

A diverse of vibrant retail offer

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Lorie Rault
[Senior Business](#)
[Advisor](#)

Our Head of Retail, Lorie Rault spoke with the Jersey Evening Post for their 'Celebrate Jersey' supplement on why the scale and scope of Jersey's shopping scene may take some people by surprise.

It may be hard to believe given the Island's size that, nestled within its 45 square miles, are nearly 1,000 retail businesses.

But, within its bustling town centre and out-of-town destinations such as Gorey, Les Quennevais and St Aubin, are 930 such premises which, between them, include department stores rich in heritage and newly opened boutiques and bakeries run by local entrepreneurs.

Within this vast offering, shoppers can find everything from luxury brands such as Jo Malone London and Karl Lagerfeld, to internationally renowned fashion brands including River Island and Never Fully Dressed.

And, of course, there are plenty of offerings which are unique to the Island, thanks to the wealth of talented jewellers, artisan producers, artists and growers, many of whom are members of Genuine Jersey.

This mix of history, familiarity, newness and entrepreneurialism is, says Jersey Business head of retail Lorie Rault, one of the things which makes the Island stand out.



Lorie Rault, Head of Retail at Jersey Business

"I think the heritage associated with our town centre is one of the things that makes shopping here such a special experience," she said. "When I look at our two big department stores, the Central Market and Liberty Wharf shopping centre (another building steeped in local history), I get a sense of comfort and permanence. There is something reassuring about knowing these buildings have survived two world wars and emerged, strong and solid, and still bring internationally renowned brands to the Island.

"Meanwhile, the strong entrepreneurial spirit in the Island also gives you the opportunity to purchase a wide range of unique and high-quality items, while also supporting the next generation of start-ups."

One of those business owners who has recently taken on her own bricks-and-mortar premises is Siobhan Ramskill, of Sister 2 Sister, whose boutique of high-end pre-loved fashion and accessories caters to an ever-growing market.

"There is a high demand now high-quality pre-loved items which enable customers to buy beautiful pieces for less, while also being that bit kinder to the planet," said Lorie. "In the UK, Selfridges predicts that, by 2030, preloved fashion will account for 45% of its sales, and Siobhan is proving that there is also a strong market for this in Jersey. With items regularly being snapped up within an hour of being posted on social media, anyone looking for an amazing piece has to pop in store regularly to check out the latest arrivals."

And Sister 2 Sister, says Lorie, is one of many new businesses appearing in the Island.

"I love watching brands like this grow and seeing new shops, which are unique

to Jersey, opening in a clear demonstration of the entrepreneurial spirit in Jersey and Islanders' support for such businesses," she said. "I hope that all Islanders understand the spending power that they have and realise that they genuinely can make a difference by choosing to buy from our local businesses where they can.

"It can be easy when you walk through town and see scaffolding outside certain premises, and building work going on, to jump to the wrong conclusion and think of these shops as representing closed businesses. However, what is actually happening in these areas is large-scale investment, which demonstrates high levels of confidence from businesses who understand the value of being in town.

"Just as importantly, it means that some exciting new retail and hospitality offerings are on the way and, in fact, Jersey's shop vacancy rates continue to be nearly 50% lower than those of the average highstreet in the UK."

Contributing to the "vibrant retail environment" is, says Lorie, a growing hospitality scene, with recent arrivals in St Helier including Flour, in Colomberie, The Waffle Bar on the corner of Broad Street and New Street and Four bakery in Bath Street.

"We have also recently welcomed Vend which, in a first of its kind for Jersey, offers people 24-hour access to a range of snacks from its vending machines in York Street," she said. "Plus, Ganache at the Waterfront is a haven for chocoholics, offering delicious local chocolates and baked goods, while the newly opened Eddie's Fish and Chips in Dumaresq Street and the nearby Cucina, which offers delicious take-away or eat-in Italian breads, pastas and other culinary treats, are further enhancing the town's offer.

"Meanwhile, at the other end of town, the work at Ann Court – the area next to the Arts Centre – is now finished and the result is a lovely new open space where people can relax and enjoy a coffee after a session of retail therapy," she said. "There is also a new Coop, plenty of outdoor seating a new short-stay car park, Charles Court, which is ideal for shoppers."

Acknowledging the importance of being able to find a parking space in town, Lorie highlights the way in which technology can help people to avoid the frustrating search for such a facility.

"A lot of people don't realise that there is a website which shows you, in real

time, how many vacant spaces are available in the large car parks in St Helier," she said. "Simply visit gov.je/Travel/Motoring/Parking/pages/carparkspaces.aspx or type car-parking spaces in Jersey into Google before setting off for the most up-to-date information."

Complementing the retail and hospitality experiences is a wide range of events and workshops.

"Anyone with a creative spark may be interested in the programme of short courses and workshops run by The Harbour Gallery, which moved into town and opened in its new premises at The Quay, 19 Commercial Buildings, last year," said Lorie. "Among the many activities on this year's list are chocolate-making and Lego workshops, which show the diversity of the offer.

"Indeed, we have so many events to look forward to in 2024. Following the wonderful Dreaming Trees event in Howard Davis Park in February, Jersey Art House has a fantastic programme of free opportunities for Islanders and visitors to experience art in all its forms. Many of these are based in the organisation's gallery next to the Town Church."

Meanwhile, Lorie says many fashion and beauty retailers are likely to benefit from Lib in the Square, a music extravaganza on 4 and 5 May, whose line-up this year will include international DJs Armand Van Helden and Gorgon City.

"Last year, Lib In The Square created such a great buzz in town as outfits were picked, pre-event dinner bookings were snapped up, and everyone tried to find shoes suitable for dancing on cobbles," smiled Lorie. "For fashion and beauty retailers, events like this are particularly memorable, as whole racks of clothing and make-up sell out as friends gather in the weekends before to plan their outfits, shop and socialise."

And this demonstrates, says Lorie, that while the internet may have changed people's shopping habits, it cannot replicate that all-important in-store experience.

"The internet is a very convenient way to aid our busy lives, but it's not a patch on a personal, in-store experience," she said. "The internet doesn't tell you how well an item will fit, the feel and quality of the fabric or the smell of a perfume. Retail staff see thousands of outfits, they know the latest trends and are experts on shape and fit, and nothing beats properly fitted clothes. Getting

advice from a shop assistant who has a tremendous amount of product knowledge is invaluable – and free. It's also a lot quicker than trawling through lots of online choices and then having to return everything that doesn't fit."

While St Helier is the Island's undisputed shopping capital, Lorie is also keen to highlight the "charm" of the out-of-town retail offer.

"In Gorey, you have everything from boutique shopping to fine dining in a truly picturesque setting. A visit makes a lovely day out for all the family and supports those local boutiques that normally rely on a stronger amount of tourism," she said. "St Aubin has really flourished over the last few years. Its offer has got even stronger and every time I go there, I see something new in the wonderful mix of retail and hospitality.

"I must also highlight our very valued charity retail businesses which attract both those on a budget and those mindful of the environmental importance of reusing items. The new Durrell charity shop at the Zoo with its drive-through drop-off facility means you can easily donate any quality used items, and then pop into the shop to grab some new-to-you finds at the same time.

"While this article only touches on a small number of the 930 retail businesses in the Island, I hope it has given people a flavour of the diversity of this offer. Unlike so many UK highstreets, Jersey has managed to retain so much heritage, in both its façades and premises, as well as retaining jewels such as the Central Market. These factors, along with the household names, international brands and a thriving number of local producers and entrepreneurs, makes Jersey's retail offer absolutely fantastic.