

Travel > Europe

The ultimate guide to Guernsey, the Channel Island that packs a historical punch

Our expert reveals how to have the perfect holiday, from quiet beaches to dark skies and unique wildlife

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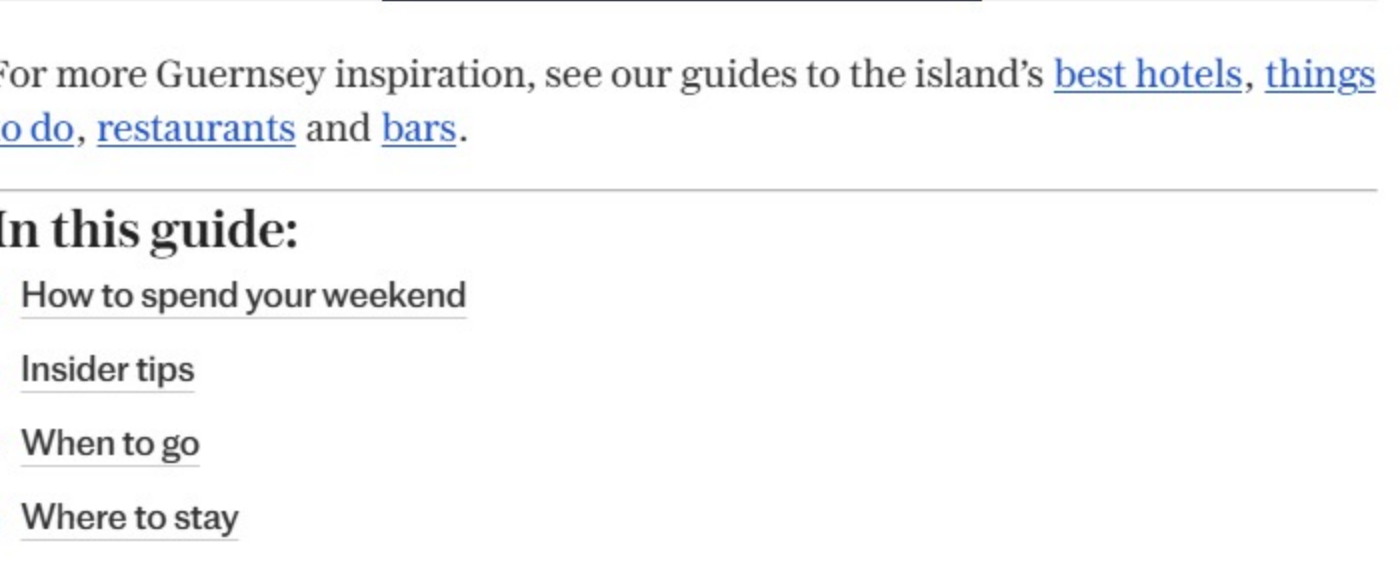


Discover how to spend a weekend in Guernsey, from local restaurants to leisurely outdoor activities. Credits: Christine/Getty Images

If you're looking for leisurely seaside days, platefuls of fresh local produce and cosy evenings in granite-built pubs, then you'll love [Guernsey](#).

The second largest of the Channel Islands is quieter than its neighbour Jersey. You won't find fast-food restaurants or a multiplex cinema here. Instead, life revolves around bracing cliff walks, rockpooling on quiet beaches, stopping for ice creams and crab sandwiches and ending the day with a pint at a beachside pub to watch the sun go down.

Also in the Bailiwick are three other islands, each with their own identity. You have tiny car-free Herm, which you can walk around in a day; slightly larger and also car-free Sark, the world's first dark sky island, which has a shed-like observatory in a field – and then there's Alderney, the most northerly of the islands, which has the most fortifications of anywhere in the world and unique wildlife including blonde hedgehogs and thousands of nesting northern gannets.



For more Guernsey inspiration, see our guides to the island's [best hotels](#), [things to do](#), [restaurants](#) and [bars](#).

In this guide:

- [How to spend your weekend](#)

- [Insider tips](#)

- [When to go](#)

- [Where to stay](#)

How to spend your weekend

Day one: morning

Head to Moulin Huet Valley to take the [Renoir Walk](#). The famous impressionist painter came to the island in 1883 and worked on 15 paintings during his stay, which all depicted views of Moulin Huet bay – one of which hangs in London's National Gallery.

The trail takes in five steel frames, through which you can see the views depicted in the paintings. A QR code on each frame takes you to an audio description of each painting narrated by an art historian.

End your walk at the [Renoir Tea Garden](#) where you can try the local Bar Jan (a traditional stew of beans and pork), or a slice of Guernsey Gâche, a fruit bread, with a cup of tea.

