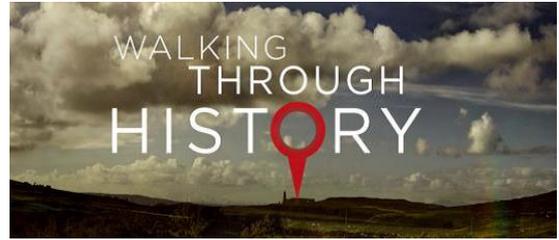


# PROGRAMME 2 THE CHANNEL ISLANDS: NAZI OCCUPATION



## Introduction

We're walking through two of the glorious Channel Islands and one of the darkest chapters in British history. This four-day walk explores Jersey and Guernsey's unique wartime heritage as we delve into Germany's occupation of the Channel Islands from 1940 to 1945.

Jersey and Guernsey are blessed with beautiful beaches and tropical waters. At almost all of them are the remnants of a bunker or a machine gun post left over from the Second World War. Starting in Guernsey, we'll trek the stunning south coast, taking us through the chaos and tragedy of summer 1940. From here we'll skip over to Jersey to find out how this tiny corner of the British Isles survived five long years of Nazi rule.



# Walking Through History



## Day 1

We're starting inland at Guernsey airport, where the first German troops landed on British soil. From there, it's a bracing ten mile walk along the stunning south coast, finishing in St Peter Port where a ferry will take us the 30 miles to Jersey.

- ⇒ Guernsey Airport to St Peter Port, via Moulin Huet and Clarence Battery  
**Distance: 12 miles, plus a one-hour ferry journey**

## Day 2

We're heading west to discover how the Germans turned Jersey's exposed coastline into an impregnable fortress. This leg of our journey will take us east from St Aubin's Bay to the heavily fortified headland at La Corbiere.

We'll then turn north for five miles along St Ouen's beach, before ending our day at a cliff-top stronghold in Les Landes - a further ten miles.

- ⇒ St Helier to Les Landes, via St Aubin Bay, Corbiere railway walk and St Ouen's Beach  
**Distance: 15 miles**

## Day 3

Inland, it's cross-country to visit war tunnels with a grim secret, before returning to the north coast.

- ⇒ Greve de Lecq to St Catherine's Bay, via Val de la Mare reservoir and the Jersey War Tunnels  
**Distance: 12 miles**

## Day 4

The final morning of our wartime walk has brought us to St Catherine's Bay on the east coast.

To see how the occupation came to an end, we're heading along the sprawling sandy beach of Grouville Bay and across into St Helier, where Liberation finally arrived in May 1945.

- ⇒ Bouley Bay to St Helier, via Grouville Bay and Elizabeth Castle  
**Distance: 12 miles**



Please use maps to plan your route. All distances approx.  
Ordnance Survey does not publish maps of the Channel Islands, but Jersey Official Leisure Map by States of Jersey and The Bailiwick of Guernsey by States of Guernsey are available.

# Walking Through History



## Day 1 – Places of Interest

Guernsey Airport to St Helier,  
via Moulin Huet, Clarence  
Battery and St Peter Port  
Distance: 12 miles



We're kicking off our walk at Guernsey Airport. Just south of the airport is the German Occupation Museum, but right now we're heading for the coast. The small road heading south off Route des Landes doubles up as a footpath and leads us down to Petit Bot Bay.

## A Model Occupation?

On 30 June 1940 a platoon of German troops landed at Guernsey Airport and, to their relief, they met no opposition. In the minds of the German High Command there were many similarities between the British and Germans. The records show that they saw themselves as akin to the British and as such they wanted this to be a 'model occupation'. The German propaganda machine went into overdrive and depicted life continuing as normal.



From here we're following the dedicated walking tracks east along this stunning coastline. However, we can't move on without taking a moment to admire this beautiful little bay complete with stone defense tower. Petit Bot Tower is open to the public free of charge on a daily basis from March to October.

