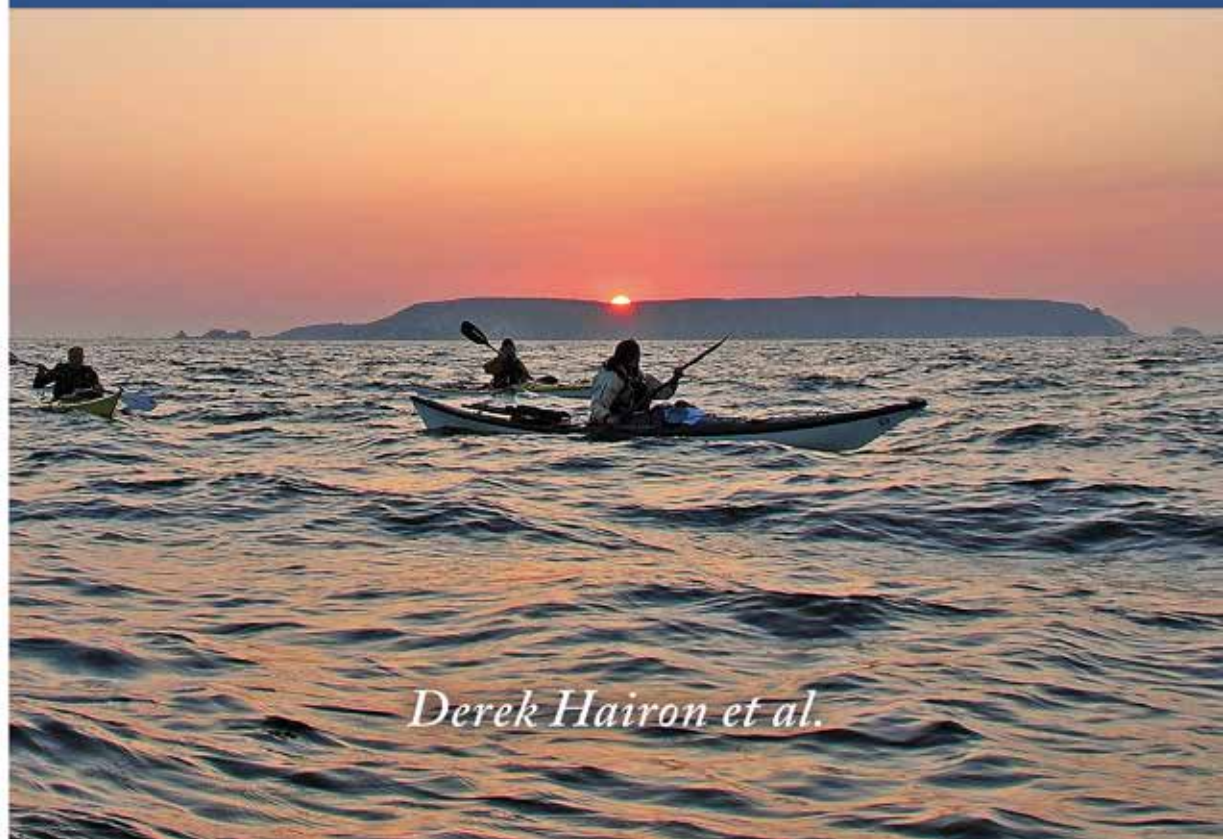
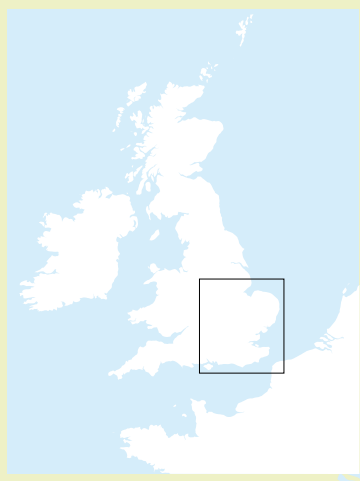




South East England & Channel Islands Sea Kayaking



Derek Hairon et al.



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Introduction

Though geographically close, the two areas covered in this guide are as different in character as it is possible to conceive.

