

INTRODUCING BRITTANY & NORMANDY

THEY MIGHT BE NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOURS, BUT BRITTANY AND NORMANDY EACH HAVE A KALEIDOSCOPIC CHARACTER ALL OF THEIR OWN.

On one side, there's Normandy, where the relative merits of three of the nation's favourite 'c's – Calvados, cider and Camembert – are still the subject of impassioned debate. On the other, there's Brittany: wild and windswept, once an independent kingdom that has always stood one step removed from the rest of the nation, governed by its own distinctively Celtic culture and language. Put the two together and you've got one of France's most fascinating regions – a heady blend of cliffs and countryside, smugglers' ports and medieval cities, ramshackle fishing towns and stately chateaux, with a history stretching back over 6000 years.

It's certainly a region for those with a penchant for the past, but life in this corner of France is very much for the living. Whether it's browsing the day's catch at a noisy fish market, dancing to the sound of *binious* and *bombardes* at a traditional *fest-noz* or striking out across the cliff tops in search of inspiration and escape, one thing's for certain – these twin Gallic gems will stay with you long after you leave for home.

TOP Mont St-Michel (p157) rises majestically above the landscape **BOTTOM LEFT** The American Military Cemetery (p187) overlooking Omaha Beach **BOTTOM RIGHT** A walking trail passes a secluded cove in Finistère (p77).

JOHN ELLER



MONT ST-MICHEL



D-DAY BEACHES

NORMAN SYRING



EMMANUEL LATTES / ALAMY

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FINISTÈRE



ST-MALO



ALIGNEMENTS DE CARNAC



JOHN LEEK II
DAVID MONROE/OLYMPIA



DINAN

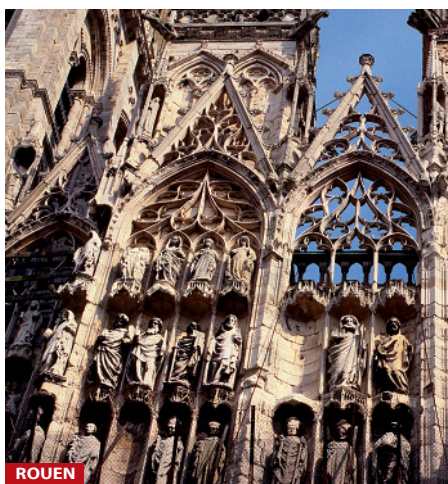


AVI NIKH

GIVERNY

TOP LEFT The walled city of St-Malo (p33) **TOP RIGHT** An old stone house in Dinan (p59) **BOTTOM LEFT** The alignments in Carnac (p122) cover a vast area **BOTTOM CENTRE** Monet's garden (p251) in Giverny was a major source of inspiration for the artist **BOTTOM RIGHT** Intricate workmanship on Rouen's Cathédrale Notre Dame (p238)

CHRISTOPHER WOOD



ROUEN

GETTING STARTED

BRITTANY & NORMANDY

WHAT'S NEW?

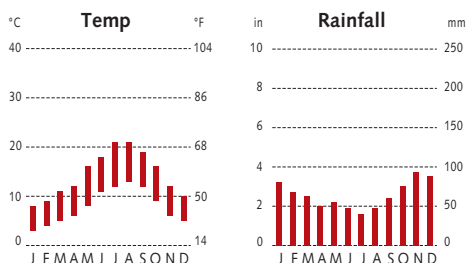
- ★ A brand new causeway to the tidal island of Mont St Michel (p163)
- ★ A newly revamped Musée des Impressionismes in Giverny (p252)
- ★ France's newest marine park, the Parc Marin d'Iroise (p90)
- ★ New *voies vertes* (green ways) in Brittany and Normandy (p23)
- ★ A new Térénez Bridge has been built just south of Landévennec (p97)



CAROL MARTIN

CLIMATE: ST-MALO

Average
Max/Min

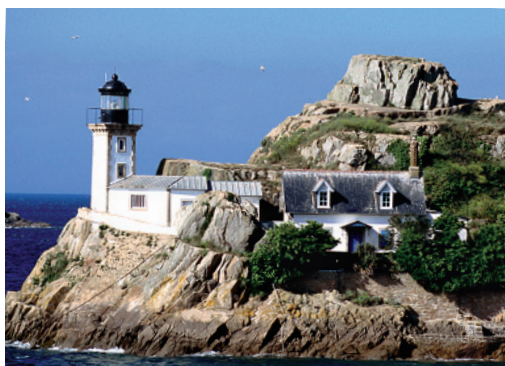


PRICE GUIDE

	BUDGET	MIDRANGE	TOP END
SLEEPING	<€70	€70-150	>€150
MEALS	<€25	€25-35	>€35



CAROL MARTIN



OLIVER GRENON

TOP LEFT A traditional Breton headdress **BOTTOM LEFT** A snack of Camembert, Livarot and Pont l'Évêque **BOTTOM CENTRE** An island lighthouse in Finistère (p77) **FAR RIGHT** Window-shoppers in Rouen (p234)

ACCOMMODATION

Whether you're looking to camp under the stars, take a room by the sea or live the high life in your very own château, you'll find something to suit in Brittany and Normandy. Both are chock-full of lovely hotels and campsites, but if you really want to get under the region's skin, *chambres d'hôtes* (B&Bs) are worth considering; staying with a local family is a great way of immersing yourself in the culture, and the owners are generally mines of useful information. For more on accommodation, see p287.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

ST-MALO FERRYPORT (☎ 02 99 40 64 41; Gare Maritime du Naye) Main Breton stop for ferries from Portsmouth, Poole, Weymouth and the Channel Islands.

