

THE PERFECT WEEKEND IN...

THE BAILIWICK OF GUERNSEY

The route: Fermain Bay & Petit Port Bay (Guernsey); Dixcart Bay & Havre Gosselin (Sark); Belvoir Bay & Rosaire Steps (Herm)

Some years ago, a survey concluded that the people of Guernsey were among the happiest in the world. I suspect that the survey was conducted in St Peter Port, the beautiful island capital, and that many of the respondents were also boat owners! Located near the Normandy coast, Guernsey benefits from wonderful outlying islands: Herm is just three miles to the east, while Sark lies six miles to the south-east. Relatively cheap mooring fees and tax-free diesel only add to the appeal of this stunning cruising ground.

SATURDAY MORNING

As a visiting boater, it makes good sense to start your weekend with your boat safely berthed in St Peter Port's Victoria Marina in the heart of the town. There's plenty here to keep you entertained and you can plan your trip according to wind and tide. Fermain Bay lies due south, just over a mile from town. Safely anchored close to shore, a short row in the dinghy brings you to the pebble beach where an early morning coffee at the excellent café kick starts the day. Petit Port is another idyllic destination, just round the headland on Guernsey's south coast, a circular trip covering less than three miles. Access is easy by boat but landlubbers face a steep descent via 300 steps cut into the cliff face!

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

The sound of the traditional noon-day cannon firing on Castle Cornet resounds in the bay, signalling that it's time to set off and sample the delights of Sark island, where the pace of life slows further still. Navigation is straightforward – there is ample deep water en route to Dixcart Bay on Sark's south coast; just route 100m south of L'Etac, a rocky islet.

Sark is three miles long and, with no cars on the island, you really feel like you are taking a step back in time. Here it's all about taking in life's simpler pleasures, such as strolling along the tree-lined lanes or renting a bicycle. Those that like to indulge might enjoy a ride on a horse-drawn cart, where the stress will drop away with the sound of hooves clip-clopping along the unmade roads. Sign posts here measure distances in minutes rather than miles, adding to the old world, relaxed pace of island life.

Renowned British businessmen, Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay, live on neighbouring Brecqhou Island and have invested enormously in Sark's infrastructure. I like to eat at the beautifully preserved Dixcart Hotel – once a haunt of Victor Hugo – or Aval du Creux. Worth a visit, too, are the walled gardens of La Seigneurie, especially in their summer splendour.

PROFILE

THE AUTHOR

Patrick Goddard has been boating in Guernsey for 20 years. He cruises regularly in his Bénéteau Antares 9, *Sea Magic*, accompanied by his friend Steve Guilliard on board his Botnia Targa 35, *Armorique*.



Tranquil Fermain Bay in Guernsey



Photo: Alamy

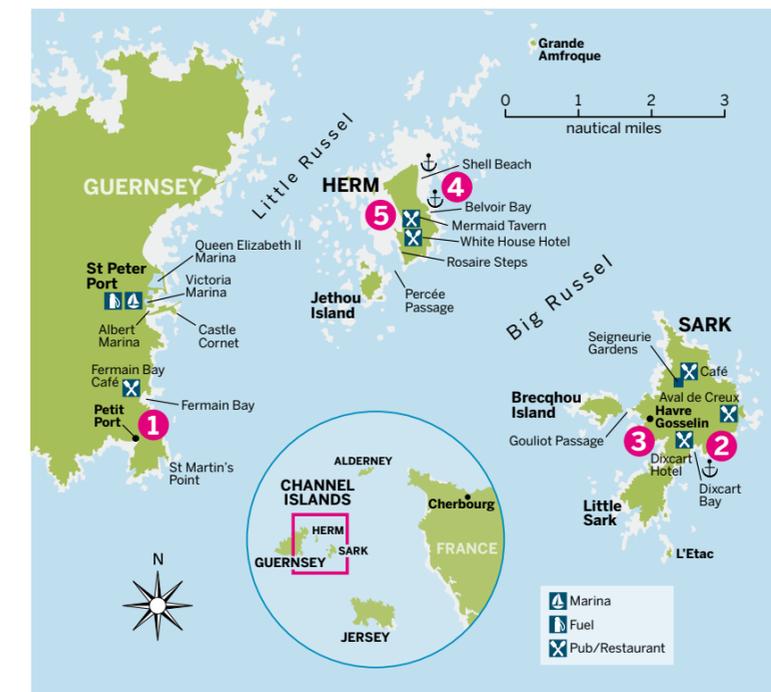
Photo: Alamy

Dixcart Bay on Sark's east coast has two sandy beaches

With no cars on the island, Sark feels like a step back in time. Here it's all about taking in life's simpler pleasures and strolling along the tree-lined lanes



