

LIFE & STYLE FOOD & DRINK



Clockwise from left: The grand entrance to Longueville Manor; the Oak Room restaurant at Longueville; the bar at Ormer; the terrace at Sumas; the front of Ormer



The ultimate foodie break to Jersey

The largest of the Channel Islands has more than tax breaks and sunshine to offer, finds Steve Dinneen

Have you been to Jersey lately? Why not? It's the sunniest place in the British Isles. You can leave your City office at 6pm and make an 8pm dinner reservation (I flew from London City with Blue Islands, which provides you with free drinks and won't shout at you about the size of your carry-on luggage). And the food scene over there is well worth checking out, which is pretty remarkable considering it has a population of less than 100,000. But then this is an island with a speed limit of 40mph where every second car is a Porsche, a place where the super-wealthy come for favourable tax rates as well as a hearty tan.

The weather, though, isn't guaranteed. I visited the weekend of the annual boat show and it rained incessantly. Thankfully, Jersey's most famous tourist attraction, the War Tunnels, is underground. Dug by Hitler's army during the occupation (the Channel Islands are the only place in the British Isles the Nazis ever set foot), these kilometres-long tunnels are a fascinating place to spend an afternoon, especially if you have kids in tow. But I was really only here for one reason: to eat. Here's how to plan the ultimate foodie trip to Jersey.

LONGUEVILLE MANOR

Longueville Manor is the ideal base for your foodie trip. Located on the south east end of the island, it's a beautiful stately home set in 16 acres of lawn, woodland and a kitchen garden complete with smokery.

The food, put together by the talented Andrew Baird and served in a low, wood-paneled 15th century dining room, is excellent. The seafood-heavy tasting menu includes a tower of beguilingly sweet local crab with watermelon; poached lobster in a rich, foamy broth, topped with roe and a tiny flower; buttery sea bass with fat tiger prawns and fennel salad. It tastes as good as it sounds – all simple, distinct flavours.

There was beautifully pink best-end of lamb with a rich heap of braised shoulder, which was as wholesome as you dare to wish for half-way through an eight course meal. Goat's cheese fondant with caramelised red onion passed in a blur but the piña colada with macadamia crumble and glazed pineapple was exceptional – three individual globes of dessert, each exquisitely crafted. By the apple terrine I was struggling. The petit fours I wrapped in a napkin for later and found stuck to the inside of my jeans the next morning.

And there are few better places to wake up than the Tower Suite at Longueville Manor: a comfortable, modern bedroom with a huge entertaining room opening onto the manicured lawns and outdoor pool, where I ate oysters during a brief window of sunshine. Make sure you try the house-smoked salmon for breakfast. Longueville also has a brand new yacht available to charter for up to eight guests – call for more information.

Longueville Rd, St. Saviour, JE2 7WF, 01534 725501, longuevillemanor.com

ORMER

Ormer is probably the best known restaurant on Jersey thanks to its head chef Shaun Rankin, who you might have seen at work on The Great British Menu (his treacle tart won the dessert category in the fourth season). The restaurant is split into a brasserie-style bar and a swish 50-cover dining room (on sunny days they open the terrace, which I'm assured is stunning).

There is, of course, a tasting menu with matched wine; the only choice after a day drinking champagne in the pouring rain. The free-flowing booze and course after course of excellent, largely local cuisine left me with hazy but entirely pleasant memories – a

glass of intense, floral gewurztraminer here and an orange marmalade with salt caramel there.

There were cubes of tuna with avocado puree and cucumber sorbet; a gigantic scallop with lime-marinated carrot; a crisp tomato and feta salad. All excellent. There was a phenomenal pancetta-wrapped rabbit loin with morel mushrooms and a pea and truffle sauce – wonderfully lean, perfectly cooked. Lamb with glazed sweetbreads and roast aubergine was rich and intense. There was passionfruit gateaux. I'm probably missing something.

It was a meal of unusual quality, laid back despite the formal surroundings. Apparently I thanked Shaun personally, but that's one memory that's entirely lost amid the evening's swirling gastronomic mosaic. I'll thank him next time – I hear his treacle tart alone is worth the trip.

7-11 Don St, St. Helier, JE2 4TQ, 01534 725100, ormerjersey.com

SUMAS

Sumas is as picturesque a restaurant as you'll find anywhere in the world, with Mont Orgueil Castle rising imposingly from the sea a few hundred feet down the road. The food's not bad, either.

The white-washed dining room has a beach-restaurant quality and much of the produce is brought in from the harbour you can see below you. I started with saddle of rabbit – I was still swooning over Shaun Rankin's rabbit from the night before – and wasn't disappointed; firm rolls of meat atop potato puree with a light onion gravy. El Pye had crispy pucks of polenta, with blue cheese and wilted vegetables, which I could have taken or left. I followed it up with monkfish, Jersey Royals (match), corn fritters and beetroot, while El Pye had lobster claws with a prawn salad. It's simpler fare than at either Longueville or Ormer, less painstakingly put together, but perfectly acceptable for whiling away the tail end of an afternoon after trekking around a picturesque castle.

