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

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

It’s certainly a region for those with a penchant for the past, but life in this corner of France is very much for the living. Whether it’s browsing the day’s catch at a noisy fish market, dancing to the sound of binious and bombardes at a traditional fest-noz or striking out across the cliff tops in search of inspiration and escape, one thing’s for certain – these twin Gallic gems will stay with you long after you leave for home.
TOP LEFT The walled city of St-Malo (p33) TOP RIGHT An old stone house in Dinan (p59) BOTTOM LEFT The alignements in Carnac (p122) cover a vast area BOTTOM CENTRE Monet’s garden (p251) in Giverny was a major source of inspiration for the artist BOTTOM RIGHT Intricate workmanship on Rouen’s Cathédrale Notre Dame (p238)
WHAT’S NEW?

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

CLIMATE: ST-MALO

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PRICE GUIDE

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

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

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

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

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

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

THINGS TO TAKE

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

WEBLINKS

**BRITTANY TOURISM** ([www.brittanytourism.com](http://www.brittanytourism.com)) Online portal for the Brittany tourist board.

**LE MÉTÉO** ([www.meteo.fr](http://www.meteo.fr)) Catch the latest weather forecast.

**NORMANDY TOURISM** ([www.normandy-tourism.org](http://www.normandy-tourism.org)) Plan your own Norman invasion.

**VOYAGES-SNCF.COM** ([www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)) Train times and online bookings with France’s national carrier.
**MARCH**

**FÊTE DES MARINS**

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

**APRIL**

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

**JAZZ SOUS LES POMMIERS**

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

**JULY**

**FÊTES MÉDIÉVALES DE BAYEUX**

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

**FESTIVAL DES VIELLES CHARRUES**

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

**MAY**

**FÊTE DE JEANNE D’ARC**
France’s favourite saint met her end in Rouen on 30 May 1431. This lively national festival on the last weekend of May marks the occasion. www.fetesjeannedarc.fr

**THIS IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS**

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*TOP LEFT* Celebrations for a pardon

*RIGHT* The boardwalk at the seaside resort of Deauville (p208) pays homage to the stars of the silver screen.
**FESTIVAL DE CORNOUAILLE**

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

**LA PETITE TROMENIE**

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

**AUGUST**

**FESTIVAL INTERCELTIQUE**

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

**SEPTEMBER**

**AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL**

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

**OCTOBER**

**FESTIVAL DU FILM BRITANNIQUE**

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

BAYEUX (p177) Where embroidery becomes an artform.

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

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

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

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

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

CLAUDIE CONNECTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

DON’T MISS EXPERIENCES

★ The Carnac alignments – prepare to be dumbfounded by this megalithic marvel (p122)

★ Rouen’s old town – delve into the half-timbered heart of this exciting city (p236)

★ St-Malo – get lost along the cobbled alleys of the Cité des Corsaires (p33)

★ Dinan – wander the ramparts of this medieval river town (p59)

★ Festival de Cornouaille – join the party for Quimper’s Celtic hoedown (p105)

★ Pardons – nearly every Breton town holds its own colourful procession dedicated to its patron saint

★ Bayeux – savour the city’s medieval festival (p10)

TOP PARDONS

TRÉGUIER (May) For St-Yves, Brittany’s patron saint.

PLOUGUERNEAU (June) To St Peter and St Paul.

QUIMPER (July) Honours the House of the Mother of God.

ROSCOFF (July) To St Barbara, patron saint of artillerymen.

LOCRONAN (July) Hosts the Petite or Grand Troménie.

STE-ANNE D’AURAY (July) One of Brittany’s most spectacular pardons.
CULTURE
BRITTANY & NORMANDY

FILMS
CONTE D’ÉTÉ (Eric Rohmer, 1996) Summer love story set in Dinard.
JEANNE D’ARC (Luc Besson, 1999) The story of France’s national icon.
PARAPLUIES DE CHERBOURG (Jacques Demy, 1964) If only Cherbourg were this pretty.
SAVING PRIVATE RYAN (Steven Spielberg, 1998) Spielberg’s take on Jour-J.

FAMOUS WRITERS
AUGUSTE RÉNÉ DE CHATEAUBRIAND (1768–1848) The nation’s foremost Romantic novelist grew up, wrote stories and died at Combourg (p49).
GUSTAVE FLAUBERT (1821–80) The author of Madame Bovary (based on real-life events that took place in the town of Ry) was a Rouen native (p234).
GUY DE MAUPASSANT (1850–93) France’s most famous short-story writer, was born in Fécamp (p225) and wrote many of his short stories in Étretat.
JULES VERNE (1828–1905) Born in Nantes, he ran off to be a cabin boy as a child and later became a prolific sci-fi pioneer who penned 63 classic novels (p144).

