



CALVADOS & ORNE

3 PERFECT DAYS

🍷 DAY 1 // THE LONGEST DAY

Begin with a D-Day overview at the excellent Mémorial de Caen (p191) before heading to the beaches where the action took place. All of the major sites – Pointe du Hoc (p186), Batterie-de-Longues (p187), and the beaches themselves – can be seen in one day, but you'll need to be judicious with the museums you visit. Allow time for Arromanches 360 (p188), the American Military Cemetery (p187) and the Bayeux War Cemetery (p183) at a minimum.

🍷 DAY 2 // CONQUER WILLIAM'S LEGACY

At Bayeux, brush up on the history of the Norman Conquest by viewing the famous tapestry (opposite). Head back to Caen (p191) you'll find one of William's castles and the abbeys where he and his wife were buried. Continue south to Falaise (p196) and tour the fortress where William was born. Spend the rest of the day exploring the beautiful Suisse Normande (p194).

🍷 DAY 3 // GASTRONOMIC GOODIES

First stop, Camembert (p204) – if only for a photo in front of the road sign. Continue through the heart of the Pays d'Auge to Livarot (p204) and a tour and tasting at the cheese factory. Convince your travelling partner that it's their turn to be the designated driver and head to the Distillerie Christian Drouin (p180), just outside of Pont l'Évêque, to see how Calvados and cider are made. Hit Deauville-Trouville (p208) for lunch and a look around, and continue on to Honfleur (p211) where there are many wonderful restaurants to choose from for dinner.

BAYEUX

.....

pop 15,000

The first city to be liberated after the D-Day landings, Bayeux is one of the few towns in Calvados to have survived WWII largely unscathed. The River Aure still turns the paddles of watermills as it cuts through ancient streets lined with elegant stone mansions and the occasional rickety half-timbered medieval house. Rue St-Malo (which becomes St-Martin and then St-Jean) has been the main street since Gallo-Roman times, when the town was known as Augustodurum. Behind the cathedral you can see remnants of Bayeux's 3rd-century walls.

The town may be synonymous with its World Heritage-listed tapestry (see below) but it's also a wonderfully picturesque base from which to explore the D-Day beaches.

The **Fêtes Médiévales de Bayeux** is held here in July, and the **Calvados de Rock** is held in August (see p181 for details).

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

TOURIST OFFICE // **Bayeux** (☎ 02 31 51 28 28; www.bessin-normandie.com; Pont St-Jean; 🕒 9am-6pm Jul & Aug; 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun)

EXPLORING BAYEUX

📖 **BAYEUX TAPESTRY** // READ THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS CARTOON STRIP

They say that it's the prerogative of the victors to write history – and if they decide to embroider it onto 68m of linen, then who's to argue. The world-famous

Tapiserie de Bayeux (☎ 02 31 51 25 50; www.tapiserie-bayeux.fr; 13 bis rue de Nesmond; adult/child €7.80/3.80; 🕒 9am-6.30pm mid-Mar–mid-Nov, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm mid-Nov–mid-Mar, last admission 45min prior) recounts the Norman take on their invasion of England. The Norman Conquest was the military epic that defined the 11th century, in much the same way as the D-Day landings defined the 20th century – which makes the tapestry the *Saving Private Ryan* of its time.

The cloth itself has had a turbulent history. In 1792 it was narrowly saved from use as a wagon cover, and in 1794 it was almost cut up into decorative sections. Napoleon displayed it in Paris for a few years to drum up support for an invasion of England, but the tapestry was eventually returned to Bayeux, where the priceless work underwent a careful restoration. In 1939 it was placed in an air-raid shelter and then in 1944 it was sent to Paris and hidden in a cellar of the Louvre.

An excellent free audioguide will walk you along the tapestry at a cracking rate (hit pause if you want to linger), providing plenty of detail but conveniently ignoring the sexually explicit images in the borders. For more on the tapestry, see the boxed text, p183. A separate room contains interesting bilingual displays about Norman life, the Conquest and the history of the tapestry. The visit culminates in a 16-minute film that brings the embroidered scenes to life with recreations and a commentary (English and French screenings alternate).

A tapestry ticket gets you free entrance into the **Musée Baron Gérard** (☎ 02 31 92 14 21; 6 rue Lambert Leforestier; adult/child €3.50/1.50; 🕒 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm), where a small collection of archaeological artefacts, paintings, local lace and porcelain is housed in the mansion, Hôtel du Doyen.

(Continued on page 182)