



AUTUMN IN GUERNSEY

BY NATALIE HENRY FROM ISLAND FAMILIES

There's really something special about autumn in Guernsey. The IslandFamilies household loves this time of year – wellies, puddle suits, and plenty of outdoor exploring – and I particularly love how the light changes making family photos a little more golden too.

Long walks are a staple autumnal activity in our house, and the quiet lanes at this time of year make for some lovely little expeditions kicking crispy leaves. So, wrap up warm and head out and about. A few of our favourites are Les Verdes Quarry Nature Walk, a loop around the reservoir, through Vase Castle and along to Bordeaux, and across L'Ancrese common on to Pembroke Bay. The Visit Guernsey app provides self-guided walking tours with plenty to choose from in a variety of lengths, so easy to find something that'll suit your family's pace.

If you're lucky, the hedgerows will still have some blackberries come October. Fill a tub for crumbles or just enjoy them straight from the

bramble. Alongside blackberries, autumn also brings wild sloes and sweet chestnuts scattered across the lanes, though I must confess, we've no idea how to prepare either for eating. Foraging can continue beyond food through, with acorns and conkers falling throughout October and into November.

We really can't talk about autumn without discussing pumpkins. And while they're readily available in many places across the island during October, they've become synonymous with Le Hechet Farm and its wonderful pumpkin shop. Open daily throughout the month, the farm is a must-have visit for families who want to choose their pumpkins, meet adorable calves, and hop on a tractor – plus, there are local crafts and sweet treats. Older kids can feed the 'gram too with photo opportunities galore.

While you're out, why not do some geocaching as you go? We consider it to be a secret weapon to get youngsters out into the fresh air, especially as they get a

little older and a plain walk isn't as exciting as it once was (Pokémon Go works well too). There are hundreds of caches in Guernsey along with some on Lihou, Herm, Sark and Alderney too. It's fun, it's free, and it makes you look at some of your favourite places in a new way as you hunt for treasure.

Parks are another staple in our autumn days. Saumarez Park is always a winner, no matter what time of year. The ducks are the star of the show for our youngest, while her older brother makes a beeline for the play area. When we're joined by the older ones (with or without their friends) they can enjoy some independence and pop off to the cafe by themselves before rejoining us.

Scooters and bikes are great here or at Delancey Park, which obviously also boasts a good play area too. Sticking to wheeled adventures, we love a walk to the fairy ring with scooters, and it's better outside of summer because we all know parents are carrying those scooters for a large part of it!

OPPOSITE PAGE L-R: GEOCACHE AT L'ANCRESE;
AUTUMN LEAVES IN SAUMAREZ PARK; LE HECHET FARM PUMPKIN SHOP.
ABOVE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CHRISTMAS EVE ON PEMBROKE; DINOSAUR LAND ON CHOUET;
SPLASHING IN WAVES AT BORDEAUX; DIGGING AT CHOUET. ALL IMAGES ©ISLAND FAMILIES.

I'm a firm believer in the beach is not just for summer, and to be honest I enjoy it more in the shoulder months. I admit I'm not a sea swimmer at the best of times (though there's a wild swimming local community if you're looking for someone to go with) but there's plenty of fun to be had on the sand even when it's not sunny.

Kite flying is fantastic if the wind's strong enough, and sandcastles don't care what time of year it is – we've spent Christmas Eve on the beach several times. Essentially, as long as they're dressed correctly for the weather, children will thoroughly enjoy the beach whatever the weather, and autumn is perfect as it's not too cold for the adults who stand and watch the playing.

The winning activity in our house must be the Jurassic Park we built on Chouet – we took dinosaurs, used a blue bin bag to create a pool, and dug tunnels through the sand. Hours of fun – just remember to take all rubbish with you when you leave the beach.

The sand at Chouet is also home to the autocross with Sunday dates in both October and November – fun to watch all year round but even better with a hot drink from a local kiosk.

To me, autumn is a perfect time for picnics, and it doesn't have to be a cold sandwich on a cloudy day either. We've found hot dogs travel well in an insulated water bottle – perfect for slapping in a bun when you reach a good spot. I've even been known to pack rice and curry in a mini thermos for the kids, so the choices are limitless. Pair it with a hot chocolate and you can sit and watch nature, or listen to the waves crash on a beach somewhere.

If you're looking for an adventure without breaking the bank, head to Victoria Tower. You can borrow the key from Guernsey Museum for free, climb the 99 steps and enjoy panoramic views across St Peter Port. Or for another fantastic view, head to the Guet where you can see across Cobo and Grandes Rockies from the top of the 18th century

watch-house. The kids can run around, climb logs, hang from rope swings, look for pine cones, and search for the hidden fairy door.

If the weather's truly not in your favour, head to Guille-Allès Children's Library and enjoy its haven that is secret shelves, fairy-lit trees, and cosy little reading nooks. Older kids might enjoy using the Fab Lab, or even popping to Priaux Library to research local history.

You don't have to spend a fortune to make great memories in the autumn. Whether you're hunting for blackberries, braving the sea, or climbing tower steps, Guernsey truly delivers all year round.

IslandFamilies is a vibrant hub of information, and home to the popular Community Club, helping families get most out of life in the Bailiwick. Visit islandfamilies.com for more information on things to do, places to go, and money to be saved along the way.

