 100 miles from mainland Britain and just 14 miles from France. Its forty-five square miles makes it nearly twice the size of Guernsey and it has a population of something over 85,000 soles. It has majestic cliffs, exposed bays, sandy beaches and rocky coves and has one of the highest tidal ranges in the world.

Like Guernsey, it governs itself and makes its own laws whilst continuing to pledge allegiance to the English Crown. Less than 15 minutes by air from Guernsey, the frequent daily ‘bus stop’ service allows plenty of time for a day trip.



### ALDERNEY

The third largest and northernmost of the Channel Islands is Alderney. It is just 3½ x 1½ miles in size and has a total circumference of about 8 miles which coincidentally is how far it is from France making it the closest of all the Channel Islands to the French mainland. Its capital, St Anne’s is a tumble of narrow cobbled streets flanked by colour-washed cottages and town houses and the island boasts fine sandy bays and an anchorage for visiting yachts. It is the only Channel Island with a working standard gauge railway with passengers enjoying the delights of travelling in former London Underground coaches!



### SARK

Sark is the smallest of the four main Channel Islands just 3 miles long and a mile and a half wide and boasts 40 miles of picturesque coastline and approximately 600 residents. Today, Sark holds the last remaining feudal constitution in the Western world; neither part of the United Kingdom nor European Union, yet not a sovereign state either. The Seigneur holds the island from the Monarch in perpetuity, and governs in conjunction with Chief Pleas, the island’s parliament. The tranquillity of the island is unbroken by the sound of cars because there are none. If you land on Sark from the sea (the only method) you will either need to walk up to the village or take a ride in a tractor drawn bus. From there your choice of transport is easy – you take a horse-drawn carriage, a bicycle or you use your feet! You might even partake of a lobster lunch at one of Sark’s award-winning hotels or take home some of the delightful produce on offer including Sark butter, cream, ice cream and completely ‘wicked’ handmade chocolates!

Above from top: Jersey as seen from space (image courtesy of VisitJersey); Alderney as seen from the air; Sark’s harbour.

Of course these are not the only islands which make up the Channel Islands, Burhou and Les Casquets also form part of the northern group; Grande Fauconnière, a bird sanctuary and Crevichon which was used for quarrying and, it is suggested, sent its granite to construct the steps of St Paul’s Cathedral but most definitely provided much for the building of Castle Cornet in the 13th century are part of the Guernsey Bailiwick whilst Les Écréhous and Les Minquiers are part of the Jersey group.



## BRECQHOU

Brecqhou lies just in front of Sark, as viewed from Guernsey, and so often blends in with the coastline of its larger neighbour making it difficult to distinguish it as being there at all! The island is approximately 160 acres in size and was bought by the Barclay twins in 1993. Since then a mock gothic castle has been built in place of the original mansion but little else is known as the owners prefer to use this outpost as a private haven and who can blame them. What is known is that the Seigneur of Sark still has the right to demand two men with muskets to protect the island from the owners of Brecqhou!

## HERM

Herm Island may be small but it is perfectly formed! Just one and a half miles long and a half mile wide, its scenery varies from woodland to open fields and gentle hills to golden beaches. Herm has no need of cars (although there is a Model T Ford truck encased within the harbour walls – laid there as a time capsule left over from the 1920's when it was used to transport seaweed to the fields as fertiliser!) but exploring on foot is no hardship and can be done easily on a day trip – something you can take by boat in just 20 minutes from Guernsey. Its granite was used in London for road and rail building and maintenance of both London and Blackfriars Bridge. The Wood family, as tenants, assumed the role of guardians more than 50 years ago and have made the island into a small but thriving community. It has a tiny village, an ancient Norman chapel, a home farm and a colourful history which encompasses Neolithic man, Breton monks, pirates, quarrymen, a murdered parrot and incredibly, a Prussian Prince who inexplicably introduced 30 wallabies to the island! You may be pleased to know that there are none left today!

## JETHOU

Jethou lies just south of Herm and covers an area of approximately 44 acres. It is leased from the Crown (unlike neighbouring Herm which is leased from the States of Guernsey) and the tenant may or may not live there full-time and allows visitors to land only at their discretion. Previous tenants of the Manor House on Jethou have included Sir Compton Mackenzie (of Whisky Galore fame) who lived there for fifteen years.

## LIHOU ISLAND

Lihou Island is the odd one out being the only offshore island on the west coast. It is connected to Guernsey by a causeway which allows people, when the tide is right, to walk across. The island has a fascinating history that can be traced from the newly discovered Norman priory, consecrated in 1114 AD right up to a recent tenant who temporarily introduced seaweed eating sheep and attempted to issue his own postage stamps. The island is now owned by the States of Guernsey, a sale which Swuffers were pleased to be able to negotiate. 'Doing a viewing' took on a whole new meaning for us when, for the first time, our negotiators needed to check the tide tables before they could carry out appointments and had to ensure that they always had their wellies on hand! Lihou is a haven for wildlife, more than 100 species of birds have been identified there in the last 30 years, of which 26 are considered to be at risk on a national scale.



Above from top:  
Brecqhou as seen from Sark;  
Shell Beach on Herm;  
Jethou as seen from the air;  
Lihou Island as seen from Guernsey.

All images courtesy of VisitGuernsey.

So, next time we mention 'views to the offshore islands' perhaps you will have a better understanding of what is out there – you might even take the opportunity to visit this string of gems and enjoy them for yourself.

