



Atlantic Coast

POP 4,717,460

Includes ➔

Nantes	612
Poitiers	617
Marais Poitevin	619
La Rochelle	620
Île de Ré	625
Cognac	626
Bordeaux	628
St-Émilion	638
Arcachon	641

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ La Ribaudière (p628)
- ➔ Cocotte Restaurant (p615)
- ➔ Marché des Capucins (p633)
- ➔ Le Thiers Temp (p624)
- ➔ Le Cheverus Café (p633)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Maison Flore (p619)
- ➔ Hotel Sôzô (p615)
- ➔ La Maison Douce (p626)
- ➔ Ecolodge des Chartrons (p631)
- ➔ L'Hôtel Particulier (p632)

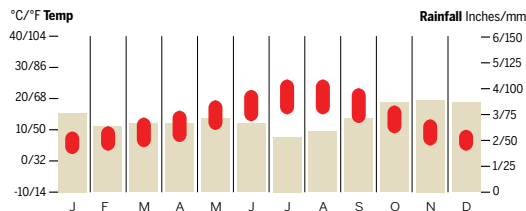
Why Go?

With quiet country roads winding through vine-striped hills and wild stretches of coastal sand interspersed with misty islands, the Atlantic coast is where France gets back to nature. Much more laid-back than the Med (but with almost as much sunshine), this is the place to slow the pace right down.

But the Atlantic coast can do cities and culture as well. There's bourgeois Bordeaux with its wonderful old centre, lively Nantes with its wealth of fascinating museums, and salty La Rochelle with its breathtaking aquarium and beautiful portside setting.

The one thing that unites the people of this area is a love of the finer things in life. The region's exceptional wine is famous worldwide, and to accompany it you'll find ocean-fresh seafood wherever you go, plus plenty of regional delicacies – including crêpes in the north, snails in the centre and foie gras in the south.

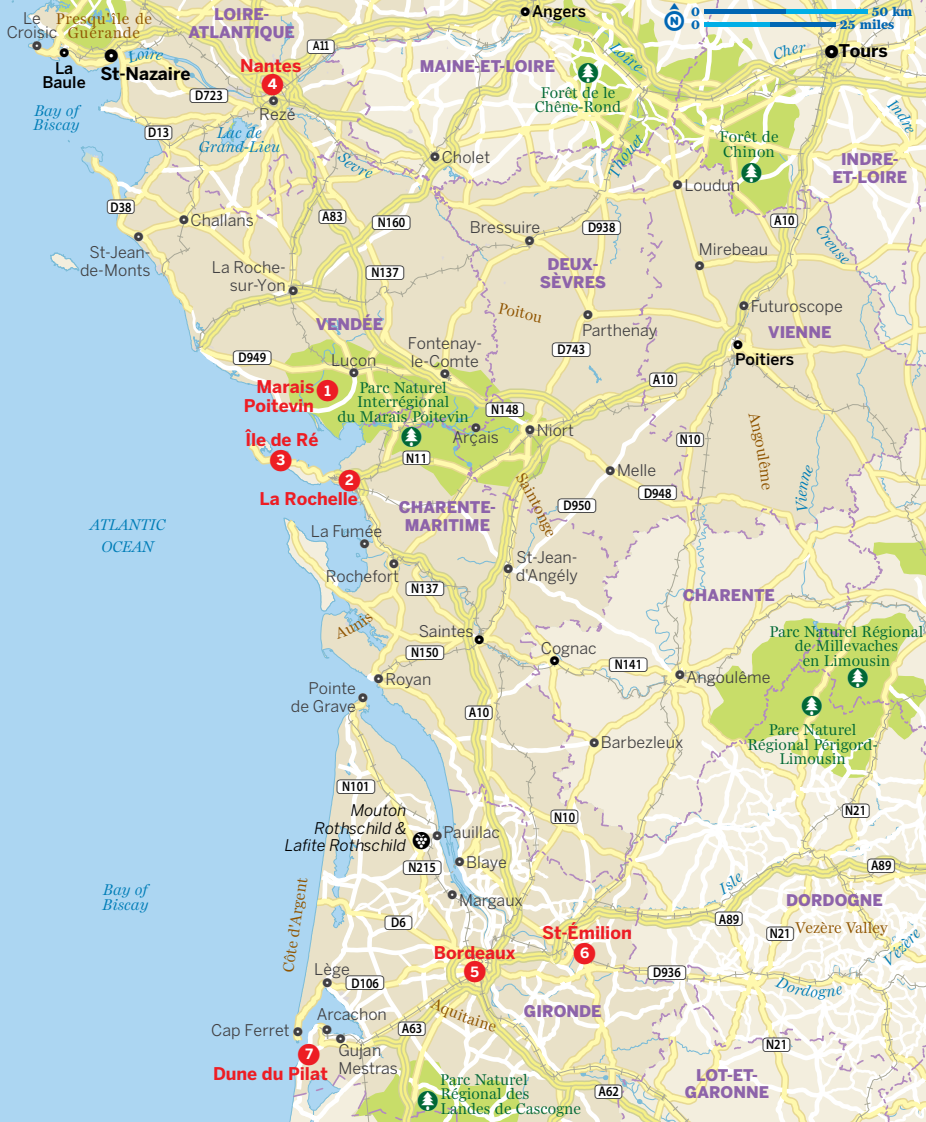
When to Go Bordeaux



May–Jun Ducklings are splashing around the Marais Poitevin and it's a prime time to visit La Rochelle.

Jun–Sep The beaches are bathed in sunshine but there are no high-season crowds.

Sep–Oct Grape-harvesting season around Bordeaux, and oyster and cèpe mushroom season all over.



Atlantic Coast Highlights

1 Gliding through the emerald-green waters of the **Marais Poitevin** (p619), the 'Green Venice'

2 Diving deep under the waves and coming face to face with wobbly jellyfish and jaw-gnashing sharks at La Rochelle's incredible **aquarium** (p621)

3 Cycling the smooth, flat bike paths criss-crossing the sunbaked **Île de Ré** (p625)

4 Riding a three-storey, 60-tonne mechanical elephant in **Nantes** (p612)

5 Touring the dramatically floodlit buildings and monuments making up the world's largest Unesco-

listed urban area in central **Bordeaux** (p628)

6 Satisfying your craving for wine in **St-Émilion** (p638), home to some of the world's most famous wines

7 Admiring the views from the summit of the **Dune du Pilat** (p642), Europe's highest sand dune