The South East of England has a varied landscape of chalk cliffs, pebble beaches, vast expanses of sand, mudflats and river estuaries. At one extreme is the tidal Thames which runs through the densely populated city of London, and at the other is the deserted North Norfolk coast. It is true that some parts of this region are more attractive to sea kayakers than others, but we have been selective. All of the routes in the guide are worthwhile and many of them are real gems.

The Channel Islands consist of a small number of large islands and a vast number of islets and reefs. Here we are talking pink granite, white sandy beaches and very strong tidal streams. They are closer to France than to England (a mere 12km between Les Écréhous reef and mainland France) and are in fact what remains of the Duchy of Normandy. The French eventually recovered mainland Normandy but the Islands retained their independence and their links with the UK. Most Channel Islanders speak English as their mother tongue, but you will see French and Norman French place names everywhere. Many of the routes here are very committing but there are also a good number of gentler paddles.

Enjoy ...



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How to Use the Guide

To use the guide you will need an up-to-date tide timetable for the relevant area, the appropriate Ordnance Survey maps and the knowledge to use them. The Channel Islands section differs slightly to cope with the need for different maps and nautical charts. These are detailed in the chapter The Channel Islands.

Each of the trip chapters is set out into six sections:

Tidal & Route Information – This is designed as a quick reference for all the ‘must know’ information on which to plan the trip.

Introduction – This is designed to give the reader a brief overview of what to expect from the trip and what the appetite.

Description – This provides further detail and information on the trip including the coastline, launching/landing points, the wildlife and environment, historical information and places of interest to visit.

Tides & Weather – Offering further tidal information and how best to plan the trip which takes the tides, weather and local knowledge into consideration.

Map of Route – This provides a visual outline of the route’s start/finish points, landing places, points of interest and tidal information.

Additional Information – This section provides further information (including Admiralty Charts and other useful maps) that will complement the trip, or be of interest if in the local area.

Using the Tidal & Route Information

Each route begins with an overview of pertinent details beginning with the following information: grade of difficulty, trip name, route symbols, and trip number.



Grade A | Relatively easy landings with escape routes easily available. Offering relative shelter from extreme conditions and ocean swell. Some tidal movement may be found, but easy to predict with no major tidal races or overfalls.



Grade B | Some awkward landings and sections of coastline with no escape routes should be expected. Tidal movement, tidal races, overfalls, crossings, ocean swell and surf may be found on these trips. They will also be exposed to the weather and associated conditions.



Grade C | These trips will have difficult landings and will have no escape routes for long sections of the trip. Fast tidal movement, tidal races, overfalls, extended crossings, ocean swell and surf will be found on all these trips. They will be very exposed to the weather and conditions, therefore require detailed planning and paddlers to be competent in rough water conditions. With this considered, the journey may require good conditions for the trip to be viable.

CIRCUMNAVIGATION

COASTAL PADDLING

SHELTERED

OPEN SEA CROSSING

NO LANDING ZONES

STRONG TIDAL EFFECTS

PORTAGE NECESSARY

VEHICLE SHUTTLE

FERRY SHUTTLE

ROUTE SYMBOLS



Distance	Total distance for the trip.
OS Sheet	Number of Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger map required.
Tidal Port	The port for which tide timetables will be required to work out the tidal streams.
Start	△ map symbol, name and six-figure grid reference of starting point.
Finish	○ map symbol, name and six-figure grid reference of finishing point.
HW/LW	The high and/or low water time difference between local ports nearest to the trip and the tidal port.
Tidal Times	Location or area of tidal stream movement, the direction to which the tidal stream flows and the time it starts flowing in relation to the tidal port high water.
Max Rate Sp	The areas in which the tidal streams are fastest and the maximum speed in knots attained on the average spring tide.
Coastguard	Name of the relevant Coastguard Station.