Afternoon

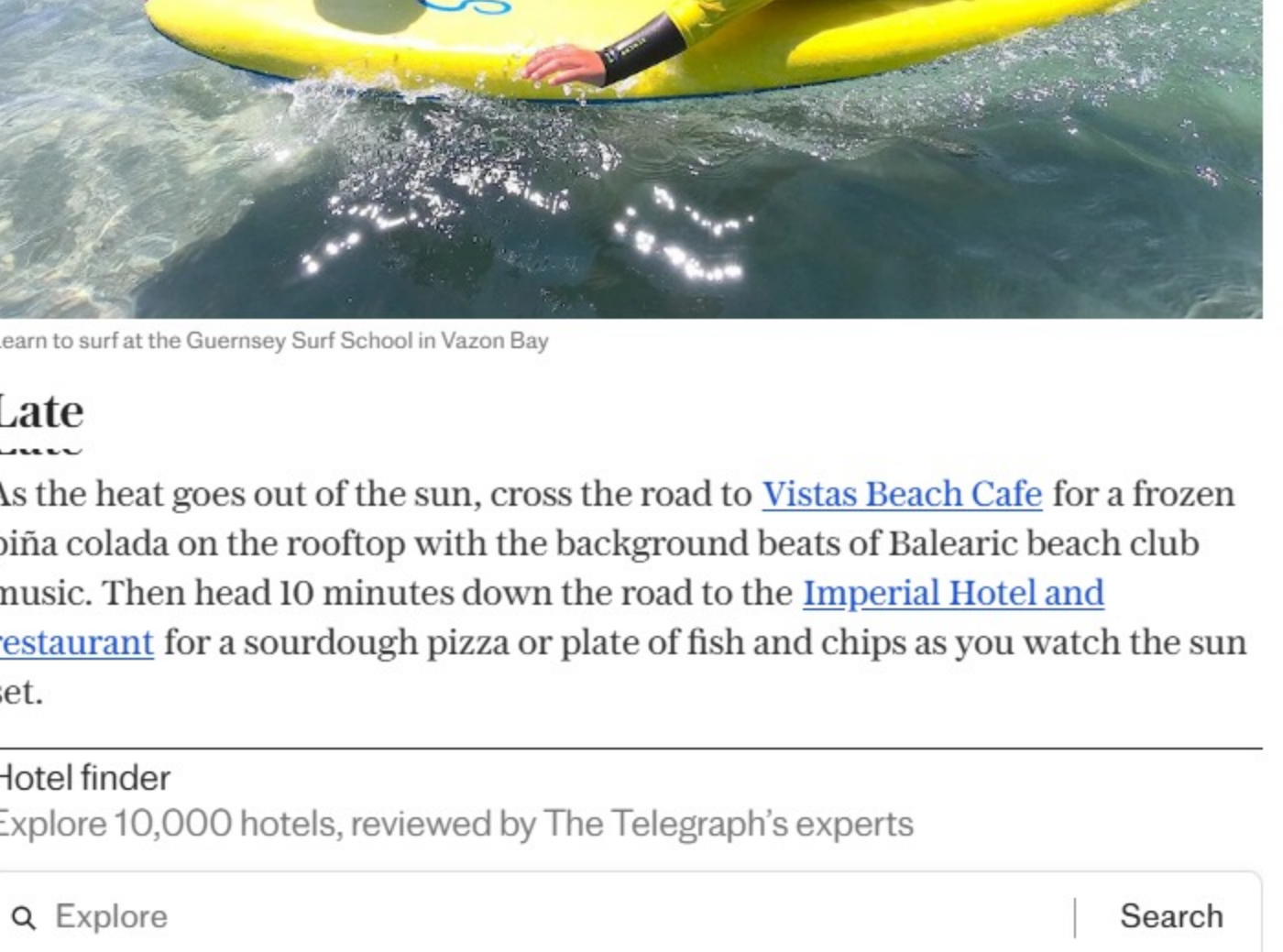
From Moulin Huet it's an 11-minute drive or one-hour walk to Rocquette Cider farm in wooded Fauxquets Valley. Take a guided tour of their extensive orchards followed by a tasting of their range, including a "Merry Berry" sweet raspberry cider and the cloudy medium-dry Fauxquets Valley cider. They also have an excellent fresh-pressed apple juice if it's too early for alcohol.



From here it's only a six-minute drive to Vazon Bay where you can relax on the beach watching the surfers or have a go yourself ([Guernsey Surf School](#) hires surf boards and offers lessons).



