

# The Channel Islands



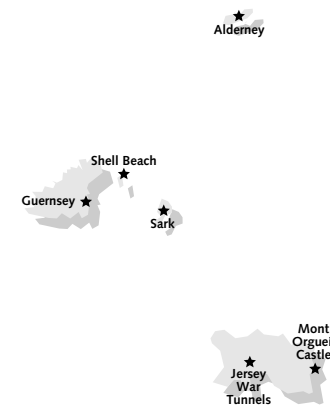
The Fates were having a good day when they created the Channel Islands. These slabs of granite, sliced from the French mainland and scattered artfully into the sea, are full of mild adventures and small discoveries. With exquisite coastlines, beautiful harbours and forgotten, shaded lanes, their quirky anachronisms will keep you puzzled and entertained for hours. In places just 8 miles from France, there's a vaguely tropical feel here. Life is lived at a slower pace, tides and fog affect schedules, and plans sometimes just have to change – giving travels a gently random flavour. And there's a sense of uniqueness; partly the French–English cultural blend, but also something genuinely distinct. It shows itself in a host of individual surprises, from car number plates to car bans – all played out in pockets of bucolic idyll.

Though British, the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey are fiercely independent and administered locally; the latter includes the smaller islands of Alderney, Sark and Herm. Jersey and Guernsey, the largest and most accessible islands, specialise in excellent seafood and glorious coastal walks. Their holiday worlds are slowly evolving from bucket and spade towards latte and spa, but even here a genteel calm often prevails. The three smaller islands, determinedly idiosyncratic and seemingly frozen at different points in time, add another layer of complexity to explore.

And for islands so small there's a surprising amount to discover. Surf pounding seas, kayak tranquil coves, tackle testing 30-mile hikes, languish in luxury spas and indulge in seriously good food; all this awaits – even though the biggest island is only 9 miles long. And perhaps because of their size there's a sense of really getting to know them; it's as if someone's let you in on a great secret. Be warned – once tasted, these islands can become gently addictive.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Cycling by moonlight in car-free, care-free, magical **Sark** (p947)
- Feasting on fresh-caught crab and local lobster in Guernsey's tempting, top-notch **restaurants** (p945)
- Evoking the WWII Occupation at the chilling **Jersey War Tunnels** (p943)
- Swimming off the exquisite white, warm and sandy **Shell Beach** (p946) at Herm
- Pointing at puffins and gandering at gannets as you bob on a boat around remote **Alderney** (p946)
- Experiencing medieval mayhem at Jersey's hugely imaginative **Mont Orgueil Castle** (p943)



■ POPULATION: 151,562

■ AREA: 120 SQ MILES

## History

The Channel Islands are rich in archaeological sites from the Stone Age onwards. The Romans used the islands as trading posts, and they were part of Normandy until 1066, only becoming English when William of Normandy (aka 'William the Conqueror') was crowned king. For centuries the islands were used as sparring grounds, but in 1483 England and France agreed that the territory would remain neutral in the event of war.

Then, in 1939, this happy-go-lucky resort suddenly found itself the only British soil to be occupied by German forces during WWII. This incredibly harsh period of Channel Islands history can be seen in numerous, poignant sites, including the many highly visible German fortifications. The postwar years have seen the fishing, tourism and farming industries decrease, to be replaced by the big bucks of offshore banking. Finance houses have replaced greenhouses, and today the sector employs the biggest chunk of the workforce.

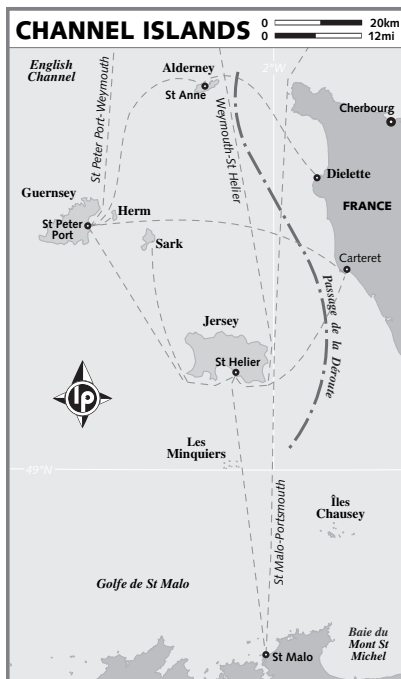
## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Jersey and Guernsey are the main points of entry. Return-trip fares vary wildly between £70 and £300 – shop around.

