

# A Visitor's VIEW ON GUERNSEY

words | Carolyn Patricia Grisold

**S**t. Peter Port rose up from the Channel in jagged shadows. The sun shone too bright in my camera and the wind whipped my hair in my eye. When we got closer I could see boats moored along the coast. The man beside me said when the tide goes out, all those boats sit on rocks. I said no way. I wasn't sure if I would like it. I'd only known about the island from reading the Potato Peel Pie Society. Thought it sounded cute. Was in England for the Henley Regatta so decided to give Guernsey a try. Hesitantly, taking the long way there. I took the train to Dover, the ferry to Calais, drove to Rouen. Stayed in an Ibis, shivering in my thin sweater, missing the stifling Toronto summers back home. Monday drove to Le Mans, later to Saumur for croque monsieur in a courtyard and two lovely nights in a Nantes B&B. Then to the Carrefour in St. Malo, stocking up on red wine and dried sausage, another ferry to Jersey, Bloody Mary by the harbour, holding back nausea from the travel. And here, now, watching Guernsey rise up from dark waters, not ominous, but not as I pictured it, all pastel in the afternoon and moules-frites and me in my new blue and white nautical-themed dress that I thought would be perfect. Too bad about the weather.

The next day I took to the 7A counter-clockwise, asked the driver if it was true, I could get around the island for a pound. I sat caught between three Frenchmen, leaning over me to point out the window. Commenting on the traffic. I'd been warned about the streets, the rental cars, the damage to their sides. I loved the houses, tiny flowers sprouting out from their old stone walls, petit jardins, French streetnames, the "hedge veg" (such a trusting island; Torontonians would never leave produce unattended). I sat on the right, the coastal side, but after a while wished I were on the left, watching the rolling hills lumber by, reminding me of England, indulging in their

verdancy (swimmingly meeting the verdant sea). Within an hour and a half I was back "downtown," strolling to the Old Quarter, the market, with my nails freshly rosy from Amelia's Wardrobe, smudged flipping through Gallery magazine, wanting to visit Victor Hugo's statue, but it was late, and so I headed to my rented room

On Friday I wandered into Candie Gardens for a tea in the conservatory, and it was there that I saw it, the statue of Victor, realizing all along he'd been across the street. That night to L'Éscalier, highly recommended, bounding up the steps. I had Herm oysters; charred pork loin for the main. I closed it down, talking Sark Folk Festival with the chef, tattoos with the Maître d'. I told them this is how Toronto dining works best: local, rustic, decadent. Two solitudes, in solidarity. T.O. and St. P.

Saturday it rained but the sun came out long enough for a drive to Cobo Bay, G&T at The Rockmount, quick snapshot of Icart Point along the way.

Sunday: much too early and a Flybe to Gatwick. Later, high on sleeping pills and Jacob's Creek, soaring over the Atlantic, my blue-and-white dress all rumpled, missing the island already, wondering if it was real.

I landed in a smog-filled heatwave and Canadian customs asked where I'd been. When I said Guernsey she said "who's he?"

**Carolyn writes amusing musings  
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