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Learn to surf at the Guernsey Surf School in Vazon Bay

Late

As the heat goes out of the sun, cross the road to [Vistas Beach Cafe](#) for a frozen piña colada on the rooftop with the background beats of Balearic beach club music. Then head 10 minutes down the road to the [Imperial Hotel and restaurant](#) for a sourdough pizza or plate of fish and chips as you watch the sun set.

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Day two: morning

Wake up and clear your head with a sea-water swim. The tidal range in Guernsey is pretty extreme so to be guaranteed a dip, head to the Victorian [La Yallette bathing pools](#), which are built into the rocks at Havelot Bay, at the southern edge of St Peter Port.

There are four pools to choose between, so you can opt to join the Mental Tentacles – a group of locals who swim here at sunrise every day – or can find solitude in a different pool.

The sun rises directly over the pools, painting them with an orange glow. If it's winter and you've been really brave to take a dip, you can treat yourself with a post-swim sweat in the [Hot Haus](#), a wood-fired sauna tucked into the cliff just behind the bathing pools and order a breakfast buttie from the café.



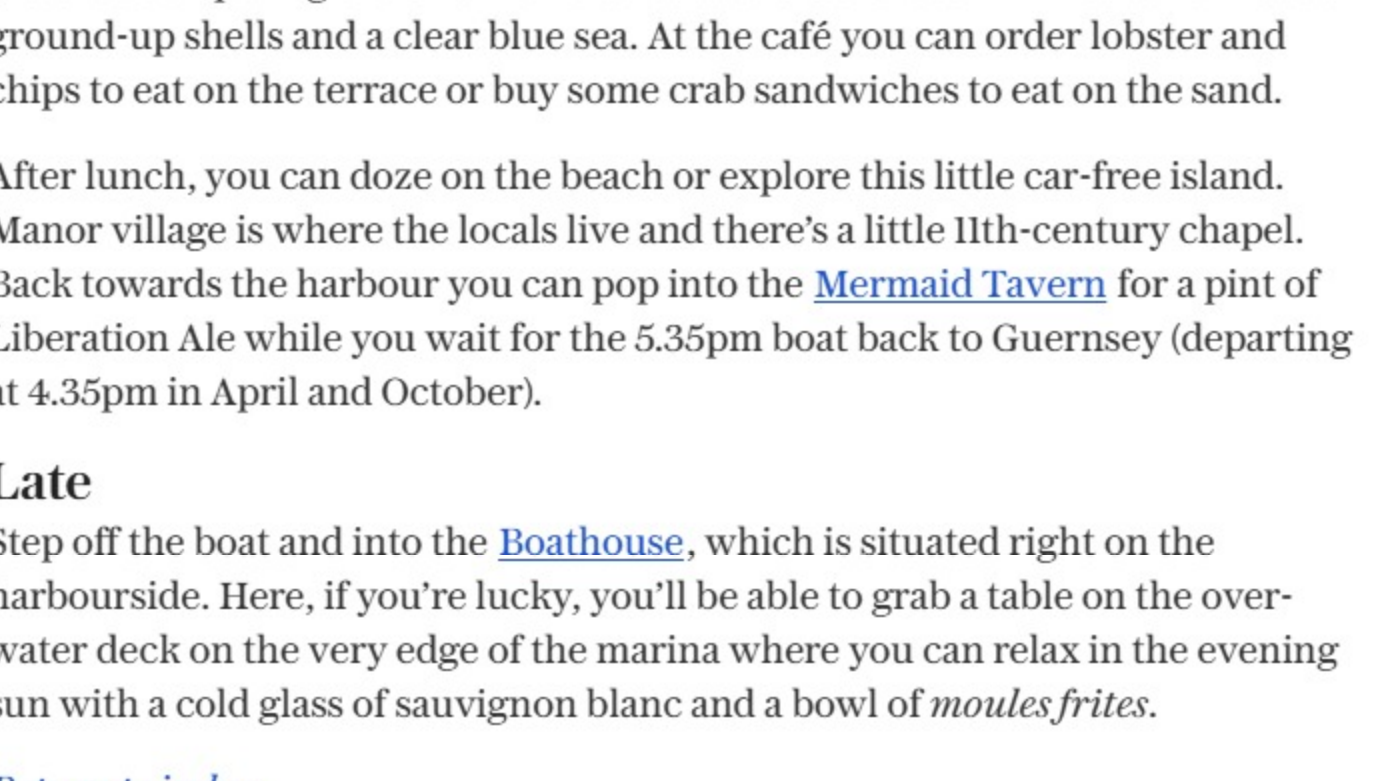
La Yallette bathing pools are built into the rocks at Havelot Bay

Once you're warm and dry, head to [Hauteville House](#), which is a 15-minute walk away. This was the home of French author Victor Hugo, who finished his famous tome *Les Misérables* from his writing desk at the top of the house. The interiors are an extraordinary insight into Hugo's creative mind as each room is elaborately decorated.