## French or English?

These islands were originally part of the Duchy of Normandy but were severed when King John lost mainland Normandy to France in 1204. The islands, however, were promised independence when they swore allegiance to the English crown. Petit Bot Bay's Tower 13 is one of 15 loop-holed towers built in the Napoleonic era. When France allied themselves with the Thirteen Colonies in 1776, after the outbreak of the American War of Independence, the islands were under a very real threat of invasion.



A mile east along the cliffs brings us to Icart Point. Just prior to this headland we find a stone on top of the cliffs above Jaonnet Bay, commemorating Guernseyman, Lt. Hubert Nicholle.

## Churchill's Commandos

Winston Churchill was determined to strike back after the Germans landed and decided that Guernsey would be the perfect place to try out a new elite unit of the British Army. Their mission was to 'develop a reign of terror down the enemy coast'. They were called the commandos. London planned a daring raid.

First, they sent a young Lieutenant called Hubert Nicolle to gather intelligence. He landed here at Icart Point, and having grown up in Guernsey, he knew this island well. He discovered that a total of only 469 Germans were in control of the entire population, around 25,000 people. Having exposed this German weakness, 140 commandos crossed the channel but the raid ended in total failure. One unit found themselves on the island of Sark, two boats capsized, one crashed into a rock. The 40 men from No3 Commando that did successfully land couldn't then find a single German soldier. It was to prove a valuable lesson for subsequent Commando operations.



Continuing east along the rugged cliffs, we'll pass one of author Victor Hugo's favourite picnic spots at Moulin Huet Bay. The headland of Jerbourg Point brings us round northwards towards St Peter Port. Before heading into the port we're going to take a look around Clarence Battery at Fort George.

## From Invasion to Occupation

At Clarence Battery you'll find the remains of Fort George, the principal fort during the French Revolution. In 1940, however, it was Germans sitting here behind the guns looking up when only a few weeks after the invasion, the Battle of Britain was raging in the skies above southern England. Thousands of German troops descended on the islands over the coming months but the focus of the war was about to shift. By September, the RAF had won the Battle of Britain and the Germans were forced to put their invasion of England on hold. By the end of 1940 it was clear that the Channel Islands would be the only bit of British soil Hitler would get his hands on - at least for the moment.



The German war machine was ordered to transform these islands - even tiny Sark and Herm - into island fortresses, trapping the islanders behind a curtain of guns, bunkers and barbed wire.



Just north of Clarence Battery is St Peter Port, scene of a grave and unnecessary tragedy. The footpath from the battery joins the road and the South Esplanade takes us into the harbour.

## Tragedy in St Peter Port

Before the occupation had even started, St Peter Port was the sight of a terrible tragedy, one that never should have happened but for a simple bit of communication. In June 1940, Guernsey's tiny capital was gripped by fear as residents desperate to leave rubbed shoulders with refugees arriving from France. The German High Command, not realizing that all British troops had retreated to England, was preparing to invade and carried out an armed reconnaissance. On 28 June 1940, three Luftwaffe bombers flew low over the harbour and spotted trucks lining the docks. Mistaking these for troop carriers, they attacked. The trucks were loaded with Guernsey tomatoes, ready to be exported to the mainland, but the raid killed 33 innocent people. A further 11 were killed in Jersey, our next destination.



From the docks, it's time for us to hop over to Jersey by ferry. The journey takes one or two hours depending on whether you take the fast or conventional ferry. Please check the timetable in advance.



