



Derek Hairon, Jersey Kayak Adventures, St Clement

Born and brought up in Jersey, Derek trained as a teacher and worked as a kayak instructor in mainland Britain for a while. But kayaking in Jersey was always his first passion. The island's south-eastern corner – the vast rocky tidal seascape from St Helier around to Gorey – is a Ramsar site, an international classification that highlights outstanding wetland habitats. 'The Ramsar site was my playground,' he says. 'When the tide's out you've got this fantastic seascape which at high water would be under 30 to 35 feet of water. You need a boat or kayak to get to the best bits safely, but you're privileged at low water to be able to walk around on it – with a lot of care!'

He returned to the island and an office job, kayaking in his spare time. But always in the background was the nagging fact that although Jersey had something unique to offer paddlers, no one was doing anything about it commercially. So with business partner Gary Kemp he founded Jersey Kayak Adventures.

'We went for the kind of kayaks that enable people to get out paddling very quickly,' he explains. 'Our kayaks are very friendly, stable craft, designed to get you from A to B easily.'

Where they go is dependent on the weather, and the state of the tide. A lot of people take a tour just for the experience of kayaking on open water, while others do it to see the wildlife. Derek's groups are always small, and because they paddle silently, being in the right place at the right time can mean a thrilling encounter with dolphins when they come right up to the kayaks.

Springtime in Jersey definitely has a different perspective when you're on the water. 'Come April, the evenings are opening out, the daylight's coming in, the temperature's rising and the sea is beginning to warm up again,' says Derek. 'You'll get storms in early spring, and seeing some of the big ones is an amazing experience.' But kayakers can take heart from the flipside to these stormy conditions. 'You also get flat calm sunny days with what I call Caribbean sea, with a beautiful colour and clarity of water. But the really big thing is the huge spring tides – up to 40 feet – so you get massive areas visible at low tide which you wouldn't normally see.'

And, of course, the peace and quiet of this time of year is another big attraction. Derek's early season clientele tend to be kayaking connoisseurs, people who want to be doing something a little bit different. 'The nesting season is starting, and a lot of birds are coming in to breed. The puffins are back on the island on the north coast, and with care you can get quite close to them. The coastline looks magnificent anyway, but with trees coming into bloom as well, it's really exciting.'



Arthur Lamy, Blue Badge Guide

For Arthur, spring is 'like a bear waking from his winter slumbers'. But when does he get the time to slumber in the winter months? As a busy guide he needs to brush up on his walks and cycle rides, and maybe research some new ones.

Because of Jersey's mild climate, the seasons tend to melt into each other and the changes here are not as abrupt as they might be in other places. Despite this, says Arthur, the arrival of spring can still be seen, heard and smelt if you join him on one of his walks or cycle rides.

'The countryside really comes alive in the spring,' he says. 'I love the daffodils, and the cliff paths take on a wonderful mantle of colour. In the island's Green Lanes the hedgerows are a wonderful sight, with daffodils sharing the banks with pungent wild garlic. But while it's hello to a lot of plants and flowers, it's goodbye to birds like the brent geese, which overwinter here. Having said that, others arrive. The island is a stopping-off point for a lot of migrating birds. The first arrivals are usually wheatears, which holiday here briefly as they journey north from the Sahara.'

'But the best bit about springtime is that it means a return to my role as a tourist guide, and an opportunity to show off an island that I love.'

Interviews by Clive Tully.