Downstairs is a corridor of crockery, including plates fixed to the ceiling, a kitchen with a "H" tiled into the fireplace and a "tapestry room" in which every surface is covered in tapestry.

Upstairs is a marvellous red sitting room that is filled with *objets d'art* and Chinoiserie, and an imposing oak gallery reminiscent of a courtroom. Everywhere are hidden inscriptions, which your tour guide will point out to you (you can only visit by guided tour, which lasts about an hour).

From here, you can walk down to the Inter Island Quay to catch the [Trident](#) boat to Herm Island. The walk takes about 17 minutes and you are walking along the seafloor most of the way. In July and August, boats depart every hour from 10.15am until 5.15pm; in other months from April to October a morning boat departs at 10.30am and again at 12.15pm.



The Trident boat carries passengers to Herm Island

Afternoon

You are heading to the [Shell Beach Café](#) for lunch, which is a 20-minute walk across the island along a meadow path. This is the beach you might have seen in pictures comparing the Channel Islands to the Caribbean – white sand made of ground-up shells and a clear blue sea. At the café you can order lobster and chips to eat on the terrace or buy some crab sandwiches to eat on the sand.

After lunch, you can doze on the beach or explore this little car-free island. Manor village is where the locals live and there's a little 11th-century chapel. Back towards the harbour you can pop into the [Mermaid Tavern](#) for a pint of Liberation Ale while you wait for the 5.35pm boat back to Guernsey (departing at 4.35pm in April and October).

Late

Step off the boat and into the [Beachouse](#), which is situated right on the harbourside. Here, if you're lucky, you'll be able to grab a table on the over-water deck on the very edge of the marina where you can relax in the evening sun with a cold glass of sauvignon blanc and a bowl of *moules frites*.

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Insider tips

Money saver

Come to the island in the autumn for [Tennerfest](#), a fixed-price food festival in which restaurants showcase their cuisine with set menus priced from £10. Tennerfest lasts for eight weeks from October 1 to November 30, which means you can dine out daily for little more than it would cost to cook at home.

Attractions

[The Little Chapel](#) is a tiny church decorated entirely in mosaics made of broken pottery, including lots of Wedgwood. It was created by a monk as a mini replica of the famous grotto and basilica at Lourdes. Go in the early morning or late afternoon to avoid a coach group (it's open 9am to 4pm in the winter and 9am to 6pm in the summer).

Neighbourhood watch

St Peter Port is the island's capital and where the bulk of the restaurants, bars and museums are situated. Wander the cobbled streets of the old town and explore the independent shops. Visit Castle Cornet to see the firing of the noonday gun by volunteers in 19th-century dress.



St Peter Port is home to many of the island's shops, restaurants and pubs. Credits: Chris George Photography

Did you know?

