

NORMANDY IN SPRINGTIME



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1

Must See Sights

Mont-St-Michel

One of the most spectacular sights in Normandy, this craggy rock crowned by a magnificent abbey appears to erupt from the surrounding landscape – a broad expanse of sand or sea, depending on the dramatic tides. The region's star attraction since pilgrims first flocked here 1,000 years ago, it now draws some three million visitors each year – and has perhaps 50 true inhabitants.

A project is under way to replace the causeway to the island with a bridge, allowing the river and tides to scour away accumulated silt.

For more on St Michael (see *St Michael and St Aubert*)

Top 10 Features

1 Abbey
This splendid building is a pleasing jumble of architectural styles. Its jewel is the Merveille, built during the abbey's heyday and incorporating cloisters, knights' hall, refectory and guests' room.

2 Ramparts
Punctuated by imposing towers, the longest section was built to repel the English during the Hundred Years' War. The abbot's soldiers lodged in the Tour de l'Arcade.

3 Grande Rue
Through the fortified Porte du Roy, its portcullis still visible, the Grande Rue winds steeply uphill. Pretty and cobbled, it was the 12th-century pilgrim's way, and remains the only route to the top – though now you have to run a gauntlet of souvenir shops and overpriced restaurants.



4 Musée Historique
Highlights are the garden periscope, 14th-century monks' bath, 17th-century riding boots, and recreation of the prisons.

5 Logis Tiphaine
Chief of the king's armies Bertrand du Guesclin built this house in 1365 for his wife, Tiphaine – a safe haven while he was away at war.

6 Archéoscope
A large model of the Mont rises from a huge tank of water in a spectacle of sound and light, with a historical commentary in French.



7 Église St-Pierre
The most interesting feature of the parish church, begun in the 11th century but not completed until the 17th, is the apse that straddles a narrow street. Its treasures include a silver statue of St Michael.

8 Chapelle St-Aubert
Legend tells of a huge rock blocking the entrance to a cave where the abbey now stands. Nobody could move it until a small boy miraculously pushed it into the sea with his foot. This tiny 15th-century chapel was built on the site where the rock was supposed to have landed.

9 Maison de la Baie, Relais de Courtils
Films and displays offer a fascinating insight into the bay of Mont-St-Michel – its formation, evolution, eco-structure and the planned project for its survival.

► **Map B5**

10 Maison de la Baie, Relais de Vains
Less technological and more child-friendly than its namesake at Courtils, this exhibition examines "life in the bay" (flora, fauna and environment), as well as the past lives of fishermen and salt workers, through models and computers.

► **Map B5**

Mont-St-Michel: Abbey Features

1 West Terrace
From this terrace, there are breathtaking views over the bay. On a clear day, you can see as far as the Channel Islands – the source of the granite used to build the abbey.

2 Abbey Church
Despite its fine roof, the austere Romanesque nave – the oldest part of the church – is eclipsed by the glorious Flamboyant Gothic chancel. The walls inside the

west front are still scorched from a 19th-century prison fire.

3 Cloisters
A garden enclosed by a double row of delicate pink granite columns, the cloisters gave the monks a place to meditate, converse and exercise.

4 Refectory
Apart from one who would read aloud from the Scriptures, the monks ate their meals in silence in this unusual room, which has rows of narrow side windows invisible from the entrance.

5 Guests' Room
Light floods through large windows into this elegant rib-vaulted room used to receive important guests. Food was cooked in the two huge fireplaces.

6 Crypt of the Mighty Pillars
To support the new chancel, 10 massive pillars were built in this 15th-century crypt, a waiting room for those anticipating the judgement of the abbot, who presided over the Belle-Chaise courtroom next door.

7 St Martin's Crypt
Decorated with frescoes, this crypt, which provided the foundation for the south transept, was the funeral chapel for lay people.

8 Prison
During the Revolution, the abbey was used as a prison. The iron cage used to confine dangerous prisoners is long gone, but the vast wheel for hoisting up provisions is still in place.

9 Knights' Hall
This vast, imposing hall was the monks' scriptorium, where they studied and copied manuscripts. A wooden trap door led to the food store.

10 St Etienne's Chapel
The monks' funeral chapel was well placed between the infirmary and the ossuary, where the bones of the dead were preserved. Monks kept vigil over the dead for three days and nights.

Top 10 Events in the History of Mont-St-Michel

1 708:
Aubert, Bishop of Avranches builds an oratory on Mont Tombe

2 966:
Duke Richard I imposes Benedictine rule

3 1017:
work on Romanesque abbey church begins; village grows up below

4 1434:

ramparts completed during Hundred Years' War

5 1789:
monks leave; abbey converted to a political prison during the French Revolution

6 1874:
becomes a Historic Monument and opens to the public

7 1877:
construction of causeway linking the Mont and the mainland

8 1969:
Benedictine monks return

9 1979:
UNESCO designates Mont-St-Michel a World Heritage Site

10 2003:
work starts on bay project including bridge to mainland

Mont-St-Michel

Practical information

- Map B5
- Office du Tourisme: blvd de l'Avancée
- 02 33 60 14 30
- Abbey: 02 33 89 80 00
- Open May–Aug: 9am–7pm; Sep–Apr: 9:30am–6pm
- Adm charge (under 18s free)
- Maisons de la Baie: (1) rte de la Roche Torin, 50220 Courtils
- 02 33 89 66 00
- (2) 50300 Vains
- 02 33 89 06 06
- Open Apr–May & school hols: 2–6pm; Jun, Sep: 10am–6pm; Jul, Aug: 10am–7pm
- Adm charge
- Musée Historique: 02 33 60 14 09
- Open 9am–6pm daily
- Adm charge
- Logis Tiphaine: 02 33 60 23 34
- Open 9am–6pm daily
- Adm charge
- Archéoscope: 02 33 48 09 37
- Open mid-Feb–mid-Nov, Christmas hols: 9am–6pm
- Adm charge

Top tips

- Cafés and restaurants line the Grande Rue. Try Mère Poulard (see Omelette de la Mère Poulard, La Mère Poulard, Mont-St-Michel).
- Contact Chemins de la Baie (02 33 89 80 88) for a guided bay walk from Genêts to Mont-St-Michel.

Tides

Mont-St-Michel has the highest tides in continental Europe, with a difference of up to 15 m (49 ft) between low and high water in March and September, when the spring tides occur. When the tide is out, it exposes around 250 sq km (97 sq miles) of sand. The tide is also unusually strong, running across the flat expanse of sand at a speed of some 10 kph (6 mph). The strongest tides occur two days after a full or new moon, when the sea reaches its highest level at 8 or 9 am and pm.

Bayeux Tapestry



Both a unique historical document and an astonishing work of art, the Bayeux Tapestry tells the story of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 – and it tells it with thrilling narrative drive. Stitched in eight brilliant shades of red, yellow and blue wool, the 58 strip-cartoon-style scenes were embroidered just 11 years after the Conquest onto a single 230 ft (70 m) linen cloth – at the behest, it is thought, of William the Conqueror's half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. It is displayed in a renovated seminary, preceded by helpful explanatory exhibitions.

Top 10 Highlights of Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant

1 The Tapestry Explained

A slide show projected onto billowing white "sails" describes the Viking invasions of western Europe. Next, echoing the Tapestry itself, an 85 m (280 ft) band of cloth explains the story told by the embroidery.

2 The England of William

Using life-size figures, maps and scale models (including a delightful model of the village of East Meon), William's influence on every sphere of English life after his conquest is cleverly portrayed.

3 The Film

In the Salle Mathilde, maps and drawings depict the events of the Norman Conquest. Next comes a 14-minute film which tells the story from the point of view of William's half-brother Bishop Odo.

4 The Tapestry

Now it's time to see the Tapestry itself, dimly lit behind glass. The audio guide walks you through each scene, adding fascinating details about the lifestyle of the period.

5 Harold's Mission to Normandy

In the first scene, Edward the Confessor is seen sending Harold from England to Normandy to tell Duke William that he will succeed to the English throne. Harold starts for the coast, preceded by his pack of hounds.

6 Harold's Oath

This critical scene (No 27) provides the moral impetus for the story, told from the Norman point of view: Harold, touching holy relics, swears allegiance to Duke William.

7 Harold's Perjury

Harold returns to England from Normandy. On the death of Edward the Confessor, he is crowned king, breaking his oath to William. The appearance of Halley's Comet foretells doom (No 32).

8 William Invades England

As soon as William has ordered his invasion fleet to be built (No 35), the stylized trees that served to break the scenes cease to appear, and the story begins to gather pace.

9 The Battle of Hastings

The battle scenes are marvellously depicted, – full of the clash, clamour and horror of war (Nos 51–58).

10 The Death of Harold

The Tapestry comes to an abrupt end with the death of Harold – shot in the eye by an arrow – and the victory of William over the English.

Sights in Bayeux

1 Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant

Known in France as La Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde, the world-famous Bayeux Tapestry, housed in an impressive 18th-century building, is responsible for one third of this prosperous town's income.

2 Cathédrale Notre-Dame

Much altered over the centuries, the cathedral was consecrated in the presence of William the Conqueror in 1077.

3 Musée de la Bataille de Normandie

Bayeux is the perfect base for visits to the D-Day beaches. This museum provides an excellent introduction for all the family to the Battle of Normandy, told chronologically.

4 Musée Baron Gérard

Fine collections of Bayeux porcelain (no longer made) and lace are currently on display in the Hôtel du Doyen, during restoration of the museum's new home.

➤ rue Lambert Leforestier • Open 10am–12:30pm, 2–6pm daily • Free with Tapestry ticket

5 Conservatoire de la Dentelle

Watch a group of dedicated craftswomen at work as they continue the tradition of intricate Bayeux lacemaking.

► *Maison Adam et Eve, 2 rue Bienvenu • Open 10am–12:30pm, 2–6pm Mon–Sat • Free*

6 Musée Mémorial du Général de Gaulle

The museum commemorates de Gaulle and the landmark speech he made to the people of Bayeux on 14 June 1944.

► *10 rue Bourbesneur • Open Mar–Nov: 9:30am–12:30pm, 2–6:30pm daily • Adm charge*

7 Jardin Public de Bayeux

The botanical garden has a magnificent weeping beech tree 40 ft (13 m) in diameter.

► *55 route de Port-en-Bessin • Open Apr–Nov: 9am–8pm daily; Sep–Apr: 9am–5pm daily*

8 Circuit du Vieux Bayeux

Follow the waymarked route round the streets of Vieux Bayeux, with information in English and French at places of interest.

9 British Cemetery and Memorial

The largest British war cemetery in Normandy has 4,144 graves.



10 Monastère de Bénédicte

Pray with the nuns in their serene church, then buy artifacts in their shop.

► *48 rue St-Loup*

Top 10 Events in William's Life

- 1 **Born in Falaise (1027)**
- 2 **Receives the Duchy of Normandy on his father's death (1035)**
- 3 **Helped by King Henri I of France, crushes rebel barons in Normandy (1047)**
- 4 **Edward the Confessor, his cousin, purportedly promises him the English throne (1051)**
- 5 **Harold Godwinson – rival heir to the English throne – swears allegiance to William, perhaps through trickery or under duress (1064)**

6 Harold succeeds Edward as king of England (1066)

7 William invades England, defeats Harold, and is crowned at Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day (1066)

8 Ruthlessly crushes all rebellions until England is conquered and united (1072)

9 Commissions the Domesday Book, an invaluable survey of land ownership (1086)

10 Dies in Rouen from a battle wound (1087)

Bayeux Tapestry

Practical information

- Map D3
- Office du Tourisme: pont St-Jean
- 02 31 51 28 28
- Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant: rue de Nesmond
- 02 31 51 25 50
- Open May–Aug: 9am–7pm; mid-Mar–May, Sep–Nov: 9am–6:30pm; Nov–mid-Mar 9:30am–12:30pm, 2–6pm. Closed second week of Jan
- Admission €7.40; concessions €3.00; children under 10 free

Top tips

- For an excellent lunch try Le Pommier, rue des Cuisiniers, or La Table du Terroir, run with great panache by master butcher Louis Bisson behind his shop in rue St-Jean.
- From the d'Ornano car park and bus station in Bayeux, follow the Circuit de Vieux Bayeux trail, with clear descriptions in English and French at every point of interest.

Museum Guide

A visit to the Tapestry itself takes just 20 minutes using the brief but excellent audio guide. It's therefore advisable to take the tour which starts on the first floor and leads up to the Tapestry. A full visit can easily take over two hours. Your ticket also entitles entry to the Musée Baron Gérard.

Honfleur



Seductively pretty, with cobbled streets and half-timbered or slate-fronted houses, Honfleur is a working port with a long maritime history. First mentioned in documents of the 11th century, by the 15th it had become a significant fortified port. Its heyday came some 200 years later, when it spawned intrepid explorers like Samuel de Champlain, who set out from here to found Québec. Le Vieux Bassin, the charming old dock at the heart of the town, is brimming with colourful sailing boats; artists have flocked here since the 19th century.

More on Artists in Normandy



Honfleur artist

Top 10 Sights

1 Le Vieux Bassin
This picturesque harbour was built in the 17th century at the behest of Colbert, Louis XIV's chief finance minister, who also ordered the demolition of the ramparts. Quai Ste-Catherine is particularly attractive.



2 Musée Eugène Boudin
Now housing an exciting collection of 19th- and 20th-century art, the museum was founded in 1868 by Honfleur's best-known artists, Boudin and Dubourg.



3 Église Ste-Catherine
Built to celebrate the end of the Hundred Years' War, the largest wooden church in France is half-timbered inside and out, with twin naves and tall oak pillars. The weight of the bells demanded a separate stone bell tower.

4 Greniers à Sel
Larger cod catches in the late 16th century increased the demand for salt as a preservative. To accommodate this, two huge salt stores were built in

the main street of the enclos, the walled town. Stone from the old ramparts was used for the walls, and oak for the roofs – which are still in superb condition. Now they are used for meetings, exhibitions and concerts.



5 Église St-Léonard
From its 16th-century Flamboyant door to its 18th-century octagonal bell tower, St-Léonard is a hotchpotch of styles. The copper lectern comes from Villedieu-les-Poêles.

6 Musée de la Marine
Housed in a 14th-century church, the Musée de la Marine traces the history of the port through scale models, instruments, engravings, cutlasses, cannons and other fascinating artifacts.

7 Musée d'Ethnographie et d'Art Populaire
Nine rooms crammed with objects, furniture and costumes transport you back through the centuries. Most delightful is the haberdasher's shop, complete down to the ribbon samples.



8 Les Maisons Satie
A suitably offbeat tribute to the eccentric composer Erik Satie, born here in 1866. Videos, surreal room sets and life-size electronic sculptures recreate his fantasy world.

9 Chapelle Notre-Dame de Grâce
Explorers came to this enchanting little chapel to pray before setting sail. Built in the early 17th century to

replace a chapel that fell into the sea, it remains a place of pilgrimage.

10 Pont de Normandie
Opened in 1995, this elegant space-age bridge links Honfleur and Le Havre. Its 856 m (2,800 ft) span held the record – albeit briefly – for the world’s longest cable-stayed bridge.

Honfleur

Practical information

- Map F3
- Office du Tourisme: quai Lepaulmier
- 02 31 89 23 30
- Musée Eugène Boudin: pl Erik Satie
- Open mid-Mar–Sep: 10am–noon, 2–6pm
Wed–Mon; Oct–Dec, mid-Feb–mid-Mar: 2:30–5pm
Mon, Wed–Fri, 10am–noon, 2:30–5pm Sat–Sun
- Adm charge
- Musée de la Marine (quai St-Etienne), Musée d’Ethnographie et d’Art Populaire (rue de la Prison):
open mid-Feb–Mar, Oct–mid-Nov: 2–5:30pm
Tue–Fri, 10am–noon, 2–5:30pm Sat–Sun; Apr–Jun,
Sep: 10am–noon, 2–6pm Tue–Sun; Jul–Aug:
10am–1pm, 2–6:30pm daily
- Adm charge
- Les Maisons Satie: 67 blvd Charles V
- Open Wed–Mon
- Adm charge

Top tips

- In summer, pick one of the pavement cafés in Le Vieux Bassin.
- Take a tour organized by the tourist office (English tours start 3pm Mon, May–mid–Oct; €6).

Honfleur Artists

Turner, Corot, Courbet, Daubigny, Dubourg, Jongkind, Monet and the Impressionists, the Fauves, Dufy, Friesz – these and countless others were drawn to Honfleur by the special quality of light in the Seine estuary, the unspoilt medieval town, and the beauty of the surrounding countryside – the same reasons that Honfleur has a thriving artists’ colony today.

Caen

The capital of Basse-Normandie, Caen is a lively, cultured university town with a compact historic centre. Although devastated in 1944, it was carefully restored, and today successfully blends modern with old, dominated still by William the Conqueror's Château Ducal and his two great abbeys. The presence of a colourful marina in the heart of the town is a reminder that Caen is also a proud seaport. Equidistant from Cherbourg, Mont-St-Michel and Rouen, it makes an excellent base for exploring Normandy.

More on William the Conqueror

For nearby wartime sights (see D-Day Beaches)

Top 10 Sights

1 Abbaye-aux-Hommes

William and Matilda were cousins; at first, the pope opposed their marriage. He relented, and they atoned by each founding an abbey: in William's case, the Abbaye-aux-Hommes (see Abbaye-aux-Hommes, Caen, Caen).



2 Abbaye-aux-Dames

Matilda's tomb is marked by a slab of black marble in the choir of her abbey church, La Trinité. Her beautiful abbey, in creamy Caen stone, is now the Regional Council headquarters.