CHERBOURG FERRYPORT (☎ 02 33 88 44 88; quai de Normandie) Normandy's busiest Channel gateway docks ferries from Portsmouth and Poole in the UK and Rosslare in Ireland.

RENNES AIRPORT (RNS; ☎ 02 99 29 60 00; www.rennes.aeroport.fr) Flights to French cities plus budget connections to the UK, Ireland and continental Europe.

THINGS TO TAKE

- ★ Good manners. *La politesse* goes a long way in France; say *bonjour* and *au revoir* when entering and leaving shops
- ★ A pocket dictionary with a good food section
- ★ Beach gear but also take a waterproof raincoat
- ★ A corkscrew for country or park picnics
- ★ Comfy shoes for exploring old cities and coastal trails



JANNAU/LETA

WEBLINKS

BRITTANY TOURISM (www.brittanytourism.com) Online portal for the Brittany tourist board.

LE MÉTÉO (www.meteo.fr) Catch the latest weather forecast.

NORMANDY TOURISM (www.normandy-tourism.org) Plan your own Norman invasion.

VOYAGES-SNCF.COM (www.voyages-sncf.com) Train times and online bookings with France's national carrier.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

BRITTANY &
NORMANDY

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MARCH

FÊTE DES MARINS

HONFLEUR

Local fishing boats decked out in nautical finery congregate in the Vieux Bassin (p213) for a Whit Sunday blessing.

APRIL

FÊTE DE LA COQUILLE ST-JACQUES

Scallops take centre stage at this foodie festival to mark the end of the fishing season in April. Held alternately in Erquy, St-Quay-Portrieux and Loguivy (see p67).

CARNAVAL DE GRANVILLE

GRANVILLE

One of Normandy's biggest street carnivals is held on the Sunday before Shrove Tuesday. Floats, fireworks and street parades are enjoyed by 120,000 revellers; for more see p164. www.carnaval-de-granville.fr

MAY

FÊTE DE JEANNE D'ARC

France's favourite saint met her end in Rouen on 30 May 1431. This lively

national festival on the last weekend of May marks the occasion. www.fetesjeannedarc.fr

JAZZ SOUS LES POMMIERS

COUTANCES

Jazz Under The Apple Trees – sounds good already, doesn't it? Music fans congregate here (p166) in mid-May for outdoor concerts and jam sessions. www.jazzsouslespommiers.com

JULY

FÊTES MÉDIÉVALES DE BAYEUX

BAYEUX

The town (p177) goes all medieval on the first weekend in July. Jesters, jugglers, wenches and knights errant parade through the town's cobbled streets.

FESTIVAL DES VIELLES CHARRUES

CARHAIX-PLOUGUER

This major mid-July music fest held in the eastern edge of Finistère is a biggie – previous acts include Lenny Kravitz, The Killers and Bruce Springsteen. www.vieillescharrues.asso.fr

TOP LEFT Celebrations for a *pardon* **RIGHT** The boardwalk at the seaside resort of Deauville (p208) pays homage to the stars of the silver screen

FESTIVAL DE CORNOUAILLE

QUIMPER

The region's largest celebration of Breton culture occurs in mid-July. So get your *bombardes* and bagpipes at the ready (p105).

LA PETITE TROMENIE

LOCRONAN

Pardons (religious festivals) are held all over Brittany during the summer months, but this one is among the most traditional (p102).

AUGUST

FESTIVAL INTERCELTIQUE

LORIENT

Scottish pipers, Irish bands, Welsh singers and Breton street artists come together for one great Celtic extravaganza in mid-August (p121).

SEPTEMBER

AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL

DEAUVILLE

It's not quite Cannes, but this annual celebration of American cinema still attracts high-profile premieres and big names from the silver screen (p208).

OCTOBER

FESTIVAL DU FILM BRITANNIQUE

DINARD

Cross-Channel connections come to the fore in this early October film festival, showcasing the year's best new British films (p48).

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CULTURE

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ARTISTIC SITES

BAYEUX (p177) Where embroidery becomes an artform.

BELLE-ÎLE (p127) Many of the leading artists of the 19th century spent time on this idyllic island.

CÔTE D'ALBÂTRE (p217) Stroll the coastline that inspired a generation of Impressionists.

GIVERNY (p251) Claude Monet painted his water lilies here and changed the art world forever.

HONFLEUR (p211) Monet's mentor, Eugène Boudin, was born in Honfleur and the town has a museum dedicated to his work.

PONT-AVEN (p111) Paul Gauguin founded a community of painters in this town and dreamt up a new artistic movement.