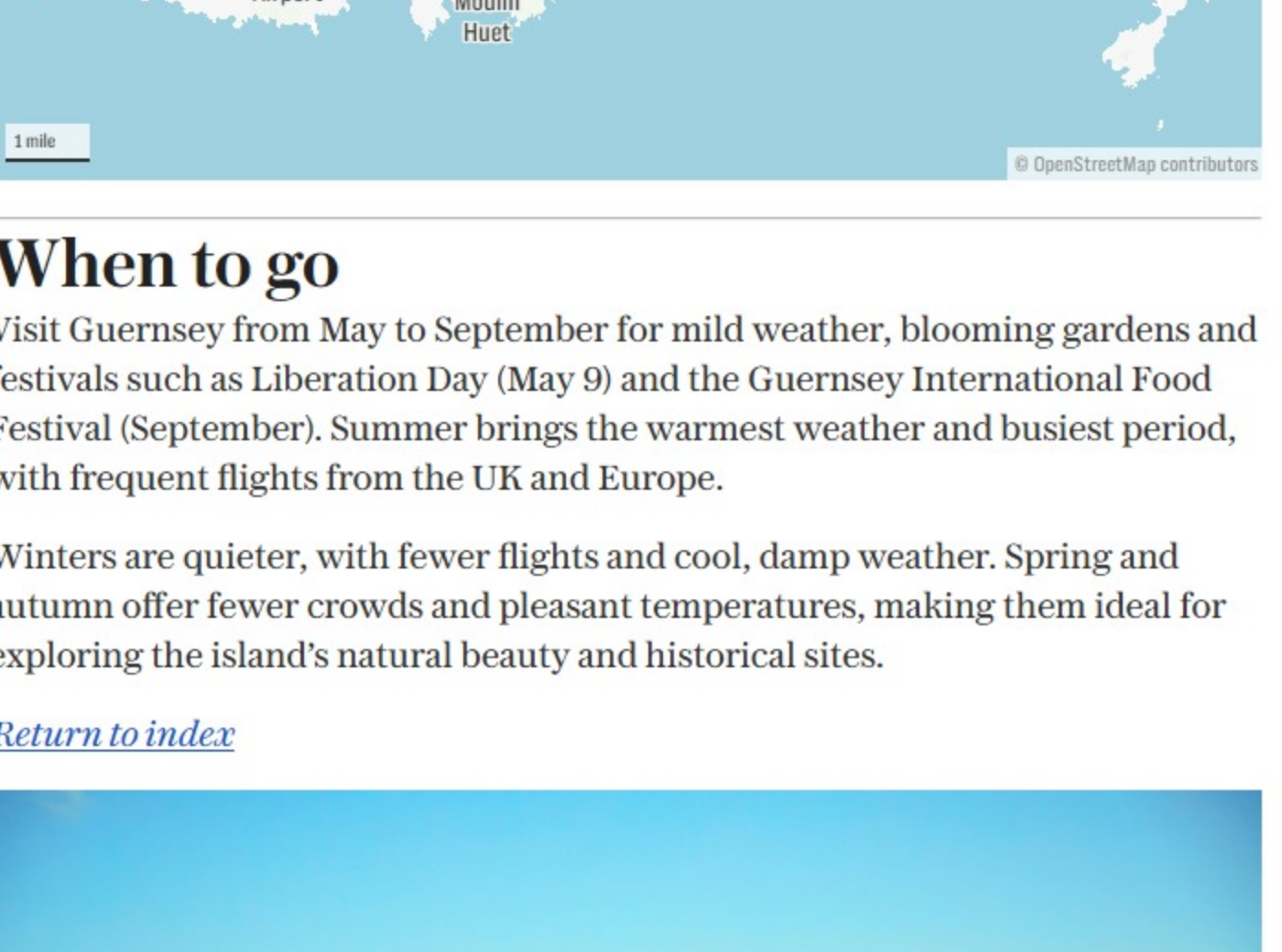
You can buy veg from the hedge in Guernsey? Small, unattended roadside stands known as "hedge veg" stalls are dotted around the island selling homegrown produce, flowers, eggs and even homemade jams. The system operates on an honour basis: buyers simply take what they want and leave the payment in a little box.

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How to get there and how to get around

You can fly to Guernsey from regional and international airports across the UK, including London Gatwick, Edinburgh, Dublin, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Southampton. The national airline is [Aurigny](#), while [Blue Islands](#) and [Loganair](#) also operate routes into the island.

If you want to bring your car, you can travel by ferry with [Brittany Ferries](#) from Poole or Portsmouth (cars can also be hired from the airport). Alternatively you can use [Guernsey buses](#) to get around for a single fare of £1.60 or various family pass options starting at £13. Or hire an [electric bike](#). Information on how to book a taxi is [here](#).

