Jersey

Location

The Bailiwick of Jersey is located in Europe and has a total area of 45 square miles. Jersey is the largest of the Channel Islands, which are located in the English Channel, off the coast of Normandy, France, and include Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, Herm, and Jethou. Jersey is 9 miles long and 5 miles wide. The island is 14 miles north of France and 100 miles south of Great Britain. It is bordered on the north by the English Channel and on the south by the Bay of Mont St Michel. Its political boundaries also include the reefs of Minquiers and the Ecrehous.

Geography

The geography of the island is mainly gentle and rolling, with rougher hills along the northern coast with the English Channel. The highest point is 143 meters, while sea level is the island’s lowest point. The island’s location in between the Bay of Mont St Michel and the English Channel gives the island tidal ranges of over 40 feet, among the largest range in the world. Most of the island is a plateau which sweeps towards sea level as one travels south. The west end of the island features St Ouen’s Pond, which is Jersey’s largest fresh water source. The interior of the island is home to pastoral grazing lands and home to most of Jersey’s agriculture.

Climate

Jersey’s climate is quite temperate, due to its location in the English Channel. The island is the sunniest place in the British Isles with an average of over 1,951 hours per year. The average daily temperature in winter is 6 degrees C, while in summer the average is 17 degrees. The average rainfall from 1961 to 1990 was 859.9mm per year.
History

Evidence found on the islands show that the first humans arrived on present-day Jersey 80,000 years ago, when Jersey was connected to the mainland of France. The island shows up in Roman records as “Andium”, a subdivision of Gaul. The Vikings were known to raid the islands in the mid-900’s. In 933 A.D. the island came under Norman rule, which is the basis of its system of laws today. In 1204 with the Treaty of Paris, the island became a part of England, however it kept close cultural and religious ties to France.

The island took up an important strategic purpose during the 100 Years War between England and France from 1337-1453 and became a site of near constant attack for its position off the French coast. For the next 300 years, the island was always involved in frequent military actions between the English and the French.

In 1781, the capital of St Helier was captured by the French and a battle known as the Battle of Jersey took place in which the British, under Major Francis Peirson, disobeyed English orders to surrender and instead routed the French forces, during their last attempt to capture the islands. During the rule of Napoleon, many French, loyal to the monarchy fled to Jersey and lived in exile.

Peace prevailed on the island for the next 100 years and many technological advancements were made, including the deepening of the harbor at St Helier, the establishment of a representative type government and the beginning of a transition towards the adoption of English as the common-use language of the island.

On June 17, 1940 the British government began to evacuate the island in the face of a certain German attack. Six thousand five hundred residents fled to England out of a population
of 51,000. On July 1, 1940 the German Army, aided by aerial bombing invaded the island. Life under Nazi occupation was difficult and some islanders were deported to prisons in Germany.

The Royal Navy liberated the Channel Islands on May 8, 1945, which was V-E Day; the day that Germany capitulated to the Allied Forces. The island was rebuilt and many of the natives who fled to Britain before the war returned and adapted back to Jersey’s way of life. After the war, Jersey became an international center of banking and finance.

Currently Jersey is a British Crown Dependency, though not a member of the United Kingdom. Its Chief of State is Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, while the local government is headed by Lieutenant Governor and Commander in Chief Air Chief Marshall Sir John Cheshire and Bailiff Philip Martin Bailhache.

Important Dates

The important dates on the island of Jersey are New Years Day- January 1st, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Day Holiday- First Monday in May, Liberation Day- May 9th, Spring Holiday- last Monday in May, Summer Holiday- last Monday in August, Christmas Day- December 25th, and Boxing Day December 26th.

