

# Past and present

Take a deep dive into Jersey, where a host of historic attractions are being given a new lease of life this year, finds **Tamara Hinson**

Standing in a dimly lit bunker filled with Second World War relics, it dawned on me that Jersey is one of the few places where brand-new attractions regularly include ones rooted in the past. In this case, a bunker built by German soldiers during the Channel Islands' occupation in the war, recently opened to the public after a volunteer-led restoration.

Exhibits on display – many of which were only uncovered in the past two years – prove that Jersey is an island filled with reminders of its past. My guide pointed to a dented metal cabinet, used by the Germans to store military equipment, and explained that a local farmer had been using it as a toolbox but recently donated it after hearing about the restoration project.

Fresh from celebrating its 80th anniversary of liberation from occupation by German forces – which came on May 9, 1945, a day after VE Day in the rest of Europe – this month, Jersey is in the spotlight for other reasons too. They include the reopening of its opera house

after a major refurbishment, new guided tours of its wartime bunkers and a new DFDS ferry connection to Portsmouth, part of a 20-year contract that began in March.

## FROM SEA TO CITY

The bunker restoration was a collaboration between Jersey War Tours and Jersey Seafaris, two businesses that should be on agents' radars. Jersey Seafaris, based next to the bunker, specialises in rib boat tours which take place between late March and early October.

Boat trips even explore as far as the Écréhous, a cluster of rocks poking above the ocean six miles from Jersey and eight miles from France, on which a handful of isolated, windblown fishermen's cottages are perched. It's a brilliant excursion for wildlife-loving clients; during my two-hour trip, I spotted countless blubbery Atlantic grey seals sprawled on rocky outcrops.

There's plenty on offer for those clients who prefer dry land, including the reopening this autumn of the Jersey Opera House following a £12.7 million spruce-up. ➤