CLAUDE CONNECTIONS

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Brittany and Normandy attracted a swathe of young artists including Claude Monet (1840–1926), who studied at the Le Havre School of Arts, and later under the tutelage of Honfleur painter, Eugène Boudin. Monet felt an affinity for Normandy's rolling countryside, gentle coastline and big, open skies, but as his artistic eye developed it was the shifting colours and subtle play of light across the landscape that fascinated him most – an obsession that developed into a new artistic style that became known as Impressionism. Norman locations feature in some of Monet's famous works, including Deauville, Étretat and Rouen Cathedral, but it was his quasi-abstract studies of his own Giverny gardens that have proved the most enduring. For more on the area's artistic connections, see p270; for more on Monet, see p252.

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TOP LEFT Monet's house (p251) in Giverny **BOTTOM LEFT** Monet's painting *Water-Lily Pond, Symphony in Green* **RIGHT** Josselin castle (p136) and the Oust River **FAR RIGHT** A cobbled street in Dinan (p59)

TOP MUSEUMS

MÉMORIAL DE CAEN This cutting-edge WWII museum is overwhelming in every sense (p191).

MAISONS SATIE Ponder a winged pear and a pedal-powered instrument at the house of eccentric composer Eric Satie (p214).

MUSÉE DÉPARTEMENTAL BRETON Brush up on your Celtic culture and see some historic Quimper *faïence* (p104).

MUSÉE DES BEAUX ARTS, ROUEN The region's leading fine-arts museum (p240).



DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ The Carnac *alignements* – prepare to be dumbfounded by this megalithic marvel (p122)
- ★ Rouen's old town – delve into the half-timbered heart of this exciting city (p236)
- ★ St-Malo – get lost along the cobbled alleys of the *Cité des Corsaires* (p33)
- ★ Dinan – wander the ramparts of this medieval river town (p59)
- ★ Festival de Cornouaille – join the party for Quimper's Celtic hoedown (p105)
- ★ *Pardons* – nearly every Breton town holds its own colourful procession dedicated to its patron saint
- ★ Bayeux – savour the city's medieval festival (p10)

TOP PARDONS

- TRÉGUIER** (May) For St-Yves, Brittany's patron saint.
- PLOUGUERNEAU** (June) To St Peter and St Paul.
- QUIMPER** (July) Honours the House of the Mother of God.
- ROSCOFF** (July) To St Barbara, patron saint of artillerymen.
- LOCRONAN** (July) Hosts the Petite or Grand Troménie.
- STE-ANNE D'AURAY** (July) One of Brittany's most spectacular *pardons*.

CULTURE

BRITTANY &
NORMANDY



FILMS

CONTE D'ÉTÉ (Eric Rohmer, 1996) Summer love story set in Dinard.

JEANNE D'ARC (Luc Besson, 1999) The story of France's national icon.

THE LONGEST DAY (Ken Annakin, 1962) Big-budget D-Day epic.

PARAPLUIES DE CHERBOURG (Jacques Demy, 1964) If only Cherbourg were this pretty.

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN (Steven Spielberg, 1998) Spielberg's take on Jour-J.

FAMOUS WRITERS

AUGUSTE RÉNÉ DE CHATEAUBRIAND (1768–1848) The nation's foremost Romantic novelist grew up, wrote stories and died at Combourg (p49).

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT (1821–80) The author of *Madame Bovary* (based on real-life events that took place in the town of Ry) was a Rouen native (p234).

GUY DE MAUPASSANT (1850–93) France's most famous short-story writer, was born in Fécamp (p225) and wrote many of his short stories in Étretat.

JULES VERNE (1828–1905) Born in Nantes, he ran off to be a cabin boy as a child and later became a prolific sci-fi pioneer who penned 63 classic novels (p144).

PARDONS & FESTOU-NOZ

For many Breton villages, the biggest event of the year is the *pardon*, a traditional religious festival that can trace its roots back to the Middle Ages, when villagers were given a once-yearly opportunity to expiate their sins (hence the name). *Pardons* later developed into days of worship for the local parish saint. Once a year, the whole village turns out in all their finery to follow the organised procession behind the saintly banner, before joining in with traditional dances and *festou-noz* (night-time musical concerts), customarily accompanied by Breton instruments such as the *bombarde* (an oboe-like instrument) and the *binou* (Breton bagpipes).

TOP LEFT Village folkloric dancers and musicians in Finistère **RIGHT** The imposing castle of Josselin (p136) is one of the finest in the region

BRITTANY'S ANCIENT MONUMENTS

Brittany has more megalithic menhirs, tombs, cairns and burial chambers than anywhere else on earth. Most of Brittany's sites date after around 3500 BC. The most frequent structure to look out for is the dolmen, a covered burial chamber consisting of vertical menhirs topped by a flat capstone. Peculiarly, Brittany's ancient architects had different architectural tastes from their European neighbours – rather than the cromlechs (stone circles) commonly found throughout Britain, Germany, Spain and Ireland, they were much keener on constructing arrow-straight rows of menhirs, known as *alignements* – one of which, the monumental Alignements de Carnac, is the world's largest known prehistoric structure and makes Stonehenge look like child's play.