MAP SYMBOLS



start & alternative start



finish & alternative finish



waypoint



possible escape



portage



described route



alternative route



tidal stream direction

-0520 HW

time relative to Tidal Port HW

7kn Sp

Max Rate at Springs



major counter-current



areas of counter-currents / eddies



areas of rough water / overfalls



lighthouse & light



lifeboat station



Coastwatch lookout (NCI)



ferry, passenger & car



campsite



bird reserve



town / buildings



prohibited area



Site of Special Scientific Interest

About the Authors

Channel Islands – Derek Hairon

Derek Hairon is a BCU Level 5 sea kayak coach and has paddled throughout the Channel Islands for over 42 years. In 1978 he completed the first circumnavigation of Ireland by kayak and has subsequently undertaken expeditions to Alaska, Nova Scotia, Faeroe Islands, Aland Islands, Brittany, whitewater rivers in Nepal, and most of the classic UK sea kayaking destinations. Recognising the growth of sit-on-top kayaking he wrote the guide *Sit-on-Top Kayak*. He owns Jersey Kayak Adventures and runs a range of sea kayak introductory and advanced courses plus guided coastal sea kayak tours.

South East England

The impetus for this section of the guide was originally provided by Chris Wheeler, whose enthusiasm and commitment to kayaking knew no bounds. On his untimely death on the River Dart others stepped into the breach, and the South East England section was a combined effort involving seven different contributors. They are (in order of the number of routes contributed):

Andy Levick, Mark Rainsley, Mark Gawler, Annie Davis, Guy Smith, John Brett and Kurt Finch.

To see who contributed a particular route please refer to the contents on page 4.

Environmental Considerations

RESPECT THE INTERESTS OF OTHER PEOPLE

Acting with courtesy, consideration and awareness is essential. If you are exercising access rights, make sure that you respect the privacy, safety and livelihood of those living and working in the outdoors, and the needs of other people enjoying the outdoors. Even jet skiers.

CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Sea kayakers are privileged to access remote places that others cannot. Many of these places have sensitive plant, animal and bird life. Be aware of, and respect, landing restrictions around nature reserves. Look after the places you visit, enjoy the land and leave it as you found it. Natural England (www.naturalengland.org.uk) has created magic.defra.gov.uk, a source of incredibly detailed maps outlining protected habitats and sites (does not cover the Channel Islands). The Marine Conservation Society (www.mcsuk.org) offers advice on how to act appropriately around marine wildlife.

WILD CAMPING

This guide provides information on many commercial campsites. Although most are pleasant places, if you value solitude and silence treat anything with 'holiday park' in the title with caution. The authors of this guide camp 'wild' whenever a commercial site is unavailable, and have almost always been able to find an appropriate spot, with a little thought. Wild camping provides a special experience and forms an integral part of sea kayaking. There is no legally enshrined right to camp on the English coast, and areas in the south east and the Channel Islands that obviously lend themselves to wild camping for sea kayakers are limited. Large groups hoping to put up numerous tents are probably in the wrong region; think discretion and low profile. If you decide to include a wild camp in your journey plans, choose a location away from dwellings and roads. Arrive late and do not pitch your tent until dusk. You should take down your tent early the following morning. *"Leave nothing but footprints and take nothing but photographs."*

WARNING

Sea kayaking is inherently a potentially dangerous sport. The sea is one of the most committing and unforgiving environments. Conditions on the sea can change quickly and dramatically. When planning to venture out on any of the trips described in this book, ensure that your knowledge, experience, ability and judgement are appropriate to the seriousness of the trip. The authors recommend acquiring appropriate training and advice from experienced and qualified individuals.

The information in this book has been thoroughly researched; however the authors and publisher can take no responsibility, if tidal times differ or if the information supplied is not sufficient to negotiate the conditions experienced on the day. The outdoors cannot be made risk-free and you should plan and act with care at all times, for your own safety and that of others. The decision on whether to go out sea kayaking or not, and any consequences arising from that decision, remain yours and yours alone.





Chichester Harbour



No. 4 | Grade A | 17km | OS sheet 197

Tidal Port Portsmouth

Start  Emsworth (SU 748 055)

Finish  Dell Quay (SU 834 028)

HW/LW At Chichester Harbour entrance, HW springs is 10 minutes before, and neaps are 5 minutes after, HW Portsmouth. LW springs and neaps are 20 minutes after LW Portsmouth.

Tidal Times Tide times within the harbour are within a maximum of fifteen minutes difference from HW/LW at Chichester Harbour entrance. Slack water coincides with HW/LW.

Max Rate Sp 2.4 knots (6.4 knots Chichester Harbour entrance).