**Air Southwest** (☎ 0870 241 8202; www.airsouthwest.com) flies from Jersey to Plymouth and Bristol. **Aurigny Air Services** (☎ 0871 8710717; www.aurigny.com) links Guernsey with Bristol, London Stansted, London Gatwick, Manchester and Dinard. It also connects Alderney with Southampton and runs frequent interisland services.

**Blue Islands** (☎ 01481-727567; www.blueislands.com) flies from Bournemouth, Brighton, France and the Isle of Man and between islands. **bmbaby** (☎ 0871 224 0 224; www.bmbaby.com) con-



nects Jersey with Cardiff, the East Midlands airport, Edinburgh and Manchester.

**British Airways** (☎ 0870 850 9 850; www.ba.com) links Jersey with London Gatwick and Manchester. **Flybe** (☎ 0871 700 0535, calls per min 10p; www.flybe.com) connects Jersey/Guernsey and Belfast, Birmingham, Dublin, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, London and Southampton.

### BOAT

**Condor Ferries** (☎ 0870 243 5140; www.condorferries.com) runs daily fast ferries (two to 2½ hours)

to/from Poole and Weymouth. Return fares start at £90 for a foot passenger, £250 for a car and driver. There's also a slow daily ferry from Portsmouth to Guernsey (seven hours there, 13 hours back) and Jersey (10 hours), for similar fares.

Condor sails daily to St Malo in France from Guernsey (return foot passenger £40, car and two adults £95, 1¾ hours), and between Guernsey and Jersey (£25 return, one hour).

**Manche Iles Express** (☎ 01481-701 316; www.manche-iles-express.com) links the islands with France and runs regular interisland services for foot passengers – including useful Guernsey/Alderney and Jersey/Sark connections (all routes one way £20 to £30, around one hour).

## JERSEY

☎ 01534 / pop 88,200

Jersey is the biggest, and its rivals would say brashest, of the Channel Islands. Its capital, St Helier, does have more than a whiff of the offshore finance centre it is – think shimmering steel and glass, and pinstripe suits. But the island is also much more; its coast alone is 48 miles long. Exquisite swaths of sandy beach fringe the south, east and west sides, rugged cliffs – good for walking and cycling – frame the north, and countless tranquil lanes lie in between. Its richly textured history is also brought to life by a clutch of excellent museums.

## Orientation & Information

Measuring 9 miles by 5, Jersey is roughly rectangular in shape; St Helier sits on the south at the eastern side of the wide sweep of St Aubin's Bay. At the bay's western edge lies St Aubin itself, a harbour village and a recommended base, with its attractive string of seafood restaurants. The miniport of Gorey clings to the island's eastern tip.

**Jersey Tourism** (☎ 448800; www.jersey.com; Liberation Sq, St Helier; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri & 9am-1pm Sat Oct-Apr, 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri & 9am-1pm Sat & Sun Apr-Jun, 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat & 8.30am-2.15pm Sun Jun-Oct) is opposite the bus station, a short walk from the ferry terminal.

**usetheinternet** (☎ 768879; 9 Charing Cross, St Helier; per 15min £1; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun) is a few minutes' walk behind the tourist office.

## Sights & Activities

Formerly called Jersey Zoo, **Durrell** (☎ 860000; www.durrellwildlife.org; Les Augrès Manor, Trinity; adult/child

£11.50/7.40; ☎ 9.30am-dusk) is an inspiring place, far from the cooped-up misery of many of its counterparts. Founded by writer and naturalist Gerald Durrell, it focuses firmly on breeding endangered species then releasing them into the wild. The layout allows inhabitants remarkable freedom, with monkeys and lemurs roaming a natural, wooded environment. The talks given by enthusiastic keepers are recommended. Take bus 3A, 3B or 23 from the bus station.

