A short stroll around the historic area of Gorey with dramatic castle views and a well-earned drink on the pier at the finish. Approximately 45 minutes.

Start outside The Dolphin pub.

Although St Helier has always been Jersey's capital and the seat of its government, the centre of power for over four centuries was the main fortification, Mont Orgueil Castle. With the little Village of Gorey close by, the small port below the Castle was the closest link with the neighbouring coast of France.

Early in the 19th century, the Village of Gorey grew rapidly as hundreds of oyster fishermen moved to Jersey from the south-east coast of England. The population of the Village doubled in a short time and some 2,500 people were employed in the industry, either fishing, or cleaning and packing the catch. Rows of fishermen’s cottages were built to house them. There were about 250 boats bringing back around 12,000 oysters on every trip, and before long the Gorey oyster beds became over-fished. By 1864 the fleet had dwindled to just over 20 boats.

Walk along the seafront promenade away from the pier. On the right-hand side you will see a granite ship’s keel, a reminder of the shipbuilding yards that once stood here.

Oyster Sculpture

A new industry developed in Gorey in the second half of the century as shipyards, which had been established to build oyster boats, moved to building much larger vessels for transatlantic trading. The most prolific boat builder was John Picot, who built 44 boats between 1858 and 1883. Eventually the industry went into decline as wooden sailing vessels were replaced by steam-powered iron vessels.

Pause a little further on to look at Seymour Tower on the horizon.

Seymour Tower is the furthest offshore of Jersey’s 18th century fortifications, built to protect the Island against invasion from France. The islet on which it stands is about two kilometres out to sea from La Rocque Point, but such is the extreme rise and fall of the tide on Jersey’s east coast that the Tower is accessible at low tide. Over the years, many people have been cut off by the rising tide. In February 1987, two riders and their horses became lost when a thick fog descended without warning. They famously took refuge on the base of the tower and the horses could only be persuaded to come back down after a ramp of sand had been constructed by their rescuers.
Continue to the end of the promenade.

This coastal promenade follows the railway line that ran from St Helier to Gorey. The Jersey Eastern Railway line opened from Snow Hill to Gorey Common in 1874 and was extended to the pier in 1891. It was then possible to book a through ticket from Snow Hill to Paris, with a steamer providing the connection from Gorey to Granville on the Normandy coast. The railway was a great success in its early years, particularly on weekends and public holidays, when huge numbers made the excursion to Gorey. Events held on the Common such as horse races, athletics meetings, military reviews and regattas brought thousands of day-trippers to the village. In the 1920s, however, competition from buses led to falling passenger numbers and the eventual closure of the line.

At the end of the promenade, walk carefully along the pavement towards Gorey Village.

Cross the main road and stop opposite the old train station, now converted into a house.

Old Train Station

This building was originally Gorey Village Station. Just four days after the opening of the railway, 2,500 people used this station to attend a fete on Grouville Common. Newspaper reports describe gangs of youths drinking in the local pubs and making their return journey in a drunken state.

Head towards Gorey Village and take the footpath on your left that runs alongside the Common.

Notice the small set of granite steps that allow access to the stream. These were used to collect water or for washing clothes in the stream.

Turn right into Union Road by Dolphin Cottage.

At the end of the road turn left and stop outside the church, now converted into business premises.

The Village grew rapidly in the 19th century to accommodate local fishermen and their families, as well as those working in the oyster and shipbuilding industry. Rows of cottages were built to house this new workforce and three churches were built to cater for their religious needs.

This church was formerly Gorey Methodist Church. It was built for the English-speaking congregation of Gorey and opened in February 1840. It was enlarged just three years later to accommodate the rapidly-growing community. Education was also important and there is evidence of at least five schools in the Village at various times. There were two public schools and other small private schools operated from houses towards the western end of the Village.

Turn back and walk towards the shops in the heart of the Village.

On the right-hand side, Rosedale Stores is part of a farmstead dating back to the 18th century. There has been a shop on this site since the 1890s.
Continue along the main road through the Village until you reach Old Bank House on the right-hand side.

Despite its name, this building was never a fully-fledged bank. The house was rented by a banking family, the Godfrays of the Jersey Old Bank, which later became Midland Bank and it was for this reason that it was given the name of 'Old Bank House'. However, a branch of the Midland Bank did operate from here for a short time in the 1930s.

Keep right as the road forks.

Gouray Cottage, at the bottom of this hill, is an attractive property that dates back to the 17th century. On the front there is an interesting plaque of Caen stone with the coat of arms of William III and dated 1697. The Royal Arms suggest that the house may have been used for occasional sittings of the Royal Court.

Walk up the hill, ignoring the footpath signposted to Gouray Church, and pause at the top.

Sign Post

The granite guide post on the left-hand side dates from a time before motor vehicles. These sign posts can be found across the Island and some can be quite elaborately decorated.

Above you stands Gouray Church

Although it uses the old spelling for the Village, this church was only built in 1832-33. It was made for the new English-speaking community of Gorey who were understandably reluctant to walk two miles up the hill to the Parish church at St Martin to take part in a French language service that they couldn’t understand!

Cross over and walk carefully along the main road.

At the junction continue down the hill and at the very bottom take the narrow footpath on the left called La P’tite Ruelle Muchie. This will take you up the Castle Green for a closer look at Mont Orgueil Castle.

This site has been fortified since the prehistoric period but the construction of the Castle began in 1204. It was a medieval bow-and-arrow castle that defended the Island from French attack until the development of gunpowder in the 16th century when it proved vulnerable to cannon fire from the hill above. It was replaced by Elizabeth Castle around 1600, but luckily Sir Walter Raleigh, then Governor of Jersey, prevented it being demolished. Instead, it was used as the Island’s prison.

The Castle is well worth a visit but you may want to save this for another day. There is a pub to visit after all!
During opening hours (10 am to 5 pm) you can reach the pier by walking through the main gate of the Castle. By the ticket office, go down the steps on the right-hand side and walk through the gardens down to the pier.

On the way, note the sculptures in the garden that refer to the Castle’s early history.

If the Castle is closed, go back to La P’tite Ruelle Muchie and head down to Gorey Pier.

In 1685 this area was described as ‘the most ancient harbour in the Island. There is an old decaying pier, where such small boats as use the neighbouring coast of Normandy resort’. By 1800 the pier had deteriorated even further and paintings of the Castle at this time show almost no trace of it. However, the booming oyster industry meant that a proper harbour was needed to protect the fishing fleet and the pier was rebuilt in 1816.

Number 15 at the end of the pier was formerly the Harbour Master’s house.

Number 14 was an inn during the 19th century. In 1944, it was converted by the German occupying forces into a strongpoint with a machine gun loophole at ground floor and a 3.7cm Pak 35/36 anti-tank gun on the first floor overlooking the pier.

Return to The Dolphin for some well-earned refreshment.

This mid-19th century building is part of the Victorian development of Gorey Harbour. It was first licensed as the Dolphin Hotel in 1947 but in the 19th century it operated as a post office and was also home to Steven’s Eastern Railway Tea Rooms.

Go online to jerseyheritage.org/walks-trails-and-tours and explore more Heritage on Tap self-guided walks.