Coastguard Solent, tel. 023 9255 2100, VHF Ch67, (Ch16 should only be used for emergency and urgent calls.) VHF weather Ch86 and Ch23 at 0130 local time, repeated every 3 hours.
Ch14 Call 'Chichester Harbour Radio'.

Introduction

Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a wildlife haven and a sailing Mecca. The harbour offers sheltered paddling, with views of historic, picturesque villages with the backdrop of the Sussex Downs. During summer weekends you'll share the harbour



© Emsworth Key and Slipway | Mark Gawler

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with hoards of dinghies, windsurfers and keel boats. In autumn and winter you'll be able to appreciate the harbour's natural beauty at its best; it is also the best time to see waders and wildfowl, their numbers boosted by overwintering species. Brent Geese litter the mud flats from October to March.

Description

Emsworth is a small picturesque town at the north-western corner of Chichester Harbour. It was once a major port, the centre for oyster fisheries, and home to a number of shipbuilders. *Terror* is often moored here; a sailing boat built around 1890, she is believed to be the last remaining boat of the Victorian oyster fleet. Now Emsworth is mostly associated with sailing and a few exclusive restaurants.

Although the slipway is not accessible at all states of the tide, Emsworth makes a good starting point for a variety of trips in the western part of the harbour. It is worth exploring the river to The Old Flour Mill (one of Emsworth's two tide mills) and the boat yard (SU 753 056); beautiful wooden boats are often being restored here.

Heading towards the Emsworth Channel, the evidence of the former oyster industry is still to be seen, most notably towards LW when the Fisherman's Walk is visible. This causeway once ran most of the way to Fowley Island. North of Fowley Island, the channel is joined from the west by the Sweare Deep. The combination of these channels can produce a surprisingly swift flow between Hayling and Thorney Island, reaching 2 knots.

Oysters

A handful of fisherman still dredge for oysters in the harbour, but this is a shadow of the former industry which pre-dates Roman times. Emsworth was the centre of the industry ... until it was brought to an abrupt end by the Great Oyster Scare of 1902. Guests at a Winchester banquet became ill and the Dean of Winchester died from typhoid attributed to eating Emsworth oysters. Inspection of the oyster beds revealed gross sewage contamination. Oyster sales immediately slumped and the industry never recovered.

To the east is Thorney Island, a bleak and desolate place from the sea. The 'Welcome to Hell' graffiti on the seawall further compounds this image! Thorney is however part of the AONB and the beautiful Church of St Nicholas at West Thorney (confusingly on the east of the island) is a major redeeming feature. The island has been connected to the mainland since 1870; the





📷 Anchorage at East Head | Mark Gawler

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channels that once separated the island from the mainland are now regulated by sluice gates. Eames Farm is the most important site in the harbour for nesting waders and wildfowl, an area of reclaimed land forming a coastal grazing marsh habitat. South of the Great Deep, the island is an MOD base. Access is controlled by ‘signing in’ at the security gates. Walkers are permitted to walk the Sussex Coast Path round the perimeter of the island and visit the church. Landing by kayak is unlikely to be challenged, providing you don’t stray inland.

To the south of Thorney Island on the eastern side of Chichester Harbour entrance is East Head, an important mobile sand dune feature, sand dunes being something of a rarity on the south coast. An SSSI managed by the National Trust, its habitat supports specially adapted maritime plants such as sea holly, sea bindweed and marram grass. There are several scarce invertebrates living here, and nesting in the dunes are ringed plover, skylark and meadow pipit. The sand spit has moved significantly since the 18th century when it pointed south-west into the Solent.

The northern tip of East Head provides a busy anchorage for yachts in the summer. It is an excellent place to stop for a leg stretch. The walk round the sand spit is about 2.5km. At the southern end is The Hinge (SZ 765 984), where the salt marshes of the harbour are perilously close to the open sea. Departing East Head, a potentially muddy but entertaining diversion is to explore the creeks through the salt marshes towards Roman Landing.

Heading north-east up the Chichester Channel, to the north is the RSPB reserve Pilsley Island. Attached to the southern peninsula of Thorney Island by a causeway, the island’s undisturbed habitat is home to an impressive variety of unusual plants, spiders and insects. Three species of tern including the rare little tern sometimes breed here. The terns lay their eggs on shingle, so exploring on foot is strongly discouraged.