# Walking Through History



## Day 2 – Places of Interest

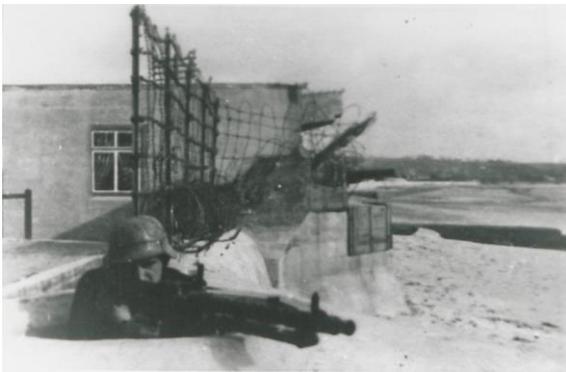
St Aubin's Bay to Greve de Lecq  
via: La Corbierre, St Ouen's Bay  
and Les Landes

Distance: 15 miles



We're continuing our walk through the Channel Islands wartime history in Jersey. Starting in St Helier, our route takes us west across St Aubin's Bay to find out how Hitler's fixation with the Channel Islands transformed their appearance.

## Hitler's Fixation



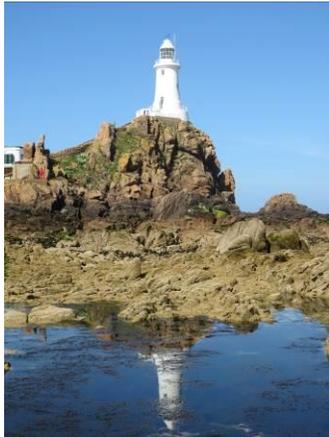
military significance.

St Aubin Gunsite café was originally a German bunker called Resistance Nest 3, which housed a 10.5cm gun. When the RAF won the Battle of Britain, Hitler feared Churchill might try to reclaim these islands. Hitler was obsessed with holding on to the Channel Islands - it was a huge propaganda coup seeing German soldiers walking down British streets. He set about turning the islands into an impregnable fortress as they became part of the Atlantic Wall - a network of fortified bunkers, stretching from Norway to southern France. The Wall required an estimated 17 million cubic metres of concrete. One twelfth of all the reinforced concrete used in the Wall was poured into the Channel Islands - far in excess of its



At the other end of St Aubin's Bay, we can see where the Germans modified an old railway line to carry ammunition and material. Today, the Corbiere Railway Walk is maintained as an arboretum and provides us with a beautiful inland walk to the west coast. The canopy is filled with traditional oak trees, palms and sycamores and it's a refreshing change from the cliffs and beaches. The railway line leads us to the Corbiere headland - one of the island's best known landmarks.

## Corbiere: Strategic strongpoint



At the tip of the headland is Corbiere's lighthouse, which was built in 1874 and was the first in the British Isles to be made of reinforced concrete. The Germans built this 'Strongpoint' right next to it. The most heavily defended positions were known as a 'Strongpoint', then came the 'Resistance Nest' and thirdly, the 'Operation Position'. It's a natural strategic point - you can see almost the entire coast from up here.

The six main fortifications on the headland were built between 1942 and 1943. They include six bunkers and were built by Spanish, French and Belgium workers. These bunkers are now part of the tourist trail, but their construction left the islanders with a terrible dilemma. The Germans demanded men to help build them but the local island authorities refused. Under the Hague convention, an occupier could not force people to work against their own country.



We're now pushing north up St Ouen's Bay, which stretches for five miles. As the tide goes out, Jersey grows in size by about a fifth, making beaches like this the perfect place to land an enemy army.

## Preparing for a British Invasion

Given how suitable St Ouen's Bay is for amphibious landings, it comes as no surprise to find a huge concrete wall running the full length of the beach. This wall, or 'Panzermauern' in German, is 20-feet high in places. Panzer is the German word for tank and to guard against them the foundations supposedly reach six feet into the sand. The open west coast was considered most open to British attack. The Allies, however, had no intention of taking Jersey back by force, so St Ouen's anti-tank barrier was nothing but a huge drain on German resources.



Leaving St Ouen's beach the path briefly comes inland before we return to the granite cliffs that dominate the area around Les Landes, Jersey's largest maritime heathland and home to another serious fortification.

# Walking Through History



## Moltke Battery Gun

Gazing out across the Atlantic Ocean is one of the most complete World War Two gun batteries in existence. This is Battery Moltke, which is looked after by volunteers from Channel Islands Occupation Society. A fearsome 15.5cm K418F French field gun, it has a range of 12 miles. It was one of four captured from the French and brought to the islands.