3 Château Ducal

Built as a royal home, William's hilltop castle became a fortress in 1204. The ramparts, Chapelle St-Georges, and the great hall of Henri I's palace are all that remain.

4 Musée des Beaux-Arts

Within the castle walls is this wide-ranging fine-art collection, strong on 17th-century French and Italian painting (see Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen).

5 Musée de Normandie

Also in the Château complex, this museum presents a survey of Norman life, with exhibits ranging from the prehistoric to the industrial.

6 Le Mémorial de Caen

Northwest of the city, this major museum of remembrance and peace traces the causes and consequences of World War II and the Cold War.



7 Église St-Pierre

The church is notable for its impressively ornate Renaissance apse and its much-copied spire, rebuilt after 1944.



8 Rue St-Pierre

This lively shopping street is lined with historic buildings. Turn down rue Froide, full of interesting shops and hidden alleys, then left to reach place St-Sauveur, scene of a Friday

market since 1026 (see Caen).



9 Marina

Tour Leroy stands at the entrance to the old harbour. Today, a yacht marina, picturesque in summer, marks the canal that leads to the ferry port of Ouistreham.



10 Quartier Vaugueux

This is Caen's "petit Montmartre", with a jumble of pretty buildings, old street-lights, and a great mix of restaurants and cafés.

Caen

Practical information

- Map D3
- Office de Tourisme: pl St-Pierre
- Map M2
- 02 31 27 14 14

St-Étienne:

- Map L2
- Open 8:15–noon, 2–7:30pm daily
- Free

Abbaye-aux-Hommes:

- Map L2
- Guided tours from 9:30am daily
- Admission €2

Abbey-aux-Dames:

- Map N1
- Guided tours 2:30 & 4pm daily
- Free

Musée des Beaux-Arts:

- Map M1
- Open 9:30am–6pm Wed–Mon
- Admission €3.80

Musée de Normandie:

- Map M1
- Open 9:30am–12:30pm, 2–6pm Wed– Mon
- Admission €1.55 (free on Sun)

Le Mémorial de Caen:

- Map L1
- Open 9am–7pm or 8pm daily
- Admission €16.60

Top tips

- There's a wide range of eateries in the Quartier Vaugueux.
- Park at the Côte de Nacre car park north of the city for just €2.50 per day; then travel free by tram to the city centre.

Caen Orientation

The city grew up around William's Château Ducal, flanked by the two abbeys to east and west, with all the other sights of interest (except the Mémorial) between. Buses and trams arrive close to the Église St-Pierre and the tourist office, which occupies a fine mansion, Hôtel d'Escoville (don't miss its Renaissance courtyard to the left of the entrance).

Deauville and La Côte Fleurie

Between Honfleur and Cabourg, the Norman coastline becomes a playground: resorts, casinos, watersports, sunshine, sandy beaches backed by wooded hills. It all started in Trouville, which triggered the 19th-century rage for sea bathing. Next comes racy, romantic Deauville – created in the 1860s by a trio of wealthy entrepreneurs, embellished in 1910 with boardwalk, casino and racecourse. In contrast, Touques and Dives-sur-Mer have historic links with William the Conqueror, while stately Cabourg is forever associated with Marcel Proust.

For information on Honfleur

Top 10 Sights

1 Deauville
Racehorses pounding the beach at sunrise, a glamorous wooden boardwalk, the glittering casino, the sumptuous Hôtel Normandy, the Bar du Soleil, the Pompeian Baths, designer shops, marinas, racecourses, extravagant mock-Tudor villas – a glossy picture.

2 Trouville-sur-Mer
In contrast to its neighbour Deauville, Trouville exudes a terrific, happy-go-lucky air – due in part to its south-facing waterfront boulevard, trawlers and fish market, aquarium, children's amusements, and wonderfully florid 1912 casino and town hall.



3 Touques
The vestiges of William the Conqueror's castle can be visited at Bonneville, above his port of Touques. In the neat town centre stands the 11th-century church of St-Pierre.

4 Manoir des Evêques
Dip your toes into the beautiful Pays d'Auge with a visit to the half-timbered Manoir des Evêques, one of its loveliest buildings.



5 Villerville
This friendly little seaside town, surrounded by woods and meadows, has become a village des livres, specializing in books.

6 Mont Canisy
Mont Canisy rises above Deauville, with views from Le Havre to the Orne; underground is a warren of German bunkers and tunnels.

7 Falaise des Vaches Noires
A walk at low tide between Villers and Houlgate takes you past the "cliff of the black cows", rich in fossils.

8 Houlgate
Like Villers-sur-Mer, Houlgate is a family resort notable for its Neo-Norman architecture, all half-timbering, gables, turrets and towers.



9 Dives-sur-Mer
The former port from which William set sail to conquer England boasts a magnificent oak-framed market hall and the church of Notre-Dame, founded in 1067.



10 Cabourg
Take tea at the Grand Hôtel, so vividly described by Proust in *A la recherche du temps perdu* and, like Cabourg itself, still redolent of those genteel 19th-century days.

Deauville and La Côte Fleurie

Practical information

- Map E3
- Office du Tourisme: pl de la Mairie, Deauville
- 02 31 14 40 00
- Jardins du Casino, Cabourg: 02 31 91 20 00

Top tips

- In Deauville, Bar du Soleil and Bar de la Mer on Les Planches are great for people-watching. If you are looking for regional specialities, try Le Kraal, overlooking the marketplace.
- In Trouville, eat moules-frites at one of the many water-front restaurants, such as Les Vapeurs.
- Dress up to visit Deauville: it will make you feel the part.
- Access to Deauville beach is free; its gaily coloured parasols – folded in a way unique to the town – are, however, quite expensive to hire.

The High Life

A non-stop round of film festivals, horse racing, yachting regattas, tennis and golf tournaments, international bridge championships, jazz, and vintage car rallies keeps Deauville buzzing all year. But it's the hectic 100-day summer season that brings the beautiful people out in force, staying at the Normandy, dining at Ciro's, shopping for Cartier, posing on Les Planches, gambling, racegoing, or sipping cocktails on their yachts. Elegant, snooty, monied, and not a little flashy: that's Deauville.

Pays d'Auge



Orchards of apple and pear, thatched houses and half-timbered manors tucked into the hills, fat brown-and-white cows, immaculate studs, farmhouses selling cider and cheese – that's the Pays d'Auge. Stretching north to the Côte Fleurie (see Deauville and La Côte Fleurie), bisected by the River Touques, the region perfectly encapsulates the distinctive charms of Normandy. The highlights described here are a delightful selection of villages, views, manors, châteaux and abbeys – and, of course, a Camembert museum and a Calvados distillery.

In Lisieux, you can visit Les Buissonnets, Thérèse's childhood home, as well as the Cathédrale St-Pierre, where she attended mass.

For recommended cafés and restaurants in Beuvron, Pont l'Evêque and Lisieux (see L'Aigle d'Or, Pont-l'Evêque)

Top 10 Highlights

1 Lisieux
The principal town of the region is inextricably linked with Ste Thérèse, who achieved posthumous renown for her book, *Histoire d'une âme* (Story of a Soul), and was canonized in 1925. On her account, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims flock here every year.

2 Château St-Germain-de-Livet
A visit to this enchanting château feels like entering a private world. Outside, turrets, towers, timbers and cleverly patterned brick; inside, oak furniture, Renaissance frescoes and thick, creaking floorboards.

3 Manoir de Coupesarte
A short track off the D47 brings you to the most romantic of all the Auge manors. It's privately owned, but you can enter the adjoining farmyard to see the late-15th-century timbered, turreted house.



4 Vimoutiers
In the centre of Vimoutiers is a statue of Marie Harel, credited with inventing Camembert in the sleepy village of that name. The Musée du Camembert tells the story.

5 St-Pierre-sur-Dives
The market town huddles round its huge, sheltering church, all that is left of the rich Benedictine abbey that once stood here (see Eglise Abbatiale,

St-Pierre-sur-Dives). The monks originally constructed the town's venerable market hall.

6 Château de Vendevre
There's plenty to do here: step back into the 18th century in the elegant château itself; visit the museum of miniature furniture (see Musée du Mobilier Miniature, Vendevre); or wander in the delightful "surprise" water gardens.

7 Château de Crèvecour-en-Auge
A rare chance to look inside a medieval lord's moated, fortified Auge manor. The former agricultural buildings house a museum of oil prospecting, connected with the Schlumberger Foundation.

8 Beuvron-en-Auge
One of the loveliest, and most popular villages in the area. Charming houses, each one striped with old beams and dripping with geraniums, cluster around the main square. There is a fine manor house.

9 Clermont-en-Auge
In the village, look for St-Michel-de-Clermont, a charming chapel offering a fine panorama of the Pays d'Auge and the marshland beyond.



10 Maison des Calvados, Cormeilles
At this distillery, you can learn about the process of making the cider brandy Calvados – and, of course, taste the results.

Pays d'Auge

Practical information

- Map E3–4, F3–F4
- Office du Tourisme: 11 rue d'Alençon, Lisieux
- 02 31 48 18 10

Château St-Germain-de-Livet:

- Map F4
- Open Feb–end Sep, mid-Oct–Nov: 11am–5pm Wed–Sun
- Adm charge

Château de Vendevre:

- Map E4
- Open May–Sep: 11am–6pm daily
- Adm charge

Château de Crèvecœur-en-Auge:

- Map E4
- Open Apr–Jun, Sep: 11am–6pm daily; Jul, Aug: 11am–7pm daily; Oct: 11am–6pm Mon–Sat, 2–6pm Sun
- Adm charge

Maison des Calvados:

- Map F3
- Open Apr–Oct daily
- Adm charge

Top tips

- Beuvron-en-Auge makes a good place for lunch, with plenty of choice, including gastronomic Pavé d'Auge (see Pavé d'Auge, Beuvron-en-Auge), cosy Boule d'Or (see Auberge de la Boule d'Or, Beuvron-en-Auge), a crêperie and tearooms.
- Driven in numerical order, the sights listed here make an excellent circular tour.

The Cider Route

If you like cider, you can do no better than to follow the signposted Route du Cidre, linking the Pays d'Auge's principal cider-making villages – such as delightful Cambremer, Bonnebosq and Beuvron-en-Auge – by pretty backroads. The route also passes about 20 local producers (recognizable by the sign 'Cru de Cambremer'), who offer tours of their cellars, and tastings (see Calvados Pierre Huet, Cambremer). Pick up a "Tourist Routes" leaflet at a tourist office.

Fondation Claude Monet, Giverny

Travelling by train between Vernon and Gagny in April 1883, Monet spotted Giverny through the window. It was love at first sight, and he moved here with Alice Hoschedé as swiftly as possible. He planted his garden so that he could paint in every season. He considered it his masterpiece, a painting of dazzling colours created with nature. After his death, the house and gardens fell into disrepair, but between 1977 and 1980 the Académie des Beaux-Arts restored them to their original condition – a living memorial to Monet and his work.

More on Artists in Normandy

Top 10 Highlights



1 Water Garden
Exotic, asymmetrical, Monet's water garden is a place for calm contemplation of nature, amongst a gentle riot of plant life: rhododendrons, weeping willows, water lilies, and

much more.



2 Japanese Bridge
This famous, wisteria-draped bridge reflects Monet's abiding interest in Japanese prints, many of them in the Pink House collection.

3 Clos Normand
Monet's French-style garden is a triumph of symmetry, colour and judicious planting, with flowers in bloom all season.



4 Pink House
In this charming pink stucco house, Monet entertained Cézanne, Renoir, Matisse and other famous artists of his time, as well as his good friend Georges Clemenceau.

5 Japanese Prints
Monet's precious woodblock prints are hung in several rooms, according to a plan drawn up by Monet himself.

6 Sitting Room-Studio
Monet used to come to his simply furnished studio after dinner to relax, smoke, and examine his day's work.

7 Monet's Bedroom
The room where Monet slept for 43 years, and eventually died, still has most of its original furniture, including a fine 18th-century inlaid desk. Endearingly, Monet kept works by the artists he most admired in his bedroom: among them Cézanne, Renoir, Manet, Pissarro and Rodin – a collection now scattered worldwide.

8 Dining Room
Imagine Monet, together with Alice Hoschedé, her children and visiting artists, seated around the large dining table in this perfectly restored room, painted in two shades of yellow, with faïence plates and Japanese prints on the walls, and vestiges of the dinner service in two dressers.

9 Kitchen
Little seems to have changed over the past century in this delightful room – an extension built by Monet, with blue-and-white-tiled walls, a handsome cast-iron range, butler's sink, terracotta floor, and burnished copper pots and pans.

10 Water Lily Studio
His sight affected by cataracts, Monet built this large, light studio between 1914 and 1916, to work on his water lily series. It now houses the shop of the Fondation Claude Monet.

Musée d'Art Américain, Giverny

1 The Foundation
American industrialist and art collector Daniel J Terra founded this museum in 1992 in homage to Giverny's American artists. Like its sibling in Chicago, it is run by the Terra Foundation, whose aim is to foster greater understanding of America's cultural heritage.

2 The Collection
The Terra Foundation owns more than 700 works of American art from 1750 to the present day, shown in exhibitions at Giverny and Chicago.

3 Giverny Paintings
Among Monet's followers, whose paintings of Giverny are often on display, were Theodore Wendel, Willard Metcalf, Mary Cassatt and Theodore Robinson, whose *Wedding March* (1892) is perhaps the most celebrated.

4 The Building
Terraced into the hillside, with vine-clad roofs, the building was designed by Philippe Robert to blend with its surroundings. Inside, there are three exhibition galleries and a 200-seat auditorium.

5 Exhibitions

Four or five exhibitions each year showcase works of art owned by the Terra Foundation, and on loan from other American institutions.

6 Museum Gardens

In landscape architect Mark Rudkin's design, beds are simply planted in monochrome colour schemes, divided by hedges.



7 Hameau Garden

The upper part was inspired by the paintings of Lilla Cabot Perry and Frederick Frieseke, who lived in the Hameau house. Didier Brunner's lower garden features indigenous wild

plants.

► Open Apr–Oct: 10am–12:30pm, 1:30–5pm • Free with museum ticket



8 Maison Rose and Maison Cannet Gardens

At the turn of the last century, American artists lived in both houses, and enjoyed their lush gardens. Monet's stepdaughter,

Suzanne, and her husband, Theodore Butler, made Maison Cannet their home.

► Guided tour: 3:30pm Sun • Adm charge

9 Workshops and Courses

The museum runs afternoon workshops for children aged 4 to 12, two- to five-day workshops for adults on various topics from glass painting to abstract art, and history-of-art courses.

► 02 32 51 94 05

10 Concerts

From April to October, concerts of American music are staged in the auditorium and garden.

► www.maag.org

6 **1874: holds "Impressionist" exhibition with Renoir, Sisley and other artists**

7 **1883: discovers Giverny and moves into the Pink House**

8 **1892: starts work on the garden and Rouen Cathedral series; marries Alice Hoschedé**

9 **1916: starts Water Lily series**

10 **1926: dies on 6 December at Giverny**

Fondation Claude Monet, Giverny

Practical information

- 84 rue Claude Monet, 27620 Giverny
- Map K4
- 02 32 51 28 21
- www.fondationmonet.com
- Open Apr–Oct: 9:30am–6pm Tue–Sun
- Admission €5.50; gardens only, students €4; under-12s, disabled €3; house only €1.50; -under-7s free
- Musée d'Art Américain: 99 rue Claude Monet
- 02 32 51 94 65
- www.maag.org.
- Open early Mar–May, mid-Jul–mid-Aug, Sep–Oct: 10am–6pm Tue–Sun; May–mid-Jul: 9:30am–6:30pm Tue–Sun; Nov: 10am–6pm Thu–Sun. Closed 2nd half Aug
- Admission €5.50; concessions €4; 12- to 18-year-olds €3; under-12s free

Top tips

- For refreshment, try Hôtel Baudy (81 rue Claude Monet), or the café of the Musée d'Art Américain.
- Avoid the crowds by visiting early or late in the season.

Top 10 Events in Monet's Life

- 1 **1840: born on 14 November in Paris**
- 2 **1858: introduced to painting outside by Eugène Boudin**
- 3 **1866: enjoys first success at the Salon**
- 4 **1870: introduced to art dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel**
- 5 **1871: starts collecting Japanese prints**

Sight Guide

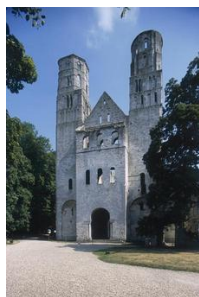
From the entrance on rue Claude Monet into an outbuilding, stairs lead down to the water lily studio. Outside is the Clos Normand. In the southwestern corner, an underground passage leads to the water garden and Japanese bridge. On entering the Pink House, beside the entrance, you must turn left and follow the circuit round from the small blue reading room to the sitting room-studio, then upstairs to the bedrooms. The tour ends with the dining room and kitchen.

Abbaye de Jumièges

The hauntingly beautiful, bleached white ruins of this Benedictine abbey stand in a loop of the Seine. Founded by St Philibert in 654, following the donation of the estate to him by Queen Bathilde, wife of Clovis II, it was one of a number of abbeys built under the dukes of Normandy as the region turned to Christianity. Despite its chequered history (sacked by Vikings, it was rebuilt only to later be reduced to ruins and used as a quarry), it is a part of Normandy's rich heritage and an important stop on the famous Abbey Route.