The profound impact that the German Occupation had on thousands of individual worlds is told in the **Jersey War Tunnels** (☎ 860808; www.jerseywartunnels.com; Les Charrières Malorey, St Lawrence; adult/child £9/5; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Feb-late Dec, last admission 4.30pm). Here flickering film footage and personal testimonies fill the chilling kilometre-long passages of a former underground military hospital, hacked out of solid rock by forced labour. The tales are of personal courage, resistance, endurance and – sometimes – collaboration. Your ticket, in the form of an islander's identity card, means you find out more about the person you 'were'. History made human, it makes you ask what would you have done, and then – are you sure? Take bus 8A.

Perched high above the small port of Gorey, **Mont Orgueil Castle** (☎ 853292; www.jerseyheritage.trust.org; adult/child £6/5.20; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-dusk Fri-Mon Nov-Mar) is a fairy-tale tumbling of defensive styles which has undergone a remarkably imaginative restoration. Catapults, artefacts and thought-provoking artwork lurk amid dark corners, tiny alleyways and stone spiral staircases. It's a wonderful place to duck, twist, learn and marvel. If you have children, great. If you don't, become one again for a few hours. Bus 1 goes to the castle.

Jersey's **Maritime Museum** (☎ 811043; New North Quay, St Helier; adult/child £6/5.20; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar) is an interactive, whirling, lever-pulling delight. Here you build boats, change the wind direction, make waves and generally play at being King Knut. There are conventional exhibits too, but largely this is excellent education, by stealth.

On the wild, west coast, the 5-mile sandy beach at **St Ouen's Bay** is mind-expandingly big and backed by wind-sculpted dunes. **Pure Adventure** (☎ 769165; www.purejersey.com) offers sea-kayaking and land-yachting (two hours £35), while **Jersey Surf School** (☎ 484005; www.cisurf.com; Watersplash, St Ouen's Bay; wetsuit & board hire per

## VIVE LA DIFFERENCE

The Channel Islands have the kind of low tax rates (20%) that make mainlanders weep, and no Value Added Tax (VAT). They print their own version of the British pound – you can't use it on the mainland, but you can use British money on the islands. Posting mail requires local stamps and, not being in the UK, the islands have complex health arrangements – making private cover advisable.

Self governing, the Channel Islands are not part of the EU and really only rely on the UK for defence; laws passed in London have no automatic force. The islands also have their own languages: Jèrriais and Guernesiais – which borrow heavily from Normandy French. Spoken by a small number of islanders today, the dialect's legacy lingers in the local pronunciation of what visitors expect to be French sounding locations. Sometimes anglicised, sometimes not – try applying a Parisian accent to Jersey and Guernsey street names, and see the smiles in response.

2hr £10-15) does classes and equipment hire. Or hunt out **Le Pinade**, in the northwest. Stone Age quarry and Roman shrine, what really catches the eye here is the rock outcrop: pointy and made of pink granite, it's seen, somewhat inevitably, as a fertility symbol.

### Sleeping & Eating

Jersey Tourism operates a free reservations service, **Jerseylink** (☎ 448888). Book ahead in summer.

**Rose Farm Camping** (☎ 741231; La Rue de la Pigeonnerie; tent site & 2 adults from £17; 📞 📺 📶) A pretty, hilltop site with all the mod cons, half a mile from St Aubin.

**Harbour View** (☎ 741585; www.harbourviewjersey.com; Le Blvd, St Aubin; s/d £43/78; 📞 📺 📶 Mar-Oct) Stylish design, comfy leather sofas and a family atmosphere combine in an ivy-covered B&B on St Aubin's harbourfront. Great value.

**ourpick Old Court House Inn** (☎ 746433; www.oldcourthousejersey.com; Le Blvd, St Aubin's Harbour; s/d/ste £80/120/170) This 15th-century place oozes character and charm; here it's all low lintels and twisting staircases. Next to the water, the atmospheric rooms have stunning views, and the courtyard restaurant and schooner-shaped bar – made from old ship timbers – do first-class food (mains £15).

**Longueville Manor** (☎ 725501; www.longuevillemanor.com; Longueville Rd, St Savoir; s/d/ste from £205/260/530; 📞 📺 📶) Longueville is a stately Norman manor house, replete with warm stone, plush furnishings and rich woods. Exuding luxury, some suites have flat-screen TVs in the bathrooms, with fresh flowers and homemade shortbread in the rooms. With a top-notch restaurant (mains £30), it's a mile from St Helier.