This battery was garrisoned by a hundred German soldiers. It had exterior barrack huts and subterranean tunnels. Once underground in the restored tunnels, it becomes clear just how massive this battery is. The men inside trained and waited for an invasion that never came. Over 200 plant species now surround these gun emplacements.



Before we conclude our day's walk, let's take advantage of the views offered by this sumptuous vantage point. Our final few miles takes us east round the coast to Greve de Lecq and some well-earned kip.

# Walking Through History



## Day 3 – Places of Interest

Greve de Lecq to Bouley Bay,  
via Val de le Mare Reservoir,  
Jersey War Tunnels and  
Hamptonne  
Distance: 12 miles



We begin our third day by heading inland and due south towards the Val de La Mare reservoir. The footpath that runs past St Ouen's Windmill brings us past the German ruins and a lookout point with stunning views over the west coast.

## Slave Labourers

Seventy years ago we would be looking down on slave labourers from Eastern Europe being forced to build bunkers and the military railway. The Germans brought about 16,000 workers to the Channel Islands. The forced workers came from Western Europe and included Spanish republicans fleeing Franco. They were used to help build the Atlantic Wall in France and then brought to the Channel Islands. The slave workers were predominantly Russian and Ukrainian prisoners of war. Over three-million Soviet POWs were killed during the war and around 3,000 were brought to Jersey. Treated with brutality, they lived in labour camps and there were 12 of these camps in Jersey alone. Lager Immelman, a Russian slave-worker camp, was just below at the bottom of Jubilee Hill, near St Ouen's Pond.



We're heading east along the small roads and lanes, via St Peter's Village to the Jersey War Tunnels. Here, we'll see just what these slaves built, whilst also hearing stories of courage and betrayal.

## Jersey War Tunnels

Carved out of the rock by slave labourers, these tunnels were intended to be an underground invasion shelter. Many islanders were so appalled by the treatment of the Russian workers, they risked their lives to help them. The War Tunnels have been turned into a museum and it reveals how the occupation brought out the best and the worst of people. Some of the most chilling exhibits include collections of letters written to the Germans by Jersey citizens denouncing their neighbours. One written to the Kommandant reads, 'Please search Brompton Villa, St Union Road, for at least 2 wireless sets hidden under the floor boards. Loft. 1 cellar'.

## Russian Bill and Jersey's Heroes

Louisa Gould, however, is one of Jersey's many inspirational figures -those who risked everything to help their beaten down co-islanders. Louisa ran a local shop in St Ouen and in 1942 agreed to take in a prisoner who'd escaped from nearby Lager Immelman. Feodor Polycarpovitch Burriy, a Russian pilot shot down in 1941, stayed hidden in Louisa's house for eighteen months and became known as 'Russian Bill'. Tragically, in 1942, his guardian was betrayed. While Bill managed to escape, Louisa was arrested and sentenced to two years in a German prison. Bill moved around with the help of other Jersey folk and survived the war. Around 250 people breaking German rules were sent to the continent. Louisa Gould was among the 29 who never returned. She died in Ravensbruck concentration camp, just a few months before the end of the war.



From the War Tunnels, we're picking up the trail towards to the north coast. First, though, we're popping into the Museum of Country Life. It's a pleasant walk along more of those walkers' roads north and then west until we hit Le Grande Route de St. Laurent. Cross over and pick up Patente Street to the museum in Hamptonne.

## The Daily Grind

The islanders fought a daily battle against hunger. In 1944 it was found that an average Jersey person was consuming between 850 and 1100 calories per day compared to their UK counterpart, who was consuming 3500 calories. Everyday items became luxuries. Wartime coffee was made out of parsnips. Indeed, a post war medical report found that the children were a full inch shorter than they should have been. Covering six centuries of Jersey's rural life, the museum provides real insight into the daily grind of wartime life.