For more on the Abbey Route (see *Northeastern Normandy*)

Top 10 Features



1 West Façade
Stark and simple, the church of Notre-Dame's impressive Romanesque façade was built around 1060, with a projecting porch flanked by two massive towers. Square at the base, octagonal above, they originally had wooden spires.

2 Storeroom
Once a welcoming hall for important guests, the storeroom, Gothic in design, Romanesque in decoration, is intact but for its ribbed vaulting.



3 Nave
Only the walls of Normandy's tallest Romanesque nave still stand, left open to the skies after the demolition of the plaster vault that replaced the original, wood ceiling.

4 Transept
The west wall is all that survives of the 11th-century transept. The transept crossing was topped by a lantern tower, to let in maximum light in poor weather.



5 Choir
Nothing remains of the earliest choir. The ruins are from a 13th-century Gothic version, comprising an ambulatory with seven radiating chapels. An ornate

rood screen is decorated with bas-reliefs illustrating the passion of Christ.

6 Charles VII's Passage
This covered arcade, built in the early 1330s to link the two churches, predates Charles VII, but was named after a visit he made here with his mistress, Agnès Sorel, whose heart is buried under a marble slab in the north transept chapel.



7 Église St-Pierre
The façade and first two bays of the nave date from the 10th century; the chapel of St Martin contains signs of an even older oratory. The rest of the ruins date from the 13th and 14th centuries.

8 Chapterhouse
It was in this 11th- to 12th-century hall that a chapter from the rules of St Benedict was read out every morning, and monastic affairs were discussed. Between the 12th and mid-13th centuries, it became the abbots' burial ground.

9 Cloister
Today, the cloister is an expanse of grass with a yew tree at its centre, but it was once the heart of the abbey, used by monks for promenades, ceremonies, meditation and processions.



10 Abbey Dwelling-house
This imposing house was built for François de Harlay de Champvallon – a "commendatory" abbot appointed directly by the king.

Abbaye de Jumièges

Practical information

- 24 rue Guillaume-leConquérant, 76480 Jumièges
- Map H3
- 02 35 37 24 02
- www.monum.fr
- Open mid-Apr–mid-Sep: 9:30am–7pm daily; midSep–mid-Apr and Easter weekend: 9:30am–1pm, 2:30–5:30pm. Closed 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 11 Nov, 25 Dec
- Admission: adults €4.60; 18- to 25-year-olds €2.50; children under 18 free. Oct–Apr: first Sun of the month free

Top tips

- For convenience, try Auberge des Ruines (pl de la Mairie) opposite the abbey entrance; for setting, Auberge du Bac (2 rue Alphonse Callais).
- You can explore the magically illuminated abbey at night on one of the promenades nocturnes held on some Saturdays from April to September. Phone for details.

The Maurists

After a period of spiritual decline in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Maurists, a fiercely intellectual and devout congregation of St Maur founded in Paris in 1618, were dispatched to reform Jumièges Abbey. Among their improvements to its physical structure were a vast library, the abbey dwelling-house, and a monumental double staircase leading to a broad terrace and the gardens beyond.

Cathédrale Notre-Dame, Rouen

In the historic heart of the city, this magnificent cathedral took nearly 400 years to build. It stands as a record of the entire span of French Gothic architecture. Through the centuries, it has captured the imagination of artists, most famously Monet, who was so obsessed with the west façade that he painted it 30 times between 1892 and 1894 – at different times of day and year, and in various weather conditions, in order to capture the subtle changes of colour and light. His thick impasto suggests the texture of the ornately carved stone.

More on Norman Abbeys

Top 10 Features



- 1 West Façade**
Familiar through Monet's paintings, this richly sculpted façade reflects the evolution of the Gothic style. The most elaborate part is Roulland le Roux's early 16th-century central porch.



- 2 Spire**
Flaubert was famously rude about it, but the people of Rouen have grown fond of this cast-iron spire, the tallest in France. A bold 19th-century design, it matches the height of the hills that surround the city.

- 3 Booksellers' Courtyard**
Created as a short cut for the local canons, this narrow courtyard is notable for the intricacy of its carvings.



- 4 Nave**
Typical of the early Gothic style, the exquisitely proportioned nave has four storeys: arches, tribunes (in this case, false ones), gallery, and upper windows.



- 5 Lantern Tower**
The lantern tower rises a breathtaking 51 m (167 ft) above the transept crossing from floor to keystone, flooding the interior with light. At the base of each of its columns, busts 1 m (3 ft) high, said to represent the tower's builders, appear to be shouldering its weight.

- 6 Choir**
The fine 13th-century choir is half-circled by tall pillars with vast carved capitals supporting pointed arches. The choir stalls, from the same period, are carved with comic scenes.

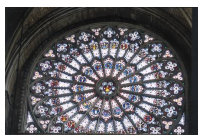
- 7 Lady Chapel**
The delicate 14th-century Lady Chapel contains the tombs of more than 150 dignitaries, including that of the Cardinals of Amboise by le Roux.



- 8 Ambulatory Tombs**
Here are effigies of Rollo, William Long Sword (known for his short stature rather than the length of his sword), and Richard the Lionheart, who ordered that his heart be buried here.



9 Library Staircase
The lower two flights of this superb staircase are the work of Guillaume Pontifs, while the upper two are 18th-century copies. The ogee arch above the wrought-iron door is typically Flamboyant Gothic.



10 Window of St Julian the Hospitaller
In jewel-like blues and reds, this early 13th-century stained-glass window tells the tragic story of St Julian, who accidentally murdered his parents and founded a

hospital in penance.

Other Sights in Rouen

1 Musée des Beaux-Arts
Highlights include paintings by Caravaggio, Velásquez, Monet, Dufy and Modigliani.
➤ *espl Marcel Duchamp* • **Map M5** • Open 10am–6pm Wed–Mon • Adm charge



2 Aître St-Maclou
This tranquil 14th-century courtyard was a plague cemetery. The timbered galleries are decorated with memento mori.

➤ 186 rue Martainville (at end of passage) • **Map N6** • Open 9am–6pm daily • Free

3 Église St-Maclou
A masterpiece of Flamboyant Gothic.
➤ **Map N6** • Open 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, 3–5:30pm Sun • Free



4 Gros Horloge
Moved from the Gothic belfry to a purpose-built arch in 1527, the Great Clock has two identical dials, a single hour hand and a panel showing the phases of the moon.
➤ 191 rue du Gros Horloge • **Map L5**

5 Palais de Justice
A magnificent example of late-medieval architecture, despite a 19th-century wing.
➤ 36 rue aux Juifs • **Map M5** • Closed to the public



6 Église Jeanne d'Arc
The cross outside this striking modern church marks the site of Joan's martyrdom.

➤ *pl du Vieux Marché* • **Map L5** • Open 10am–12:15pm, 2–6pm Mon–Thu, Sat, 2–6pm Fri, Sun

7 Musée National de l'Éducation
Charts 500 years of children's education.

➤ 185 rue Eau-de-Robec • **Map N5** • Open 10am–12:30pm, 1:30–6pm Mon, Wed–Fri, 2–6pm Sat–Sun and school hols • Adm charge

8 Abbatale St-Ouen
The Cavallé-Coll organ at this Flamboyant abbey is world-famous.

➤ *rue des Faulx* • **Map N5** • Open mid-Jan–mid-Mar, Nov–mid-Dec: 10am–12:30pm, 2–4:30pm Wed, Sat–Sun; mid-Mar–Oct: 10am–12:30pm, 2–6pm Wed–Mon • Free

9 Musée Le Secq des Tournelles
The world's largest collection of historic wrought-ironware.

➤ 2 rue Jacques Villon • **Map M5** • Open 10am–1pm, 2–6pm Wed–Mon • Adm charge

10 Musée de la Céramique
Charts the evolution of Rouen's earthenware.

➤ *Hotel d'Hocqueville, 1 rue Faucon* • **Map M4** • Open 10am–1pm, 2–6pm Wed–Mon • Adm charge

Top 10 Events of Joan of Arc's Life

1 Born in Domrémy on 6 January 1412

2 Aged 13, hears voices for the first time

3 Four years later, the voices tell her to save France from the English

4 Gains an audience with Dauphin Charles on 9 March 1429

5 Leads the French to victory at Orléans (8 May); Charles' coronation follows (17 July)

6 Captured by the Burgundians in May 1430; they sell her to the English

7 Tried in Rouen for heresy and witchcraft, 21 February to 23 May 1431

8 Burned at the stake in pl du Vieux Marché on 30 May 1431

9 Rehabilitated in 1456

10 Canonized in 1920

Cathédrale Notre-Dame, Rouen

Practical information

- pl de la Cathédrale, 76000 Rouen
- Map M6
- 02 35 89 73 78
- Open 8am–2pm Mon, 8am–7pm Tue–Sat, 8am–6pm Sun. Closed public hols
- Free
- Guided tours: phone for details

Top tips

- In a half-timbered building on a charming old street opposite the cathedral's north front, Dame Cakes (70 rue St-Romain) has a wonderful selection of tarts and gâteaux.
- You can get a good view of the famous west façade from the tourist office (25 pl de la Cathédrale). Walk round to Albane Courtyard on the north side to see where relics of earlier cathedrals have been discovered.

The History of the Cathedral

Building started in the mid-12th century on the site of two earlier cathedrals: the first, 4th-century; the second, an 11th-century Romanesque building from which the crypt survives. After a fire in 1200, work continued on the present building into the 16th century. Having survived the next four centuries more or less intact, it was devastated by bombing on 19 April 1944; only two flying buttresses prevented the whole building from collapsing. Repairs continue to the present day.

D-Day Beaches

On 6 June 1944, Nazi-occupied France was invaded by British, American, Commonwealth and Canadian troops, resulting in the country's liberation. The Allied landings on the beaches of the Seine Bay (still known by their wartime codenames) and the ferocious Battle of Normandy that followed are commemorated today through a moving mixture of museums, memorials and cemeteries. Beautifully maintained and presented with great clarity, they give visitors a fascinating insight into the events of that momentous summer.

Top 10 D-Day Highlights

1 Utah Beach and Ste-Mère-Eglise
Over 13,000 US para-troops were dropped into the Cotentin marshland; the US 4th Division came ashore on Utah and linked up with them.



2 La Pointe du Hoc
Preserved as it was at the end of fighting, this bleak headland was stormed by elite US Rangers using ropes and ladders to scale the cliff, with heavy casualties.

3 Omaha Beach
"Bloody Omaha" saw terrible losses among the 1st and 29th US Divisions. A viewing table, two museums, 11 monuments and the American Cemetery tell the story.



4 American Cemetery
Formal yet serene, the American Cemetery, containing 9,386 graves, receives many thousands of visitors each year.

➤ Colleville-sur-Mer

5 Batteries de Longues
Near Arromanches, this is the only German battery still to have its guns. Its observation post, on the edge of the cliff, can also be visited.

➤ Longues-sur-Mer



6 Arromanches
The remains of the artificial Mulberry Harbour make a startling sight – a testament to the ingenuity of Winston Churchill, who realized that if the troops wanted to land, they would

have to bring their harbours with them.

7 Gold Beach
Soon after they landed here, the British 50th Division took Arromanches, enabling the Mulberry Harbour to be put in place.

8 Juno Beach
Several small seaside resorts line the beach assigned to the 3rd Canadian Division. A huge cross of

Lorraine commemorates the triumphant return of General de Gaulle, who landed here on 14 June.

9 Sword Beach
Though the Allies established the beachhead with relative ease, the vital objective of Caen was thwarted, and the inhabitants had to wait another 34 days for their city to be liberated.

10 Pegasus Bridge
The first Allies to land in France were the men of the British 6th Airborne Division, who seized this strategic bridge, renamed after their insignia.

➤ Bénouville/Ranville

D-Day Museums

1 Musée de la Bataille de Normandie
A good place to start, this museum gives an excellent overview of the 77-day battle.
➤ *blvd Fabian-Ware, Bayeux • Map D3 • Open daily • Adm charge*

2 Musée de la Liberté
An absorbing "museum without weapons", describing life in occupied France and the liberation of the Cotentin Peninsula.
➤ *Quinéville • Map B2 • Open mid-Mar–mid-Nov: daily • Adm charge*



3 Musée Airborne
Shaped like a parachute, this museum commemorates the American paratroops dropped behind Utah Beach.

➤ *Ste-Mère-Eglise • Map B3 • Open Feb–Nov: daily • Adm charge*

4 Musée des Rangers
The museum tells the saga of the US Rangers, from their formation in June 1942 to their heroic assault on Pointe du Hoc.

➤ *Grandcamp-Maisy • Map C3 • Open Apr–Oct: Tue–Sun • Adm charge*



Sun • Adm charge

5 Musée des Épaves
A fascinating collection of D-Day wrecks.

► *rte de Bayeux, Port-en-Bessin • Map C3 • Open Jun–Sep: daily; May: 10am–noon, 2–6pm Sat &*

6 Musée du Débarquement
Port Winston, the artificial harbour constructed in the bay outside, is brought vividly to life.

► *St-Côme, Arromanches • Map D3 • Open Feb–Dec: daily • Adm charge*



Map D3 • Open Feb–Dec: daily • Adm charge

7 Arromanches 360
Surrounded by nine screens, the viewer witnesses the events of D-Day in an 18-minute film, *The Price of Freedom*.

► *St-Côme, Arromanches •*

8 Juno Beach Centre
A museum depicting the Canadian contribution to D-Day.

► *Courseulles-sur-Mer • Map D3 • Open Feb–Dec: daily • Adm charge*



9 Musée Mémorial Pégasus
Bill Millin's bagpipes are among the exhibits commemorating the British glider assault at Bénouville.

► *Ranville-Bénouville • Map E3, D3 • Open Feb–Dec: daily • Adm charge*

10 Le Grand Bunker
The impressive command post of the German battery at Ouistreham houses the Atlantic Wall Museum.

► *Ouistreham • Map E3 • Open Feb–Nov: daily • Adm charge*

Top 10 Amazing D-Day Statistics

1 4,000 ships in the fleet

2 5,800 bomber planes

3 4,900 fighter planes

4 153,000 troops

5 20,000 vehicles

6 11,000 casualties

7 2,500 dead

8 2,052,299 men came ashore following D-Day

9 3,098,259 tons of stores

10 640,000 Germans killed, wounded or taken prisoner in the Battle of Normandy

D-Day Beaches

Practical information

- Map C3, D3
- Office du Tourisme: pont St-Jean, Bayeux
- 02 31 51 28 28

Top tips

- Three seaside restaurants recommended for their seafood: La Marine at Arromanches, Le Bistrot d'À Côté at Port-en-Bessin, and La Marée at Grandcamp-Maisy.
- Decide in advance which of the many museums, memorials and beaches you most want to see. Consider starting at the Musée de la Bataille de Normandie in Bayeux and ending at Arromanches 360.

Touring the Beaches

Drivers can follow two themed and signposted routes, "Overlord– L'Assaut" and "D-Day– Le Choc", which are backed up by information "totems" at each place of interest (look for the dove symbol). The accompanying booklet (including a total of eight routes around Normandy), *The D-Day Landings and Battle of Normandy*, is available from local tourist offices, where you will also find details of recommended bus and taxi tour operators.

2

Normandy's Chateaux

Châteaux

1 Château de Miromesnil

Visit the Montebello salon and the Marquis de Miromesnil's bedroom and study in the 16th-to 17th-century mansion where Maupassant was born.

► *Tourville-sur-Arques* • **Map J1** • *Open May–end Sep: 2–6pm Wed–Mon* • Adm charge

2 Château d'Eu

Queen Victoria came to stay in Louis Philippe's 16th-century holiday home, now the Musée Louis-Philippe, newly restored and crammed with antiques.

► *Eu* • **Map J1** • *Open mid-Mar–Oct: pm Mon, Wed–Thu, Fri, Sat* • Adm charge



3 Manoir d'Ango

A glorious Italian Renaissance manor, built for polymath Jehan Ango in the early 16th century.

► *Varengueville-sur-Mer* • **Map J1** • *Open*

mid-Mar–mid-Nov: daily • Adm charge

4 Château de Robert le Diable

Savour the breathtaking view along the Seine from this ruined 11th-century fortress, named after a mythical character. Its museum tells the story of the Viking invaders.

► *Moulineaux* • **Map H3** • *Open Mar–Aug: daily; Sep–Nov: Tue–Sun* • Adm charge

5 Château d'Orcher

This 11th-century fort (remodelled in the 18th century) has a spectacular clifftop setting and a park with avenues of ash.

► *Gonfreville l'Orcher* • **Map G2** • *Open early Jul–mid-Aug: pm daily* • Adm charge



6 Château de Filières

The left wing is all that remains of the original Henri IV house. In the park is a splendid vaulted beech avenue known as La Cathédrale.

► *Gommerville* • **Map G2** • *Open May–Jun, Sep: 11am–7pm Wed, Sat–Sun; Jul–Aug: daily* • Adm charge

7 Château d'Ételan

A striking example of the 15th-century Flamboyant Gothic, this château – in two parts linked by a magnificent stone staircase – has a jewel of a chapel.

► *St-Maurice-d'Ételan* • **Map H3** • *Open mid-Jul–Aug: pm daily* • Adm charge

8 Château de Cany-Barville

This impressive moated château of stone and brick, built by François Mansart (whose uncle built Versailles) in the 1640s, has always been in the same family.

► *Cany* • **Map H2** • *Open Jul–Aug: Sat–Thu* • *Closed 4th Sun in Jul* • Adm charge

9 Château de Galleville

The former home of Maréchal de Villars, this late-17th-century château displays a rare consistency of architectural style.

