

Isle of Sark

Overview:

Sark consists of two main parts, Little Sark and Greater Sark. They are connected by a narrow isthmus called La Coupée which is just nine feet wide with a drop of 300 feet either side.

Territory:

The island is on a plateau averaging 90 m above sea level surrounded by near vertical cliffs. It has a total area of only 545 ha and is some 4.8 km long and 2.4 km wide at its widest point.

Location:

Sark is the smallest of the four main Channel Islands, located some 80 miles off the south coast of England. The island sits 20 miles from the coast of France and is part of the British crown dependency — technically owned by Queen Elizabeth II, but not part of the United Kingdom.

Latitude and Longitude:

Latitude: 49° 25' N Longitude: 2° 21' O

Time Zone:

GMT -1

Total Land Area:

545

EEZ:

Climate:

The climate is equable, similar to Devon and Cornwall and frosts are infrequent. The average rainfall is about 140 mm p.a. The Island is fully exposed to winter gales from all quarters and these can interrupt the boat service.

Natural Resources:

ECONOMY:

Total GDP:	
2004	560,000.00 USD

Per Capita GDP:

% of GDP per Sector:			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

% of Population Employed by Sector			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

External Aid/Remittances:

The island is economically self sufficient and receives no income from outside sources.

Growth:

Labour Force:

Unemployment	
Year:	Unemployment Rate (% of pop.)

Industry:

The prospect of employment is limited to seasonal work in the tourist industry either in the hotels or carriage driving. There is no employment agency, no national insurance, no unemployment benefits and no old age pensions.

Niche Industry:

Revenue is derived from local taxation and the tourist industry, upon which it is very dependent for both the local inhabitants and the administration.

Tourism:

Imports and Exports:	
Tot. Value of Imports	0.00 ()



From Eu:	
Import Partners (EU:)	
Partners Outside EU:	
Import Partners:	
Tot. Value of Exports	()
To Eu:	
Export Partners:	
Partners Outside EU::	
Export Partners:	
Main Imports:	
Main Exports:	

TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS

External:

Number of Airports:

Number of Main Ports:

A year-round shipping service from Guernsey is operated by the Isle of Sark Shipping Company. The Company is given a monopoly licensed by the Lieutenant Governor to ensure a viable year-round service. The Company is fifty percent owned by Chief Pleas who have to agree timetables and fare structure. Although there is a summer boat service from Jersey (not controlled by Chief Pleas) regular communications are with Guernsey. The passenger boats run a frequent service during the season April to mid-October every day except Sundays when there is just one boat in and out. In winter there is a daily 'in and out' boat on weekdays and a return boat on Wednesday which enables residents to go shopping, visit dentist, etc.

Internal:

Air

Road:

Personal transport on the Island is limited to foot, bicycle or horse drawn carriage. The use of tractors is limited by license to carriage of goods and for agriculture. Roads are repaired during the winter months when there is no tourist traffic and when other work is in short supply. There is also, from the practical point view, the requirement that dirt roads have to be repaired and rolled when wet or the surface will not bind. It is the responsibility of the Douzaine to determine which roads are to be repaired, taking into account the amount of funds voted by Chief Pleas. It is the Constable's duty to hire the men and supervise the work.

Sea:

Other Forms of Transportation:

Economic Zones:

Energy Policy:

Electricity is available at 240V AC. Houses are generally heated by solid fuel or oil boilers. Bottled gas is available.

Year	Total Energy Production (Mwh)	Type			Total Energy Consumption (Mwh)	Sector				
		Thermic (Mwh)	Geothermic (Mwh)	Other (Mwh)		Domestic (Mwh)	Commercial (Mwh)	Public Service (Mwh)	Industry (Mwh)	Public Lighting (Mwh)

Official Currency:

UK currency (sterling)

Banking and Insurance:

Number of Banks and Credit Unions:

Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:

Number of Insurance Companies:

There are branches of National Westminster and Midland Banks open daily Monday to Friday. U K, Guernsey and Jersey currencies are in circulation. The Island is fiscally independent of the UK and Guernsey.

Financial Services:

Sark is an internationally important finance centre. The Sark-Lark scenario is part of an offshore operation whereby Sarkese become directors of overseas companies, charging a nominal director's fee. The operation of these companies becomes secretive and not open for scrutiny.