Population

The population of Jersey was estimated to be 87,500 in December, 2003. The population has grown slightly, an increase of 400 in the last three years. The birth rate per 1,000 population is 11.5, while the death rate is 8.7 per 1,000. (2003) The population density of Jersey is 750 people per square kilometer, which is over twice the density rate of the United Kingdom. With strict immigration restrictions, over 90% of the population is either Jersey or UK born. The life expectancy at birth is 79.07 years.
Currency

The official currency of the Bailiwick of Jersey is Sterling. The main denomination is £1 pound, which is broken down into 100 pence. Notes include £50, 20, 10, and 5, while coins come in £2 and 1 and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2, and 1 pence. The island prints their own currency, which is on par with the UK’s pound Sterling. On the island, both Jersey pounds and UK pounds are interchangeable. As of July 18, 2004, $1 US Dollar = £0.5339 GBP (Bloomberg.com)

Education

Schooling in Jersey is compulsory from the age of 5 to 16. The government provides 23 primary schools and 5 secondary schools. In addition there are 6 private primary schools and 3 private secondary schools on the island. Once students graduate from secondary school at age 18, they have been trained for many vocations of their choosing. Those who wish to further their education must leave the island, for there are no universities on Jersey. Most students, who wish to further their education, travel to the United Kingdom for schooling. There are no official statistics on literacy on Jersey.

Language

English is the official language of the Bailiwick of Jersey. Until the 1960’s, French was also the official language. However, French is still used as the main language in the court and legal system, which stems from Norman Law. Jerriais is the native tongue of the island and is a blend of Norse and Norman French. It is spoken mainly in the rural areas, outside of the capital city. Seven percent of the population currently is fluent in Jerriais, but there is a renewed interest in the language and the younger citizens of Jersey are taking an interest in learning their native language.
Religion

Most residents belong to the Anglican (Church of England), but there are many Roman Catholics, followed by other Christian denominations, such as Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian.

Agriculture

Agriculture has and currently plays an important role in the economy of Jersey. Fifty three percent of the land area of the nation is currently in agricultural production. Currently the average farm size is 34.5 acres and the main crops include potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, and tomatoes. In 1996, Jersey exported £45.4 million in agricultural goods, almost exclusively to the United Kingdom.

Jersey’s largest impact on agriculture worldwide is quite arguably the Jersey breed of dairy cow. The Royal Jersey Agricultural- Horticultural Society proudly proclaims on its website that, “The Jersey is a product of her name sake. For more than two centuries, the cow has been carefully bred and developed by the Island breeders.” The Jersey is well-known for its high butter fat content, efficient feed conversion, early maturity, and calving ease.

Trade

Much of the economy of Jersey is based on financial services due to Jersey’s favorable tax rates. The Jersey breed of cattle is a major revenue source from export worldwide. Most other trade is between the island and the U.K. Jersey exports food products, especially vegetables, light industrial goods including electronics, and dairy products. Main imports include power sources, machinery, fuel, chemicals, and food products. The main importer to Jersey is
the U.K. However, in recent years, the EU has become a growing trading partner with the island.

Food

Since Jersey is an island, many of its traditional recipes include seafood, and have many French influences. Traditional dishes include, bean crock, which is a French-style casserole with beans and pig trotters, La Soupe D’Andgulle, which is soup made from the conger eel. Other stews are popular which contain different types of shellfish, such as oysters and mussels, but probably the traditional Jersey dish which has become most popular in America is what they call in Jerriais, Le Niere Buerre or black butter, which is known as apple butter in the U.S. It originated in the 1600’s on the island, when leftover cider apples were boiled to form a spread. Emigrants from Jersey to the American Colonies brought the practice to the New World.

Landmarks

One of the main tourist attractions in Jersey is its coastline. The coast varies along the island shore, from beautiful beaches to rugged cliffs. The capital city of St Helier is the location of many of the island’s festivals and is home to the Central Market, where fish, meats, and produce are sold daily. The interior of the country has kept its rural character and offers visitors relaxing country paths and is home to the Jersey War Tunnels, which is a system of tunnels used by the occupying German army to defend the island during World War II. Elizabeth Castle, built in 1590 has been turned into a museum dedicated to Jersey Heritage and along with the Jersey Museum in St Helier are good places for visitors to learn about the varied history of this small nation.

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