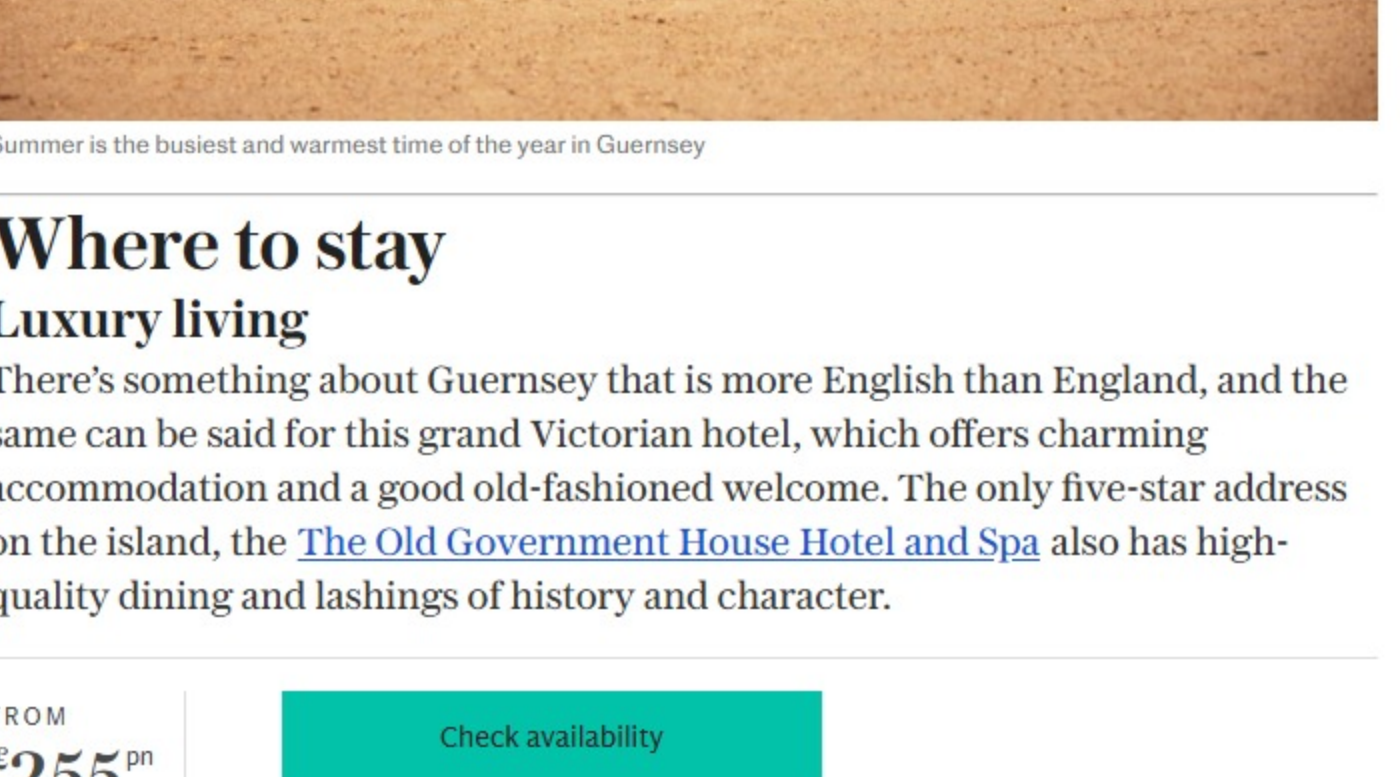


When to go

Visit Guernsey from May to September for mild weather, blooming gardens and festivals such as Liberation Day (May 9) and the Guernsey International Food Festival (September). Summer brings the warmest weather and busiest period, with frequent flights from the UK and Europe.

Winters are quieter, with fewer flights and cool, damp weather. Spring and autumn offer fewer crowds and pleasant temperatures, making them ideal for exploring the island's natural beauty and historical sites.

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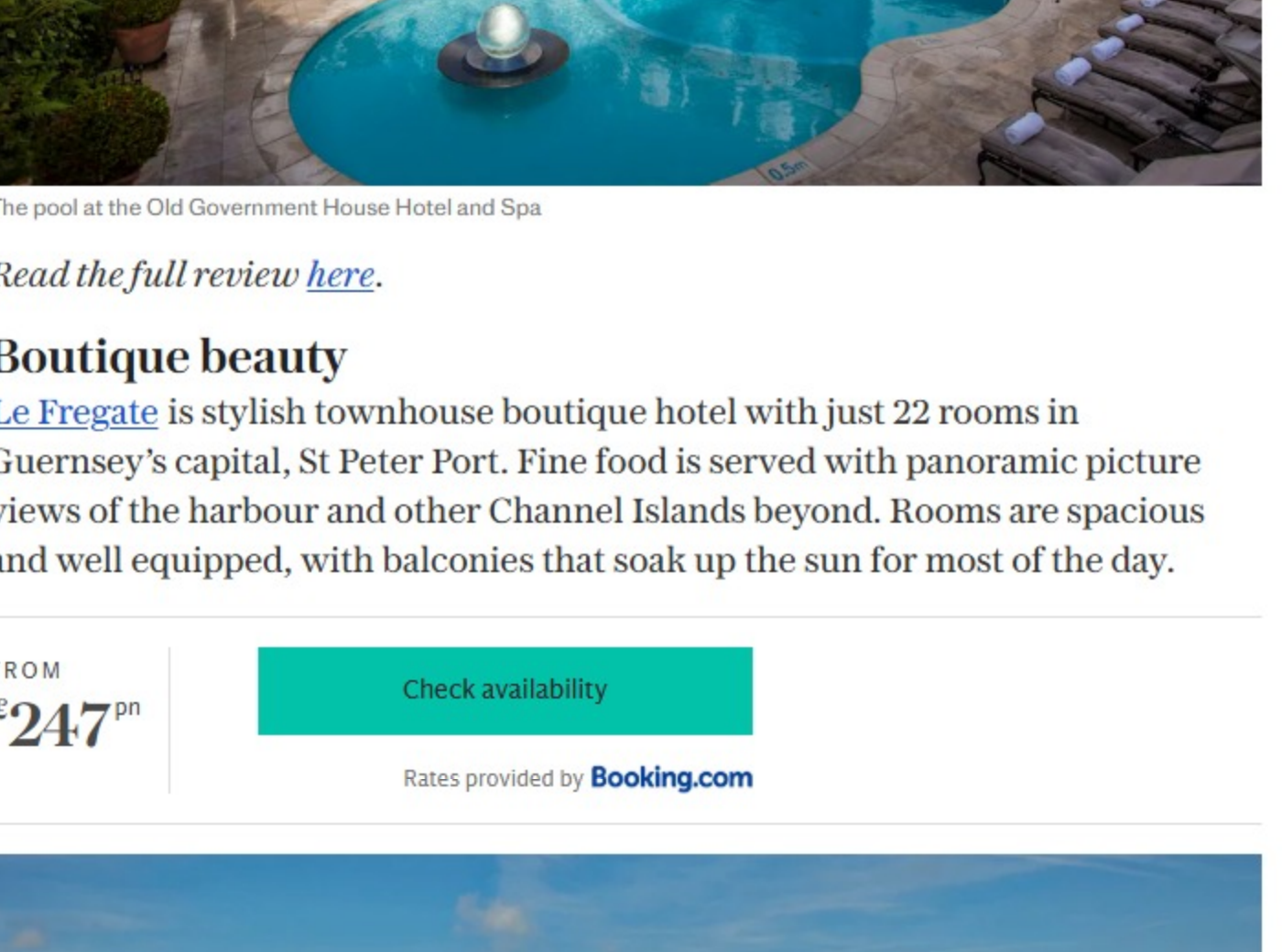
Summer is the busiest and warmest time of the year in Guernsey