► *Doudeville* • **Map H2** • *Open late Jul–Aug: pm daily* • Adm charge

10 Château du MesnilGeoffroy

This 17th-century house of rosy brick and stone has a large garden with a hornbeam maze by Le Nôtre's leading gardener, Colinet.

► *Ermenouville* • **Map H1** • *Open May–Sep: Fri–Sun pm, hols* • Adm charge

Châteaux

1 Château d'Anet

Diane de Poitiers' once-fabulous château is now but a glimmer of its former glory, yet still impresses – especially the gatehouse with its amazing clock.

► **Map K4** • *Open Apr–Oct: pm Wed–Mon; Nov, Mar: pm Sat, Sun* • Adm charge

2 Château de Balleroy

The château's sumptuous interior has portraits of Napoleon and Wellington, confronting one another across the Waterloo Room. A hot-air balloon museum is housed in the stables.

► **Map C3** • *Open Jul–Aug: daily* • Adm charge

3 Château de Beaumesnil

This glorious Baroque masterpiece, a frothy pile of pink brick and pale stone floating on its glassy moat, is perfectly complemented by the formal gardens that surround it.

► **Map H4** • *Open Easter–Jun, Sep–Oct: pm Fri–Mon; July, Aug: pm Wed–Mon* • Adm charge

4 Château de Bénouville

The monumental staircase is the star at this impressive yet charming Neo-Classical château.

► **Map D3** • *Open Jul–mid-Sep: Wed–Mon* • Adm charge

5 Château de Bizy, Vernon

The interior of this handsome château set in an English-style park is graced by superb woodwork, tapestries and Empire furniture.

► *blvd des Capucins* • **Map K4** • *Open Apr–Oct: Tue–Sun; Mar: pm Sat, Sun* • Adm charge

6 Château de Champ-de-Bataille, Le Neubourg

This soldierly 17th-century château is owned by interior designer Jacques Garcia. On view are the kitchens, and lavish gardens inspired by mythology.

► **Map H3** • *Open May–Sep: pm daily; Mar, Apr, Oct: pm Sat, Sun* • Adm charge



7 Château de Fontaine-Henry

The sloping roofs of this extraordinary-looking Renaissance chateau are taller than its walls.

► **Map D3** • *Open*

Easter–mid-Jun, mid-Sep–Oct: Sat, Sun; mid-Jun–mid-Sep: Wed–Mon • Adm charge

8 Le Domaine d'Harcourt

The ancestral home of the Harcourt family has an important arboretum, created in 1802.

► **Map H4** • *Open mid-Jun–mid-Sep: daily; Mar–mid-Jun, mid-Sep–mid-Nov: Wed–Mon • Adm charge*

9 Château de Lantheuil, Creully

In the same family since 1613, the chateau has retained its original Louis XIII decoration.

► **Map D3** • 02 31 80 14 03 • *Open by appointment*

10 Château de Pontécoulant

The last member of the Pontécoulant family gave the estate to the département of Calvados. Fronted by long, formal lawns, backed by woodland, this 16th- to 18th-century chateau in the Suisse Normande has great charm.

► **Map D4** • *Open mid-Apr–Sep, Nov: pm Wed–Mon • Adm charge*

3

Towns and Villages

Towns and Villages



1 Sées
A bishopric since the 4th century, Sées has its fair share of religious buildings: a Gothic cathedral with a very fine interior, a former Bishop's Palace and an abbey.

► **Map E5** • Tourist office: *pl du Général-de-Gaulle* • 02 33 28 74 79

2 St-Céneri-le-Gérei

Not just pretty but officially so (listed as one of France's top 100), this small stone village above the River Sarthe is a little gem which has inspired generations of artists.

► **Map E6**

3 L'Aigle

Traditionally a metalworking area, the town plays host each Tuesday to Normandy's biggest market. St Martin's church and the château are both worth a visit.

► **Map H5** • Tourist office: *pl Fulbert de Beina* • 02 33 24 12 40

4 Camembert

Popularized by Napoleon III, the famous cheese was first made here by Marie Harel around 1790. Some nearby farms still use her original method.

► **Map E4** • *La Ferme "President"*: 02 33 36 06 60 • Open for visits Mar–Oct: daily • Adm charge

5 Argentan

Apart from its role at the end of the Battle of Normandy (1944), commemorated by the nearby Memorial de Montormel, the town is known for lace and horse racing.

► **Map E5** • Tourist office: *rue Latour-Labroise* • 02 33 67 12 48

6 Mortagne-au-Perche

Sometime regional capital, and an excellent historic base for exploring, this bustling hill-top town is famous for its black pudding.

► **Map H6** • Tourist office: *pl du Général-de-Gaulle* • 02 33 85 11 18

7 Bellême

On a rocky spur overlooking forest, vestigial fortifications nestle among well-preserved 17th- and 18th-century houses. There's a wonderful mushroom fair here in late September.

► **Map H6** • Tourist office: *blvd Bansard des Bois* • 02 33 73 09 69

8 Domfront

Perched above the Varenne Gorge, with open views over the pear orchards of the Passais bocage, the ramparts and towers are evidence of the town's turbulent history.

► **Map D5** • Tourist office: *pl de la Roirie* • 02 33 38 53 97



9 Mortain

Mortain is surrounded by woods, waterfalls and granite. Two remarkable falls (Grande and Petite Cascade) are within walking distance of the town centre.

► **Map C5** • Tourist office: *rue du Bourg Lopin* • 02 33 59 19 74

10 Pontorson

Pontorson is something of a gateway to Mont-St-Michel. Its 12th-century church is a fine example of Norman Romanesque.

► **Map B5** • Tourist office: *pl de l'Hôtel de Ville* • 02 33 60 20 65

Unspoilt Villages

1 Barfleur

The long tradition of fishing in Normandy is perfectly embodied in the charming port of Barfleur. Stubby, brightly painted fishing boats jostle in the harbour, overlooked by stern granite houses braced for all weathers. Beaches for shell gathering and a lighthouse you can climb make it a perfect place to visit.



festival.

► **Map D6**

2 St-Fraimbault

Saint-Fraimbault is a true village fleurie. Each spring, 100,000 flowers swamp the village in colour as villagers try to outdo each other's displays. It all culminates in a mid-August



3 St-Céneri-le-Gérei

This ravishing village has a memorable setting. Crowned by a fine Romanesque church, its stone houses overlook the gentle River Sarthe as it flows around a rocky promontory on the edge of the Alpes Mancelles.

4 Beuvron-en-Auge

All the charms of the Pays d'Auge are summed up in Beuvron. Its flower-decked houses are prettily striped and patterned with timber. On the south side of the central square, the delightful 15th-century Vieux Manoir is elaborately decorated with wood carvings.

5 Putot-en-Auge

This sleepy Pays d'Auge village has little more than a church (with a fine Romanesque portal, and a cemetery for Allied soldiers), manor house and little brick-built mairie (town hall), but it somehow encapsulates the rural delights of the Auge region. Nearby Criqueville-en-Auge is also worth a visit for its enchanting manor house.

► **Map E3**

6 Lyons-la-Forêt

A captivating medley of 16th- to 18th-century half-timbered buildings, Lyons-la-Forêt stands in a sylvan setting deep in the lovely Forêt de Lyons. It starred in both the 1934 Jean Renoir and the 1991 Claude Chabrol versions of *Madame Bovary*, whose intangible influence still permeates the area (see *Gustave Flaubert*).

7 Montville

At the confluence of two rivers – Clérette and Cailly – Montville is distinctive for flowers and fire engines. A village fleurie, it has an attractive lake, a park with a superb 300-year-old purple beech, and the Musée des Sapeurs-Pompiers (museum of the fire brigade), full of old hand pumps and gleaming red fire engines. It traces the history of the French fire brigade from the early 18th century onwards.

► **Map J2**



8 Allouville-Bellefosse

An extraordinary oak tree, thought to be at least 1,300 years old, has put this little village on the map. Inside the huge trunk are a sanctuary and a hermit's cell fashioned by a local priest in 1696. Nearby, in an old farmhouse deep in the countryside, is the Musée de la Nature, dedicated to the local landscape, flora and fauna.

► **Map H2**

9 Autretot

A quintessential Norman village set in the middle of gently rolling countryside, Autretot is beautifully kept by its inhabitants. In May of each year, they join forces to adorn the houses and streets with flowering plants. Half-timbered farmhouses and the 18th-century brick-and-stone church add to the appeal.

► **Map H2**



10 St-Valéry-en-Caux

Encircled by high cliffs, this fishing village as well as child-friendly seaside resort occupies a charming spot on the Côte d'Albâtre, where tranquil Pays de Caux countryside meets beach, boats and bikinis. It is graced by the Maison Henri IV, a fine, timber-framed Renaissance house on the quay.

► **Map H11**

Country Towns

1 Bernay

It's worth penetrating the suburbs to find Bernay's share of picturesque timbered houses (among them rue Gaston-Follope, lined with antiques shops), an abbey church begun in 1013, and a handsome municipal museum.

► **Map H4** • Tourist office: 29 rue Thiers • 02 32 43 32 08

2 Brionne

An excellent base for exploring the Risle Valley, this small market town is watched over by an 11th-century keep.

► **Map H3** • Tourist office: 1 rue du Général-de-Gaulle • 02 32 45 70 51



3 Beaumont-le-Roger

The stark ruins of the 13th-century priory, and the parish church of St-Nicolas are eye-catching sights in this war-torn riverside town.

► **Map H4** • Tourist office: 1 rue Belgique • 02 32 44 05 79

4 Clécy

This pretty stone-built village in the Suisse Normande (see *La Suisse Normande*, *La Suisse Normande*) boasts one of Europe's largest model railways (see Musée du Chemin de Fer Miniature), but its main attraction is the wide range of holiday activities on offer.

► **Map D4** • Tourist office: pl du Tripot • 02 31 69 79 95

5 Conches-en-Ouche

Approached on the D830 from Evreux, the town's fine setting above a bend in the River Rouloir is revealed.

► **Map H4** • Tourist office: pl Briand • 02 32 30 76 42

6 Orbec

This delightful country town seems unconcerned about the tourist potential of its many fine old buildings, including the Vieux Manoir of 1563 in rue Grande.

► **Map G4** • Tourist office: 6 rue Grande • 02 31 32 56 68



7 Pont-Audemer
In the charming town centre, encased like a jewel in its nondescript surroundings, water and half-timbered houses are the defining features.

► **Map G3** • Tourist office: pl Maubert • 02 32 41 08 21

8 Pont-l'Éveque
This workaday Pays d'Auge town is famous for its cheese. Nearby, at Château de Betteville, the Belle Époque motor museum is worth a visit.

► **Map E3** • Tourist office: 16 rue St-Michel • 02 31 64 12 77

9 Verneuil-sur-Avre
Chequered walls and turrets catch the eye in this fortified town on the old Franco-Norman border, as do the 13th-century Tour Grise and the striking tower of Ste-Madeleine (see Notre-Dame, Verneuil-sur-Avre).

► **Map H5** • Tourist office: 129 pl de la Madeleine • 02 32 32 17 17

10 Vernon
This smart residential town includes a former mill straddling two piers of a medieval bridge, the tiered Maison du Temps Jadis and the Tour des Archives, a castle keep (see Notre-Dame, Vernon).

► **Map K4** • Tourist office: 36 rue Carnot • 02 32 51 39 60

4

Religious Architecture

Norman Abbeys



1 Mont-St-Michel
Dramatically sited on a lone rock in the Bay of Mont-St-Michel, this famous abbey exerts a huge draw on the thousands who visit every year.



2 Jumièges
A centre of learning for 700 years, Jumièges became nothing more than a quarry after the Revolution. Today, its enigmatic ruins, romantically set in a loop of the Seine, live again as one of the "must-see" sights of Normandy (see Abbaye de Jumièges).

3 Le Bec-Hellouin
In 1034, a knight called Herluin exchanged his charger for a donkey and founded a religious community on the banks of the River Risle. When he was joined some eight years later by the influential Italian theologians Lanfranc and Anselm, the monastery grew to become the intellectual heart of Normandy. Disbanded in the Revolution and later demolished, it again became a Benedictine monastery in 1948 (see A Drive Along the Risle, Abbaye Notre-Dame, Le Bec-Hellouin).

4 Abbaye-aux-Hommes, Caen
Lanfranc was the first abbot of the abbey, which was founded by William the Conqueror and consecrated in his presence in 1077. Ten years later, William was buried, most unceremoniously, in the abbey's church, St-Etienne.

5 Abbaye-aux-Dames, Caen
Like their founders William and Matilda, the Abbaye-aux-Hommes and Abbaye-aux-Dames (the first of the two to be built) are close cousins. The lovely convent buildings were designed by Guillaume de la Tremblaye.

6 St-Georges, St-Martin-de-Boscherville
In 1114, William of Tancarville founded a small community of monks, who took this beautiful Norman Romanesque building as their abbey church (see Abbaye St-Georges de Boscherville).

7 St-Wandrille
Founded in 649 and rebuilt in the 10th century after destruction by Norsemen, the abbey became a centre of learning. Inevitably, the Revolution saw its demise, but in 1931 it once again became a Benedictine monastery (see Abbaye de St-Wandrille).

8 La Trinité, Fécamp
This vast and austere beautiful church owes its scale to a casket containing the Holy Blood of Christ, said to have been washed ashore in the trunk of a fig tree in the 1st century. The abbey built on the spot in the early 13th century attracted streams of pilgrims. Le Précieux Sang is still venerated today.

9 Hambye
Lord of the Manor Guillaume Paynel founded the abbey in 1145. Always a small community, its fortunes declined over the years, and in 1784 it was declared defunct. In the 19th century, the buildings were quarried for stone; only in the 20th were the noble ruins we see today saved from further destruction (see Abbaye de Hambye).

10 La Trappe
Founded in 1140, La Trappe was one of the Cistercian monasteries which adopted the Strict Observance – silence, prayer, abstinence, manual labour – introduced by Abbé de Rancé in the 1660s. Thereafter, they were known as Trappist monasteries; there is another at Bricquebec.

► Soligny-la-Trappe • Map F5, H5

Religious Buildings



1 Abbaye d'Ardennes, Caen

During the Battle of Normandy, 23 Canadian soldiers were executed at this 12th-century abbey on the outskirts of Caen; a memorial garden now

commemorates them. The partially ruined abbey church is a fine example of Norman Gothic architecture.

► Map D3

2 Abbaye St-Martin-de-Mondaye, Juaye-Mondaye
The monks of this small community welcome guests on retreat, and host summer concerts in their handsome 18th-century abbey.

► Map D3

3 Prieuré de St-Gabriel, Brécly
Set around a courtyard, the lovely honey-stone buildings of this former daughter house of the Abbey of Fécamp are now occupied by a horticultural school. They can be viewed from the outside only.

► Map D3

4 St-Pierre, Thaon
No longer in use, this little church is a lovely sight in its isolated setting, hidden by greenery at the tip of a valley. A gem of Romanesque architecture.

► Map D3

5 Eglise Abbatiale, St-Pierre-sur-Dives
At noon, the copper strip on the floor of the nave shows the position of the sun's rays.

► Map E4

6 Ste-Foy, Conches-en-Ouche
This Flamboyant Gothic church is graced by some of the finest stained glass in Normandy. Its tall spire is a precise copy of the one knocked down in a storm in 1842.

► *Map H4*



7 Abbaye Notre-Dame, Le Bec-Hellouin

There is a marvellous view of the abbey, its creamy 18th-century buildings nestling in the lush valley, as you enter the village from the south on the D39. The

18th-century refectory has been converted into a simple church, where its founder's sarcophagus lies sunk beneath the altar.

► *Map H3*

8 Notre-Dame, Louviers
From the 13th century, the town was an important centre of cloth-making. The lavishly decorated church, with its stunning south porch, reflects its wealth.

► *Map J3*

9 Notre-Dame, Verneuil-sur-Avre
Built of a reddish stone called grison, this attractive church is noted for its plethora of saintly statues, mostly 16th-century.

► *Map H5*

10 Notre-Dame, Vernon
With its elegant High Gothic west front, complete with graceful rose window, this collegiate church has the feel of a cathedral.

► *Map K4*

5

Art in Normandy

Museums and Galleries

1 Bayeux Tapestry
Embroidered in 1077, this much-loved treasure unfolds, with astonishing detail, clarity and drama, the story of Duke William's conquest of England. The galleries leading up to the tapestry bring the historical background vividly to life. The cloth itself – all 70 m (230 ft) of it – is displayed behind glass.

2 Le Mémorial de Caen
A moving and contemplative museum of remembrance, the Mémorial takes the visitor on a journey through the causes and consequences of World War II and the ensuing Cold War, using a host of interactive and audio-visual techniques, as well as fascinating archive footage. A recent extension to the museum acts as a place of reflection on peace and the means of achieving it.

3 Cité de la Mer, Cherbourg
This new attraction, which creates an enthralling "subaquatic sensation", has proved extremely popular, so in high season it's advisable to arrive as early in the day as possible. The former maritime station is now home to Europe's deepest aquarium. An added attraction is *Le Redoutable*, the first visitable French nuclear-powered submarine (built at Cherbourg). All of this introduces the visitor to the wonders of the underwater world, and to human adventures and achievements there. Allow three hours for your visit.

► *Gare Maritime Transatlantique, Cherbourg • Map B2 • Open Jun–mid-Sep: 9:30am–7pm daily; mid-Sep–May: 10am–6pm daily. Closed Christmas, New Year, 2 weeks Jan • Adm charge*

4 Musée d'Art Américain, Giverny
Now the venue for exhibitions, workshops, courses and concerts, this cultural outpost was first established to bring back works by American artists who painted in Giverny at the turn of the 19th century (see Giverny Paintings).