North of the Chichester Channel is a 2km line of broken piles, interrupted briefly by the Thorney Channel which leads to the alternative launch or landing at Prinsted.

After Chidham (Cobnor Point) is the Bosham Channel, which leads to the picturesque and historic village of Bosham. There is a slipway here, accessible at all states of the tide except when the road to it floods near HW. Bosham features in the Bayeux Tapestry, showing King Harold praying at the church before sailing on his ill-fated 1064 mission to Normandy; the rest as they say is history. The Holy Trinity church is one of the earliest in Sussex; the prominent Saxon tower is the oldest part. The legend of King Canute also relates to Bosham, the King's daughter is alleged to have drowned in the millstream and to have been buried at the church.

Continuing east into Itchenor Reach, the channel is flanked by yacht moorings. The shingle hard at Itchenor provides a launch point at all states of the tide.

The moorings continue up the channel almost as far as Birdham Pool, the north shore obstructed by a number of private hards and jetties which cross the mud flats from expensive-looking houses. Birdham Pool marina was reputedly the first purpose-built marina in England, developed in the late 1930s from tidal mill pools; the old mill building still stands at the entrance lock.

The Portsmouth and Arundel Canal enters the harbour at Salterns Lock. The canal is not navigable for the first 2.5km as it is used for houseboat moorings, but the short Chichester branch has been restored. The large, modern Chichester Marina is of little interest to the discerning paddler.

The channel becomes more rural in the final stretch to Dell Quay. This quieter section attracts huge numbers of birds. It is worth continuing for a further 1.5km beyond Dell Quay to get a unique view of Chichester Cathedral, the only cathedral visible from an English harbour.

At the top of the harbour is Fishbourne. Although not accessible by kayak, it is worth visiting the remains of the Roman Palace, which includes the largest collection of in-situ Roman mosaics in Britain.

Dell Quay has a quiet boatyard and quay on the eastern shore, and The Crown and Anchor Pub is conveniently located just behind the quay.

Additional information

Launching points and car parks:

Emsworth slipway: Accessible HW +/- 3hr, loading/unloading permitted on the hard shore by the slipway (SU 749 055). Pay and display car park in town 100m away.

Bosham: Launching at all states of the tide from the slipway; you will be charged if you take your car onto the quay, but otherwise it's free. Launch from the road at HW as the road floods. With good timing you don't have to carry the boat! (SU 805 038). Free parking on the road below HW mark. Pay and display car park in village 200m away.

Itchenor: Launching is possible from a shingle hard or slipway (SU 799 014) at all states of the tide. Pay and display car park 200m from the slipway.

Prinsted: Launching is possible two hours either side of HW from a small shingle launching area at the end of Prinsted Lane, Southbourne (SU 765 050). Limited roadside parking.

Dell Quay: Launching is possible three hours either side of HW from a shingle launch hard and slipway (SU 835 028). Limited roadside parking.

Langstone: Free car park at The Ship at Langstone. Launching possible at all states of the tide except LW springs. Three hours either side of HW the slipway adjacent to the car park is accessible; at other times a longer carry to the slipway at the base of the east side of the Langstone Bridge.

www.conservancy.co.uk – Chichester Harbour Conservancy

www.emsworthonline.co.uk – local information

www.emsworthheritageproject.org.uk – local history

Variations

Emsworth to Prinsted 14km (via East Head) – a short one way trip, optionally via East Head and/or Itchenor. The shuttle is 2.5km by foot and can be done almost entirely on footpaths.

Emsworth to Bosham 15km (via East Head); there is better parking at Bosham than Dell Quay.



St Catherine to Les Écréhous



No. 3 | Grade C | 9.2km (5NM) | OS sheet J | 3655

Tidal Port St Helier

Start ▲ St Catherine (715 531) (49° 13' 28N 02° 01' 08W)

Finish ● Marmotière, Les Écréhous (49.283°N, 01.933°W)

HW/LW HW St Helier is 4 hours 55 minutes before HW Dover.

Tidal Times A NW going stream begins at 1 hour 40 minutes before HW St Helier. The SE stream starts at 4 hours 50 minutes after HW St Helier.