Communications/E-Commerce:

Public Ownership:

It is in land tenure that the basis of the old feudal system can best be seen. No land in Sark is held as a Freehold. The Seigneur holds the Island in perpetual tenure from the Crown in return for certain obligations and annual dues (rente), and may not have that taken away from him unless he reneges on his commitment. Also he may not sell his Fief (the whole Island) without Crown permission. In like manner all landholdings in Sark are held in perpetual tenure from the Seigneur in return for certain obligations, rentes and tithes and may not be bought or sold without his permission. Tithing is currently in abeyance but the obligation to hold arms for defence is written into all contracts and the Seigneur's permission to sell and buy is still required



and the purchaser must pay one thirteenth of the purchase price to the Seigneur for his permission.

Land Use:

Agriculture/Forestry:

Marine Activity:

Fishing:

Marine conservation laws prohibit taking fish below a prescribed size and also provides a closed season for taking lobster, crab and orniers to preserve stocks. In addition, under 'The Fishing (Sark) Ordinance', it is forbidden to take fish of any kind whilst being 'totally or partially submergedand breathing with the aid of breathing apparatus or wearing a face visor'.

Marine Life:

Critical Issues:

An area of Sark has for the first time been recognised as a Wetland of International Importance under the international Ramsar Convention. The site covers four hectares, from the west coast of Sark stretching across the renowned Gouliot Headland to the famous Gouliot Caves. The Gouliot Caves have long been noted as an important habitat for a rich variety of invertebrate life, almost unique in Western Europe. This rare intertidal habitat contains many endangered species; including sponges, sea anemones, and hydroids. The Headland above the caves supports a range of coastal ecosystems including coastal grassland and hard rock. These habitats are home to many rare and endangered species of plants, insects and lichens.

JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES

Capital:

Political System:

The Seigneur of Sark is the head of the feudal government of the Isle of Sark (in the case of a woman, the title is Dame). Many of the laws, particularly those related to inheritance and the rule of the Seigneur, are little changed since they were enacted in 1565 under Queen Elizabeth I. Sark holds a unique position within the Channel Islands, which themselves hold an unusual position in Her Majesty's possessions, in that they are not part of the United Kingdom or Great Britain nor are they sovereign states. Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark have their own insular legislature, judicial system and administration. Under feudal precepts Her Majesty as Sovereign had the ultimate responsibility for defence of the Islands. That responsibility is now shouldered by Her Majesty's Government. Similarly the Government is responsible for foreign affairs and the ultimate responsibility for law and order, until recently lay with the Home Office, is now seen to lie with the Lord Chancellor's Office. The Queen derives Her Sovereignty of the Islands as successor to the Dukes of Normandy, the Islands having been part of that Duchy until the 13th century. Sovereigns of England have for many years charged the Home Secretary with the responsibility of advising them on all Channel Island affairs however this function has recently (June 2001) been transferred to the Lord Chancellor's Department. Sark, with its own independent legislature and court, falls within the Bailiwick of Guernsey. Its present constitution was originally framed under a Royal Charter of 1565, reinforced by Letters Patent in 1611. It was amended by Order in Council of 1675 suspending the Court and introducing the office of Seneschal, since when changes in small detail have been incorporated under further Orders in Council. The latest amendment was in 1986. The Channel Islands are neither members nor associate members of the European Community but have a special relationship set out in Protocol 3 to the Treaty of Accession. However they are within the Common Agricultural Area, the Common External Tariff and Common Agricultural Policy, while being free to levy their own excise duties on goods. Provisions exist to apply V.A.T. but have never been implemented in the Islands. Her Majesty the Queen is represented in the Bailiwick by the Lieutenant Governor whom she appoints. He is usually a high ranking officer and in times of hostilities is ex-officio Commander-in-Chief of any military forces stationed in the Islands. He is charged with ensuring that the Sark Officials do their duties 'faithfully and well'. The Bailiff of Guernsey is the senior civic authority charged with upholding its laws traditions and liberties. Appointed by the Queen under Letters Patent, he is President of the States of Guernsey (the Guernsey legislature) and is presiding Judge in the Royal Court. Appeals from the Sark Court and criminal cases beyond its competence are heard before him or his deputy in the Royal Court. H.M. Procureur (Attorney-General) and H.M. Comptroller (Solicitor-General), are the legal advisors of the legislative bodies of the Bailiwick; these include the Chief Pleas of Sark. Appointed by the Crown they are responsible for the enforcement of Criminal Law and for drafting into legal terms laws presented to them.

Political Parties:

Since around 1565, 40 heads of the island's farm owning families have raised taxes and decided on matters of law, part of an independence agreement brokered with Queen Elizabeth, after the English seized control of the island from France. In 1920, 12 non-landowning deputies were appointed, voted for by all islanders over 18 — the last concession made to democratic government. An extraordinary meeting of the Chief Pleas voted Wednesday by 25 votes to 15 votes to approve a bill that will reduce the size of the legislature and see the two sets of representatives elected by all voting-age islanders.