5 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen
Monet's study of Rouen Cathedral and Corot's fine Quayside Trade in Rouen are among the highlights of this important art museum, strong on Old Masters as well as the Impressionists.

6 Musée Eugène Boudin, Honfleur
Honfleur's rich artistic heritage is celebrated in this appealing museum, which includes works by Boudin himself, as well as by Monet.

7 Musée du Mobilier Miniature, Vendevre
Unique in its extent and quality, this extraordinary collection of miniature furniture is housed in the orangery of Château de Vendevre. The exquisite pieces – which include objects such as cutlery, porcelain, paintings and chess sets – date from the 16th to 19th centuries, and are fascinating for their meticulous detail and craftsmanship.

8 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen
Standing within the walls of William the Conqueror's hilltop château, Caen's fine art collection is housed in a

well-lit contemporary building. French, Italian, Flemish and Dutch paintings, chronologically arranged from the 15th to the 20th centuries, present a coherent survey of the history of painting. Perugino's *The Marriage of the Virgin* is a highlight.

9 Musée Malraux, Le Havre
This innovative building of glass and metal, offering views of the port through a monumental concrete sculpture known as "The Eye", is filled with light. Inside, the galleries are linked by gangways. There are fine collections by Raoul Dufy and Eugène Boudin.

► *2 Blvd Clemenceau, Le Havre • Map E2 • Open 11am–6pm Wed–Fri & Mon, 11am–7pm Sat & Sun • Adm charge*

10 Musée de Beaux-Arts et de la Dentelle, Alençon
In 1665, lacemakers in Alençon were given the challenge of creating lace equal in quality and popular appeal to that of Venice. They succeeded, coming up with a new and better technique, which made Alençon lace supreme until demand dropped in the 20th century. The story is told here, along with exquisite and intricate examples of the craft.

► *Cour Carrée des Dentelles, Alençon • Map E6 • Open 10am–noon, 2–6pm Tue–Sun (Jul, Aug: open daily) • Adm charge*

Top 10 Paintings of Normandy

1 Rouen Cathedral Series (Monet)
Painted between 1891 and 1895. One is displayed in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, others in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

2 Waterlily Series (Monet)
Painted between 1899 and 1926. Several are on show at the Musée d'Orangerie, Paris.

3 Impression: Sunrise (Monet)
Painted in Le Havre in 1872. Displayed in the Musée Marmottan, Paris.

4 The Gleaners (Millet)
Painted in 1857. Exhibited at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

5 The Cliff at Étretat after the Storm (Courbet)
Painted in 1869. Displayed in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

6 Wheat-field in Normandy (Dufy)
Painted in 1935. On show at the Musée Eugène Boudin, Honfleur.

7 People on the Beach at Trouville (Boudin)
Painted in 1865. Exhibited at the Musée Eugène Boudin, Honfleur.

8 View from the Port of Dieppe (Pissarro)
Painted in 1902. Displayed in the Château-Musée de Dieppe.

9 The Fish Market, Honfleur (Dubourg)
Painted in 1876. Displayed in the Musée Eugène Boudin, Honfleur.

10 View of the Coast of Normandy (Richard Bonnington)
Painted in 1823. Exhibited at the Louvre, Paris.

6

Spring Events

Jazz sous les Pommiers, Coutances

Jazz sous les Pommiers (Jazz under the Apple Trees) has now been running for more than 20 years, and each year it grows in size and cachet. Over one week in May, it features concerts by established artists, as well as showcasing new talent. There are also promenade concerts, free concerts, street performances and jam sessions.

► **Map B4** • Théâtre Municipal "Les Unelles": 02 33 76 78 61

Foire au Boudin, Mortagne-au-Perche

For 40 years, a fair has been held in Mortagne-au-Perche halfway through Lent to celebrate the local gourmet speciality boudin noir, a long sausage made from pig's blood, onions and pork fat. Over three days, butchers gather to sell more than 5 km (3 miles) of this delicacy. Competitions include one to find the person who can eat the most.

► **Map H6** • Mortagne tourist office: 02 33 85 11 18

7

Outdoor Normandy

Parks and Gardens

1 Jardins d'Argences

In a little valley near Coutances, the 17th-century Manoir d'Argences is surrounded by eight charming and distinctive gardens, connected by water.

► **Saussey • Map B4 • Open late May–mid-Oct: 2–6pm daily • Adm charge**

2 Jardin d'Elle

This is a modern landscaped garden with a maze of individually themed areas leading one into another, and more than 2,500 varieties of plants and trees on display.

► **Villiers-Fossard • Map C4 • Open Feb–Nov: 9am–noon, 2–7pm Mon–Sun • Adm charge**

3 Château de Brécy

Five terraces of formal gardens sweep gracefully from the château toward the focal point: an ornate wrought-iron gate bearing the initials of Brécy's 17th-century owners. The gardens are thought to have been designed by François Mansart.

► **St-Gabriel-Brécy • Map D3 • Open Apr–Nov: 2:30–6:30pm Tue, Thu & Sun (Sat in Jun) • Adm charge**

4 Château de Canon

The highlights of this 18th-century Anglo-French park, with its pretty, Italianate château, are the Chartreuses, a series of walled gardens brimming over with flowers. Statues, a temple and a Chinese pavilion add further interest.

► **Mézidon-Canon • Map E4 • Open Easter-May: 2–6pm Sat, Sun; Jun–Oct: 2–7pm Wed–Mon • Adm charge**

5 Jardin des Plantes, Rouen

These tranquil public gardens in the heart of the city house a large and important botanical collection, with formal flowerbeds, rare trees, hothouses, orangery, rose garden, rockery, and a collection of medicinal plants.

► **rue Lethuiller Pinel • Map J3 • Open 8:30am–dusk daily • Free**



6 Château de Vandrimare

Each of these contemporary gardens is devoted to one of the five senses – sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. Set in a First Empire park, they include a maze, an orangery and over 2,500 plant species.

► **Vandrimare • Map J3 • Open Apr–Nov: 2:30–7pm Mon & Fri, 10am–1pm, 2:30–7pm Sat & Sun • Adm charge**

7 Parc Zoologique Jean-Delacour

There's plenty for adults as well as children in this landscaped park surrounding the Renaissance château at Clères. Created in 1920 by naturalist Jean Delacour, the garden is populated by flamingoes and exotic ducks, while in the park, animals such as kangaroos, antelopes and gibbons roam in partial freedom.

► **Clères • Map J2 • Open Mar–Sep: 10am–5pm daily (Jul, Aug: 10am–6pm); Oct, Nov: 1:30–5pm daily • Adm charge**



8 Château de Bosmelet

Built in Louis XIII style in 1632 (and restored after bombing in 1944), the château is notable for its "Rainbow Potager" (vegetable garden), a remarkable sight in summer.

There is also a superb avenue of 300-year-old lime trees.

► **Auffay • Map J2 • Open Jun, Sep, Oct: 1–7pm Fri, Sat & Sun; Jul, Aug: 1–7pm daily • Adm charge**

9 Jardins de Bellevue

Two national collections – of Meconopsis (Himalayan blue poppy) and Helleborus Orientalis (Lenten rose) – are included in these lovely year-round gardens facing the Forêt d'Eawy.

► **Beaumont-le-Hareng • Map J2 • Open 10am–6pm daily • Adm charge**

10 Parc du Bois des Moutiers

Edwin Lutyns and Gertrude Jekyll created the park and gardens for Guillaume Mallet, for whom Lutyns also built the house in 1898. Between here and the sea, the vailleue (dry valley) is filled with acid-soil-loving plants such as rhododendrons and azaleas. Artists including Cocteau, Calder, Monet and Braque were frequent visitors in their day.

► **Varengville-sur-Mer • Map J1 • Open mid-Mar–mid-Nov: 10am–7:30pm daily • Adm charge**

Forests

1 Forêt d'Eawy

Although the name "Eawy" (pronounced "Ee-a-vee") means wet pasture, this is a glorious beech forest covering 72 sq km (28 sq miles) on a jagged outcrop. It was originally planted with oaks, which were subsequently cut down to build houses after the Hundred Years' War. To see other species, follow the Chemin des Écoliers.

2 Forêt de Reno-Valdieu

Walk or cycle along the path carved through the middle of the forest, and admire a magnificent line of giant oaks that soar up to 40 m (130 ft). They were planted in the 17th century, with beech trees, on the orders of Colbert, to make planks for naval ships.



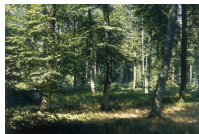
scenes.

3 Forêt d'Écouves With its dense thickets of oak, beech and imported spruce and Scots pine covering the eastern end of the hills of Basse-Normandie, at 140 sq km (54 sq miles), this is the region's largest, wildest and arguably most beautiful forest. It supports a varied wildlife, including rare birds, deer and boar. Tucked away in Bois de Goult is a charming 11th-century chapel, frescoed with hunting



4 Forêt des Andaines You might glimpse deer or roebuck roaming through the forest that encircles Bagnoles-de-l'Orne, and you will certainly see many different species of tree, including Japanese larch and Canadian fir. Try to visit the priory dedicated to St Ortaire, and the attractive observation tower of Bonvouloir.

5 Forêt de Lyons This 100 sq km (37 sq mile) beech forest was a favourite hunting ground of Merovingian kings. Tall, slender beech trees cast a beautiful, dappled light, making it a perfect place for walking. As well as Lyons-la-Forêt (see Lyons-la-Forêt), there are two châteaux and the ruined Abbaye de Mortemer to explore.



Yères Valley from Poteau de Ste-Cathérine, and a pair of intertwined oak and beech trees, known as the *bonne entente* (happy couple).

7 Forêt de Brotonne Heart of the Parc Naturel Régional des Boucles de la Seine Normande, this peaceful forest of towering oak, beech and pine, almost encircled by a loop in the Seine and reached by the soaring Brotonne Bridge, affords breathtaking views. It is home to deer, boar and hare, and in spring produces a carpet of bluebells.



8 Forêt du Perche et de la Trappe Glimpse the characteristic étangs (pools) through the trees from the D603, which bisects these neighbouring forests, usually regarded as one. A ramble here might turn into a mushroom hunt: the ferny floor is a breeding ground for ceps and chanterelles. Don't miss Abbaye de la Trappe, home to Trappist monks.

9 Forêt de Belleme Like the Forêt du Perche et de la Trappe, this forest is dotted with pools, including the lovely Étang de la Herse. Of its many splendid oak trees, the most famous is the Chêne de l'École on the western fringes – 40 m (130 ft) tall and more than 300 years old.

10 Forêt de Roumare With the Forêts de Rouvray, Verte and La Londe, this forest forms a 140 sq km (50 sq mile) crown around Rouen. Children will enjoy watching the roe and fallow deer and wild boar in the Parc Animalier (wildlife park) near Canteleu on its eastern border, where there is also a 15th-century subterranean convent in the caves of Ste-Barbe.

Outdoor Activities

1 Golf Golfers are spoilt for choice in Normandy, which has 37 courses – 23 of them with 18 holes or more. Notable ones include Golf d'Étretat, situated on the cliff top above the famous Falaise d'Aval (see Étretat), and Golf de Saint-Saëns, with beautiful views over the Forêt d'Eawy. Deauville has no less than three top courses, and there are fine 27-hole courses at Omaha Beach and Granville.

2 Cycling Cycling is the best way to take in the glorious Norman countryside. Each département has marked cycle routes, with accompanying booklets available from tourist offices. In Manche, old railway lines and towpaths are being turned into cycle paths. The forests of Lyons and Brotonne and the Eure and Seine Valleys are all excellent cycling areas.

3 Mountain Biking The Perche is particularly suited to mountain biking, with marked trails at various levels of difficulty (maps available from Mortagne-au-Perche and Domfront tourist offices). The terrain is also suitable in the Suisse Normande and at Amayé-sur-l'Orne.

4 Walking and Rambling Normandy is wonderful walking country. Official footpaths (marked by red-and-white posts) criss-cross the region, while the National Hiking Trails (Grandes Randonnées, or GR) provide spectacular long-distance routes. These include the GR23 (Seine and Forêt de Brotonne), GR223 (Cotentin Peninsula coast), and GR221 (Suisse Normande).



5 Bungee Jumping

At the now defunct Souleuvre railway viaduct (built in 1889 by Gustave Eiffel), apparently sane people choose to dive toward the ground secured only by an elastic rope

around the ankles, or scoot across the valley at 60 mph (100 kph) in a harness suspended from a cable.

► **Map C4** • **AJ Hackett Bungy**: • 02 31 66 31 66



6 Horse Riding

Normandy has many equestrian centres – especially in the Orne, where, for example, Le Village du Cheval in St-Michel-des-Andaines offers a wide variety of

horsey activities. You can take a full-blown trekking holiday or just a few hours' ride (see On Horseback).

7 Sand Yachting and Watersports

Normandy's broad, sandy beaches lend themselves perfectly to sand yachting (*char à voile*), particularly at Omaha Beach and along the west coast of the Cotentin Peninsula (there are large centres at Vauville and Portbail). You will also find windsurfing on offer, and something called "kitesurfing" (imagine snowboarding on water, wearing a harness with a kite attached). Sailors can choose from the 100 sailing schools and clubs along the coastline.

8 Canoeing

Condé-sur-Vire is Normandy's largest canoeing and kayaking resort; the Vire makes a perfect family outing (see Vallée de la Vire). Canoeing is also on offer at Pont d'Ouille in the Suisse Normande, on the Eure near Pacy-sur-Eure, and at Saint-Saëns in the Pays de Bray.

9 Fishing

The marvellous diversity of Norman lakes and rivers makes freshwater fishing a rewarding and popular pastime. Sea fishing expeditions are organized from ports including Honfleur, Trouville, Dieppe and St-Valéry-en-Caux.

10 Bases de Loisirs

Normandy has many base de loisirs (leisure bases) by lakes and on rivers, where you can enjoy swimming and watersports. Many also offer tennis, golf, riding, archery and other facilities.

Top 10 Walks

1 La Hague Peninsula

The coastal path GR223 passes the dramatic Nez de Jobourg.

2 Val de Saire

This pastoral valley makes gentle walking country. Finish at St-Vaast-la-Hougue or at Barfleur.

3 Dunes and Marshes, Bréhal

Take the *route submersible* to see one of Cotentin's unique natural havens, Havre de la Vanlée – but be warned, the road becomes heavily flooded during the dramatic spring tides.

► **Map B4**

4 Waterfalls of Mortain

Follow the river Cance, in an Alpine landscape.

► **Map C5**

5 La Suisse Normande

Rugged walking country, with great views from the Roche d'Oêtre.

6 Pays d'Auge

Rolling pastures, pretty villages, and plenty of stops for cheese and cider.

7 Forêt du Perche et de la Trappe

Combine walking with mushrooming amidst woods and pools of water.

8 L'Aigle

Market day (Tuesday) is the best day for a walking tour of this historic town and its neighbouring cantons.

9 Forêt d'Eawy

Explore one of Normandy's most beautiful beech forests by walking the Chemin des Écoliers.

10 The Seine

Follow the GR23 along the Seine's south bank and into the Forêt de Brotonne.

8

Dining

Gourmet Restaurants

1 La Chaîne d'Or, Les Andelys
The cares of the world recede as you enter this enveloping 18th-century inn. Excellent traditional cooking and fine river views make an unbeatable combination. The menu détente is very reasonably priced.

2 Manoir du Lys, Bagnoles-de-l'Orne
Franck Quinton's superb cooking is rooted in local tradition but respects contemporary trends. He loves cooking with truffles and mushrooms, and organizes popular "mushroom weekends". In summer, you can dine outside; in winter, take a digestif in the cosy salon.

3 Hôtel de la Marine, Barneville-Carteret
From his beignet de foie gras en vinaigrette de betterave to his brioche aux pommes confites, Laurent Cesne's distinctive blend of innovation and delicacy has won him many admirers. Given the waterfront setting of this hotel, it's no surprise that many of his specialities feature fish or shellfish.

4 Château de Sully, Bayeux
This handsome château hotel has the finest restaurant in the area. In the grand dining room, with its chandeliers and panelled walls, the freshest local produce is served in elegant and tempting ways.

➤ *rte de Port-en-Bessin • Map D3 • 02 31 22 29 48 • Closed Thu–Fri, Sun L • €€€*

5 Pavé d'Auge, Beuvron-en-Auge
The former covered market of this picturesque village is the setting for the Pays d'Auge's most sophisticated restaurant, where luxurious dishes (featuring langoustines, asparagus and foie gras) and fine wines are served.

➤ *pl du Village • Map E3 • 02 31 79 26 71 • Closed Jul–Aug; Mon; Sep–Jun: Mon–Tue • €€€*

6 La Mère Poulard, Mont-St-Michel
In late 2003, leading Norman chef Michel Bruneau and his wife Françoise set up kitchen in this Mont-St-Michel institution, home of the famous Omelette de la Mère Poulard. Thanks to his skills, the restaurant has been revived as a culinary hotspot where regional cooking is raised to the heights. Views of the bay are of an equally high standard.

➤ *18 Grande rue • Map B5 • 02 33 89 68 68 • €€€€*

7 La Terrasse et l'Assiette, Honfleur
A relaxed and convivial place, run by chef Gérard Bonnefoy and his wife Anne-Marie. M Bonnefoy is a master of classic cooking with a contemporary twist: seductive and beautifully presented.