TOP CHÂTEAUX

- ★ Fairy-tale towers and lavish interiors make for Brittany's finest at Josselin (p136)
- ★ Fougères is the picture of a medieval stronghold – moats, turrets and all (p56)
- ★ See Chateaubriand's writing desk and death bed at his baronial home in Combourg (p49)
- ★ Sumptuous Beaumesnil features a fabulous 80-hectare park designed by Versailles' landscape gardener, Le Nôtre (p248)
- ★ Admire the stunning medieval floor at Suscinio, a family manor on the Presqu'île de Rhuys (p134)



FOOD & DRINK

BRITTANY &
NORMANDY

COOKING COURSES

CUISINE CORSAIRE (www.cuisine-corsaire.fr) Roellinger-trained chefs supervise this sophisticated seafood school in Cancale.

LIBRE COURS (www.resto.librecours.fr) This innovative bistro-cum-cookery school in Rennes runs courses on everything from cooking for kids to the art of French patisseries.

MANOIR DE LA RIVIÈRE (www.manoirdelariviere.net) Residential courses held in St-Louet-sur-Seulles. You'll also go shopping for your own ingredients.

ON RUE TATIN (www.onrue.tatin.com) Scribe-chef Susan Hermann Loomis runs courses at her famous cookery school in Louviers, south of Rouen.

OUI CHEF (www.ouichef.com) Lively countryside-inspired cooking lessons in Neuville-sur-Touques.



GREG LEMS

REGIONAL CUISINE

Food's not just a fact of life in this corner of France, it's a *way* of life. Traditional Norman cooking is rich, indulgent and heavy, dominated by prodigious portions of meat and game smothered in butter, cheese and cream-based sauces. True to its roots, Brittany takes a more down-to-earth approach, making plentiful use of locally grown produce, especially onions, cauliflowers, potatoes and other root vegies. Seafood is the one constant between the two: with over 2000km of coastline, fish unsurprisingly plays a central role in both regions' cuisines. But it's the simple things that make this region so rewarding: browsing the bustling stalls of a village food market, stocking up on fresh-caught fish straight from the boats, or setting off for a countryside picnic of cheese, cider and fresh crusty bread. *Yehed mad*, as they say around these parts...



GREG LEMS

TOP LEFT A seafood platter featuring prawns **BOTTOM LEFT** Cups of sweet cider **RIGHT** A pâtisserie selection including *kouign amann* (butter cake) **FAR RIGHT** Norman cheese for sale

TOP CHEFS

FONTAINE AUX PERLES (www.fontaineauxperles.com) Rachel Gesbert is one of Brittany's up-and-coming names (p54).

GILL (www.gill.fr) Gilles Tournadre's Rouen restaurant has received the Michelin seal of approval – twice (p242).

JEAN-LUC TARTARIN (www.jeanluc-tartarin.com) You're in for an experience (p224).

LA COQUILLAGE (www.maisons-de-bricourt.com) Brittany's celebrity chef, Olivier Roellinger, has chucked in three Michelin stars to open new premises (p45).



DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ Place des Lices market – Rennes' weekly food fair is the second-biggest in France (p52)
- ★ Oysters in Cancale – shuck your own from the quayside stalls (p44)
- ★ Livarot – take a cheesy tour in the home of Livarot (p204)
- ★ Fish markets – watch the fishermen sell their catch in Roscoff (p86), Concarneau (p108) and Le Guilvinec (p108)
- ★ Honey-making at Ferme Apicole de Térénez – and taste 100% organic honey (p96)
- ★ Honfleur – sip something cold and savour seafood at a harbourside restaurant (p215)
- ★ Foire aux Dindes – turkeys fill Sées' streets in December

STAPLES

- ★ Crêpes and galettes
- ★ Seafood, especially oysters and scallops
- ★ Cheese (of course)
- ★ Cotriade (fish stew)
- ★ Kig ha farz (Breton meat and veg stew)
- ★ Kouign amann (a buttery Breton cake)
- ★ Far breton (Breton flan with prunes)
- ★ Calvados, Normandy's apple-scented spirit
- ★ Cider and Breton beer
- ★ Beurre salé (salted butter)

FOOD & DRINK

BRITTANY & NORMANDY



SCOTT WILSON/ALAMY

FOOD BOOKS

AT MY FRENCH TABLE (Jane Webster) Foodie reminiscences from an Aussie expat.

COOKING AT HOME ON RUE TATIN (Susan Hermann Loomis) Recipes from the Louviers-based cooking school.

FRENCH CHEESES (Eyewitness) Handy pictorial guide to all the top French cheeses.

OLIVIER ROELLINGER'S CONTEMPORARY FRENCH CUISINE Learn the culinary secrets of Cancale's famous chef.

TOP TREATS

CAMEMBERT AND LIVAROT Cheese straight from the source (p204).

CONSERVIERIE LA BELLE-ILOISE Visit the Quiberon's last fish cannery (p126).

DISTILLERIE CHRISTIAN DROUIN Try Normandy's two top tipples – Calvados and cider (p180)

GALETTES DE PONT AVEN Shop for buttery biscuits in Pont-Aven (p112).

KOUIGN AMANN Our favourite version of this Breton cake comes from Hotel Lulu-Larnicol (p112).