**Boathouse** (☎ 744226; 1 North Quay, St Aubin; 📞 bar lunch & dinner, restaurant closed lunch Sat & Mon) Two storeys of timber and gleaming glass directly overlooking St Aubin's Bay. With bar meals downstairs (mains £9), restaurant upstairs (mains £16), this is super-stylish but still simple dining.

**Museum Brasserie** (☎ 510069; The Weighbridge, St Helier; mains £8.50-11.50; 📞 lunch daily, dinner Wed-Sat) Attached to Jersey Museum, spilling into a delightful courtyard and great for fresh fish.

**Suma's** (☎ 853291; Gorey Hill, Gorey; mains around £19; 📞 lunch & dinner) Small, smart and pale blue, Suma's does good Mediterranean-influenced food. Its little terrace overlooks Gorey Harbour.

Alternatively, stock up at St Helier's central and fish **markets** (Halkett Pl; 📞 7.30am-5.50pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Thu), grab a portable barbecue and do what the locals do – head to the sands of St Ouen's Bay to watch the sun go down.

### Getting There & Around

For information on getting to Jersey, see p942.

A taxi from the airport to St Helier costs around £8 (20 minutes). The Airport–St Aubin–St Helier bus 15 costs £1.60 (15 to 45 minutes). All bus routes on the island – including those to the sights – originate at St Helier's harbourside bus station. Useful routes include bus 1 to Gorey and 12a to St Ouen's Bay (fares 90p to £1.60).

Traffic is heavy. **Aardvark/Zebra** (☎ 736556; www.zebrahire.com; 9 Esplanade, St Helier), in the centre of town, hires cars (per day £30) and bikes (per day £10). **Jersey Cycletours** (☎ 482898; Corbiere Walk; per day £11) is in St Aubin.

### GUERNSEY

☎ 01481 / pop 60,285

At times being in Guernsey is like falling into a giant flowerbox – everything's in bloom. With a subtropical feel, the highly picturesque capital, St Peter Port, has narrow cobblestone streets winding up and down steep hills to the water's edge, where rafts of colourful yachts pack the harbours. A little further out, a seafaring rash of development has left its mark, and many locals worry that the island's character is being eroded. But Guernsey's chief appeal – its knack of conjuring halcyon days from green lanes and coastal fringes, where hiking the cliffs reveals dramatic scenery and gentle crescents of beach – remains.

### Orientation & Information

Guernsey is roughly 7 miles long by 5 miles wide. St Peter Port, or 'town', lies on its eastern edge. The south coast is steeper, with leg-testing cliff paths; land on the west and north slopes more gently towards the sea. The Bailiwick of Guernsey includes the smaller islands of Herm, Sark and Alderney.

The helpful **Guernsey Tourist Board** (☎ 723552; www.visitguernsey.com; North Plantation, St Peter Port; 📞 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat Nov-Mar) is on the waterfront, and there's an information desk at the airport. There's no internet café on the island, but the tourist office provides 10 minutes' free internet access.

### Sights & Activities

Of numerous appealing beaches, **Cobo** is recommended for surfing, northern **Pembroke** for family fun.

After being exiled from France in 1851 following Napoleon III's coup, Victor Hugo lived in St Peter Port for 14 years. His home, **Hauteville House** (☎ 721911; www.victorhugo.gg; 38 Hauteville; adult/child £5/free, guided tour only; 📞 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug), imprinted with his larger-than-life personality, has been preserved. It's all do-it-yourself opulence; Hugo gleefully searched out mundane objects to create a quirky interior world – check out the candelabra made of bobbins. Standing at his desk in the rooftop glass lookout where he wrote *Les Misérables*, on a clear day you can see France.

The tunnel network of Guernsey's **German Military Underground Hospital** (☎ 239100; La Vassalerie Rd, St Andrews; adult/child £3.50/1; 📞 2-3pm Sun & Thu Mar & Nov, 2-4pm Apr & Oct, 10am-noon & 2-4pm May-Jun & Sep, 10am-noon & 2-4.30pm Jul & Aug) has been left void and its frightening, echoing emptiness evokes the enforced labourers who died building it, and the German soldiers treated here. Outside, a display of 1940s newspapers and posters highlights the Occupation's overarching impact. Many speak volumes; one announces the execution of an islander for sending a carrier pigeon to England. With dripping, dank walls and vanishing corridors, this is a horrible place telling a horrible story – a compelling reason to visit. Take bus 4 or 5.