➤ *8 pl Ste-Catherine • Map F3 • 02 31 89 31 33 • Closed Jul–Aug; Mon; Sep–Jun: Mon–Tue • €€€*

8 La Ferme St-Siméon, Honfleur
As you might expect from such a luxurious hotel, the food here is richly embellished: carpaccio of scallops with Sevruga caviar, lobster with asparagus and mushrooms, for example.

➤ *rue Adolphe-Marais • Map F3 • 02 31 81 78 00 • Closed Mon, Tue L • €€€€€*

9 Gill, Rouen
With two Michelin stars, Gill is Normandy's foremost gourmet establishment. In the elegant quayside dining room, the best of Norman produce is transformed into concoctions such as pigeon à la rouennaise avec ses raviolis de foie gras.

➤ *8–9 quai de la Bourse • Map L6 • 02 35 71 16 14 • Closed Sun–Mon; first 3 weeks of Aug • €€€€*

10 Les Nymphéas, Rouen
This is a wonderful spot in summer, but locals are drawn principally by the imaginative cuisine – in particular, the wide selection of fish.

Places to Eat

1 Le Pressoir, Caen
Ivan Vautier has a Michelin star for his innovative take on Norman cooking: a millefeuille of andouille and Camembert, for example.

➤ *3 ave Henry Cheron • Map D3 • 02 31 73 32 71 • Closed Sat L, Sun D, Mon • €€€€*

2 Auberge de la Boule d'Or, Beuvron-en-Auge
A stone's throw from the gourmet Pavé d'Auge (see Pavé d'Auge, Beuvron-en-Auge), this cosy restaurant is run by women, who create a soothing atmosphere and carefully cooked dishes.

➤ *Map E3 • 02 31 79 78 78 • Closed Tue D, Wed • €€*

3 L'Aigle d'Or, Pont-l'Évêque
The lunchtime menu de terroir is a bargain at this snug, characterful inn, bristling with beams inside and out.

➤ *68 rue Vaucelles • Map E3 • 02 31 65 05 25 • Closed Wed (winter: Tue, Wed) • €€*

4 Au Vieux Normand, Lisieux
The plentiful dishes served in this charming restaurant epitomise the phrase "typical French cuisine".

➤ *14 rue Henry Cheron • Map F4 • 02 31 62 03 35 • Closed Sun D, Mon L & Nov • €*

5 Le Manoir du Butin, Honfleur
Time seems to run slower at this half-timbered manor just outside Honfleur. A warm welcome and excellent regional cooking.

➤ *Phare-du-Butin • Map F3 • 02 31 81 63 00 • Closed Wed–Fri L • €€€*



6 Belle Île-sur-Risle, Pont-Audemer

A romantic private island provides the setting for Mme Yazbeck's elegant mansion hotel and restaurant. The pastilla de lapin (in filo) is wonderful.

➤ 112 rte de Rouen • **Map G3** • 02 32 56 96 22 • Closed Mon–Wed L (winter only) • €€€

7 Auberge de l'Abbaye, Le Bec-Hellouin
This exquisite geranium-decked inn looks across the village green to the abbey. Finish with the tarte aux pommes flambées.

➤ 12 place Guillaume le Conquérant • **Map H3** • 02 32 44 86 02 • Closed Sun D, Mon, Tue • €€€

8 L'Étape Louis XIII, Beaufemesnil
This delightful former presbytery has a convivial atmosphere and well-regarded food.

➤ 2 rte de la Barre-en-Ouche • **Map H4** • 02 32 44 44 72 • Closed Tue, Wed • €€€

9 La Ferme de Cocherel, Cocherel
Pierre and Danielle Delton have turned their country home in a village by the Eure into a splendid restaurant. Excellent cheeseboard.

➤ rte de la Vallée de l'Eure • **Map J4** • 02 32 36 68 27 • Closed Tue, Wed • €€€

10 La Fine Fourchette, Falaise
Just outside town, a glowing dining room and Norman dishes with a twist of sophistication.

➤ 52 rue Georges Clemenceau • **Map E4** • 02 31 90 08 59 • Closed Tue D, Thu D • €€

Places to Eat

1 Hôtel de la Marine, Barneville-Carteret
Wraparound windows allow you to enjoy the waterfront views as you savour the superb cooking of fifth-generation chef-patron Laurent Cesne (see Hôtel de la Marine, Barneville-Carteret).

➤ 11 rue de Paris • **Map A3** • 02 33 53 83 31 • Closed Sun D, Mon (Feb, Mar, Oct); Mon L (Jan, Apr–Sep, Nov–Dec) • €€€



2 Le Moulin à Vent, St-Germain-des-Vaux
Glorious views and the freshest seafood at very reasonable prices.

➤ Hameau Danneville • **Map A3** • 02 33 52 75 20 • €€

3 France et des Fuchsias, StVaast-la-Hougue
If you like seafood, you'll love France et des Fuchsias.

➤ 20 rue Maréchal Foch • **Map B2** • 02 33 54 42 26 • Closed Mon, Tue • €€

4 Le Mesnilgrand, Négreville
A beautifully restored traditional Norman farmhouse in deep countryside. Peace and quiet, a lovely garden, warm atmosphere and good cooking (try the raspberry tart) are assured.

➤ **Map B2** • 02 33 95 09 54 • €€

5 Auberge du Moulin, Fierville-les-Mines
There is a working windmill next door, but it's the rustic calm of this thatched cottage, the modest prices, and the honest approach to traditional Norman cuisine that really appeal.

➤ **Map A3** • 02 33 93 05 05 • Closed Mon, Tue • €

6 La Gonivière, St-Lô
Close to the river, an airy first-floor dining room decorated in soothing pastel shades. The cuisine is based on fresh market produce.

➤ Rond-Point du 6 Juin • **Map C4** • 02 33 05 15 36 • Closed Sun • €€

7 La Voisinère, Savigny
This farmhouse is also a charming restaurant-with-rooms. The menu du terroir offers a good introduction to Norman cuisine.

➤ 8 rue Hêtres • **Map B4** • 02 33 07 60 32 • Closed Sun D, Mon, Tue L • €€

8 Verte Campagne, Treilly
Elegantly rustic on the inside, this old, ivy-covered farmhouse offers well-prepared dishes spread over a wide enough range of menus to suit most pockets.

➤ **Map B4** • 02 33 47 65 33 • Closed Mon, Tue • €€€

9 Ferme de Malte, Villedieu-les-Poêles
Owned by the Knights of Malta, who have a long connection with the town, this former farmhouse is now a smart restaurant, with two welcoming dining rooms, one contemporary, the other rustic.

➤ 11 rue Tétréol • **Map B5** • 02 33 91 35 91 • Closed Sun D, Mon • €€€

10 L' Auberge, Mesnil-Rogues
Hams and legs of lamb spit-roasted over an open fire by jolly patron Joseph Cotin are the specialties at this popular rustic auberge.

➤ **Map B4** • 02 33 61 37 12 • Closed Mon, Tue • €

Eating and Drinking Tips



1 Menus
Most restaurants have several set menus (menu prix-fixe), as well as à la carte, from which you order separate dishes. By law, menus must be displayed outside the restaurant. Set menus, which may include wine, are usually excellent value, the cheapest often costing as little as €7.00.

2 Regional Cuisine
The real French eating experience is becoming increasingly elusive; the tinned, the frozen, the bottled

and the re-heated are now far too common. However, if you look carefully and avoid tourist traps, you will find in Normandy a great deal of honest cooking using fresh local ingredients. Famous regional dishes, such as teurgoule and poulet Vallée d'Auge (see Poulet Vallée d'Auge), hold sway, and even go-ahead young chefs base their creations on classic Norman dishes. When choosing a restaurant, don't be seduced by a picturesque building; look at the menu first.



3 Wine and Cider

Normandy is too fertile for the grape; any wine you drink will be from another region of France. Cider is often preferred as the best accompaniment to the rich and creamy regional cuisine.

Most cider is sold in a corked bottle (cidre bouché).

4 Water

Water is always drunk with meals. Even in up-market restaurants it's acceptable to ask for a carafe d'eau (jug of tap water) rather than a bottle of mineral water.



5 Choosing Cheese

Cheese-makers apply the same term as wine-makers to their finest products: AOC (appellation d'origine contrôlée). The most famous Norman cheeses – Camembert,

Livarot, Pont l'Évêque and Neufchâtel – are all AOC, but there are more than 30 other types made by local producers.

6 Bloody, Rare or Well-done

If you like your steak well done, order it bien cuit ; medium, à point ; rare, saignant (bleeding); very rare, bleu (blue).

7 Picnics

Like all French people, the Normans love a picnic, so when you plan an alfresco lunch at the beach or in the country, you will be spoiled for choice. Boulangeries (bakeries) and pâtisseries (pastry shops) offer a wonderful selection of loaves, pastries, and sweet and savoury tarts. Markets are another good source, with artisan food producers selling farm-made cheeses, andouilles, terrines, tartes aux pommes, teurgoules, and locally produced cider.

8 Vegetarians

Vegetarians are poorly served in Norman restaurants. Few offer anything more than salad, omelette or cheese – soups almost always contain meat stock. However, vegetarians catering for themselves will find mouth-watering fresh fruit and vegetables, delicious cheeses and a wide variety of dairy products. Fish-eaters will have no problems, especially on the coast.

9 Cafés and Bars

There's not much to choose in Normandy between establishments calling themselves cafés and those which call themselves bars. All serve alcoholic drinks and coffee

all day, and most serve simple snacks such as ham, cheese or salami sandwiches and perhaps a slice of apple tart. Village cafés usually close around 8pm; city and resort café-bars stay open much later.

10 Bills and Tipping

In cafés, the bill for each drink is brought to your table with your order, but there is no need to pay until you leave. A small tip is customary. In restaurants, menu prices normally include the tip; an extra 5 to 10 per cent gratuity for good service is optional (see Hidden Charges in Cafés and Bars, Over-tipping).

9

Shopping

Shopping Tips

1 Shopping Hours

Food shops tend to open from 7 or 8am–7 or 8pm Monday–Saturday, with a lunch break from noon–2pm. Most open on Sunday morning. Non-food shops generally open 9am–6pm Monday–Saturday. Hypermarkets, supermarkets, department stores and shops in city centres and tourist towns stay open over lunch; others may take a break. Smaller shops may close one day a week, usually Monday. Most shops are closed Sunday afternoons.

2 Taxes and Allowances

If you live within the EU, there are no limits on the amount of wine, spirits, tobacco and perfume you can take home. For non-EU residents, restrictions apply. Non-EU residents can claim back the value added tax (TVA) on purchases worth more than €305 in one shop, as long as they are to be exported within six months.

3 Day Shopping Trips

The Channel ports, especially Dieppe, Le Havre and Cherbourg, are popular destinations for day-trippers from England, mostly intent on buying wine and beer in hypermarkets conveniently placed near the ferry terminals. A website, www.day-tripper.net, has all the information you could need.

4 Centre Ville, Centre Commercial

The town centre – centre ville – is often pedestrianized and full of individual food stores, boutiques and gift shops, ideal for leisurely browsing. At the other end of the spectrum is the centre commercial on the outskirts of town, where you will find vast hypermarkets selling everything from food to garden furniture.



5 Markets

One of the great joys of visiting Normandy is shopping in the superb weekly morning markets (marchés) that really bring country towns to life. Arrive early to be sure of the best choice; most end at noon. Look out for the specialist local producers with only one or two lines – perhaps cheese or foie gras. Their goods are often high in quality, relatively low in price. Tourist offices can supply a calendar of market days in the area.

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6 Vente Directe

All over Normandy, especially in the Pays d'Auge, you will see roadside signs advertising vente directe (direct selling) and dégustation (tasting) of home-made produce – commonly cheese, cider and Calvados, but also, for example, foie gras and honey. Make sure you like what you taste – and don't expect prices to be much lower than in the shops.

7 Regional Produce

Apart from cider, Calvados and cheese (see Top 10 Cheeses), look out for other local specialties: superb home-made jams, confiture de lait (a kind of milk jam), sablés d'Asnelles (a shortbread) and sucres de pomme ("apple sugars" – a type of bonbon) to mention just a few.

8 Fairs and Festivals

If you're interested in buying local specialties, check with the tourist office to see if one of Normandy's special food-related markets, fairs or festivals is taking place nearby. These include: black pudding (Mortagne), mussels (Le Tréport), cherries (Vernon), cheese (Livarot, Neufchâtel-en-Bray), prawns (Honfleur) and herrings (Dieppe).



9 Antiques, Arts and Crafts

Normandy has many antiques and bric-à-brac shops in picturesque towns. Arts and crafts can be found in many specialist shops and craft centres.

10 Clothes

Normandy is close to Paris, and good clothes are never far away. Caen is especially noted for its boutiques and department stores; Deauville, where the beau monde flock, is like a miniature version of the rue Faubourg St-Honoré in Paris.

Local Specialities

1 Gribouille, Honfleur

For more than 20 years, jovial M Gribouille has sold the best of Norman gastronomic specialties, from pommeau to confiture du lait (see Gourmet Restaurants), in his lavish emporium in Vieux Honfleur.

► *rue de l'Homme de Bois* • **Map F3**

2 A La Recherche du Temps Perdu, Cabourg

Ghislaine and Sylvie Soulas sell clothes, knitwear, embroidery, linens, gifts and traditional games in this enchanting boutique.

► *3 ave Commdt Touchard* • **Map E3**

3 Poterie du Mesnil de Bavent, Ranville

Famous for its roof decorations and finials (épis de faitage), this pottery also produces faïence animals, many of them life-size, as well as hand-decorated table-ware.

► *Le Mesnil, D513* • **Map E3**



4 Après La Pluie, Beaumont-en-Auge

Kaleidoscopes galore, plus thaumascopes, phenakistiscopes, fantascopes, praxinoscopes and other absorbing optical objects from a manufacturer

unique in Europe.

► *14 rue Paradis* • **Map E3**

5 H20 Parapluies, Creully

The creation of handcrafted umbrellas is an art, and it is practised to perfection at H20. From plain about-town umbrellas to unique creations, the factory shop has a wide selection.

➤ *Hameau de Creullet • Map D3*

6 Calvados Dupont, Victot-Pontfol

One of the most impressive of the 20 or so producers along the Route du Cidre (see Pays d'Auge). As well as cider, Calvados and pommeau, you can buy Crème Calvados, cider vinegar and Pomme Captive – with the apple a “prisoner” in the bottle.

➤ *RD16 • Map E4*

7 Calvados Pierre Huet, Cambremer

Another traditional producer in the heart of cider country, Huet has operated from the lovely half-timbered Manoir de la Brière des Fontaines since 1865. You can visit the atmospheric cider distillery before buying.

➤ *Map E4*

8 La Ferme de la Moissonnière, Fervaques

Like cider, cheese is a “must-buy” in Central Normandy. This characterful farm in the south of the Pays d'Auge makes classic Pont l'Évêque and Pavé d'Auge.

➤ *Map F4*

9 La Ferme du Mesnil, Ste-Marguerite-en-Ouche

Foie gras,illettes and confits from a farm deep in the Pays d'Ouche.

➤ *Map H4*

10 Miel Charozé, La Vacquerie

The art of beekeeping is explained at this lovely, isolated farm, whose shop sells wonderful honey and a huge variety of honey-based products.

➤ *Map C4 • Le Haut Hamel*

Arts and Crafts

1 Pottery

With good-quality clay and a constant demand for jugs and mugs in which to serve cider and milk, there is a long tradition of pottery-making in Normandy. At the Musée de la Poterie in Ger (between Fiers and Mortain), you can see how the craft has developed over 500 years, and watch a potter at work. In Noronla-Poterie near Bayeux, salt-glaze pottery has been made since the Middle Ages; several studios are still in operation. The painted earthenware of Forges-les-Eaux is on display in the Musée de Faïence there.

2 Rouen Faïence

Faïence (earthenware with a white tin glaze that can then be decorated) was introduced to Rouen by Masséot Aबाquesne in the mid-16th century. It flowered into a fine art, before ceasing in the 1780s with the advent of imported chinaware. Beautiful examples can be seen in the Musée de la Céramique in Rouen, and modern copies are on sale all over town (see Faïencerie Augy, Rouen).

3 Roof Finials

In Normandy, épis de faitage, often coloured and ending either in a simple point or topped by a bird, are

much admired. Seen to best effect on the fantastical 19th-century villas of Deauville, they can also be spotted in the Bayeux Tapestry. You could have one too: at Poterie du Mesnil de Bavent in Ranville, ceramic finials have been hand-produced since 1842 (see Poterie du Mesnil de Bavent, Ranville).

4 Lacemaking

From the 17th to 19th centuries, lace was all the rage across Europe. In Normandy, Alençon, Argentan and Bayeux were the three main centres of production, each with their own technique. Exquisite examples can be seen in all three towns, while Bayeux's bobbin lace with its intricate floral motif is still made by a dedicated group of craftswomen (see Conservatoire de la Dentelle).

5 Traditional Furniture

Highly regarded, Norman antique furniture is characterized by four objects: the wardrobe (traditionally part of a bride's dowry), the sideboard, the longcase clock and the box bed. Fine 18th- and 19th-century pieces, on display in museums and for sale in antique shops, are well proportioned, elegant and often elaborately decorated.



6 Wooden Toys

In Bézu-Saint-Eloi, 6 km (4 miles) northwest of Gisors, Ateliers Jorelle have been making traditional wooden toys since 1864.

Visit the workshop, or look out for their products in local

toy and craft shops, including spinning tops and an obstacle game called jouet de la grenouille (literally, “frog game”) played in Normandy since the Middle Ages.