MACAROONS Sample handmade macaroons from a master-maker in Quimper's old town (p104).

NORMAN CHEESES

If there's one thing this part of France is famous for, it's cheese. Some of the most enduring names of French *fromage* come from Normandy, including Pont L'Évêque, Livarot and, most famous of all, Camembert. Norman monks first experimented with cheesemaking during the 11th century, and it's now a multimillion-euro industry – Camembert's factories churn out 15,000 tonnes of the stuff every year, and the industry is still a massive local employer. All the big cheeses are protected by their own AOC (*appellation d'origine contrôlée*), a culinary copyright that prevents other manufacturers from cashing in on the hallowed name.

TOP LEFT Making crêpes at the Festival de Cornouaille (p105) in Quimper **RIGHT** A sizzling plate of oysters, Cancale's speciality (p44)

FRUITS OF THE SEA

Seafood features on practically every menu. The signature dish to look out for is the *plateau de fruits de mer* (seafood platter), which varies according to the daily catch, but generally includes langoustines, spider crab, oysters, prawns, shrimps, clams, scallops and mussels. Fish is often served fairly simply to bring out the flavours: popular sauces are *à la normande* (in a creamy sauce) or *au beurre blanc* (in a butter sauce). Other dishes to look out for are *homard à l'armoricaine* (lobster in a herb and tomato sauce), *bar de ligne au sel de Guérande* (line-caught sea bass crusted in Guérande salt), *cotriade* (a hearty fish and shellfish soup), and of course the ubiquitous bistro staple of *moules-frites* (mussels and chips).

FOOD FESTIVALS

- ★ Foire au Boudin – if black pudding's your passion, head for Mortagne-au-Perche in March
- ★ Fête de la Coquille St-Jacques – savour scallops in Erquy, St-Quay-Portrieux and Loguivy in April
- ★ Fête du Fromage – Pont L'Évêque champions its cheese in mid-May
- ★ Fête de la Morue – this May cod festival in Binic commemorates the town's fishing heritage
- ★ Fête de la Crevette – Honfleur's shrimps are honoured in late September



OUTDOORS

BRITTANY &
NORMANDY



CAROLE MARTIN

TOP NATURE PARKS

There are several glorious *parcs naturels régionaux* (PNR).

PNR ARMORIQUE (www.parc-naturel-armorique.fr) Wild hilltops, granite moors and rugged cliffs stretching across central Brittany (p94).

PNR BOUCLES DE LA SEINE NORMANDE (www.pnr-seine-normande.com) Has 4500 hectares of bird-friendly wetlands (p221).

PNR BRIÈRE (www.parc-naturel-briere.fr) Canals, salt marsh and reedland support rare migratory birds in Loire-Atlantique (p151).

PNR MARAIS DU COTENTIN ET DU BESSIN (www.parc-cotentin-bessin.fr) Lowland nature park straddling Manche and Calvados (p161).

PNR PERCHE (www.le-perche.org) Some 2035 sq km of fields, forests and farms in southern Normandy, and not an auto-route in sight (p203).

THE WILD SIDE

With a pastoral patchwork of green fields, ancient woodland, humpbacked hills and over 2000km of rugged coastline, outdoorsy types will be spoilt for choice in Brittany and Normandy. Hard-core hikers, iron-legged bikers and dedicated sailors will find a wealth of opportunities to indulge their passions, and local tourist offices are well setup for providing advice on loads of outdoor activities.

While you certainly won't be able to escape the summer crowds along the most popular stretches of coastline, a quiet beach, remote cliff-top or unspoilt patch of countryside is never more than a quick drive or ride away; and if you're looking to get back to nature, the area's many *parcs naturels régionaux* (regional nature parks) and *réserves naturelles* (nature reserves) are ideal, protecting huge tracts of natural landscape that collectively support all sorts of rare flora and fauna.



BETHUNE CAMACHAEL

TOP LEFT A forest walk in the Morbihan countryside **BOTTOM LEFT** A sweeping view of Étretat (p224)
CENTRE RIGHT A puffin poses on rocks near Le Conquet (p89) **FAR RIGHT** Plage de Toul Drez (p74)

TOP HIKES

BAIE DE MONT ST-MICHEL (p163) Take a guided walk across one of the world's largest tidal bays.

BELLE-ÎLE-EN-MER (p127) Strike out along the island's coastal path.

FORÊT D'HUELGOAT & MONTS D'ARRÉE (p95) Volcanic boulders, Celtic camps and legends, and a mysterious forest, as well as marshes and tors.

PARC NATURAL RÉGIONAL DU PERCHE (p203) There's hiking and horse riding galore in this huge Normandy nature park.



