

# From Tourism to Tax Haven: Jersey [B1]

La più grande tra le isole del canale della Manica, Jersey ha una storia affascinante. Per anni, le sue pecore e le sue genti produssero vestiti di lana per tutta l'Europa, finché l'isola fu invasa dalla Germania durante la seconda guerra mondiale. Poi arrivò il turismo, e più tardi miliardi di dollari: come mai?



Jersey is the largest and [southernmost](#) of the Channel Islands, situated 43 kilometres from its sister island Guernsey, 22 kilometres from the French coast, and 137 kilometres from England. It has a population of about 103,000, with around 35,000 living in the town of St. Helier. The island is home to three languages — English, French and Jèrriais (an ancient Norman language) — but most people speak English. It has its own financial, legal and judicial systems. Jersey is not part of the UK but it is part of the British Islands.

## MODERN APPEARANCE

Jersey's modern appearance [took shape](#) in the 19th century, with [improvements](#) in the road network, the construction of two railway lines,

[improvements](#) in transport [links](#) to England, and the building of new [piers](#) and [harbours](#) in St. Helier. Tourism started, together with the immigration of thousands of people from England, which created a more anglicised society.

## **KNITTING CULTURE**

Before these changes, however, the island had been famous for basically one thing: [knitting](#)! For hundreds of years, Jersey was famous for [knitting](#) and its [wool](#), which eventually gave the world the knitted jersey, the cable-knit [wool](#)len Jersey [jumper](#) typically worn by [fishermen](#). The islanders — men, women and children — produced ten thousand [stockings](#) a week, mostly for continental Europe. People even knitted in church, [angering vicars](#), who had [to shout](#) their sermons!

## **TOURISM GROWTH**

The relevance of [knitting](#) eventually declined, but tourism, together with agriculture, more than took its place. The two sectors grew throughout the 19th century and the early 20th century. Tourists, mainly English, came for the miles of beaches and the warm climate. The island's major agricultural products were, and still are, potatoes and [sandy dairy produce](#) — Jersey Royal Potatoes have a Protected Designation of Origin. The island is famous for its rich milk and cream.

## **GERMANS ON JERSEY**

Tourism stopped with the Second World War. The island was occupied by the Germans from 1940 to 1945. Hundreds of islanders were sent to concentration camps on the continent. The Germans [banned](#) radios, changed the time zone and made residents drive on the right. Jersey was liberated in 1945, ruining Hitler's plan to convert the island into a Nazi holiday resort.

## TIMELY TIDES

Tourism grew [dramatically](#) after the war, principally [due to improvements](#) in transport. Water activities, especially surfing, became very popular. The beautiful beaches, and the [tides](#), have played an important role in surfing's popularity. Jersey has the third largest tidal movement in the world, creating wonderful waves for surfers. The small island — nine miles by five miles — [shrinks](#) to half that size at high tide compared to low tide. The tide [rises](#) at a speed of 10kph.

## TAX HAVEN

Jersey, however, is not just famous for its tourism. It is also well-known — if not [infamous](#) — for its status as an off-shore tax haven, which is now attracting the interest — and anger — of the European Union. In the 1950s, Britons began to move to the island, attracted by Jersey's low [taxes](#). Then, in the 1970s, the banks also arrived, transforming the economy, and [incomes](#) rose — but so did house prices! [Delighted](#) with the hundreds of billions of dollars arriving on the island, governments built new schools, hospitals and roads, plus a new harbour. But it forgot about the tourism and agriculture sectors, which have both suffered significantly.

## DIRTY MONEY

The European Union, on the other hand, did not forget about Jersey's financial sector. For decades Brussels has accused the island of accepting dirty money, facilitating "illicit financial [flows](#) and [capital flight](#)." Jersey's reputation has suffered and the financial sector has contracted considerably. The EU is considering legal action against the Jersey government. There are also problems for the island at sea. France and Jersey have had numerous disputes over fishing rights since Brexit. Both Britain and France have even sent [gunships](#) to patrol the area. Fishing and financial [clouds](#) can clearly be seen on the horizon, and they seem to be coming in with the tide.

## THE PURITAN ISLAND

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the island was swept by puritanism from France after the Reformation. Sunday activities were limited. Dancing, skittles and gossiping could result in prison. Even in the 1980s it was forbidden to dance or buy cigarettes on Sundays. Jersey has numerous historical oddities: in the 16th century, speeding was an issue, and people could be arrested for “furious driving”, while in the 17th century, more people were hanged for witchcraft and theft than for murder.

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# Glossary

- **fishermen** = pescatori
- **stockings** = calze
- **to shout** = urlare
- **tides** = maree
- **piers** = moli
- **jumper** = maglione
- **clouds** = nuvole
- **vicars** = pastori
- **dramatically** = spettacolarmente
- **capital flight** = fuga di capitali
- **Reformation** = Riforma
- **gossiping** = spettegolare
- **improvements** = miglioramenti
- **rises** = salire
- **infamous** = famigerato
- **Delighted** = felici
- **flows** = flussi
- **links** = connessioni
- **knitting** = cucire
- **wool** = lana
- **due to** = dovuto a
- **shrinks** = ridurre
- **incomes** = redditi
- **gunships** = aeronavi militari
- **took shape** = prendere forma
- **sandy** = sabbiose
- **dairy produce** = prodotti lattici
- **forbidden** = proibire
- **oddities** = curiosità
- **witchcraft** = stregoneria
- **harbours** = porti
- **speeding** = eccesso di velocità
- **theft** = furto

- **southernmost** = più settentrionale
- **angering** = fare arrabbiare
- **banned** = proibire
- **taxes** = tasse
- **swept** = propagarsi
- **skittles** = birilli