

Guernsey History and Culture

Guernsey's living history book begins with Neolithic Man and the Les Fouillages burial mound, possibly the oldest man made structure in Europe.

The islands formed part of Normandy from 933, forging a link between Britain and France that survives locally in Norman Law, surnames and Guernesaise, the local language.

Guernsey sided with England in 1204 when King John lost Normandy to Phillippe Augustus of France. Castle Cornet was built to repel a French invasion and today houses some of the island's best museums.

Guernsey's heritage is inextricably linked to the sea and that close relationship is reflected in the way of life. The traditional Guernsey jumper is still used throughout the world and is famous for its warmth and water repellent wool.

The island was home to French poet Victor Hugo, whose house provides an intriguing monument to his 15-year exile. His creative spirit lives on in a non-stop programme of exhibitions and performances.

The 20th century also left its mark, when the islands became bulwarks in Europe's WWII Atlantic Wall. The legacy is a labyrinth of fortifications, plus fascinating museums that vividly recreate everyday life in the occupied islands.

St Peter's Port

Guernsey's capital has been a busy entrepôt since Roman times. Her deep, safe anchorage and relative remoteness from France made St Peter Port the Channel Islands' premier port, graced by the wealth of ship builders, privateers and merchant adventurers.

Georgian and Regency styles were enriched by an influx of French emigrés, including Victor Hugo, whose influences included Parisian-style urinoirs. Today the town is a captivating blend of styles, framed by a tumble of terraces and tiered gardens and criss-crossed by worn steps and hidden alleys.

Shopping in St Peter Port is an unmissable experience. Electronic and photographic equipment, jewellery and perfume are all good, low duty buys, along with wines, spirits and tobacco and of course the famous Guernsey jumper. Small boutiques offer exclusive clothes, shoes and leather goods, whilst the Old Quarter is the place to find antiques. But take time to just look around you.

After all, this is the Channel Islands' most beautiful town.

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