

Lihou Island



Contact Information

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Location

Lihou Island is a beautiful and tranquil haven, and the most westerly point in the Channel Islands. Perry's Guide Ref: Page 12.

Opening Times

Lihou Island is linked to Guernsey at low-tide by a quarter mile causeway from L'Erée headland. A list of [causeway opening times](#) must be consulted before a visit to the island. Opening times for the causeway are also posted at either end of the causeway,

If, on your return journey from Lihou Island, you find that the tide has come in and the causeway is covered, DO NOT attempt to cross. Call the emergency services (999 or 112) for assistance.

Facilities

There are no public toilet facilities on Lihou Island. The closest public toilets are located at L'Erée Beach Car Park (Perry's Guide Ref: 20B1).

History

The Island was purchased by the States of Guernsey in January 1995. It is an important conservation area due to an abundance of bird and marine life. On 1st

March 2006, Guernsey designated its first Ramsar Site, which encompassed Lihou Island.

Lihou boasts an impressive collection of legends surrounding its obscure history. The ruined priory is thought to be the largest religious relic in the Bailiwick. The house was shelled during the German Occupation of the Channel Islands during World War II.

The Lihou Island House

The Lihou Charitable Trust took over the lease for the house in 2006 in order to continue the work started by The States by ensuring that the House on the island remain as a facility open to all.

For booking information, please visit www.lihouisland.com.

Biodiversity

The Environment Department, who are responsible for managing the island, is mindful of the sensitive balancing act between the needs of the visitor and the needs of wildlife.

From a distance, Lihou Island looks like a low lump of rock emerging from the sea, with patches of grass growing on it. On closer inspection, it becomes clear that the island is a thriving community with a wealth of habitats.

The island was recognised as part of a "Site of Nature Conservation Importance" (SNCI) as part of a 1989 study, and along with much of the Guernsey coastline it is designated an internationally "Important Bird Area". The bird nesting sites on Lissroy and Lihoumel are breeding areas for species such as Oystercatchers and Ringed Plovers. The public are asked to avoid these sites, which are clearly marked with signs and roped off areas. On the main island, various bird species can be found from the familiar and amiable Robin to the elusive and breathtaking Peregrine Falcon. The island provides a suitable environment for many different species of plants. Rare species that have been recorded include Yellow Horned Poppy, Sand Crocus, Least Adder's Tongue and Sea Stork's Bill.

Birds on the shore

As the tide goes down, exposing the rocks and shingle of the intertidal area around the causeway, it is often possible to spot waders such as Oystercatchers, Curlews, Turnstones and Redshank moving around the pools and shoreline looking for food. Little Egrets and Grey Herons can be seen fishing in pools and shallows, and Shags occasionally venture into the shallow water near to the causeway in search of a meal. The birds, particularly the Oystercatchers and Curlews, are often heard before they're seen, with the Curlews' distinctive "Cour-li" and the often frantic sounding "Kleep-keep-keep" of the Oystercatcher. In winter, Brent Geese may be seen feeding on the eel-grass in the channel.

Birds that breed on Lihou

Breeding birds are plentiful on, or around, Lihou during the Spring and Summer:

- Gulls and Shags nest on Lihoumel and Lissroy, the two islets. Large numbers of Oystercatchers visit the island to raise their young.
- Ringed Plovers (2 pairs in 1998) breed on the shingle bank and a pair of Shelducks successfully raised a family at the dew pond (Summer 2000).

To protect the birds, the shingle bank and two islets are closed off during the breeding season, between 1st January and 1st August each year.

Life on the seashore

A variety of seashore life lives around both the causeway and the rest of the shoreline, including:

- Shore Crabs, Edible Crabs (Chancres), Porcelain Crabs, Velvet Swimming Crabs and Hermit Crabs scuttle from under rocks and into seaweed.
- Their close relations, Squat Lobsters, can be found lower on the shore, and Shrimps and Prawns thrive in the rockpools.
- Limpets, Winkles, Topshells, Dog Whelks and other members of the snail family can be seen alongside starfish (Cushion Stars and Brittle Stars).
- Ormers, a local delicacy protected by strict legislation, graze the underside of rocks on the lower shore.
- Anemones, such as the Beadlet and Snakelocks, lurk among the rocks. These same rocks provide refuge for a wide variety of worms, including the Ragworm, a fisherman's favourite.
- Blennies (or Shannies) swim in rockpools alongside Gobies and Butterfish.
- Seaweeds, or algae, are abundant. Over 200 species have been listed, five of which are not recorded for any other site in the Channel Islands.

Flora

Flora on the island is diverse and includes the following:

- Grasses, predominantly Red Fescue and Yorkshire Fog are widespread.
- Many of the paths are carpeted by Buckshorn Plantain whilst Wild Carrots, Violets, Cinquefoil, Trefoils and Campion are scattered in the areas of short turf.
- Sea pinks bloom over much of the Island in early summer and Autumn Squill provides a fine display later in the year.
- A number of very rare species such as Sand Crocus, Dwarf Pansy, Sand Quillwort and Early Meadow Grass have been recorded.