



It was getting dark. The daylight was slipping behind me. Ahead was just the sound of a wave gently swooshing into the blackness of a very deep cave and the voice of Derek calling me to paddle my sea kayak towards him.

I'd turned up at Greve de Lecq bay in Jersey, Channel Islands UK (not to be confused with New Jersey).

# Hidden island

## Sea kayaking

the caves on the north coast of

# Jersey

By Trudie Trox who paddled with Jersey Kayak Adventures

The Cathedral Cave  
at Greve de Lecq



## smuggler's cave

running under the Parish Church  
half a mile away

Left: Exploring the caves on foot and below: Trude, le Agois at Creve de Leq.

## It wasn't quite like

It wasn't quite like this at the start. I was booked on a sea kayaking trip with Jersey Kayak Adventures along the northern coastline of Jersey. What I hadn't expected was to find myself sitting in the most awesome sea cave I'd ever been in – so deep that the legend, Derek told of it, being a smuggler's cave running under the Parish Church half a mile away, seemed to have some truth in it.

Right from the start I realised this was not just a gentle paddle around the bay at the seaside. Sure, there was the beach café selling some seriously good food and ice cream and a beach full of dads busily constructing huge sand castles, while their children lazed about listening to their iPods.

Within minutes of going afloat (after a detailed safety briefing and instruction) Derek, our trained guide, was giving personal coaching tips and a guided history of Jersey. Then we began to see the 'jumpers'. People, who were just, well, throwing themselves off the cliff face into the sea.

Jersey's national sport is jumping. "If it was in the Olympics we'd get gold," said Derek. Just watching them throw themselves off rocks maybe 10 metres up was stomach churning and made me wonder whether the locals had some sort of death wish or

were related to the small animals called lemmings, which are reputed to leap off cliff tops into oblivion. Strangely, everyone seemed to come up smiling and keen to do it again.

Then it was our turn to be adventurous. Our little group of kayakers – who hadn't met till 30 minutes ago – were already starting to feel like explorers as we cruised between the rocky granite channel at Rouge Nez and a rock called the Rhino.

Look carefully at the rock and it does start to look like a rhino's head, but I couldn't see the red nose on the headland, which originated from the French word Rouge (red) and Viking word Nez (nose).

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Creux Gabourel. One of the few caves with a beach to land on.





# Drifting on the

sea we listened to the description of the bird life around us before Derek suddenly announced, "Follow me" and vanished into a foreboding hole in the cliff face. Time to remember the old ski school advice, "Always follow close behind your instructor." I thought, and followed him in.

I felt a blast of air on my face. Suddenly the cave opened up around me. In front of me sat Derek under a beam of sunlight. Looking up I now saw that I was sitting in a cave with not one but two entrances. One at sea level, the other eight metres above me.

I sat quietly taking it all in. The stillness and gentle sound of the waves slopping against the rock face made Greve de Lecq beach seem a very long way away. As I looked into the darkness the water seemed to be emerald green in colour. I was sitting in a kayak in a blue hole cave, one where light is entering through another underwater entrance and shining upwards.

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one where light is entering through another  
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Blow holes are a feature along  
the north coast

I thought these only existed in the Mediterranean and Caribbean. "Well Jersey tourism did advertise Jersey as Britain's South Sea island years ago," replied Derek.

Passing beneath the cliffs we were getting close to the wildlife. "Shags" announced Derek. These elegant black and greenish coloured birds looked a bit ungainly on cliff face but once they dived beneath the water they shot about like little rockets beneath our kayaks in search of fish.

## How huge it was

Another cave and this time I could sense that the other seven kayakers were all intent upon dashing in. But first the guide was going ahead to check it was safe in case there were any sudden swells and also to make sure, we did not stray too deep into the darkness of the cave. As we paddled into the cave it dawned on me, just how huge it was. The roof arched maybe 10 metres above our heads and was so wide we could easily turn our kayaks around if we wanted. No way was I leaving until I'd explored further into the darkness. I wanted to be an explorer.

To my right the walls were encrusted in sea life. As I looked closer it seemed that the walls were constructed like a weathered dry stone wall full of rocks and mortar creating a path into the blackness. This had all the makings of a real smugglers cave. That is until Derek pointed out that in a few hours the sea would have risen by some 10 metres and I'd then be banging my head on the distant ceiling of the cave.