RICHARD MILLS



JOHN ELLIOTT

DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ Birdwatching – the Réserve de Cap Sizun (p100) and the Sept Îles (p74) offer some of France's finest twitching
- ★ Canal Cruising – steer your own houseboat along the Nantes–Brest and Ille-et-Rance canals (p136)
- ★ Golfe du Morbihan – explore the miniature islands of this huge coastal bay (p133)
- ★ Île d'Ouessant – take a boat trip to this wild, wind-lashed Atlantic island (p89)
- ★ Wild Woods – trek the forest trails of Paimpont (p37) and the Forêt de Lyons (p256).
- ★ D-Day Beaches (p185) – pay homage to the heroism of the D-Day veterans

LIFE'S A BEACH

Top tips for beach-bums:

- ★ Côte d'Albâtre (p217)
Sunbathe beside chalk-white cliffs
- ★ Crozon Peninsula (p96)
Spotted with secluded coves
- ★ Quiberon (p126) Packed and proud of it
- ★ Pointe de la Torche (p108)
Brave the Atlantic swells
- ★ D-Day Beaches (p185)
Grand and golden
- ★ Côte de Granit Rose (p73) A family fave
- ★ Côte de Penthièvre (p66)
Home of the *station balnéaire*

OUTDOORS

BRITTANY &
NORMANDY



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TOP WEBSITES

All but the first option are in French only.

WWW.BRETAGNE-RANDO.COM Hikes within Brittany.

WWW.LESROCH.ORG Tips on mountain-bike trips in the Monts d'Arrée.

WWW.NAUTISMEBRETAGNE.FR Online guide to water activities.

WWW.RANDOBREIZH.ORG Great resource for Breton hiking and cycling itineraries.

WWW.RANDONNEE-NORMANDIE.COM Hikes with a Norman focus.

RESOURCES

All but the last option are in French only.

COMITÉ RÉGIONAL NORMANDIE CANOË-KAYAK (www.crck-normandie.fr) Information on kayaking and canoeing throughout Normandy.

FÉDÉRATION FRANÇAISE DE CYCLOTOURISME (FFC; www.ffc.fr) Cycle-specific maps, booklets and trail guides.

FÉDÉRATION FRANÇAISE DE LA RANDONNÉE PÉDESTRE (www.ffrp.asso.fr) The main hiking contact in France, with *topoguides* covering trails including the GR34.

FÉDÉRATION FRANÇAISE DE LA VOILE (www.ffvoile.net) France's national sailing federation, with links to accredited sailing schools.

INSTITUT GÉOGRAPHIQUE NATIONAL (IGN; www.ign.fr) France's main map company.

THE GR34

This trail ranks is one of France's longest *Sentiers de Grande Randonnée* (GRs; long-distance trails). Hugging the Brittany coast, it runs for over 2000km all the way from Mont St-Michel to Port-Navalo on the Golfe du Morbihan. The trail is marked by red-and-white striped trail markers – wherever you see one, you can be sure you're on a maintained trail offering spectacular coastal walking. Many stretches, especially near coastal towns, are known as *Sentiers des Douaniers* (customs officers' trails), a reminder of the days when the paths were patrolled by armed officers on the lookout for smugglers.

TOP LEFT Brittany's countryside and superb roads are perfect for cycling **RIGHT** Sand-yachting on a Brittany beach

VOIES VERTES

Brittany has some of the nation's most extensive *voies vertes* ('greenways'). These trails stretch for over 1000km along old canal towpaths, disused logging roads and decommissioned railways, and can be used by hikers, cyclists and horse riders. Many sections are paved to enable access for wheelchair users. There are currently three main sections in Brittany: St-Malo to Rennes along the Ille-et-Rance Canal (Voie 2, 105km); St-Malo to Rhuys via the Forêt de Paimpont (Voie 3, 150km) and St-Méen-le-Grand to Carhaix via the Monts d'Arrée and Lac Guerlédan (Voie 6, 111km). Extra sections are slowly taking shape along the coastline and between Roscoff and Rosporden; you'll also find a smaller network in Normandy. See www.voiesvertes.com for more info.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- ★ Cycling holidays – with Breton Bikes (www.bretonbikes.com), a British-owned but Breton-based company

- ★ Golf-breaks – with Golfing in Brittany (www.golfinginbrittany.co.uk)

- ★ Sand-yachting – at Penthièvre, run by Passageurs du Vent (www.aeroplage.com)

- ★ Diving – Paul Éluard (www.pauleluard-plongee.com) goes to wrecks off Normandy

- ★ Hiking – Explore the Monts d'Arrée, guided by ADDES (www.arree-randos.com)

- ★ Sailing lessons – with France's celebrated school, Îles de Glénan (www.glenans.asso.fr)



FAMILY TRAVEL

BRITTANY &
NORMANDY



JEAN-BENOÎT CAMILLÉ

TOP WEBSITES

BIENVENUE À LA FERME

(www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com)

Check it out for farmstays and farm activities all over France.

WWW.FRANCE4FAMILIES

.COM Advice on travelling with kids in France, with sections for Brittany and Normandy.

WWW.GITES-BRITTANY

.COM Online directory of family-friendly, self-catering accommodation.

DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ Meet deep-sea denizens at the aquariums in St-Malo (p41) and Brest (p93)
- ★ Go wild at the Bourbansais Safari Park (p50), Branféré animal park (p135) or Parc de Clères (p243)
- ★ Play Gallic games at the Village Gaulois at Cosmopolis (p75)
- ★ Visit a decommissioned nuclear sub at Cherbourg's Cité de la Mer (p172)
- ★ Visit the fairy-tale castles of Fougères (p56), Josselin (p136) and Château du Champ de Bataille (p247)
- ★ Explore the beaches and rock-pools of the Côte de Granit Rose (p73)
- ★ Stay in a treehouse at Dihan (p295)

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

Brittany and Normandy are both well used to catering for travellers *en famille*, and you'll find plenty of child-friendly attractions dotted around both regions, ranging from animal parks to fairy-tale châteaux and world-class aquariums. For most activities and sights, kids generally pay around half price, and in many places under 5s get in for free. Most restaurants will happily cater for kids, and you'll often find a *menu enfant* that's been specially designed to appeal to younger palates (remember that lunch is generally a much less formal affair than dinner). Family hotel rooms can be expensive, so self-catering *gîtes* and campsites are popular options for family travellers. Many are specifically geared towards families, with facilities such as water parks, playgrounds and organised activities.

TOP Children fishing for crabs on the coast near Brest (p92)

THE AUTHORS



OLIVER BERRY

Introducing Brittany & Normandy, Itineraries, Brittany chapters, Background, Accommodation

Oliver's French love affair began at the tender age of two, and he's since travelled practically every inch of l'Hexagone while contributing to several editions of the best-selling Lonely Planet guide to France, among other projects. For this book he braved Atlantic swells en route to Brittany's islands, got stuck inside a prehistoric burial tomb and tried 23 different sorts of fish.



PETER DRAGICEVICH

Normandy chapters, Accommodation, Transport, Directory

After a dozen years stuck behind a desk at various newspapers and magazines, Peter has spent much of the last four years on the road – contributing to over a dozen Lonely Planet titles in the process. In the course of researching this book he added more than 3100km to his odometer and at least a couple of centimetres to his waistline – cheese being an occupational hazard for a Normandy travel writer.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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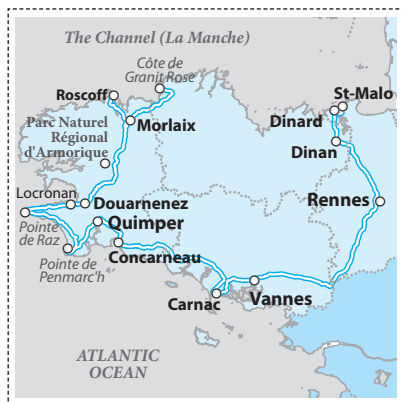
ITINERARIES

BEST OF BRITTANY

TWO WEEKS // ST-MALO TO ROSCOFF // 650KM

Begin taking in Brittany's essential sights at the old town and ramparts of **St-Malo** (p33) followed by a day trip to elegant **Dinard** (p45) and then go upriver to medieval **Dinan** (p59). Indulge in shopping and sightseeing in **Rennes** (p50), visit wonderfully

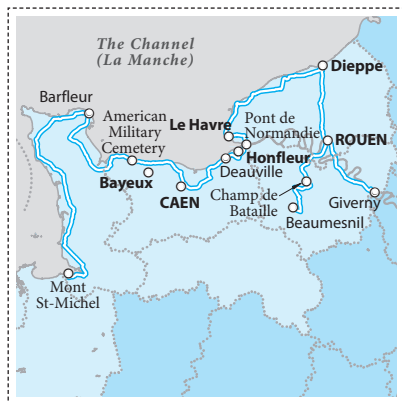
preserved **Vannes** (p130) and admire the prehistoric **Carnac megaliths** (p122). Head west via maritime **Concarneau** (p108) to the lively city of **Quimper** (p102). Trace the coastline north, stopping to see the **Pointe de Penmarc'h** (p108) and **Pointe du Raz** (p101) headlands, stroll around the old-world village of **Locronan** (p102) and visit the boat museum in **Douarnenez** (p99). Explore the **Parc Naturel Régional d'Armorique** (p94) before heading to the old port of **Roscoff** (p84), after visting **Morlaix** (p82) and making a detour to the coastline of **Côte de Granit Rose** (p73).



NORMAN HIGHLIGHTS

TWO TO THREE WEEKS // ROUEN TO MONT ST-MICHEL // 900KM

Start in **Rouen** (p234) with its medieval centre. Take day trips to Monet's gardens at **Giverny** (p251), the châteaux of **Beaumesnil** (p248) and nearby **Champ de Bataille** (p247). Then visit the port of **Dieppe** (p228) and explore the Impressionists' favourite coastline, the **Côte d'Albâtre** (p217). Compare concrete-central, **Le Havre** (p217), with futuristic **Pont de Normandie** (p215) and picture-book **Honfleur** (p211). Roll the dice at **Deauville** (p208) and visit the sombre **Mémorial de Caen** (p191), the **D-Day Beaches** (p185) and the **American Military Cemetery** (p187). Then it's on to beautiful **Bayeux** (p177) and its famous tapestry, followed by a few days exploring the **Haut-Cotentin** (p168) en route to laid-back **Barfleur** (p171) and the imposing abbey of **Mont St-Michel** (p157).