Sign of the times: in Sark distances are measured in minutes



3 SATURDAY EVENING



West-facing Havre Gosselin is a beautiful protected harbour

The Barclay brothers' castle peers down from Brecqhou's clifftops



Armorique motors out of Havre Gosselin



4 SUNDAY MORNING

Crescent-shaped Belvoir Bay on the island of Herm



Photo: Alamy

FAVOURITE MARINAS

The two local marinas in St Peter Port, Guernsey, are the old Albert Marina where I keep *Sea Magic*, and the newer QEII marina, which lies to the north of town. In-between lies the visitors Victoria Marina in the heart of the capital.



Albert Marina

FAVOURITE EATERIES

- Guernsey:** Fermain Bay Café (Tel: +44 (0)1481 238 636)
- Sark:** Dixcart Bay Hotel (Tel: +44 (0)1481 832 015)
- La Seigneurie Gardens (Tel: +44 (0)1481 832 208)
- Aval de Creux Hotel (Tel: +44 (0)1481 832 036)
- Herm:** White House Hotel (Tel: +44 (0)1481 722 159)

HANDY FUEL BERTHS

Boatworks Plus for petrol, tax-free diesel, and a wide selection of chandlery (Tel: +44 (0)1481 726 071).

NAVIGATION NOTES

The Channel Islands have significant tidal ranges and care should be taken during peak tidal streams and in wind-over-tide conditions. The route to Sark is straightforward but Herm can appear daunting on a chart. Plan well and it will be the weekend's highlight.

Herm's White House Hotel serves up excellent food



Rosaire Steps, Herm



SATURDAY EVENING

I have to admit that I'm a cautious soul and wouldn't be happy anchoring up for the night in an area beset with large tides. I prefer to head west and tie up to one of the buoys in Havre Gosselin, catching a few mackerel for evening dinner on board. The beauty of having a west-facing harbour is the chance to watch the sun drop below the sea over a chilled glass of wine. Afterwards, it's worth taking the short dinghy ride ashore to visit one of the many fine restaurants – just remember to take a torch for the return trip! Large tidal ranges, together with swell from passing boats, can damage dinghies left afloat and most visitors now carry their craft up the first flight of steps and leave them on their side on the landing.

SUNDAY MORNING

I always wake early – it's the best part of the day. With the seagulls noisily announcing the arrival of another dawn, I like to take the short hop through the Gouliot Passage – the route between Sark and Brecqhou where slack water is at half tide – but beware, the tidal stream peaks at over 7 knots, when the water will rough up for a few hundred metres and have you holding your breath as you navigate what looks like a narrow gorge in white water rafting territory! Leaving behind the Barclay brothers' magnificent castle to the south, I head towards Herm island's east coast and Belvoir Bay. It's never particularly busy here and a trip ashore is a must in order to visit Shell Beach, a few hundred metres away. The beach takes its name from the exotic shells carried on the Gulf Stream and deposited on its shores. Back on board again, it's time to move to Herm's west coast for lunch at the White House Hotel. The route that I take depends more on the season than the prevailing winds, and nature spotters are in for a treat. North-about is a much longer reef-ridden route but boating past Grande Amfroque – a large rock – it's possible to spot docile seals that have made the rock their home. The southerly route via Percée Passage, between Herm and Jethou Island, provides a chance to spot puffins nesting on Herm's south coast. Just take special care to keep your speed down.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

I like to cruise past Rosaire Steps, where the Herm Trident ferry drops visitors, carrying on a few hundred metres to anchor just north of the small harbour, adjacent to the White House Hotel. The anchorage will by now be bustling with fellow boaters, and I have seen divers slowly making their way back to craft, so do approach with care when on the move.

The White House will now be beckoning, along with the prospect of taking in the scenery over a well-earned lunch accompanied with a pint of beer or glass of wine. I love the view back across the Little Russel channel, through the many outlying reefs and over to St Peter Port. What a magnificent sight! And getting back is a doddle – the well-marked Alligande Passage shows you the way to Guernsey. **MBY** **Next Month:** Falmouth, Cornwall.

DO YOU HAVE A PERFECT WEEKEND? If you'd like to show fellow *MBY* readers how to spend the perfect weekend in your home waters, drop an email to hugo_andreae@ipcmedia.com. We pay for successful submissions!

5 SUNDAY AFTERNOON

An aerial view of Herm's turquoise waters