7 Glassware

The glassworks in the Bresle Valley are renowned, accounting for 80 per cent of luxury perfume bottles. The Musée des Traditions Verrières in Eu displays examples of astonishing beauty, while at the 16th-century Manoir de Fontaine in Blangy-sur-Bresle, you can watch weekend glass-blowing demonstrations and buy examples of the art.



8 Copper

A warm, burnished glow emanates from shop windows crammed with copper pots and pans in picturesque Villedieu-les-Poêles. Copper has been its business since the 12th century, reaching a peak in the mid-18th, when there were nearly 150 workshops in town. Today, there is no better place to buy copper utensils (poêles means pots) or to see the craftsmen at work.

9 Dovecotes

Until the French Revolution, only wealthy landowners had the right to keep pigeons, and the size of the dovecote (colombier) was a mark of prosperity. Look out for Normandy's many fine examples, mellow

with age: circular, square or polygonal, tiled and half-timbered, or patterned in brick and flint.

10 Arts and Crafts Outlets

Each July, there is an excellent arts and crafts fair, Le Festival de Métiers d'Art de Reviere, in Reviere (Calvados). In the Forêt de Brotonne (Eure), visit the Maison des Métiers at Bourneville, and the linen and clog-makers' workshops at Routot. Also keep an eye out for workshops in towns and villages, and arts and crafts on sale at markets and antiques fairs. The fair in Les Andelys in early September, for example, dates back to the Middle Ages.

Places to Shop



1 Abbaye de St-Wandrille

A 14th-century barn houses the abbey shop, outlet for the monks' own products, including CDs of Gregorian chant, honey and beeswax candles.

➤ **Map H2**

2 Faïencerie Augy, Rouen

Attractive plates, jugs, vases and lamps are decorated and fired according to 16th-century methods in the workshops attached to this seductive faïence shop. Demonstrations by appointment.

➤ **26 rue St-Romain • Map M5 • 02 35 88 77 47**



3 Monique de St-Romaine, Rouen

Going to a wedding or the races at Deauville? Get a one-off hat at this charming, old-fashioned modiste (milliner), the city's sole survivor.

➤ **58 rue St-Romain • Map M5**

4 Palais Bénédicte, Fécamp

Taste the liqueur, aged in casks in the palace basement, before visiting the shop, well stocked with Bénédicte and B&B (Bénédicte blended with brandy).

➤ **110 rue Alexandre-Le-Grand • Map G2 • Closed Jan-early Feb**

5 Delgove et Cie, Le Tréport

Following this area's traditional method of smoking fish (drying in sawdust before smoking over a beechwood fire), this smoke-house sells salmon, mackerel, herring and haddock.

➤ **Parc St-Croix • Map J1**

6 Aux Deux Gouttes d'Eau, Forges-les-Eaux

Alexandre Audel is a potter from Martinique specializing in Vieux-Forges faïence. He also takes commissions.

➤ **pl de l'Ancienne Gare • Map K2 • 02 35 09 61 53**

7 Ferme de Bray, Somme

On his farm on the Route du Fromage de Neufchâtel, Patrice Perrier makes and sells cider, flour, bread and the celebrated cheese.

➤ **Map K2 • Open Easter-Jun, Sep-Nov: pm Sat-Sun, hols; Jul-Aug: pm daily • 02 35 90 57 27**

8 Cidrerie du Duché de Longueville, Annevillesur-Scie

De Cru cider, which uses only one variety of apple, is produced in this distillery just south of Dieppe. Stock up in the shop; if you have time, visit the exhibition about cider-making.

➤ **Map J1**

9 Maison du Lin, Routot

Learn about the history and production of linen at this captivating museum, then treat yourself to some new napkins or a tea towel from the tempting shop.

➤ **pl du Général-Leclerc • Map H3 • 02 32 56 21 76 • Open pm Sun, bank hols, daily in season**

10 Sauver Chocolat, Le Havre

Latest venture of the Auzou family, chocolatiers since 1961, this irresistible shop is a chocoholic's paradise.

➤ **19 rue Albert André-Huet • Map E2**

Markets

1 L'Aigle

Noisy and bustling, this huge market draws thousands of people to L'Aigle every Tuesday. Hundreds of stalls, piled high with regional bounty from fruit and vegetables to cheeses and cider, are crammed into the town centre. Meanwhile, the livestock market (8:30-10:30 am), the third largest in France, provides raucous accompaniment; it's not for the tender-hearted.

➤ **Map H5**

2 Caen

Handsome 18th-century houses line place St-Sauveur, the attractive square in the centre of Caen where the pillory once stood, and where the colourful Friday market has been held since 1026. Stallholders sell traditional produce and, for early risers, an amazing selection of fresh fish.

➤ **Map L2**



3 Dieppe

Each Saturday, from 8am until noon, the long, pedestrian Grande Rue, lined with some 200 shops, becomes a massive open-air emporium. Locals set up

stalls to sell their produce (organic fruit and vegetables, saucisses, jams), professionals bring imports (olives, honey, exotic cheeses) from every corner of France, and fishermen sell their morning-fresh catches. Dieppe is famous for its lissettes (baby mackerel), scallops and gendarmes, the smoked herrings available in November.

► **Map J1**

4 Rouen

Place St-Marc is the scene of a lively market on Tuesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, with fruit, veg, bric-à-brac and second-hand book stalls. From 24 November, there's a Christmas market in place de la Cathédrale. Stalls resembling chalets sell gastronomic specialities and arts and crafts. Among the events are concerts and pony rides.

► **Map N6**

5 Dives-sur-Mer

Shopping in the traditional Tuesday market in Dives is an event, not least because it is held in the spectacular timbered halles with a red-tiled roof, built in the 15th century so that the local monastery could levy market taxes.

► **Map E3**

6 St-Pierre-sur-Dives

Like Dives-sur-Mer, this inland town has a magnificent covered market hall. Dating from the 11th century, it was the largest medieval hall in Normandy. After it burned down in 1944, it was completely rebuilt in the style of the original, using hundreds of thousands of wooden pegs instead of screws and nails. Small local producers bring their goods to the Monday market, which spills out of the hall.

► **Map E4**

7 Bayeux

One edge of the market that fills place St-Patrice every Saturday morning is devoted to local smallholders, their home-grown fruit and vegetables, home-produced cheese and sausages, and their livestock: perhaps a few geese, chickens and a litter of puppies. The other stallholders are professional retailers, selling clothes as well as food.

► **Map D3**

8 St-Lô

There's a typical farmers' market on Saturday mornings in the main square of this ancient and historic town. Here you can buy fresh produce from local farmers and fishermen among the stalls selling furniture, clothing and flowers.

► **Map C4**

9 Forges-les-Eaux

An excellent farmers' market is held on Thursday and Sunday mornings in the central square of this spa town on the Route du Fromage de Neufchâtel (see Étretat). Stalls offer a range of local produce: organic dairy products, eggs, smoked meat and fish, jam and the Pays de Bray cheeses including the famous Neufchâtel. On Thursday, there is a livestock market as well.

► **Map K2**



10 Cambremer

Local people dressed in peasant costumes, folk dancing, music-making and horse-drawn carriage rides are all part of the fun at Cambremer's traditional market, staged every Sunday morning in the market place in July and August and on special occasions such as Easter, 1 May and Whit Sunday. Local producers mingle with regional craftsmen and artists.

► **Map E4**

10

Places to Stay

Luxury Hotels



1 La Ferme St-Siméon, Honfleur

This ancient farmhouse on the Seine estuary, once a meeting place of Impressionist painters, is now the most luxurious – and expensive – country

hotel in Normandy.

► rue A-Maraïs • **Map F3** • 02 31 81 78 00 • www.fermesaintsimeon.fr • €€€€€

2 L'Absinthe, Honfleur

L'Absinthe, close to the Vieux Port, is the most intimate hotel in Honfleur, with just seven, well-equipped, beamed bedrooms, a restaurant, a brasserie and a cosy, wood-panelled reception room.

► 1 rue de la Ville • **Map F3** • 02 31 89 39 00 • www.absinthe.fr • Closed mid-Nov–mid-Dec • €€€

3 Normandy, Deauville

With its rambling timber-framed façade, the Normandy has the air of a quaint Norman cottage built for a giant. Inside, there are chandeliers and columns, an indoor swimming pool around which breakfast is served, and a handy underground passage leading to the Casino – which happens to belong to the same hotel and leisure group (it also owns Bar de la Mer and Bar du Soleil on the seafront promenade).

► 38 rue Mermoz • **Map E3** • 02 31 98 66 22 • www.lucienbarriere.com • €€€€€

4 Royal Barrière, Deauville

With its grand hall dressed strikingly in red, its glamorous panelled restaurant, and its outdoor swimming pool and terrace, the Royal is the perfect Deauville hotel for anyone who wishes to see and be seen. Discreet, no; flashy and fun, yes.

► Blvd Cornuché • **Map E3** • 02 31 98 66 33 • www.lucienbarriere.com • €€€€€

5 Grand Hôtel Mercure, Cabourg

Celebrated for its association with Marcel Proust, who spent his childhood holidays here and famously described the dining room as an aquarium, this huge white edifice is still redolent of its belle époque heyday, with vast rooms and balconies. The front faces the town, while the rear opens onto the beach.

► promenade Marcel-Proust • **Map E3** • 02 31 91 01 79 • www.mercure.com • €€€

6 Château de la Chenevière, Port-en-Bessin

With 19 suites and one standard room, this elegant 18th-century château standing in its own parkland has the feeling of a gracious English country house. It makes a convenient base for the D-Day beaches and Bayeux.

► **Map C3** • 02 31 51 25 25 • www.lacheneviere.fr • €€€€

7 Château d'Audrieu, Audrieu

Within easy reach of Bayeux, Caen and the D-Day beaches, this 18th-century château was the family home

of the owners until it became a hotel in 1976. Bedrooms are particularly elegant.

► **Map D3** • 02 31 80 21 52 • www.chateaudaudrieu.com • €€€€€

8 Château de Sully, Bayeux

This cool, handsome hotel has a contemporary feel, sympathetically blending modern comforts with its 18th-century surroundings. The restaurant has a Michelin star.

► rte de Port-en-Bessin • **Map D3** • 02 31 22 29 48 • www.chateauhotels.com/sully • €€€

9 Château Les Bruyères, Cambremer

In the heart of the Pays d'Auge, this stone-built château makes a luxurious bed-and-breakfast stop along the Cider Route.

► rte du Cadran • **Map E4** • 02 31 32 22 45 • chateau.bruyeres@wanadoo.fr • €€€€

10 Hostellerie du Clos, Verneuil-sur-Avre

Affordable and unpretentious, this château hotel has a luxurious interior, with light, airy bedrooms.

► 98 rue de la Ferté-Vidame • **Map H5** • 02 32 32 21 81 • www.hostellerieduclus.fr • €€€€

Seaside Hotels



1 France et des Fuchsias, StVaast-la-Hougue

Perennially popular with yachtsmen and Cherbourg ferry passengers, this captivating little hotel puts its main emphasis on

restaurant, which serves marvellous seafood platters. The best bedrooms are in the annexe overlooking the delightful English-style garden.

► 20 rue Maréchal Foch • **Map B2** • 02 33 54 42 26 • www.france-fuchsias.com • €

2 Château de Quinéville, Quinéville-Plage

Close to Utah Beach, this somewhat faded but charming 18th-century château in its own park was once occupied by James II of Scotland. It has an outdoor swimming pool.

► **Map B2** • 02 33 21 42 67 • www.chateau-dequineville.com • Closed Jan–Apr • €€

3 Hôtel de la Marine, Barneville-Carteret

La Marine is well known for its Michelin-starred restaurant with splendid views over the harbour from its picture windows, but since it is close to all the superb beaches of the Cotentin Peninsula's west coast, it also makes a good base for a seaside holiday. Ask for a room with a sea view.

► 11 rue de Paris • **Map A3** • 02 33 53 83 31 • Closed mid-Nov–mid-March • €€€

4 La Marine, Arromanches

On the seafront opposite the D-Day Musée du Débarquement, this is a popular base for visiting the landing beaches. It has a pleasant seafood restaurant, simple bedrooms, and an unfussy, old-fashioned air.

► 2 quai du Canada • **Map D3** • 02 31 22 34 19 • www.hotel-de-la-marine.fr • €€

5 Duguesclin, Grandcamp-Maisy

The friendly and efficient Duguesclin is the best place to stay in this little fishing port in the midst of the D-Day landing beaches.

► 4 quai Henri-Crampon • **Map C3** • 02 31 22 64 22 • Closed Jan • €

6 Hôtel de France, Isigny-sur-Mer

In the seaside port renowned for its superb milk, butter and crème fraîche is this comfortable and welcoming small hotel. Its restaurant wins a Bib Gourmand from Michelin for good food at moderate prices.

► 15 rue Emile-Demagny • **Map C3** • 02 31 22 00 33 • www.hotel-france-isigny.com • €€

7 Mercure, Trouville

With 80 bedrooms and an outdoor terrace, this popular hotel is a good choice in the heart of this happy-go-lucky resort.

► pl Foch • **Map E3** • 02 31 87 38 38 • h1048@accor-hotels.com • €€€

8 Le Trophée, La Flambée, Deauville

In the centre of Deauville, a short stroll away from the Casino, boutiques and glitzy seafront board-walk, the refurbished Trophée is smart enough to make chic Parisians feel comfortable. The reception desk is manned by suitably metropolitan staff.

► 81 rue GénéralLeclerc • **Map E3** • 02 31 88 45 86 • www.letrophee.com • €€€

9 Dormy House, Étretat

With an Art Deco-style main building and two (rather more comfortable) annexes, this hotel sits amongst greenery, with fine views over the town, the sea and Étretat's famous cliffs, Falaises d'Aval and d'Amont.

► rte Le Havre • **Map G2** • 02 35 27 07 88 • www.dormy-house.com • €€



10 La Terrasse, Varengeville-sur-Mer

A narrow lane winds through typical Norman countryside to the cliffed edge and this characterful small hotel, with wooden balconies. The 22 rooms are homely, the

atmosphere welcoming. There are magical sea views from the covered terrace (where meals are served in summer).

► Vasterival • **Map J1** • 02 35 85 12 54 • www.hotel-restaurant-laterrasse.com • Closed mid-Oct-mid-Mar • €€

Town Hotels



1 Le Dauphin, Caen

This lovingly restored former priory does not reveal its age until you get inside. Some of the comfortable bedrooms are in the building next door. In the smart dining room, the owner

Stéphane Pugat's food is a highlight.

► 29 rue Gémare • **Map M2** • 02 31 86 22 26 • www.le-dauphin-normandie.com • €€€

2 Hôtel d'Argouges, Bayeux

This classically proportioned town house is an efficiently run bed-and-breakfast. Rooms vary in size, but are all decorated in quite good taste with, for the most part, larger-than-average bathrooms. Guests can use the smart, light, drawing room and the garden. There is off-street parking.

► 21 rue St-Patrice • **Map D3** • 02 31 92 88 86 • dargouges@aol.com • €€

3 Auberge St-Pierre, Mont-St-Michel

The 15th-century auberge is one of a handful of hotels at the foot of Mont St-Michel and close to the causeway (useful, since all cars have to be left outside its walls). There is a large, busy restaurant at street level, while on the first floor, a pleasantly rustic calm takes over.

► Grande Rue • **Map B5** • 02 33 60 14 03 • www.auberge-saint-pierre.fr • €€€

4 Hôtel des Loges, Honfleur

Honfleur's latest hotel is an old building with a contemporary interior: quarry-tiled floors, pale cream walls, black-and-white photographs; and in the breakfast room, black iron tables, black wicker chairs and modern lighting. Bedrooms, in a separate building across a courtyard, are very quiet.

► 18 rue Brûlée • **Map F3** • 02 31 89 38 26 • www.hoteldesloges.com • €€€

5 Hôtel des Carmes, Rouen

An inexpensive, endearing hotel overlooking a quiet, tree-filled square. The owner is an artist; her paintings and sculptures decorate the ground floor, while the bedrooms are being redecorated in bright colours with her frescoes on the ceilings.

► 33 pl des Carmes • **Map M5** • 02 35 71 92 31 • www.hoteldesarmes.fr.st • €

6 Le Normandie, Bagnoles de l'Orne

This handsome old stone-built inn has a highly recommended restaurant. In summer, meals are served in the attractive garden. There is a fine view from the front across wooded countryside and park.

► 2 ave du Dr Paul-Lemuet • **Map D5** • 02 33 30 71 30 • www.hotel-le-normandie.com • €€

7 Hôtel d'Evreux, Vernon

This 17th-century coaching inn in the centre of Vernon started life as a manor house of the count of

Evreux. Its excellent restaurant, Le Relais Normand, has a romantic courtyard where you can dine in summer. The pleasant rooms have a pleasingly rustic feel.

► 11 pl d'Evreux • **Map K4** • 02 32 21 16 12 • <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/hotel.devreux> • €

8 Hôtel de France, Evreux

This long-established hostelry on the banks of the Iton has characterful bedrooms, and a welcoming restaurant.

► 29 rue St-Thomas • **Map J4** • 02 32 39 09 25 • www.hoteldefranceevreux.com • €

9 Hostellerie Genty-Home, Mortagne-au-Perche

A traditional stone-built inn in the centre of this unspoilt market town.

► 4 rue Notre-Dame • **Map F6** • 02 33 25 11 53 • €

10 Hôtel du Dauphin, L'Aigle

This 17th-century relais de poste has an excellent restaurant and brasserie, a fine wood-panelled salon, and bedrooms that blend old with new.