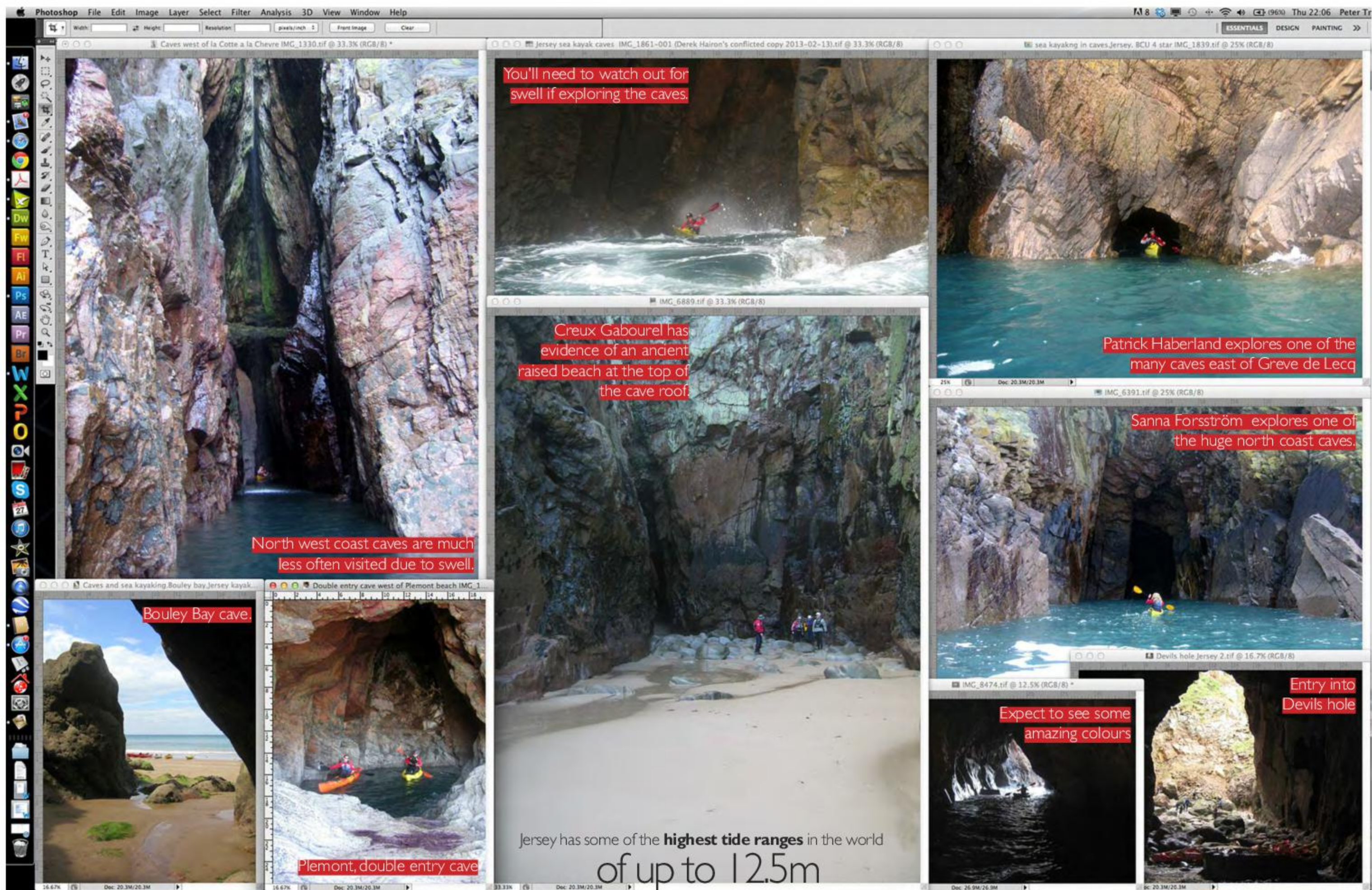
Squinting on my return into daylight, our exploration of the coast continued as we wound our way between sea stacks and channels and discovered natural arches and incredible lagoon blue ponds. Without a local guide we'd have missed these fantastic hidden spots.

Then on to Île Agois and a tiny inaccessible bay that left me feeling as if we were on a remote unexplored coast with views of distant islands on the horizon. This really was a voyage to discover a hidden Jersey.

Returning to Greve de Lecq I felt like an explorer returning from an expedition. The ice cream definitely tasted good!







and with it the chance to see a mass of different sea **kayaking environments**.



## INFORMATION



**COASTLINE:** Though only 45-square miles (118 sq. km) the island offers a huge range of activities and experiences to suit all interests.

It's the sea that dominates the landscape, however, with stunning views of the surrounding Atlantic Ocean to be had from virtually every point on the island. The coastline itself is just as compelling, with majestic cliffs, exposed bays, sandy beaches and rocky coves all easily accessible by road or on foot.

The power of the sea is keenly felt by the Islanders. In fact, due to its unique position in the Bay of St Malo, Jersey grows and shrinks twice a day as the tide ebbs and flows in excess of 40 feet (12 m) – one of the highest tidal ranges in the world.



# Jersey

Jersey Kayak Adventures  
owner Derek Hairon



**LOCATION:** Part of the Channel Islands, Jersey is in the Bay of Mont St Michel in the English Channel. Though only 12 miles from the French coast, Jersey is English speaking with a rich history.

**HISTORY:** The island is independent of the British parliament but loyal to the English monarch who is its Duke of Normandy. For many the only thing they know about Jersey is that it is home to the Jersey Cow, Jersey Royal New Potatoes (a very early growing variety) and the TV series 'Bergerac'.

**JERSEY KAYAK ADVENTURES:** Jersey Kayak Adventures operate guided kayak tours and courses around the coast of Jersey, Channel Islands, UK. The company also has trips to offshore islands with qualified British Canoe Union (BCU) coaches. For the more experienced kayaker they offer a range of sea kayaking trips and courses as well as BCU courses and assessments from BCU 1-4 Star sea kayak as well as navigation and custom sea kayak coaching. They have a range of both sit inside traditional style and modern user-friendly sit-on-top sea kayaks to suit all abilities and ages. All equipment is provided.

The founder of Jersey Kayak Adventures is Derek Hairon, a BCU level 5 sea kayak coach with over 37 years sea kayaking experience. He made the first circumnavigation of Ireland by sea kayak and has kayaked in the Faeroes and Aland Islands plus sea kayak expeditions in Alaska and Nova Scotia. Derek is the author of 'Sit-on-top Kayaking: A Beginner's Manual' and the forthcoming Channel Island and South East England sea kayaking guidebook. Both published by Pesda Press <http://pesdapress.com>

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