

AN ISLAND RETREAT



JERSEY

Holidays for Heroes Jersey (H4HJ) provides a haven for injured members of HM Armed Forces. Anyone who has returned injured from service, whether in body or mind, can experience a week's holiday on the peaceful and beautiful island. SIA's Armed Forces Peer Support Officer, **Lee Cairns**, travelled to Jersey to find out more about this free service.



LEE CAIRNS

ARMED FORCES PEER SUPPORT OFFICER
EMAIL: L.CAIRNS@SPINAL.CO.UK

I was recently luck enough to go on holiday to Jersey courtesy of H4HJ. The charity is independent and not connected to Help for Heroes. H4HJ exists to provide free holidays to Jersey for injured veterans and their families. The only criterion is that anyone wishing to attend must have sustained their injury as a result of service.

The charity is run by Dawn and Richard Woodhouse and supported by the residents of Jersey, all of whom wish to give something back to our Armed Forces. The islands have always had a strong connection with our military and this was very evident in the welcome and kindness we received during our visit.

H4HJ gave us the option of flying or taking the seacat; we opted for the seacat from Weymouth as it meant we could take the car. The journey to Jersey took four hours and the boat was wheelchair accessible with appropriate seating provided. H4HJ provide a comprehensive package of information to ensure disability needs are taken care of. We arrived on Jersey in the early afternoon to blue skies and a comfy 24 degrees. It was a short drive to the Merton Hotel, which was to be our accommodation for the week. We were provided with a very good wheelchair accessible room that had a wet-room with a wall-mounted shower seat. There was also an extensive welcome pack from H4HJ, which contained all our info for the week and some free gifts (including the obligatory free T-shirt).

After checking-in we met up with others who were booked in on the same week and Dawn and Richard were there to meet and greet us. There were around 16 veterans from all three services with their partners and families. The first day we were taken for a tour of the island and we stopped off at various points of interest. This included some of the many well-preserved gun emplacements; a legacy of the German Occupation during WW2. I used my car to get around as I was unable to get on the coach provided, which was used by people in the group with more mobility. Dawn and Richard had taken this into account and arranged for us to have a guide in the car. So we got a private tour and then met up with the coach at varying points.

On the second day, islanders who volunteer with H4HJ took us out around the island to any destination we wanted. We chose to visit the War Tunnels, which was an underground hospital the Germans created using slave labour. It is open today as a monument to the occupation and a memory to those who died to create it. We also visited the Mansell Collection, which is a collection of trophies and memorabilia that span the career of Formula One Legend Nigel Mansell. Nigel Mansell is a resident on Jersey and a big supporter of H4HJ. In the evening our Guide took us to a restaurant on the five-mile bay called El Tico; it was stunning and I highly recommend it.

Day three was a free day for us to explore Jersey and we opted to take a drive to see some more of the beautiful island and may



have visited El Tico for round two as well! We returned to the hotel in the evening for what was to become one of the highlights of my life since I was injured. The Jersey Motorbike club arrived at the hotel with their Harley Davidsons to take us out for a trip around the island. Dawn and Richard, having discussed my needs, arranged for there to be a suitable bike with a backrest so I could participate; they also arranged for a car to take my chair to the arranged stop as well. So I was lifted onto the bike and taken around the island in convoy with everyone else, stopping at a pub for a swift one along the way. I can't really begin to describe the feeling of blasting around Jersey on the back of a Harley as the sun set; just for a short time I forgot that my legs don't work anymore.

On day four we were taken by another guide around the island and we asked to be taken to some of the most picturesque spots so we could take some photos. We weren't disappointed as Jersey has some of the most spectacular bays I have ever seen. In the afternoon we were dropped off at the Daisy Cottage Spa, for a relaxing afternoon with treatments of our choice.

We had our final day on the island to ourselves and we took

a walk down into the centre of St Helier, which is very pretty. Our wander enabled us to take advantage of the island's duty-free status and partake in a spot of shopping. In the evening we attended the Governor of Jersey's house for a garden party reception to celebrate the Queen's birthday. It was a fantastic evening and allowed us the opportunity to dress up smart and be a little sophisticated – well try at least!

Unfortunately, day six was our day to check-out and head home. We had such an amazing and relaxing week. I would recommend it to anyone who is eligible to attend. Full details are on the website and I am happy for anyone with a query to contact me directly.



For more information about H4HJ and to apply for a holiday, visit www.hols4heroesjersey.org.je

BREAK THE MOULD

Spokz provide disability sports accessories, lifestyle equipment and wellbeing services. We are also the exclusive UK dealers for Oracing Wheelchairs

Not only do we sell a great range of bespoke wheelchairs, we also sell a large range of spares and accessories from tyres and inner tubes to the FreeWheel and off-road wheelchair packs. We also price match so if you've seen it elsewhere cheaper, just let us know...

WWW.SPOKZ.CO.UK CALL: 0845 25 77 496



SPOKZ

WWW.SPOKZ.CO.UK