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

TOP LEFT Village folkloric dancers and musicians in Finistère RIGHT The imposing castle of Josselin (p136) is one of the finest in the region
BRITTANY’S ANCIENT MONUMENTS

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

TOP CHÂTEAUX

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

**CUISINE CORSAIRE** ([www.cuisine-corsaire.fr](http://www.cuisine-corsaire.fr)) Roellinger-trained chefs supervise this sophisticated seafood school in Cancale.

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

**MANOIR DE LA RIVIÈRE** ([www.manoirdelariviere.net](http://www.manoirdelariviere.net)) Residential courses held in St-Louet-sur-Seulles. You’ll also go shopping for your own ingredients.

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

**OUI CHEF** ([www.ouichef.com](http://www.ouichef.com)) Lively countryside-inspired cooking lessons in Neuvilles-sur-Touques.

**REGIONAL CUISINE**

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

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

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

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

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

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

DON’T MISS EXPERIENCES

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

STAPLES

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

FOOD BOOKS

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

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

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

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

TOP TREATS

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

CONSERVERIE LA BELLE-ILOISE Visit the Quiberon’s last fish cannery (p126).

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

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

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

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

NORMAN CHEESES

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

TOP LEFT Making crêpes at the Festival de Cornouaille (p105) in Quimper

RIGHT A sizzling plate of oysters, Cancale’s specialty (p44)
Seafood features on practically every menu. The signature dish to look out for is the *plateau de fruits de mer* (seafood platter), which varies according to the daily catch, but generally includes langoustines, spider crab, oysters, prawns, shrimps, clams, scallops and mussels. Fish is often served fairly simply to bring out the flavours: popular sauces are *à la normande* (in a creamy sauce) or *au beurre blanc* (in a butter sauce). Other dishes to look out for are *homard à l’armoricaine* (lobster in a herb and tomato sauce), *bar de ligne au sel de Guérande* (line-caught sea bass crusted in Guérande salt), *cotriade* (a hearty fish and shellfish soup), and of course the ubiquitous bistro staple of *moules-frites* (mussels and chips).

### FOOD FESTIVALS

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


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

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

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

With a pastoral patchwork of green fields, ancient woodland, humpbacked hills and over 2000km of rugged coastline, outdoorsy types will be spoilt for choice in Brittany and Normandy. Hard-core hikers, iron-legged bikers and dedicated sailors will find a wealth of opportunities to indulge their passions, and local tourist offices are well setup for providing advice on loads of outdoor activities. While you certainly won’t be able to escape the summer crowds along the most popular stretches of coastline, a quiet beach, remote cliff-top or unspoilt patch of countryside is never more than a quick drive or ride away; and if you’re looking to get back to nature, the area’s many *parc naturels régionals* (regional nature parks) and *réserves naturelles* (nature reserves) are ideal, protecting huge tracts of natural landscape that collectively support all sorts of rare flora and fauna.
TOP HIKES

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

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

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

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

DON’T MISS EXPERIENCES

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

LIFE’S A BEACH

Top tips for beach-bums:

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

TOP WEBSITES
All but the first option are in French only.

WWW.BRETAGNE-RANDO.COM Hikes within Brittany.
WWW.LESROCH.ORG Tips on mountain-bike trips in the Monts d’Arrée.
WWW.NAUTISMEBRETAGNE.FR Online guide to water activities.
WWW.RANDOBREIZH.ORG Great resource for Breton hiking and cycling itineraries.
WWW.RANDONNEE-NORMANDIE.COM Hikes with a Norman focus.

RESOURCES
All but the last option are in French only.

COMITÉ RÉGIONAL NORMANDIE CANOË-KAYAK (www.crck-normandie.fr) Information on kayaking and canoeing throughout Normandy.
FÉDÉRATION FRANÇAISE DE LA RANDONNÉE PÉDESTRE (www.ffrp.asso.fr) The main hiking contact in France, with topoguides covering trails including the GR34.
FÉDÉRATION FRANÇAISE DE LA VOILE (www.ffvoile.net) France’s national sailing federation, with links to accredited sailing schools.
INSTITUT GÉOGRAPHIQUE NATIONAL (IGN; www.ign.fr) France’s main map company.

