

Cream of Jersey



Explore the best corners of this Channel island on a guided group tour, writes **Natalie Marsh**

I've been handed the identity card of Harold Le Druillenec MBE. On it are his date and place of birth, marital status, hair and eye colour. As we entered the Jersey War Tunnels, we were each given the details of a different person who will feature at some point during this fascinating walk-through of Jersey's history during the Second World War.

The war tunnels are one of the most popular historical attractions on the island of Jersey. They were constructed by the Germans during their period of occupation, firstly for shelter from possible Allied invasion and then, in 1943, converted into a hospital.

I eagerly read every sign as I navigate my way through the tunnels, searching for the name and face

on my identity card. But first, I spot a photo of a building I recognise, the Pomme d'Or hotel. Located in Liberation Square in capital St Helier, the hotel was the German naval headquarters throughout the occupation, and also happens to be our home for this five-night escorted tour with Cosmos. Staying there, and then learning about the building's significance, feels like a poignant connection to the past.

TASTE OF TOURING

It's my escorted touring debut, although it's not a first for Cosmos, which has returned to Jersey for the first time since the early 1980s with its brand-new Jersey Island Discovery tour. The six-day tour weaves in ➤

St Brelade's Bay
PICTURE: Visit Jersey/
Andy Le Gresley

DESTINATIONS

ESCORTED TOURS | JERSEY



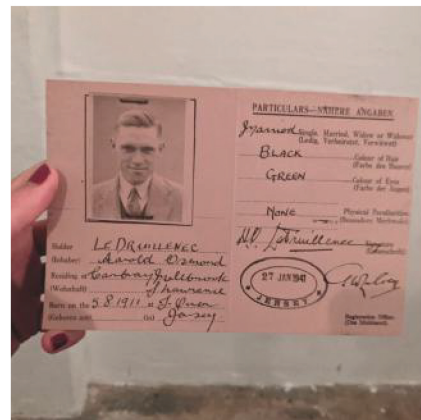
Janet Parton,
director of sales and
marketing, Cosmos

“Jersey is the perfect island for an escorted tour. It has everything: history, stunning scenery, superb beaches and unique experiences. Excursions take guests to the War Tunnels, St Helier, La Corbière lighthouse, St Aubin’s Bay and the stunning La Mare Wine Estate.

And thanks to the hotel’s location, guests can explore independently at ease. Take ‘Le Petit Train’ from outside the hotel to St Aubin, visit the Botanic Gardens at Samarès Manor, see St Elizabeth Castle, take the castle ferry or simply sample local seafood at a quayside bistro then enjoy some retail therapy in St Helier. For the more adventurous, there’s paddleboarding and kayaking off St Brelade’s Bay.”



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Elizabeth Castle; identity card for Harold Le Druillenc; writer Natalie Marsh at the Jersey War Tunnels; La Corbière lighthouse PICTURES: Visit Jersey; Cosmos



some of the island’s highlights, balanced with free time for travellers to explore as they wish.

Jersey is the largest of the Channel Islands, but it’s still relatively small, measuring just nine by five miles. On our tour, we twist and turn along the country lanes by coach, taking in the perimeter of the island from its hilly north to its beachy south – after which it doesn’t feel so small after all. It’s easy to get around too, with a network of notoriously prompt buses that can take you to most places across the island for a fixed fare of £2 by contactless card or £2.40 in cash.

There are 12 parishes in Jersey and each touches the coastline, where visitors can see for themselves one of the largest tidal ranges in the world. Around some parts of the island, the receding waters reveal unusual seabeds, rockpools and even a walkway out to Elizabeth Castle (those visiting the castle at high tide need to take the amphibious Castle Ferry). Watching the tide go out at St Aubin’s Bay made the beach seem to stretch away forever, with only a small strip of water visible on the horizon, poised to sweep back in.

GETTING THERE

Jersey is just a 45-minute flight away and, being part of the Common Travel Area, is straightforward to get to, even in the Covid-19 era. Visitors fill out a form pre-departure and take a free PCR test on arrival, but don’t need to isolate until receiving their results, provided their second vaccination was at least two weeks previously. No Passenger Locator Form is needed for the journey home.

Double vaccination is a requirement for this Cosmos tour, and the company has put in extra measures to help guests feel safe. The tour kicked off with a safety video explaining the enhanced procedures in place, which included mask wearing and distancing on our coach. Our tour director, Julie Anne, took our temperatures each morning for extra reassurance.

The back of the *Jersey Duchess* – the name of the boat we climbed aboard for our coastline excursion – was also reserved just for us, and heading out to sea was a wonderful way to appreciate how dramatic the Jersey coastline really is. Rugged cliffs interspersed the beautiful golden sandy beaches, as our boat took a wide berth, avoiding the jagged seabed below.

There’s something very liberating about floating on the water, with waves lapping the side of the boat. It was a reminder that you don’t have to travel far to feel like you’re far away. **TW**

BOOK IT

The six-day Jersey Island Discovery tour from **Cosmos** costs from £779 per person, and includes hotel accommodation, coach travel, a tour director, five breakfasts and one dinner, and some excursions. Price is based on an April 17, 2022, departure, with further availability in May, June, September and October. cosmos.co.uk