Gorey Hill, JE3 6ET, 01534 853291, sumasrestaurant.com

- Fly from £49 each way including free baggage, free ticket/name changes and seat selection. This price is based on flights from London City to Jersey, the airline also flies to the Island from Bristol and Southampton.
- A three night stay for two at Longueville Manor starts at £585 (based on a classic room, bed and breakfast, no offers have been taken into account)



Confit duck with beetroot puree, puy lentils, chard and balsamic sauce; Opposite: the Pied-a-Terre dining room



Fitzrovia's classic Pied-a-Terre is almost a quarter of a century old and it still serves the best lunch in town

WHAT? A Fitzrovia fixture since 1991, Michelin-starred Pied-a-Terre specialises in classic French cooking with the obligatory modern twist. It's quiet but fun, a nostalgic throwback to a pre-street food, pre-pop up culinary scene, when great dining still meant baskets of artisan bread and linen tablecloths rather than gourmet burgers served on chopping boards.

WHERE? Nestled among pizzerias, pubs and coffee shops on the pleasantly leafy Charlotte Street, it discreetly blends into its smart surroundings with an unobtrusive sign and plain black awning.

WHO? Founding owner David Moore



Alex Dymoke on the best places to eat during office hours

worked front of house in a number of top UK restaurants (including Raymond Blanc's Le Manoir Aux Quat' Saisons) before opening Pied-a-Terre in 1991. Head chef Marcus Eaves won his first Michelin star at 27 after opening Moore's second restaurant L'Autre Pied in 2007 and now runs the kitchen at Pied-a-Terre.

ORDER THIS... As one is entitled to expect from a Michelin-rated eatery, everything was near enough faultless, but two things stood out: a starter of lamb breast with globe artichokes, soft polenta and black olive sauce, and a transcendent mushroom broth amuse-bouche.

BUSINESS OR PLEASURE? An enjoyable mix. Though the clientele are smart, the atmosphere is decidedly convivial, and while the staff are impeccably attentive, they aren't afraid to share a joke. On the Tuesday lunchtime I was there, a giggly couple on the next table were celebrating a birthday while a business meeting took place on the table behind.

NEED TO BOOK? You probably should. The dining area is small and when I went it was pretty much full.

THE VERDICT... Pied-a-Terre blends faultless service, intricately prepared classic cooking and delicious wines without any of the stiffness usually associated with fine dining. It's a

winning combination that goes some way to explaining its longevity in a restaurant scene that's changed beyond recognition over the last twenty years

ONE MORE THING... The restaurant has an arty streak: over the years it's amassed an impressive collection of modern art including works by Sir Peter Blake, Howard Hodgkin and Richard Hamilton, all of whom have enjoyed eating there.

THE DETAILS: Pied-a-Terre daily lunch menu costs £28.50 for a starter and a main, £36 for three courses or £60 for six courses. Drinks not included. To book a table, call 020 7636 1178, or visit pied-a-terre.co.uk.

Get better acquainted with France's favourite C-word

Over the last 100 years the French have successfully petitioned for strict controls on the use of the C-word. Champagne isn't just a fizzy wine, it's a brand. The word can only be used on a bottle when the contents were made using the Méthode Champenoise (traditional method) with grapes grown and vinified in Champagne.

What is this method and what makes it so special? Unlike wine, Champagne goes through two fermentations. The first occurs in stainless steel tanks or wooden barrels. The base wine is then transferred into bottles where it undergoes a second fermentation and is left to rest for a long period while yeasty sediment – the by-product of this process known as the "lees" – collects in the bottle.

Most Champagne is made using three grape varieties – one white, Chardonnay, and two red, Pinot



Noir and Pinot Meunier, hence the terms Blanc de Blancs and Blanc de Noirs seen on Champagne labels. Blanc de Blancs, meaning white from white, is made using 100 per cent Chardonnay and tends to be crisp and elegant, with a strong backbone of acidity and minerality – delicious with oysters and fish. Blanc de Noirs, ie white from black, are made exclusively from red grapes Pinot Noir or Pinot Meunier and tend to be fuller

bodied with fruitier notes: think strawberries and cherries. These are best matched with chicken, partridge and pork.

There are some other basics to remember. Most leading Champagne houses produce non-vintage and vintage. Non-vintage Champagnes are designed to provide a continuous house style by blending grapes from different vintages. The classic NV blend is 60 per cent Pinot

Noir and 40 per cent Chardonnay. Creating a house style is an art mastered by the Champenois. Vintage Champagnes come from a single vintage or harvest in especially good years. Instead of 15 months ageing on lees, vintage Champagnes have a minimum of 36 months, although the leading

vintages tend to be aged for much longer.

Vintage Champagnes have more concentration and purity of fruit, greater depth and balance and can often age for decades. As you might expect, they are much more expensive than their NV counterparts.

Champagne is best served at 7-9 degrees C, and is best enjoyed from a tall glass with a narrow bowl.

However, the more adventurous can use a coupe, which, as legend has it, was created from a mould of Marie Antoinette's left breast and fashioned as a gift to her husband, King Louis XVI. I'll drink to that.

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