NATURAL SPLENDOUR

ONE WEEK // PNR BRIÈRE TO THE CROZON // 400KM

This trip starts with a barge trip around the marshes of the **Parc Naturel Régional (PNR) de Brière** (p151). Next, wander along the beaches of the **Presqu'île de Rhuy** (p134), spot seabirds at the **Réserve de Séné** (p134) and explore other parts of the gorgeous **Golfe du Morbihan** (p133) before heading for the aptly named **Belle-Île-en-Mer** (p127) and its diminutive neighbours, **Houat** and **Hoëdic** (p129). Cycle the quiet towpaths of the **Nantes-Brest Canal** (p136) en route to the peaceful shores of **Lac de Guerlédan** (p138). The forest trails of **Paimpont** (p37) or **Huelgoat** (p95) warrant a visit. Explore the wild hilltops of the **Monts d'Arrée** (p95) on horseback or by mountain bike, and finish up at the bays and headlands of the **Crozon Peninsula** (p96).



MEDIEVAL MARVELS

10 DAYS // BAYEUX TO VANNES // 550KM

Kick off at the world's most ambitious comic strip, the **Bayeux Tapestry** (p177). Explore the area around William the Conqueror's **château** (p196), while the village of **St-Cénéri-le-Gérei** (p201) is one of the prettiest in France. Spin on to **Coutances Cathedral** (p166) and the sea-captains' city, **St-Malo** (p33). Head up along the River Rance to **Dinan** (p59), renowned for its helter-skelter half-timbered houses. Goggle at the great cathedral in **Dol-de-Bretagne** (p49), before visiting the fortified towns of **Fougères** and **Vitré** (p56), which once guarded Brittany's border. Delve into what's left of **Rennes' old city** (p52) after the fire of 1720, before viewing aristocratic architecture at **Josselin** (p136) and ending up at one of Brittany's best-preserved medieval towns, **Vannes** (p130).



A GASTRONOMIC TOUR

10 DAYS // RENNES TO DIEPPE // 600KM

From fresh fish to salted butter, fiery ciders and smelly cheeses, this corner of France is the perfect place to indulge your inner connoisseur. Begin with a visit to the Saturday food market in **Rennes** (p52), followed by trips to **Erquy** (p67) for scallops, **Cancale** (p44) for oysters, and **Mont St-Michel** (p157) for salt-marsh lamb and an *omelette de Mère Poulard*. In **Caen** (p188), you'll need a strong stomach to handle **tripes à la mode de Caen** (p194). You'll need a strong liver to cope with **Calvados** (p180) and a strong nose to appreciate cheese at **Pont l'Évêque** (p207), **Livarot** (p204) and **Camembert** (p204). Along the coast try mussels in **Trouville** (p210), shrimp in **Honfleur** (p211), *sole normande* in **Fécamp** (p226) and fishermen's stew in **Dieppe** (p233).



THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

FIVE DAYS // ROSCOFF TO THE POINTE DU RAZ // 300KM

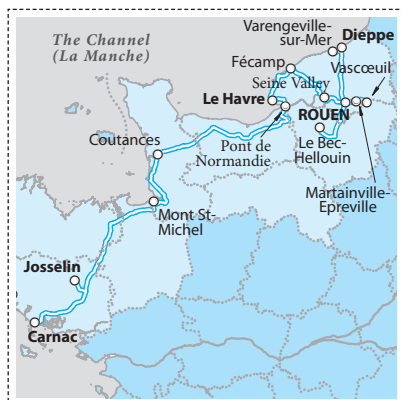
If it's spume and spindrift that set your pulse racing, the Finistère area is the place to head for. This wind-whipped coastline has a history packed with shipwrecks and smugglers: the old port of **Roscoff** (p84) makes a perfect start combined with a cruise to the **Île de Batz** (p86). Head west via the dunes of **Keremma** (p88) to the estuaries of the **Pays des Abers** (p88) and then climb the landmark lighthouses of **Trézien** and **Pointe St-Mathieu** (p89). The **Crozon Peninsula** (p96) has some stunning cliff scenery, especially around **Pointe de Pen-Hir** and **Cap de la Chèvre** (p97), while huge seabird colonies can be seen at **Cap Sizun** (p100) and awesome sunsets are guaranteed from the famous **Pointe du Raz** (p101).



ARCHITECTURAL TREASURES

TWO WEEKS // DIEPPE TO CARNAC // 800KM TO 1000KM

Begin near Dieppe at the landscaped estate of **Bois des Moutiers** (p228) before visiting **Rouen's old city** (p236), renowned for its medieval buildings, landmark **cathedral** (p238) and **Gothic architecture** (p239). Extravagant abbeys litter the **Seine Valley** (p245), while the Haute-Normandie countryside is chock-a-block with spectacular chateaux – **Martainville** (p244), **Vascœuil** (p256) and **Champ de Bataille** (p247). The nearby abbey of **Le Bec-Hellouin** (p246), and Fécamp's stunning **Palais Bénédictine** (p226) are impressive, but for sheer architectural ambition, the postwar re-imagining of **Le Havre** (p217) and the space-age **Pont de Normandie** (p215) take some topping. Factor in stops for **Coutances Cathedral** (p166), **Mont St-Michel** (p157) and **Josselin** (p136) before finishing at the **Carnac alignments** (p122).



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