THE GR34
This trail ranks is one of France’s longest Sentiers de Grande Randonnée (GRs; long-distance trails). Hugging the Brittany coast, it runs for over 2000km all the way from Mont St-Michel to Port-Navalo on the Golfe du Morbihan. The trail is marked by red-and-white striped trail markers – wherever you see one, you can be sure you’re on a maintained trail offering spectacular coastal walking. Many stretches, especially near coastal towns, are known as Sentiers des Douaniers (customs officers’ trails), a reminder of the days when the paths were patrolled by armed officers on the lookout for smugglers.
**VOIES VERTES**

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

**USEFUL CONTACTS**

- Cycling holidays – with Breton Bikes (www.bretonbikes.com), a British-owned but Breton-based company
- Golf-breaks – with Golfing in Brittany (www.golfinginbrittany.co.uk)
- Sand-yachting – at Penthièvre, run by Passageurs du Vent (www.aeroplage.com)
- Diving – Paul Éluard (www.pauleluard-plongee.com) goes to wrecks off Normandy
- Hiking – Explore the Monts d’Arrée, guided by ADDES (www.arree-randos.com)
- Sailing lessons – with France’s celebrated school, Îles de Glénan (www.glenans.asso.fr)
TOP WEBSITES

BIENVENUE À LA FERME
(www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com)
Check it out for farmstays and farm activities all over France.

WWW.FRANCE4FAMILIES.COM Advice on travelling with kids in France, with sections for Brittany and Normandy.

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

DON’T MISS EXPERIENCES

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

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

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

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

OLIVER BERRY

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

PETER DRAGICEVICH

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

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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BEGIN TAKING IN BRITTANY’S ESSENTIAL SIGHTS AT THE OLD TOWN AND RAMPARTS OF ST-MALO (P33) FOLLOWED BY A DAY TRIP TO ELEGANT DINARD (P45) AND THEN GO UPRIVER TO MEDIEVAL DINAN (P59). INDULGE IN SHOPPING AND SIGHTSEEING IN RENNES (P50), VISIT WONDERFULLY PRESERVED VANNES (P130) AND ADMIRE THE PREHISTORIC CARNAC MEgalITHS (P122). HEAD WEST VIA MARITIME CONCARNEAU (P108) TO THE LIVELY CITY OF QUIMPER (P102). TRACE THE COASTLINE NORTH, STOPPING TO SEE THE POINTE DE PENMARC’H (P108) AND POINTE DU RAZ (P101) HEADLANDS, STROLL AROUND THE OLD-WORLD VILLAGE OF LOCRONAN (P102) AND VISIT THE BOAT MUSEUM IN DOUARNENEZ (P99). EXPLORE THE PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL D’ARMORIQUE (P94) BEFORE HEADING TO THE OLD PORT OF ROSCOFF (P84), AFTER VISITING MORLAIX (P82) AND MAKING A DETOUR TO THE COASTLINE OF CÔTE DE GRANIT ROSE (P73).
NORMAN HIGHLIGHTS

TWO TO THREE WEEKS // ROUEN TO MONT ST-MICHEL // 900KM
Start in Rouen (p234) with its medieval centre. Take day trips to Monet’s gardens at Giverny (p251), the châteaux of Beaumesnil (p248) and nearby Champ de Bataille (p247). Then visit the port of Dieppe (p228) and explore the Impressionists’ favourite coastline, the Côte d’Albâtre (p217). Compare concrete-central, Le Havre (p217), with futuristic Pont de Normandie (p215) and picture-book Honfleur (p211). Roll the dice at Deauville (p208) and visit the sombre Mémorial de Caen (p191), the D-Day Beaches (p185) and the American Military Cemetery (p187).
Then it’s on to beautiful Bayeux (p177) and its famous tapestry, followed by a few days exploring the Haut-Cotentin (p168) en route to laid-back Barfleur (p171) and the imposing abbey of Mont St-Michel (p157).

NATURAL SPLENDOUR

ONE WEEK // PNR BRIÈRE TO THE CROZON // 400KM
This trip starts with a barge trip around the marshes of the Parc Naturel Régional (PNR) de Brière (p151). Next, wander along the beaches of the Presqu’île de Rhuys (p134), spot seabirds at the Réserve de Séné (p134) and explore other parts of the gorgeous Golfe du Morbihan (p133) before heading for the aptly named Belle-Île-en-Mer (p127) and its diminutive neighbours, Houat and Hoëdic (p129). Cycle the quiet towpaths of the Nantes–Brest Canal (p136) en route to the peaceful shores of Lac de Guerlédan (p138). The forest trails of Paimpont (p37) or Huelgoat (p95) warrant a visit. Explore the wild hilltops of the Monts d’Arrée (p95) on horseback or by mountain bike, and finish up at the bays and headlands of the Crozon Peninsula (p96).
MEDIEVAL MARVELS

10 DAYS // BAYEUX TO VANNES // 550KM

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

A GASTRONOMIC TOUR

10 DAYS // RENNES TO DIEPPE // 600KM

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

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

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

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**ARCHITECTURAL TREASURES**

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

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