On the west coast, the **Shipwreck Museum** (☎ 265036; Fort Grey, Rocquaine Coast Rd, St Peters; adult/child £2.50/free; 📞 10am-5pm mid-Apr-Oct), is housed in an 1804 Martello (defensive) tower. Circular and pocket-sized, it still manages to cram in a wealth of detail about the incredibly hazardous local waters, and the ships and countless lives lost. Bus 7 runs to the museum.

If waiting for an interisland boat, join the locals at the rock-sculpted **bathing pools**, just south of St Peter Port harbour; hunt out a proper **Guernsey Jumper** (special pattern, special wool) in the shops in town; or get the key to **Victoria Tower** from **Guernsey Museum** (☎ 726518; Candie Gardens, St Peter Port; 📞 10am-4pm or 5pm). Curiously crenellated, the top affords the best view on the island.

### Sleeping

**Le Friquet** (☎ 256509; www.lefriquethotel.com; Rue de Friquet, Castel; s/d/ste £49.50/92/120; 📞 📺 📶)

A secret-garden getaway and old restored farmhouse with flagstone floors and exposed beams. Towards the middle of the island, the peaceful grounds are ideal for its renowned Sunday dinners. Catch bus 2 or the hotel can arrange bargain car hire for £10 a day.

**Old Government Hotel** (☎ 724921; www.theoghhotel.com; St Ann's Pl, St Peter Port; s/d/ste £125/185/215; 📞 📺 📶) Known locally as simply 'OGH', this is the kind of place where everything seems monogrammed. Formerly the official residence of the Guernsey governors, it's now a grand hotel; sparkling with marble and chandeliers. Lovely views of the harbour, Herm and Sark. It has a superswish spa too.

### Eating

Surrounded by sea life, almost close enough to France to smell the cooking, with stunning views and nestling in the heart of tax havens – little wonder restaurants in the Channel Islands are a delight. And Guernsey somehow pulls off the best blend. Here seriously stylish lobster-laden menus sit alongside some of the freshest – and cheapest – seafood sarnies around.

**La Crêperie** (☎ 725566; 18 Smith St, St Peter Port; crepes £6; 📞 lunch & dinner, closed Sun) Bustling, with tiny tables, great galettes and superdry Breton cider. This close to France, it would be rude not to indulge.

**Da Nello** (☎ 721552; 46 Le Pollet, St Peter Port; mains £13; 📞 lunch & dinner) Nello has been satisfying islanders' pasta appetites since 1978. Cosy ambience, soft lighting, excellent food. The lobster linguini is legendary.

**La Frégate** (☎ 724624; Les Cotils; St Peter Port; mains £15; 📞 lunch & dinner) On a hill above town, this stylish place has superb, simply prepared food and panoramic views. The three-course meals (lunch/dinner £18/26.50) are good value.

Beach kiosks, generally open daily in summer, are a definitive slice of laid-back island life. Look out for local crab rolls and homemade Guernsey Gâche (pronounced 'gosh'), a kind of teacake. Favourites include Portelet, Rousse and Petit Bôt kiosks, and Chouet Tea Rooms.

### Getting There & Around

For information on getting to Guernsey, see p942.

A taxi from the airport to St Peter Port takes about 15 minutes (£9). The bus (20 minutes) stops at the main, harbour-side station in town, where all services start (any journey

60p). **Value Rent-a-Car** (☎ 243547; www.valuerentacar.co.uk; per day £30) has outlets at the airport and harbour. **Electra Bike Hire** (☎ 726926; www.electra.org.uk; North Plantation, St Peter Port; per day £6) is near the tourist office, while **Millard & Co** (☎ 720777; www.millards.org; Victoria Rd, St Peter Port; per day £26) hires scooters.

Bus 7, with its round-island, coastal route (60p per trip), is ideal for mini-explorations; see somewhere appealing, hop off, swim, hop on another – sooner or later you'll end up where you started.