From Hamptonne, it's mostly roads until we reach the north coast. A view right across to France will make it worthwhile when we get there. Follow 'Sally's Walk' north until it swings round to join Le Grande Route de St. Laurent once again. From here it's north all the way.

## The Turning Tide: Liberation?

By 1943 The Allies were on the offensive in Russia and the Mediterranean. Their next target was Jersey's closest neighbor, Normandy, just 15 miles away. With the Allied invasion of Nazi occupied France came hope for the islanders. On 6 June, 1944 more than 100,000 allied troops stormed the beaches of Normandy. The islanders could hear D-Day as it happened. Around 40 miles away, American troops were landing at Utah Beach. Had liberation finally arrived?



A few miles along the coast we'll arrive at the small north coast harbour of Bouley Bay, where we'll rest our heads before the final push!

# Walking Through History



## Day 4 – Places of Interest

Bouley Bay to St Helier, via  
Grouville Bay and Liberation  
Square

Distance: 12 miles



Our final morning of our wartime walk and we're returning to St Helier. But we've got 12 miles to cover first. Cutting across the north-east corner of the island brings us to St Catherine's Bay and Victoria Tower.

## The Germans Dig In

The fighting in France put the Germans in Jersey on high alert, and their commander ordered his men to dig in at places like Victoria Tower. A famous photograph shows an anti-aircraft gun on top of this tower pointing skywards. The Germans realized to their horror that, despite their mighty Atlantic Wall, their defences on this side of the island were inadequate. But far from trying to take back the Channel Islands after D-Day, all supplies were cut in August 1944. In nearby Mont Orgueil Castle, hungry Germans watched as the Allies cut off their lifeline to France. Everyone on the island was competing for the same dwindling supplies - and faced starvation in the coming winter.



A short saunter down to the coastal path past Mont Orgueil Castle and we're onto the sprawling sands of Grouville Bay. In 1944 this was off limits and heavily mined.

## A Great Escape: John & Carette Floyd

John Floyd was 21 when he took part in a daring attempt to join the British forces in Normandy. He and his wife, Carette, still live on the island. Carette helped John and two friends smuggle a dinghy onto the beach, right under the noses of the German guards. The plan was for the three young men to slip away in the dead of night. A few weeks earlier a similar attempt had ended with the would-be escapee being shot and killed but this didn't put off other young islanders. Remarkably, a mile or so out to sea, they came across others attempting a similar escape, but, when trying to help them, John lost his own motor. John drifted over to Normandy and eventually found the British Army. Carette, back at home, had no idea whether John was alive and only learnt of his safe passage six months later.



Almost two miles down the Grouville Bay, just short of La Rocque Point, the footpath cuts inland towards St Helier. This path runs alongside the main road so please walk with care. The main road leads us into town and the harbour front.

## Relief from the Red Cross



Escapees like John confirmed to the British authorities just how desperate conditions were for the 40,000 islanders. Help was on its way as the Allies had finally agreed to let the Red Cross in. After a 50-mile journey, we've arrived in St Helier where, on New's Year's Eve 1944, the SS Vega docked carrying 120, 000 food parcels. Liberation still took another four months but the food kept the islanders alive through the winter and people took heart as the Allies advanced into Germany.



The walking trail along the docks brings us to Liberation Square just by Albert Harbour. The memorial at the centre of the square is dedicated to all those who made this day possible.

## Liberation

By early May 1945 Hitler was dead and the war was over. Into the harbour of St Peter Port of Guernsey in the Channel Islands steams a British warship with the white ensign flying. On 9 May two British destroyers - HMS Bulldog and HMS Beagle - sailed into the Channel Islands as jubilant crowds gathered in what is now Liberation Square. Two hundred British troops came ashore in St Helier to a rapturous welcome.



One final stroll takes us out to Elizabeth Castle over the bridge. Only accessible during low tide, this castle provides one last footnote as the site where many Germans found themselves staying on as prisoners of war.