Max Rate Sp 6 knots.

Coastguard Jersey, tel. 01534 447705 Channel 82.
French Coastguard CROSS Jobourg Channel 70 (if heading into French waters).

Introduction

Les Écréhous is a classic destination, and for many visiting paddlers this is the highlight of a visit to the Channel Islands. Local paddlers are drawn back again and again, in some cases over 100



La Taille shingle bank | Derek Hairon

times. Their collections of Les Écréhous pebbles create visual diaries which sit on window sills and desks as reminders of day trips and overnight stays, magically calm days with dolphins and gannets for company, or challenging and difficult paddles through tide races and overfalls.

Perhaps it is the Caribbean-clear waters, the sense of remoteness as you sit on the bench looking towards Jersey, or just the opportunity to reach, by physical effort, a place that has a charm and beauty that is difficult to describe. Les Écréhous is a remarkable and beautiful place which draws people offshore.

Description

Local paddlers may treat this as a regular trip, but probe a little more and you soon discover that the 9.5km (5NM) crossing is not to be treated lightly. Many recount difficult landings, huge ferry glides and even missing Les Écréhous due to the fast tides. This is one route where you need to be confident in your offshore navigation when streams can reach over 5 knots.

Departure points depend on the time and height of the tide (see Variations); St Catherine is a popular starting point at about one hour before high water, with good parking.

Historically fishermen sailed from Rozel to Les Écréhous to fish and quarry the reef. Although the stone was not high quality it had one big advantage; it was free, and many walls around Rozel contain Les Écréhous granite. As a result the islets are in the parish of St Martin, and every year parish officials visit to assess the rates. Just what the hut owners get for their money is debatable, as the refuse collection and street lighting is non-existent, but the hut owners can at least call

upon the services of the parish honorary police – as they did when French demonstrators landed to protest over fishing rights in 1994.

Expect fast water and overfalls off St Catherine’s breakwater (especially at spring tides); for some paddlers this comes as a shock, but it usually calms down after 300m, though you may encounter a beam swell. The beam swell may cause problems and a reduction in speed if paddlers are not used to this. Some may also find it unsettling to be heading on a compass bearing which, having allowed for the tidal stream, seems to be sending you far from the reef; just have patience and trust your navigation and compass (assuming you have got the set and drift right).

Heading offshore there are plenty of good transits along the north coast of Jersey to estimate your drift and position. Avoid aiming too soon towards Marmotière because the tide streams flow strongly north-west towards Grande Rousse as you approach the reef; if you end up at Grande Rousse, you face some big ferry glides and eddy hops to Marmotière.





Les Écréhous with Jersey on the horizon | Derek Hairton

The small jetty at Marmotière is a good landing spot. Tide streams increase in the sound to the north of the islets. River-like conditions occur between the rocks and down the main sound on the ebb tide, and off the south-east point of Marmotière. At high tide La Taille (the steep shingle bank) covers with standing waves, while at low tide a 50 degree slope on the northern side is revealed. This was formed by the fast currents in the sound.

Today Les Écréhous comprises of three islets with 28 former fishermen's cabins and holiday huts built in a higgledy-piggledy fashion on the rocks; their bright colours and small size distort your sense of size and perspective.

Make time to explore the reef either by foot or kayak. The large lagoons have crystal clear water and an abundance of marine life. Seals are often seen in the main lagoon, with the main seal colony near Grande Galère. Try to keep clear of this area as the wildlife needs some space, especially on summer weekends when the reef gets very busy.

Variations

On spring tides it may be prudent to depart from Gorey, or even La Rocque, due to the strength of the streams, especially once you near the reefs.

The return trip is usually easier as Jersey is a big target, and many will depart around low water. On spring tides, if you miss St Catherine, you can continue south to Gorey, and then take the inshore eddy back to St Catherine. If crossing during the north-west stream, Rozel or Bouley Bay are options to consider.

History

The Scandinavian origin of the name Les Écréhous is usually explained as deriving from two Scandinavian words sker-holm, meaning 'rocky islets'. A recent interpretation is that it is a derivation of skerjaholm or 'island distinguished by adjacent skerries'. If Les Écréhous was once a single island, it may explain why a Cistercian priory was built sometime in the late 13th century. The first mention of the priory is in 1309, and the ruins can be seen at the southern tip of Maître Île. Between March and July this islet is a very smelly nesting site so landing is not recommended.