## HERM

☎ 01481 / pop 97

A 20-minute boat trip from Guernsey, Herm is a pretty island of white beaches and flower-strewn hills. It is a world in miniature (1.5 miles long and half a mile wide), totally geared up for the waves of holidaymakers landing on its shores; and at times can seem a little contrived. But once you're past the initial crowds it's still possible to luxuriate in its wheel-free atmosphere: no cars, motorcycles or even bicycles are allowed. Walking its circumference is an extremely pleasant way to spend a couple of hours.

The island has been overseen by the same family since 1949, but previous occupants included a Prussian count, who tried to establish a wallaby population, and Compton MacKenzie, author of *Whiskey Galore*. Today most people make a coast path beeline for **Shell Beach**, an undeniably beautiful spot for a swim, but it's also worth hunting out the remains of **Neolithic tombs** at the Common and the 10th-century **St Tugual's Chapel** in the centre.

## Sleeping & Eating

Self-catering accommodation and camping are booked through the island's **administration office** (☎ 722377; www.herm-island.com; tent site & 2 adults 1st night £17.30 then £10.80, high-season cottages per week from £600), which also cashes cheques.

**White House Hotel** (☎ 722159; www.herm-island.com; s/d half-board £85/170; 🍷) Upmarket, fairly formal, and appealing to a sedate crowd, this hotel's tranquil garden and rooms overlook the bay, giving superb views. The terraced restaurant does decent pub grub (mains £7).

**Mermaid Tavern** (☎ 710170; mains from £7; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Teaming with nauticalia, but somehow still not tacky. A lively atmosphere and a large, noisy courtyard.

The island has two beach kiosks.

## Getting There & Away

**Travel Trident** (☎ 721379) runs ferries to Herm from Guernsey (adult/child return £8.50/4.25, 20 minutes, six to eight daily from April to October). From November to March there are three return sailings on Wednesday and Saturday, only when the pub is open.

## ALDERNEY

☎ 01481 / pop 2400

Alderney is the third largest of the Channel Islands and is the closest to France, which is clearly visible only 8 miles away. Unlike its neighbours, as the Germans swept ever closer during WWII, virtually the whole population of Alderney opted to leave. The island was effectively turned into a forced labour camp; an estimated 6000 men endured terrible conditions, hundreds died. The fortifications, sobering on all the islands, have a particular resonance here. At times eerie, but also vibrant and undoubtedly beautiful, today it's home to a close-knit but friendly community – most evident in the cosy pubs at the end of the day.

A good time to visit is the first week in August, when the carnival and mayhem of **Alderney Week** takes place (but book ahead).

## Orientation & Information

St Anne is the pastel-painted, village-sized capital, with winding, cobbled streets, 15 minutes' walk from the airport. The port, Braye Harbour, is a similar distance north. The island has two ATMs.

**Alderney Tourism** (☎ 823737; www.alderney.net; Victoria St; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-4pm, closed Sun afternoon) shares an office with Alderney Wildlife Trust.

## Sights & Activities

**Alderney Wildlife Trust** (☎ 822935; Victoria St) can advise on guided walks, the island's win-some blonde hedgehog, and gannet and puffin colonies, all of which can be seen on a recommended two-hour, round-island boat trip (£12); get tickets at **McAllister's Fish Shop** (☎ 823666; Victoria St).

St Anne has a friendly **museum** (☎ 823222; 🕒 10am-noon daily & 2-4pm Mon-Fri Apr-Oct) with local history exhibits, relics of the Occupation and finds from an Elizabethan wreck.

## Sleeping

**Essex Lodge** (☎ 823557; Longis Bay; s £30-45, d £60-90) Elegant, with deft touches, this former

barracks has been sensitively converted to a classy guesthouse. Some rooms have tiny terraces overlooking a golden sweep of bay. It's remote, so a bike is handy.

**St Anne's** (☎ 823145; ingridmurdoch@hotmail.com; 10 Le Huret, St Anne; s/d £35/70) A fabulous guesthouse in the heart of town – enough old, twiddly bits for character, enough mod cons to be comfortable. Ingrid, the owner, volunteers at the tourist office and is a mine of information.

## Eating & Drinking

**Marais Hall** (☎ 822683; Marais Sq, St Anne; mains from £7; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Good-value food at one of the island's oldest pubs. Eat in the restaurant or the bar, and feel welcome either way. The homemade fish pie is superb.

