

# MOON walking

Jersey is a paradise for walkers,  
but there's nothing quite like the Full Moon Walk.

*Gillian Thornton sets out across the seabed.*

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*Late Monday night and the coast road round Jersey's south east tip is deserted as I drive towards Seymour Slip. I'm not the sort of girl who normally has assignments in dark car parks, but as I pull in, I'm reassured by the sight of woolly-hatted people sitting patiently in vehicles.*



We've come to take part in the Full Moon Walk, a unique Jersey experience that involves hiking across the ocean floor at low tide. The Island experiences some of the world's highest tides with a fall of up to 40 feet, so at low water, walkers can explore an area regularly covered by sea. But the Full Moon Walk happens just once a month and I've timed my visit exactly right.

At 23.45, as promised, a vehicle turns down the slip to the beach and one by one, we all emerge from our cars to meet guides Derek and Trudie of Jersey Walk Adventures. We're twelve in number, a mix of residents and visitors, all clad in warm layers despite the sunshine earlier in the day. Trudie distributes wellies and poles whilst Derek briefs us for the adventure ahead, a 1.5 mile walk offshore to Seymour Tower.

It is, he tells us, surprising just how much you can see under a Full Moon once your eyes adjust to the light level. And as we leave the lights of the shoreline behind us, I find myself picking out more and more detail. First surprise is the variety of terrain. We splash ankle deep through shallow gullies, cross smooth sand sculpted in ripples by the tide, and surmount crunchy banks of fine shingle and crushed shells.

Derek and Trudie walk this stretch of seabed regularly, at all times of day and night. Daylight walks allow visitors to get up close and personal with a variety of marine life, but the night walk has a different kind of magic, a feeling of being alone with the elements. Above us, Jupiter is clearly visible beside the moon, but I'm even more taken with what's on the ground. Until now, a moon shadow was just something Cat Stevens sang about in the '70s, but now here I am, silhouetted dramatically by the moon on the firm sand. It's a surreal moment.

Suddenly Derek calls us together, scraping his foot across his own shadow to reveal glowing particles like fallen stars. On dark nights, Jersey Walk Adventures run bioluminescence walks to see the rare phenomenon of worms that glow in the dark when disturbed. A chemical reaction causes them to shine for some 20 seconds and tonight our moon shadows are so dark that the sand seems to twinkle with constellations.

Somebody spots a sizeable crab and Trudie gamely picks up the indignant crustacean for closer scrutiny by torchlight, before placing him under a protective bower of seaweed. There's a surprising amount of foliage in this submarine garden, some swaying gently in shallow pools, the rest waiting

patiently for the waves to roll in. But weirdest of all are the deep furrows in the sand, as though someone has ridden a bicycle across the seabed. These are 'moving rocks', explains Derek. Stones that get caught up in seaweed and dragged over the sand to create eerie tracks.

As midnight draws near, so too does Seymour Tower, built on a rocky outcrop in the 19th century as an offshore lookout against invaders from Normandy, barely 14 miles away across the water. Our walk has been quiet so far, but now we increasingly hear the raucous sound of seagulls. And not just one or two. Far beyond the tower where the waves are breaking, Jersey's entire seagull population seems to be having a midnight feeding frenzy on the rich pickings of the waterline.

We linger for a while, climbing the steep steps to the foot of the white painted tower, before turning back towards the lights of the coast road. At 01.15, we arrive back at Seymour Slip, say our goodbyes, and head off into the night, tired but happy. Somehow I don't think I'll ever gaze at a Full Moon again without remembering Jersey's lunar seabed and its twinkling luminous worms!

**Full Moon Walks operate throughout the year and cost £19pp, departure times varying with the moon.**