



# SEINE-MARITIME & EURE

## 3 PERFECT DAYS

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### ♥ DAY 1 // COASTAL CRUISING

At 150km, the coastal drive along the dramatic Côte d'Albâtre (opposite) can be done in a day. Spend the morning wandering around Eu's historic sights (p231) before continuing on to Dieppe for lunch (p231). Consider stopping at the gardens at Varengeville-sur-Mer (p228), Fécamp's spectacular Palais Bénédictine (p226) and the pretty seaside town of Étretat (p224). Head to Le Havre for dinner (p223) and a taste of World Heritage architecture (opposite).

### ♥ DAY 2 // ROAMING ROUEN

This fascinating city, with its medieval laneways and magnificent edifices, begs for a thorough exploration. The walking tour, p236, is a good way to get your bearings and get started. If it's a Sunday morning, head to the market (p240). Allow plenty of time for the Musée des Beaux-Arts (p240), the famous cathedral (p238) and the city's other Gothic glories (p239). With plenty of wonderful restaurants to choose from, a leisurely lunch and dinner are essential (p242).

### ♥ DAY 3 // CHÂTEAU AND ABBEY HOPPING

The Haute-Normandie countryside is littered with remarkable chateaux and abbeys, many complete with glorious gardens or museums. There are too many to visit in a day, but options include (circling Rouen clockwise) the Parc de Clères (p243), Château de Martainville (p244), Château de Vascœuil (p256), Abbaye de Mortemer (p256), Fortresse de Gisors (p257), Château-Gaillard (p254), Château de Beaumesnil (p248), Château du Champ de Bataille (p247), Abbaye Notre Dame du Bec (p247), Abbaye St-Georges (p245), Abbaye de Jumièges (p245) and Abbaye St-Wandrille (p246).

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# CÔTE D'ALBÂTRE

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**Stretching 120km from Le Havre to Le Tréport, the lofty white cliffs of the Côte d'Albâtre (Alabaster Coast) create the most dramatic coastal scenery in Normandy. Reminiscent of the southern coast of England, these chalky towers can reach 120m as they curve around stony beaches and crack open into river valleys. Fishing ports and resort towns compete for dominance along the coast, while fields and pastures cap off the cliffs.**

## LE HAVRE

### pop 185,300

France's premier cargo port and Europe's fifth largest, Le Havre is also a bustling gateway for ferries to Britain and Ireland. As with most gateways, people tend to pass through it on the way to somewhere else, but to do so would be to miss out on a designated World Heritage Site.

Le Havre was created in 1517 by François I to replace the ports of Harfleur and Honfleur, which were silting up. With its two-hour high tides it became an important maritime centre. In the 17th century Cardinal Richelieu built a citadel and enlarged the ports just in time for the city to capitalise on emerging trade connections with the Americas. Ships loaded with cotton and coffee sailed into the port and, in the 18th century, sailed out with guns and supplies for American revolutionaries.

During WWI the Belgian government retreated to Ste-Adresse, an adjoining village that had been a fashionable sea-

side retreat for such luminaries as Sarah Bernhardt, Alexandre Dumas, Raoul Dufy and Claude Monet.

The Germans occupied Le Havre in 1940, turning it into an important garrison. From 2 to 12 September 1944, the city was subjected to a furious bombing campaign by the Allies, while the Germans, in a desperate last stand, blew up the port installations. By the time it was liberated, 85% of the city had been destroyed and 5000 civilians killed.

## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

**TOURIST OFFICE // Tourist Office** (☎ 02 32 74 04 04; [www.lehavretourisme.com](http://www.lehavretourisme.com); 186 bd Clemenceau; ☎ 9am-6.15pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Sun Easter-Oct, same except closed 12.30-2pm Mon-Sat Nov-Easter)

## ORIENTATION

A triumph in town planning, the major roads radiate from the place de l'Hôtel de Ville. Av Foch runs west to the sea and the Port de Plaisance recreational area; bd de Strasbourg goes east to the train and bus stations; rue de Paris cuts south to the quai de Southampton, where the cruise liners stop. Bd Albert leads along the beach 2km to the Ste-Adresse neighbourhood, which survived WWII with its grand turreted mansions intact.

## EXPLORING LE HAVRE

### 📍 WORLD HERITAGE

**ARCHITECTURE // DISCOVER THE BEAUTY OF CONCRETE; NO, REALLY!**

After the war the task of rebuilding an obliterated Le Havre fell to architect Auguste Perret. With a pressing need to shelter 80,000 suddenly homeless residents

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