Important Legislation:

Chief Pleas is the Island's legislative body. It originated as a democratic assembly of the heads (male) of all the families settled by the first Seigneur. Today the heads, or owners, male or female, of the forty tenements are supplemented by twelve Deputies of the People elected triennially. All persons over 18 years of age and who have been normally resident on Sark for a year-and-a-day are eligible to vote for the Deputies. Exceptions are those who own a proprietary interest in a tenement, who are under legal disability or who are aliens. Chief Pleas are required by statute to meet three times a year: The first Wednesday after 15 January, The first Wednesday after Easter and the first Wednesday after Michaelmas (29 September). Extraordinary meetings are called on rare occasions, normally summoned by the Seneschal with the permission of the Seigneur, but they can be summoned by the Lieutenant Governor if it is considered necessary. Legislation affecting Law and Order can be imposed on the Island by the States of Guernsey. Legislation on Foreign Affairs and International Agreements can result either from an Act of Parliament in the U.K. or from a decision of Chief Pleas to accept the terms of an International Convention. An Act of Parliament extended to the Channel Islands comes before the Royal Court in Guernsey who make an Order for its registration in the Greffe Offices of the Bailiwick.

Principal Taxes:

There is no income tax but there is a small tax on capital and a property tax (equivalent to Rates in the UK). Income arising outside the Island may be subject to taxation at source and prospective residents are advised to consult a taxation expert. There are no Death Duties or Capital Transfer Tax.

Associated Power:

United Kingdom

Citizenship:

Paradiplomacy:

HUMAN RESOURCES

The 'normally resident population is about 600 persons, rising to over 1000 in the summer with seasonal staff and visitors.



Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
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Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
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Migration:

Crude Birth Rate:

Life Expedctancy:

Crude Death Rate:

Ethnicity:

Class Division:

Languages:

The dialect spoken on Sark is a dialect of Jersey French as the island was colonized from Jersey in 1565. Sercquiais also known as Sarkese or Sark-French (L'Ârtchais) is the Norman dialect of the Channel Island of Sark. In the island, it is sometimes known, slightly disparagingly as the "patois", a French term meaning "regional language". Sarkese is in fact a descendant of the 16th century Jèrriais used by the original colonists, 40 families mostly from Saint Ouen, Jersey, who settled the then uninhabited island, although influenced in the interim by Dgèrnésiais (Guernsey dialect). It is still spoken by older inhabitants of the island. Most of the local placenames are in Sarkese.

Religion:

The principal faith is Anglican and the parish is served by the Church of St Peter built in 1820. The Seigneur no longer has the benefice in his giving, which now lies with the Bishop of Winchester, in whose diocese the parish lies. In practice the Seigneur takes on the responsibility of selecting a Priest-in-Charge (or Vicar) with the assistance of the Church Wardens and the Dean of Guernsey. Methodists form a significant minority and have a modern Chapel built in 1924 together with a Sunday school hall. They are served by a Pastor appointed by the Methodist District. The majority of residents of whatever faith use the Anglican Church for christenings, marriages and funerals. Visiting Roman Catholic priests sometimes say Mass in summer.

Literacy:

Education System:

Schooling is available from age 5 to 15 and although the Island can assist the education of local children in Guernsey or elsewhere beyond 15, it will not necessarily do so for newcomers. U.K. University and College Grants are not available to Channel Island residents.

Total Pre-schools:(2005)	60
Total Primary Schools	
First Level:	
Second Level:	
Third Level:	
Total Secondary Schools:	
Total Professional Schools	
Universities:	

Number of Schools per Island:										
	Pre-school		Elementary			High-school		Prof.	University	
	Pub	Priv	1	2	3	Pub	Priv		Pub	Priv

Students Enrolled:					
Year:	Pre-School	Elementary	High-school	Prof.	University

Teachers							
Year	Pre-School	Elementary			High-School	Prof.	University
		1	2	3			



Sark School currently has 60 pupils aged between four and 16 and four teachers. Children wishing to take GCSE and A level qualifications must leave the island to study in Jersey or Guernsey. Alternatively they can become boarders at schools in the UK.

Medical Services:

There is a resident doctor in private practice but for all other medical services, including dentistry, patients must travel to Guernsey. Neither residents nor temporary workers are covered by the National Health Service or the Guernsey Health Service, so private insurance is essential and the Island runs a scheme which all residents are invited to join.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

History:

Referenda:

Recent Significant Events:

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

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Useful Links:

IslandStudies.ca
www.upei.ca
www.google.ca

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