



# TO ST HELIER AND BACK

Mike Ward finds himself in foodie heaven on the island of Jersey

**T**ell me, is it normal to get as excited as my wife does about new potatoes? “Ooh, Jersey Royals!” Julie will shriek whenever they appear in the shops. “How fantastic!”

I mean, yes, they *are* great. A jewel among spuds. But do get a grip, dear: people are starting to stare.

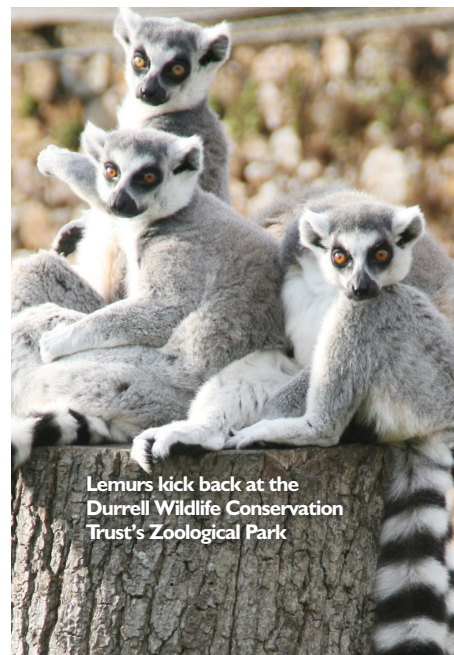
To be fair, though, the island of Jersey itself – setting for her latest potato-triggered outburst – can do that to you. It gets you shamelessly excited about simple pleasures: superb fresh produce, breathtaking scenery, wonderful hospitality – and even, throughout our weekend, blissful weather.

Besides, we’re tucking into this particular treat – a portion each of fresh royals, served in their own little cardboard punnet with a wooden fork – during Jersey’s food-themed Fete De La Mer, held at the picturesque harbour at Gorey. So I guess going mildly nuts about the fare on offer is only right. In fact, I fancy the barbecued sardines next. And some of that squid.

To be honest, there’s just one thing stopping us staying at this event all day, and that’s the fact we’ve so much other stuff to pack in.

I know it sounds nerdy, but planning is really important if you’re on Jersey for a weekend (“on?” or “in”? I’m still not entirely sure). Julie and I are staying from Friday to Sunday, and our itinerary is pretty packed. Packed in a nice, leisurely sense, I grant you.

Friday, for example, has already taken us to beautiful St Brelade’s Bay – its wonderful



Lemurs kick back at the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust’s Zoological Park

Above: Jersey’s capital, St Helier

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church and adjacent Fishermen’s Chapel perched on a hill overlooking the vast and mostly deserted beach (deserted on the Friday at least) – then north for a tasting tour around La Mare Wine Estate.

Saturday has taken us to St Helier (the capital) for a brief trip around the main shopping centre (with bargains to be had, thanks to the lack of VAT). We’ve then paid a visit to the stunning Marilyn Monroe exhibition at Jersey Museum, a collection of outfits owned by eccentric islander David Gainsborough Roberts (the museum also houses plenty of other exhibits and is a great way to learn about the history of the island).

Finally, after the Fete De La Mer, we’ll be heading to the award-winning Jersey War Tunnels, to learn about the Nazi occupation of 1940-45. It’ll prove a fascinating, humbling experience, outlining how ordinary islanders were forced to adjust to the presence of their German invaders.

With the weather still perfect, the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust – where gorillas, lemurs and meerkats are among many threatened species the team are working to save – makes the perfect



#### Yachts in sleepy St Aubin's Harbour

setting for our final morning. The afternoon will be whiled away at the magnificent Open Garden at St Etienne.

Over the course of three days we'll have skimmed only Jersey's surface. But then, as I say, we've hardly sped around at breakneck speed. We've soaked up scenery, sampled pubs, and eaten in all kinds of establishments – from the Boat House at St Aubin's Harbour (three courses for £25) to the tasty, no-nonsense Italian fare at nearby Murray's. Oh, and not forgetting the Crab Shack at St Brelade's. Excellent fish and chips.

Our hotel, I must add, has been splendid. The Somerville, perched on the hill overlooking St Aubin's Harbour, is traditional in all the right ways: lovely rooms, great service and food that puts many a fancy restaurant to shame.

We'll be heading back to Jersey very soon, I'm sure, to sample different elements of the island. It's a living community with a unique personality, blending English and French influences (as you'd expect from a Crown Dependency off the Normandy coast). And it leaves you feeling like a guest, not a tourist. It has high standards, too. "Jersey Royals *must* be fresh," one local told us. "If I've had some for more than a day or so, I just throw them away..." My wife remains in shock.

#### WAY TO GO

For flights to Jersey, go to [www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com) or call 0871 700 2000. Rooms at The Somerville Hotel start from £112 per night ([www.dolanhotels.com/The-Somerville-Hotel](http://www.dolanhotels.com/The-Somerville-Hotel)). Visit [www.jersey.com](http://www.jersey.com) or call 01534 448800.

## Ten things you must do in Jersey

**1** Visit the magnificent Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, established by the late Gerald Durrell to save threatened species.

**2** Explore the Jersey War Tunnels, an award-winning exhibition telling the story of the Nazi occupation during the Second World War.

**3** Stroll around La Mare Wine Estate, where they also make delicious biscuits and chocolate.

**4** Relax at the Jersey Lavender Farm at St Brelade. The lavender is harvested by hand to make a whole range of products.



**5** Step back in time at Mont Orgueil Castle, the medieval fortress overlooking Gorey Bay.

**6** Pause to reflect in the tiny Fishermen's Chapel at St Brelade. Some believe its walls date back to the 6th Century.

**7** Enjoy a drink or a meal overlooking picturesque St Aubin's Harbour, especially beautiful at sunset.

**8** Visit the Central and Beresford Markets in St Helier. One specialises in local produce, the other in fish.

**9** Head to the Jersey Museum and Art Gallery. It currently houses a stunning exhibition of Marilyn Monroe's outfits, owned by local collector David Gainsborough Roberts.



**10** Jersey has many great one-off events, all year round. Jersey Live 2010 is a music festival on September 4 and 5. Paul Weller tops the bill.