Where to stay

Luxury living

There's something about Guernsey that is more English than England, and the same can be said for this grand Victorian hotel, which offers charming accommodation and a good old-fashioned welcome. The only five-star address on the island, the [The Old Government House Hotel and Spa](#) also has high-quality dining and lashings of history and character.

FROM **£253** [Check availability](#)
Rates provided by [Booking.com](#)



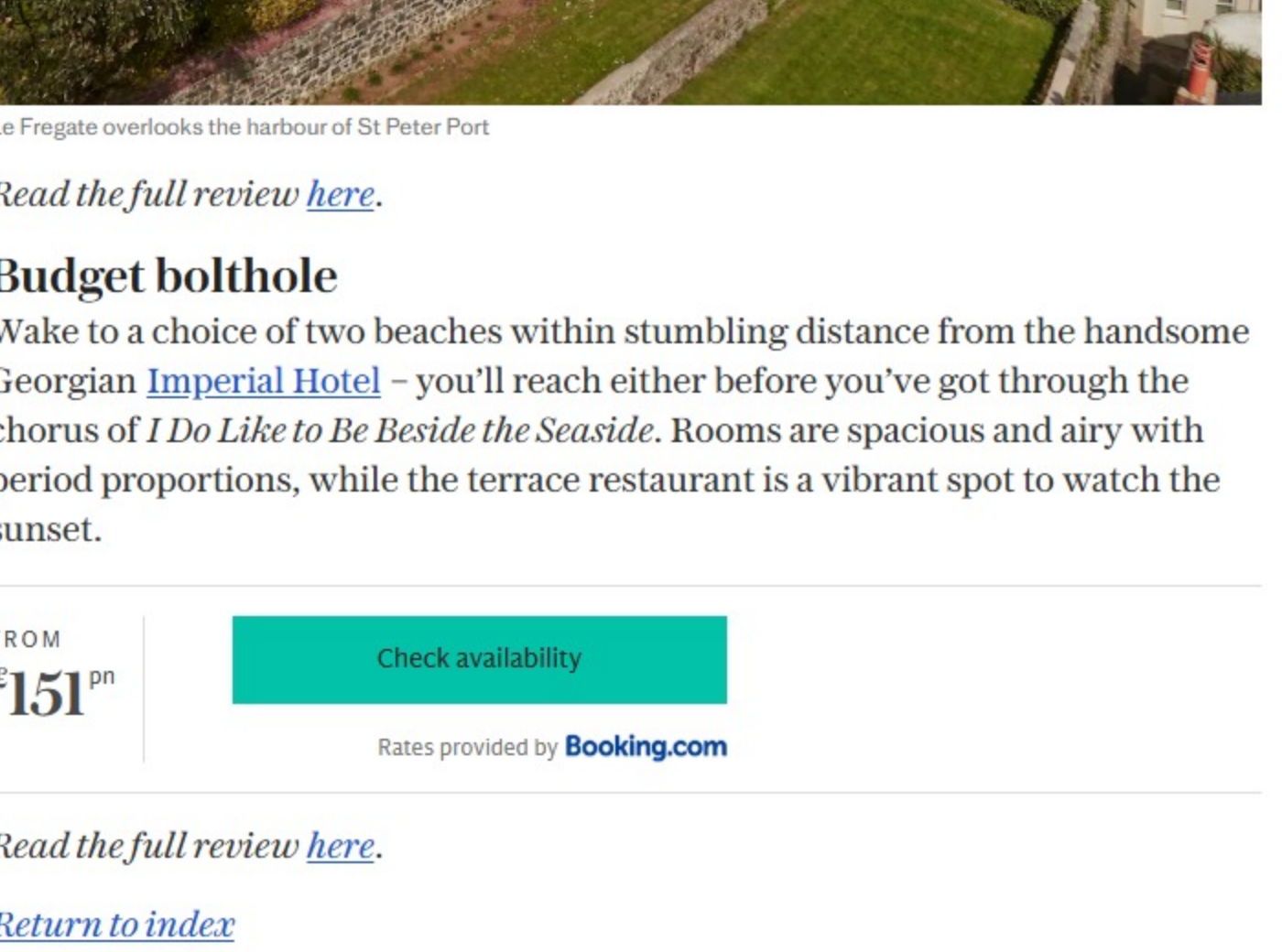
The pool is the Old Government House Hotel and Spa