**First & Last** (☎ 823162; Braye St, Harbourside; mains £16; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sat) A local favourite, with blue-and-white-checked tablecloths and a fishy theme, reflected in décor and menu. Try the excellent bouillabaisse.

## Getting There & Around

Aurigny and Blue Islands fly to Alderney from Bournemouth, Brighton, Guernsey, Jersey and Southampton, see p942. Manche Iles Express runs regular ferries from France via Guernsey, see p943, but these have been subject to change – check with the tourist office.

**Braye Hire Cars** (☎ 823881; per day £24) will deliver to the airport or harbour. **Pedal Power** (☎ 822286; Les Rocquettes, St Anne; per day £6) rents out bikes. For a taxi, call ☎ 823760.

## SARK

☎ 01481 / pop 580

Traffic-free Sark is small in size, big on anachronisms. The only engines here are attached to tractors; horses and carts are a picturesque means of travel for many visitors, the rest walk or cycle. It's also streetlight free, and cycling the dark paths at night is utterly magical – but bring a torch. With a deeply crinkled coastline, the island stretches 40 miles of cliffs and beaches from its compact dimensions: 3 miles long and 1.5 miles wide. Seemingly lost lanes, extraordinary views and a tangible sense of freedom make it reminiscent of childhood holidays you possibly never actually had; it is one of the most memorable of the islands.

Sark's system of government has long had more than a few feudal overtones, but these

days the 'ruler', the Seigneur, is more a Lord of the Manor figure. But enough glorious idiosyncrasies remain: only the Seigneur can keep pigeons, and road signs measure distances in 'minutes to walk', not miles.

## Orientation & Information

Steep-sided, the island is divided into Sark and Little Sark, and is linked by the isthmus La Coupée. The Avenue, the main concentration of shops, is 15-minutes' walk from the harbour, and is home to **Sark Tourism** (☎ 832345; www.sark.info; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11.15am-1.15pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jun & Aug, 10am-2pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar).

There is no ATM. The NatWest and HSBC banks (both open 10am to 3pm Monday to Friday) take an hour off for lunch. You can withdraw cash with your purchases from Island Stores.

## Sights & Activities

**La Coupée** forms a razor-edged path with a precipitous approach and vertiginous 100m drop; cyclists and carriage riders have to dismount before crossing.

The deeply aquamarine **Venus Pool**, a so-big-you-can-swim-in-it rock pool, can be found, at low tide only, on Little Sark's southern tip. For three hours of enthusiastic stories join George, a former fisherman, on a **round-island trip** (☎ 832107; trips adult/child £20/10) in his Sark-built boat.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Beau Sejour** (☎ 832034; www.beausejour.co.uk; Rue de la Seigneurie; s/d £32/64) This is a lovely, great-value B&B in an old granite building. The owner, Pauline, positively oozes *joie de vivre*. You can also rent the whole house (which sleeps six) and Pauline herself as your personal cook-cum-housekeeper for a bargain £230 a night.

**La Sablonnerie** (☎ 832061; www.lasablonnerie.com; s £51-82, d £102-164) Tucked away at the edge of Little Sark, this is a deeply comfortable converted farmhouse amid lush gardens. It has rustic yet grand rooms and a good restaurant (mains £15, open for lunch and dinner) and tea garden.

**La Moinerie** (☎ 832089; mains £15; 🍷 lunch & dinner, closed Mon, Sun evening) Delicious food at the foot of a typically leafy Sark lane. The huge portions of fresh fish have been caught by the owner.

## Getting There & Around

**Isle of Sark Shipping** (☎ 724059; [www.sarkshipping.info](http://www.sarkshipping.info)) sails from St Peter Port, Guernsey (adult/child return £22/11.20, 45 minutes), with five boats daily from April to October, and one boat Monday to Saturday between November and March. Day trips are a summer-only option. Manche Iles Express (see p943) runs

frequent services between Sark and France and Jersey.

An open-sided tractor-drawn cart pulls people and luggage up the harbour hill (be warned: it's dubbed 'the toast rack') or you can walk up the signed path. Horse-drawn carriages congregate at the beginning of the Avenue, near **Avenue Cycle Hire** (☎ 832102; bike hire per day £8).

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