

St. Helier: Jersey's Capital City

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Having already looked in a previous PassPorter news article at the beautiful [Channel Island of Jersey, off the south coast of England](#), it's time to look more closely at its vibrant capital, St. Helier.

While the rest of Jersey is filled with beautiful, rolling countryside, and stunning coastline peppered with the occasional small village, St. Helier is very different to the rest of the island.

The capital of Jersey, which is named after its patron saint, is a thriving town, full of many of the same shops that you find on the British mainland, but despite that, it has its own charm and plenty of sights to see.

□ Perhaps the most obvious one is one that reflects the island's history. The Channel Islands were the only part of the United Kingdom to be occupied by Nazi Germany during the Second World War and remnants of those times can easily be found in St. Helier. Liberation Square was unveiled in 1995 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the island's liberation on 9 May, 1945. Central to the square is a sculpture, depicting the joyous crowds that gathered on this spot all those years ago to celebrate the news. Look a bit closer and you'll see people who are meant to represent the various elements of the population. It's a very simple remembrance of some terrible events, and is very humbling to see.

□ Just opposite Liberation Square is what's now the Pomme d'Or hotel. During the Second World War, it was the local headquarters of the German Navy, and the symbolic heart of the Nazi occupation. It was here that the British flag was finally raised when Jersey was liberated. It must be a fascinating experience to stay here, with so much history in the building.

A little further along the road is another piece of history, although sadly one that's now been completely dwarfed by the neighbouring modern hotel, which is a great shame. The Jersey Museum and Art Gallery is set in a lovely old building, but sadly was another casualty of our flying visit, as we didn't have time to go inside. I wish we had, as it would no doubt have helped us to have a much better understanding of the island, as it tells the story of Jersey's history.

□ One of the beauties of St. Helier is that just about everything is within walking distance. Just a couple of minutes away from Liberation Square

is another impressive square, known as Royal Square. This one changed its name in the 17th century, after the then King, George II, donated £200 to create St. Helier's first harbour. In honour of him, a golden statue was erected in the square, which still looks over it to this day.

□ There's plenty to look at in this square, as it's home to the States Chamber, the island's parliament. As you'd expect it's an imposing building, taking up much of the square, although there's still room nearby for what used to be the town's police station.

□ Perhaps the most fun square, to me at least, is the one that's home to one of Jersey's most famous exports, the Jersey cow. Sadly, they're not real cows, but statues of a family of cows, and very realistic they are too, capturing their gentle expressions. It's a nice touch, and of course a serious photo opportunity.

□ Another great photo opportunity awaits at St. Helier's Central Market. Even when we visited, late in the day, it was still bursting with life, with people selling a huge variety of goods, from clothes to meat. Everywhere you look, you see florists selling their wares, providing colour and beautiful scents throughout the market. As well as the flowers, it's the architecture of this place that immediately strikes you, with its glass ceiling and, at its center, a beautiful fountain surrounded by intricately decorated cherubs. It's not necessarily what you expect to find in a market, but it makes for a very pleasant change.

□ Although there's much to see in the shopping heart of St. Helier, there's plenty more awaiting those with a car, or who are prepared to walk out towards the coastline. Fortunately, we didn't have far to go, as our hotel was right on the waterfront, with Elizabeth Marina laid out before it. It's here that you realise how much money there is in Jersey, as the size of the boats based here really takes your breath away.

□ Overlooking the marina is Elizabeth Castle, which was closed for the winter when we visited Jersey. It's certainly something I would have liked to have visited during our stay, but it wasn't to be this time around. It's a beautiful sight from the mainland, and looked like an imposing place from which to protect the island. Unsurprisingly, it gets its name from Queen Elizabeth I, as it was built during her reign in the late 16th century. It received another royal visit in the mid 17th century, when the future King Charles II gained refuge here during the English Civil War.

□ Elsewhere along the shoreline is the steam clock, modelled on a 19th century paddle steamer. This was interested to see, but the whole point

of a clock is surely to tell the time, so I was disappointed to find that it wasn't able to do that. Next door is the Maritime Museum, which I had been hoping to visit during our stay, but time ran away from us. It gives us another reason to head back to Jersey, as I was keen to see both the exhibits and the Occupation Tapestry. Just like the statues in Liberation Square, this was created to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Jersey's liberation from the German occupation during the Second World War.

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□ There's certainly more still for us to see in St. Helier, more than we could ever have managed in the short time we had there. As we wandered round, I couldn't help but think how much it reminded me of places I knew growing up on Great Britain. St. Helier has certainly got a wonderful feeling to it, and is a great demonstration of what most British towns looked like a generation ago. It's a good place to head to for a glimpse into the past of our country.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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