[Read the full review here.](#)

Boutique beauty

[Le Fregate](#) is stylish townhouse boutique hotel with just 22 rooms in Guernsey's capital, St Peter Port. Fine food is served with panoramic picture views of the harbour and other Channel Islands beyond. Rooms are spacious and well equipped, with balconies that soak up the sun for most of the day.

FROM **£247** [Check availability](#)
Rates provided by [Booking.com](#)



Le Fregate overlooks the harbour of St Peter Port

[Read the full review here.](#)

Budget bolthole

Wake to a choice of two beaches within stumbling distance from the handsome Georgian [Imperial Hotel](#) – you'll reach either before you've got through the chorus of *I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside*. Rooms are spacious and airy with period proportions, while the terrace restaurant is a vibrant spot to watch the sunset.

FROM **£151** [Check availability](#)
Rates provided by [Booking.com](#)

[Read the full review here.](#)

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WHERE TO STAY

Discover more hotels in Guernsey

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Know before you go

Essential information

Tourist office: Guernsey Information Centre, The Market Buildings, Market Square, Market Street, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, GY1 1HE; 01481 223552; [visitguernsey.com](#)

Ambulance: St John Ambulance & Rescue Service, 999 or [ambulance.gg](#)

Police: Rue des Frères Hospital Lane, Guernsey GY1 2QN; Emergency 999, non-emergency 01481 222222

Fire: Emergency 999; non-emergency 01481 221111

Currency: Sterling (UK money can be used in Guernsey, but Guernsey money can not be used in the UK – they still use pound notes)

Telegraph code from abroad: +44 1481

Time difference: The time is the same as the UK GMT/BST

Travel time from London: 40 minutes by plane.

Local laws and etiquette

Driving in Guernsey is different to the UK: the roads are narrow and you are permitted to mount the pavement to pass an oncoming vehicle. The speed limit is 35mph islandwide (lowered to 25mph in some areas for the summer season).

Parking in Guernsey is free but you will need to display a parking clock, which can be purchased from the police station (Rue des Frères Hospital Lane, Guernsey GY1 2QN) or the Guernsey Information Centre (N Esplanade, Guernsey GY1 2LQ) for £5.30.

Medical treatment in Guernsey is covered by a reciprocal health agreement with the UK, so remember to bring your GHIC card with you.

Accessibility for travellers with disabilities

The islands of Guernsey have a number of provisions in place to make the islands as accessible as possible for visitors with different needs.

Beaches: There are many bays and beaches accessible for wheelchair users and [beach wheelchairs](#) are now available at Pembroke Bay.

Parking: The island recognises the blue parking badge scheme and allows visiting blue badge holders to use the accessible (Blue badge) parking spaces.

Transport: Guernsey's low-floor buses are designed to carry passengers with disabilities and have kneeling suspensions to make it easy to board. They are fully accessible for the vast majority of wheelchair users. Accessible taxis are also available on Guernsey.

Toilets: Access to most accessible public toilets is using the Radar National Key System. Bring your own key or pick one up from the Guernsey Information Centre or the information desk at Guernsey Airport.

About our expert

Antonia Windsor

I grew up in Jersey listening to my grandparents' tales of the German occupation and in adulthood ventured across the water to explore the rival islands of Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and Herm. I now know all the islands inside out and write extensively about them.

What did you think of this article?

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