► pl de la Halle • **Map H5** • 02 33 84 18 00 • www.hoteldudauphin.free.fr • €€

Country Hotels

1 Manoir du Lys, Bagnoles-de-l'Orne

A stylish and well-appointed former hunting lodge, with two pools (one indoor), a talented chef, and a smart dining room (with fair-weather terrace). A huge log fire warms the bar in winter.

► La Croix Gauthier, rte de Juvigny • **Map D5** • 02 33 37 80 69 • www.manoir-du-lys.fr • €€€

2 Le Petit Coq aux Champs, Campigny

Helicopters arriving here in the wooded Risle Valley (and some do) look for two thatched roofs joined by a modern extension. The decoration and superb food are also fusions of old and new, and every bedroom has its own character and style.

► La Pommerie-Sud • **Map H3** • 02 32 41 04 19 • www.lepetitcoqauxchamps.fr • €€€



3 Auberge de l'Abbaye, Le Bec-Hellouin

This half-timbered 18th-century inn with five comfortable, cottage-style bedrooms sits opposite the entrance to the abbey of Notre-Dame du Bec. Run by

the same family for more than 40 years, it radiates friendly efficiency and offers meals both formal and informal, inside or out on its terrace.

► pl Guillaume le Conquérant • **Map H3** • 02 32 44 86 02 • €€

4 Auberge du Terroir, Servon

Like most houses in Servon, the front of this former presbytery looks onto the village, the back over open countryside. Three bedrooms share the main building

with the excellent restaurant; the rest are in the former schoolhouse next door. Mont-St-Michel is a scant half-hour away.

► Le Bourg • **Map B5** • 02 33 60 17 92 • aubergeduterroir@wanadoo.fr • €€

5 Verte Campagne, Trelly

Although recently modernized, this ivy-festooned 16th-century Norman farmhouse in a peaceful hamlet retains its charming beams and bare stone walls. If the thoughtful, well-presented menus downstairs tempt you to stay overnight, the bedrooms are very comfortable.

► **Map B4** • 02 33 47 65 33 • €€



6 Manoir du Butin, Honfleur

Most of the good-sized rooms in this small, relaxed manor – round the side of a hill, minutes away from the hurly-burly of Honfleur – look out over the Seine estuary.

Each room is styled individually, and residents have first call on the attractive restaurant downstairs.

► Phare du Butin • **Map F3** • 02 31 81 63 00 • www.hotel-lemanoir.fr • €€€€

7 Le Gué du Holme, St-Quentin-sur-le-Homme

Michel Leroux is probably the best chef for miles in any direction, and any thought of driving on should be dispelled by the quietly comfortable rooms – most of them in a modern wing overlooking the rose garden.

► 14 rue des Estuaires • **Map B5** • 02 33 60 63 76 • www.legue-du-holme.com • €€

8 Le Mesnilgrand, Négreville

In the deeply rural setting of an old Norman cider farm is this well-regarded restaurant-with-rooms – now under new (English) ownership. Well-placed for Cherbourg.

► **Map B2** • 02 33 95 09 54 • www.lemesnilgrand.com • €€

9 Le Pavillon de Gouffern, Sully-en-Gouffern

To the east of Argentan, this handsome, well-dressed 18th-century hunting lodge is set in its own extensive wooded park at the source of the River Orne.

► **Map E5** • 02 33 36 64 26 • pavillondegouffern@wanadoo.fr • €€

10 Château de la Rapée, Gisors

A real Gothic mansion at the end of a rutted forest track. Spacious rooms, fine furniture, pleasing views, excellent cooking.

► Bazincourt-sur-Epte • **Map K3** • 02 32 55 11 61 • www.hotel-la-rapee.com • €€

Spas and Resorts

1 Forges-les-Eaux

Quiet and dignified, Forges-les-Eaux became a fashionable spa town after it was visited in 1633 by a

regal threesome: Louis XIII, his queen, Anne of Austria, and Cardinal Richelieu. Today, the spa and casino, built in the 1950s, are run as a health and leisure complex by Club Med.

► **Map K2**

2 Étretat

With its shingle beach and esplanade curving between two famous chalk headlands, the Falaises d'Aval and d'Amont, its dramatic clifftop walks and its recreational Parc de Loisirs des Roches, charming and elegant Étretat is the Côte d'Albâtre's most alluring resort, as many writers and artists discovered in the 19th century.

3 Deauville and La Côte Fleurie

The magnificent coastline from Honfleur to Cabourg, with its series of wide, sandy beaches, means that all of its resorts – Villerville, Trouville, Deauville, Villers-sur-Mer, Houlgate and Cabourg – have much to offer the sun-worshipper, with swimming and watersports all the way along. If you tire of the sun, and your money is burning a hole in your pocket, you will find no shortage of casinos to lose it in. Each place has its own character, none more so than exclusive Deauville.

4 Riva-Bella

The people of Caen, on the River Orne, are proud of their close connection to the sea, and here, at the mouth of the river, is "Caen-sur-Mer": the attractive ferry and yachting port of Ouistreham and the bustling resort of Riva-Bella, with its superb sandy beach and jolly main street, rue de la Mer.

► **Map E3**

5 Luc-sur-Mer

Thalassotherapy (sea-water treatment) is a speciality of Norman resorts, and at bracing Luc-sur-Mer, the cure uses kelp extract. There's also a sea-water hammam. Children can shore-fish for crabs, shrimps and clams, and admire the skeleton of a 19 m (76 ft) beached whale on display in the attractive municipal park.

► **Map D3**

6 Courseulles-sur-Mer

A little further west along the Côte de Nacre at Juno Beach, where memories of the Normandy Invasion (see D-Day Beaches) mingle with modern-day seaside amusements, Courseulles has a large marina (somewhat overshadowed by modern apartment blocks), and a terrific shellfish aquarium. Just inland is Revières, where an arts and crafts festival takes place each July.

► **Map D3**

7 Barneville-Plage

Spectacular sandy beaches, backed by windblown dunes, sweep along the west coast of the Cotentin Peninsula, looking out toward the Channel Islands. At Barneville-Plage, between busy Barneville-Carteret and charming Portbail, the coastline becomes tame enough for a holiday beach, full of bursting in summer, and backed by lines of villas.

8 Agon-Coutainville

With its 8 km (5 miles) of fine, sandy beach, this west coast resort makes a great summer playground for the people of nearby Coutances and visitors alike. Contrast a morning on the beach with a walk out to Pointe d'Agon, with its magnificent sea views.

► **Map B4**

9 Granville

With its stern granite upper town on the one hand, and its beach and seaside amusements on the other, Granville offers two quite different faces. It became fashionable as a resort in the 19th century. Among its current attractions, it boasts a thalasso-therapy centre, the Aquarium du Roc (a "shell wonderland") and a casino.



10 Bagnoles-de-l'Orne

Legend has it that Hugues de Tessé left his horse Rapide to die quietly of old age in the forest, only for the animal to trot home in rude health. He found that a spring was the cause, bathed there himself, and was also rejuvenated. Today, this calm, orderly spa town attracts thousands to its Etablissement Thermal, particularly helpful for rheumatism and circulatory problems.

11

Practical Information

Sources of Information

1 Normandy Tourist Board

Based in England, this exceptionally helpful team advises on travel, accommodation, places to visit, and contacts in Normandy. There is also a no-fee hotel booking service.

► *The Old Bakery, 44 Bath Hill, Keynsham, Bristol BS31 1HG • 0117 986 0386 • www.normandy-tourism.org*

2 Government Tourist Offices

The French Government Tourist Office (Maison de la France) is a one-stop shop for useful information.

3 Comité Régional du Tourisme

Normandy's Regional Committee for Tourism is based in Evreux. Visit its office for maps, guides and information about the region, or view its website.

► *Le Doyenné, 14 rue Charles-Corbeau • 02 32 33 79 00*

4 Comité Départemental du Tourisme

Each of Normandy's five départements has its own tourist office. All are valuable sources of information on travel and accommodation, cultural, sporting and leisure activities, as well as special interests. Consult them when you are planning your trip.

► *Calvados: 8 rue Renoir, 14054 Caen • 02 31 27 90 30*

► *Eure: 3 rue du Commdt Letellier, B.P. 367, Evreux • 02 32 62 04 27*

► *Manche: Maison du Département, rte de Villedieu, 50008 St-Lô • 02 33 05 98 70*

► *Orne: 88 rue St-Blaise, 61002 Alençon • 02 33 28 88 71*

► *Seine-Maritime: 6 rue Couronné, 76420 Bihorel • 02 35 12 10 10*



5 Local Tourist Offices

All cities and most towns have a state-run tourist office. Some smaller towns and villages have a private Syndicat d'Initiative (SI). You'll also find

multi-lingual information desks at airports and main railway stations.

6 Websites

The regional tourist office and each of the five departmental tourist offices all have useful websites; note that only those for Normandy and Manche are currently available in English.

► *www.normandy-tourism.org • www.calvados-tourisme.com • www.eure-tourisme.com • www.manche-etourisme.com • www.orne-tourisme.com • www.seine-maritime-tourisme.com*

7 Minitel

Found in main post offices and some hotels, this useful telescreen system gives access to a wide range of information from railway timetables to phone numbers and addresses of French companies.



8 Newspapers

The International Herald Tribune, published daily in Paris, is available on day of publication. The pick of the local French papers are Quest-France – a daily with separate departmental editions – and Paris Normandie.

9 Television

Most hotels subscribe to multilingual cable and satellite channels, which vary the diet of French-language broadcasting.

10 Radio

If the reception is good enough, you can listen to *Voice of America*, which broadcasts on 1197 kHz AM, or the BBC World Service and BBC for Europe on 648 kHz AM.

Getting Around Normandy

1 By Rail

SNCF operates a wide rail network linking the region's major towns and cities. One of the most technically advanced train systems in the world, the service is fast, frequent and punctual.

2 By Bus

Bus routes link many of the region's major destinations, although schedules are geared to students and commuters rather than tourists, and there's a reduced service at weekends. Coastal routes tend to be the most reliable. Different companies run the network for each département; details are available from the departmental tourist offices.

3 By Car

With your own car, you can venture off the beaten track. Depending on the type of road, four speed limits apply: on autoroutes, the usual limit is 130 kph (81 mph); on N or RN roads – dual carriageways – it's 110 kph (68 mph); on local D and minor C and V roads, it's 90 kph (56 mph); lastly, there's a limit of 50 kph (31 mph) in all built-up areas.

4 Car Rental

All the major rental companies operate in Normandy from airports, railway stations and city centres. Most require drivers to be over 21, with a clean licence. Before booking, look into fly-drive packages.

► *www.avis.com • www.budget.com • www.herz.com • www.eurocar.com*



5 City Transport

With the exception of central Rouen's fiendish one-way system, most cities are car-friendly, with plenty of pay-and-display parking and car parks. Public transport is largely reliable, with bus services in all towns and cities. Rouen has a metro, and Caen, a new tram system.

6 Taxis Note that taxis can only be picked up from taxi ranks (stations de taxi) or summoned by telephone – not hailed on the street. Check that your taxi has a meter before entering. Fares can vary from one département to another.



7 By Bicycle With its varied terrain and plentiful backroads, Normandy is a wonderful region for cycling. You can transport your bike by air, rail or ferry, or you can hire one in most towns and at some railway stations. If you're after a mountain bike, look out for the sign VTT (*vélos tout terrain*). There are permanent cycle paths throughout the region; details are available from tourist offices and local cycling associations.

8 By Boat From Vernon, you can spend three hours sightseeing on the Seine, with commentary by a trained guide and lunch on a converted 1940s barge. There are similar guided river trips on the Douve and the Taute near Carentan, concentrating on the history, geography and environment of the marshlands.

- www.giverny.org/cruises
- *Douve*: 02 33 71 55 81
- *Taute*: 02 33 55 18 07

9 On Foot Normandy is criss-crossed by hundreds of footpaths graded to suit walkers of all levels. The well-known grande randonnée (GR) trails, marked by red and white stripes, take walkers through some spectacular scenery. The departmental tourist offices provide details and mapping of GR routes in their area, and most tourist offices in larger towns and cities publish a "Circuit du Patrimoine", a suggested city tour covering all the interesting sights.



10 On Horseback A charming way to enjoy Normandy, whether it's a riding tour of the Perche or a guided trek across the Bay of Mont-St-Michel. You can explore the Orne driving a

simple roulotte – a horse-drawn wagon sleeping up to four people. Tourist offices will provide details.

Banking & Communications

1 Currency Since January 2002, the euro has been the official currency in France. Euro banknotes have seven denominations: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500. There are also eight coin denominations: 1 and 2 euros, and 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents.

2 Changing Money You can exchange foreign currency and travellers' cheques for euros at banks, bureaux de change,

American Express offices, and some post offices. Check exchange rates before you travel. In bureaux de change, check that the rate offered and the commission charged are reasonable. Avoid changing money in hotels.

3 ATMs Most towns have ATMs (automatic teller machines) – a convenient way of drawing cash from your bank or credit card account. Each one indicates which cards it accepts. Many function in several languages.

4 Credit and Debit Cards Major cards are widely accepted throughout Normandy, and you should have no difficulty paying for most things – motorway tolls included – with plastic. Smaller shops, restaurants, hotels, campsites and gîte operators prefer cash.

5 Travellers' Cheques Travellers' cheques can be exchanged for cash in banks, and are widely accepted in retail outlets. Choose a well-known company like American Express or Thomas Cook.

6 Post Offices French post offices, identifiable by their yellow and blue "La Poste" sign, open 9am–noon and 2–5pm Monday to Friday, and Saturday mornings. You can buy stamps in tabacs (tobacconists), as well as post offices.

7 Fax and Poste Restante Faxes can be sent or received at all post offices. Main post offices will hold mail addressed to individuals on the move until collected in person. The envelope should carry the recipient's name (surname first), the words "poste restante", and the address of the post office, including the five-digit postal code. The person collecting the mail needs to take ID and pay a small fee.

8 Language and Etiquette English is widely spoken by people in the Channel ports, cities and main towns, but less so in rural Normandy, where you will need a grasp of French to understand and be understood. Meeting and greeting is an art form: hand-shaking is de rigueur when you are introduced to someone, and between acquaintances. It is polite to acknowledge people formally: "Bonjour, madame/monsieur".

9 Telephones With cards or euro coins, you can make local and international calls from any public telephone booth. Post offices also have booths (cabines); you make your call and pay afterwards. In some public phones you can only use télécartes – phone debit cards – which you can buy at post offices, newsagents and tabacs. The *pays direct* service enables you to call via an operator in your own country, and pay by debit or credit card. To call France from abroad, dial the relevant international code followed by 33, then the number (omitting the first zero).

10 Internet Card-operated internet terminals, called Cyberposte, have been installed in numerous post offices throughout France, providing the cheapest way for travellers to send and collect e-mail; you can buy the card over the counter. If you don't want to be restricted to post office opening

hours, there is a growing number of internet cafés in Norman towns and cities.

Security and Health

1 Emergencies

In a medical emergency, contact the 24-hour Service d'Aide Médicale Urgence, which can send a doctor, an ambulance, or paramedics in a mobile intensive care unit, as appropriate. For all but the most serious emergencies, payment in cash is required immediately after treatment.

➤ *Service d'Aide Médicale Urgence • 01 47 07 77 77*

2 Travel Insurance

Health care in France is excellent but expensive, so be sure to take out adequate insurance to cover any medical emergency. Visitors from EU countries should additionally collect an E111 form (entitling you to free basic health care) from a post office before departure.

3 Crime

Generally speaking, Normandy is a pretty safe place to travel; violent crimes, such as assault and rape, are comparatively rare. Most crime involves theft – particularly from cars. Pickpockets and bag-snatchers tend to operate in city centres, usually in crowded places like railway stations, trains and buses, and bars and clubs. If you are unlucky enough to have anything stolen, report it to the nearest police station straight away, and ask for a copy of the police report for your insurers.



connect you with rescue services via the traffic police.

4 Breakdowns and Car Accidents

If your car breaks down, place the red warning triangle which French law requires you to carry (see By Road) 50–100 m (160–300 ft) behind it. If you have an accident, telephone the emergency services. Postes d'appel d'urgence (emergency telephones) are posted at 2 km (1 mile) intervals on autoroutes, 4 km (2.5 miles) on dual carriage-ways; they will



5 Pharmacies

Pharmacies (chemists) – indicated by a green cross – are usually very helpful in treating minor ailments and injuries. If necessary, they will also direct you to the nearest doctor. Normal

opening hours are 8 or 9am–7pm Monday to Saturday, but one duty pharmacy in every town stays open at night and over weekends; others will post the address on their doors.

6 Hospitals

If you have an accident or become ill in the night, go to any public hospital's service des urgences

(accident-and-emergency department). Be warned: you will have to pay for your treatment straight away.

7 Doctors

If you are staying in a hotel, staff should be able to recommend an English-speaking doctor, or put you in touch with the 24-hour médecin de garde (doctor service) that operates in every major town. If not, consult your local pharmacist or the telephone operator.

8 Dentists

Dentists are listed in local Pages Jaunes (Yellow Pages). In an emergency, they will see you at major hospitals.

9 Documents

Always carry some form of identification with you, and have your driving licence, insurance and car registration documents to hand when driving. If you are stopped by the police, failure to produce them may result in an on-the-spot fine.

10 Lost Passport

If you lose your passport, report it to the police immediately. Next, inform your embassy or consulate; most are in Paris, but some are based in Rouen. Make copies of all your important documents and keep them separately.

Eastern Normandy















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