Maître Île was leased by the Boot family (of Boots the chemist fame) as a holiday cottage, and their stays were sometimes luxurious. On one trip a Mrs Riley brought her butler to serve meals dressed in whites, with champagne for breakfast. Earlier, the artist Oules (1884) describes "pipes, grog and songs while sitting around a blazing fire" and breakfasts of "basins of tea and a hot lobster".

In the 17th century the reef was an important smuggling transit point between France and Jersey. Edward Harris, the Lieutenant Governor of Jersey, was so involved he could never be contacted during the day. Later, Philippe Pinel lived on the reef for 40 years with his wife. She eventually left him and fled to Jersey where she accused Pinel of being a drunkard and wife-beater. More recently Alphonse Le Gastelois fled to Les Écréhous where he lived for 14 years; Alphonse was something of an eccentric and a loner on Jersey, and he was therefore a prime target for suspicion when a series of sex crimes occurred. When offered work on Les Écréhous he was happy to accept it to prove it was not him. It was not until 1971 that the perpetrator of the crimes was caught, but by then Alphonse had made Les Écréhous his home, and only returned to live in Jersey in 1975 after being arrested and charged with arson for burning down two huts (he was later acquitted).

On very low tides L'Écrevière Bank is an unusual picnic spot. If the main islets are very busy, the north-western beaches on Les Écréhous are good alternatives, with some remarkable rock formations at low tide.

JERSEY TO NORMANDY

Les Écréhous is a useful stopover for a crossing to Normandy, but you need to consider the French sea kayak regulations. The crossings from Les Écréhous are just within the limits set by the French authorities for offshore kayaking, so you should be okay unless you bump into a very zealous bureaucrat.

3A LES ÉCRÉHOUS TO CARTERET (NORMANDY)

Although a similar distance to the Jersey – Les Écréhous crossing (6NM) this crossing is more difficult in a number of ways. There is little or no assistance from the tides on this section, and it often takes longer than expected. The approach to both Carteret and Les Écréhous has a lot of fast tide streams, so you should not change course too soon.

About halfway between Les Écréhous and Carteret, Basses de Taillepied and Bancs Félés are shallow areas with overfalls and faster tide streams.

While the Jersey to Les Écréhous journey gets a bit of shelter from Jersey, this is lost on the Les Écréhous to Carteret section. If landing at Carteret, the tide goes out a long way and the harbour/marina dries.

3B ANNEPORT (JERSEY)

TO LE SÉNÉQUET LIGHT (NEAR GOUVILLE SUR MER, NORMANDY)

This is a very fast route from Jersey to Normandy as the direction of the tidal stream is very favourable.

3C LE SÉNÉQUET LIGHT

(NEAR GOUVILLE SUR MER, NORMANDY) TO LES ÉCRÉHOUS

The tidal streams are almost directly behind you on this route, making a good option for a return (via Les Écréhous) to Jersey from the Normandy coast. It is a superb offshore journey in good conditions.

Tides and weather

Tide streams are fast with overfalls about 0.5km off St Catherine and as you near the reef. In poor visibility locating the islets can be tricky as there are no lights on the reef.

At Les Écréhous the south-east stream starts about 1 hour before low water, and the north-west stream 1 hour before HW St Helier, which is not listed on the tidal atlas. On spring tides the breakout at Les Écréhous can be tricky, so it is best to approach close to Maître Île, unless you like big ferry glides.

Jersey provides considerable protection from any westerly swells, and it is only once you are 3.7 km (2NM) offshore that you may become more exposed to the swell.

Additional information

Les Écréhous is a Ramsar wetlands site. Care must be taken during the breeding season (March to July) to avoid disturbing the tern colony at Le Bliantque Île; information boards identify the sensitive spots. It is possible to travel over by charter boat and then kayak the reef with Jersey Kayak Adventures (www.jerseykayakadventures.co.uk).

The hut owners value the peace and beauty of the reef so try to keep disturbance to a minimum.



St-Brieuc

