

Normandy



Known for cows, cider and Camembert, Normandy is bordered to the north and the west by the English Channel (La Manche), Brittany to the southwest, the Paris basin to the east and France's far north to the northeast. It's a place of churned butter and soft cheeses, where gentle fields divided by hedgerows end at chalk-white cliffs and dune-lined beaches.

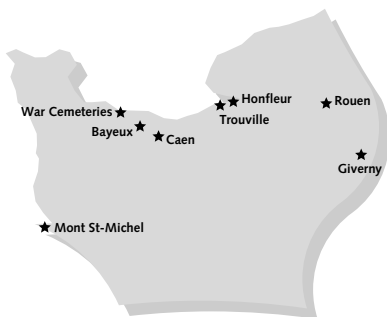
Ever since the armies of William the Conqueror set sail from its shores in 1066, Normandy has played a pivotal role in European history. It was the front line for Anglo-French hostilities for much of the Hundred Years' War and later became the crucible of Impressionist art, but it was during the D-Day landings of 1944 that Normandy leaped to global importance. Although many towns were shattered during the Battle of Normandy, the landscape is still dotted with sturdy châteaux and stunning cathedrals, as well as the glorious abbey of Mont St-Michel.

These days Normandy is an enticing blend of the maritime, the pastoral and the urban – and of old and new. The D-Day beaches are a short drive from the marvellous Bayeux Tapestry; chic boutiques occupy half-timbered houses near Rouen's famous Gothic cathedral; sheer cliffs meet the sea along the Côte d'Albâtre; fishing boats jostle with designer yachts in the harbours of Honfleur; and postwar concrete exudes 1950s optimism in Le Havre.

Normandy (www.normandie-tourisme.fr) is divided into two French administrative *régions*: Haute Normandie (the Eure and Seine-Maritime *départements*), to the east; and Basse Normandie (the Calvados, Manche and Orne *départements*), to the west.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Admire the architecture and art of the historic city of **Rouen** (p266)
- Discover your inner Impressionist at **Monet's flower-filled garden** (p278) at Giverny
- Travel back a thousand years with the world's oldest comic strip, the **Bayeux Tapestry** (p279)
- Ponder the price of France's liberation at the moving **war cemeteries** (p290 & p285) near the D-Day beaches
- Examine a century of war and peace at Caen's innovative **Mémorial museum** (p288)
- Watch the sun sink into the sands around the abbey of **Mont St-Michel** (p302)
- Savour superfresh seafood at the harbourside restaurants in **Honfleur** (p298) and **Trouville** (p294)



■ POPULATION: 3.2 MILLION

■ AREA: 29,900 SQ KM

History

The Vikings invaded present-day Normandy in the 9th century, and some of them established settlements and adopted Christianity. In 911 French king Charles the Simple, of the Carolingian dynasty, and Viking chief Hrölfir agreed that the area around Rouen should be handed over to these Norsemen – or Normans, as they came to be known.

For details on the Norman Conquest of England, see p284.

Throughout the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453), the duchy seesawed between French and English rule. England dominated Normandy for some 30 years until France gained permanent control in 1450. In the 16th century, Normandy, a Protestant stronghold, was the scene of much fighting between Catholics and Huguenots.

For details on D-Day, see p286.

Getting There & Around

Ferries to and from England and Ireland dock at Cherbourg, Dieppe, Le Havre and Ouistreham (Caen). The Channel Islands (Jersey and Guernsey) are most accessible from the Breton port of St-Malo but from April to September there are passenger services from the Normandy towns of Granville, Carteret and Diélette. For more information on ferries, see p968.

Normandy is easily accessible by train from Paris – Rouen is just 70 minutes from Paris' Gare St-Lazare. Most major towns are accessible by rail, and with the Carte Sillage Loisirs, travel around the Basse Normandie region is remarkably cheap on weekends and holidays. However, bus services between smaller towns and villages are infrequent at best. To explore Normandy's rural areas you'll really be best on either two or four wheels.

SEINE-MARITIME

The Seine-Maritime *département* (www.seine-maritime-tourisme.com) stretches along the chalk-white cliffs of the Côte d'Albâtre (Alabaster Coast) from Le Tréport via Dieppe to Le Havre, the fifth-busiest port in France. It's a region whose history is firmly bound up with the sea and is ideal for coastal exploring and cliff-top walks. When you fancy a break from the bracing

sea air, head inland to the lively, lovely metropolis of Rouen, a favourite haunt of Monet and Simone de Beauvoir, and one of the most intriguing cities in France's northeastern corner.

ROUEN

pop 108,300

With its elegant spires, beautifully restored medieval quarter and soaring Gothic cathedral, the ancient city of Rouen is one of Normandy's highlights. Known to the Romans as Rotomagus, Rouen has had a turbulent history – it was devastated several times during the Middle Ages by fire and plague, and was occupied by the English during the Hundred Years' War. The young French heroine Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc) was tried for heresy and burned at the stake in the central square in 1431. During WWII Allied bombing raids laid waste to large parts of the city, especially in the area south of the cathedral, but over the last six decades the city has been meticulously rebuilt.

Rouen is an ideal base for exploring the northern Normandy coast and Monet's home in Giverny.

Orientation

The old city, the heart of which is rue du Gros Horloge, lies north of the city centre's main east–west thoroughfare, rue Général Leclerc. The main shopping precinct is bounded by place du Vieux Marché, the Palais de Justice, rue de la République and rue Général Leclerc. The train station, Gare Rouen-Rive Droite, is at the northern end of rue Jeanne d'Arc.

Information

Banks with ATMs are plentiful on rue Jeanne d'Arc, especially near place Maréchal Foch.

ABC Bookshop (☎ 02 35 71 08 67; 11 rue des Faulx; ☎ Tue-Sat) Normandy's only all-English bookshop.

Café Chéri (☎ 02 35 70 46 76; 79 rue Ecuyère; ☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Sat) Free wi-fi has made this café the hang-out for road warriors. Online computers (upstairs) are generally free if you buy a drink.

Cybernet (☎ 02 35 07 73 02; 47 place du Vieux Marché; per hr €4; ☎ 10am–8pm Mon–Sat, 2–7pm Sun) A cybercafé.

Exchange Bureau (25 place de la Cathédrale; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Sat, 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Sun & holidays May–Sep, 9.30am–12.30pm & 1.30–6pm Mon–Sat, 2–6pm Sun & holidays Oct–Apr) Inside the tourist office.

Laundrettes 56 rue Cauchoise (☎ 7am–9pm); 55 rue d'Amiens (☎ 7am–9pm)

PlaceNet (☎ 02 77 76 90 21; 37 rue de la République; per 15min/hr €1/3; ☎ 2.30pm-12.30am Sun & Mon, 10.30am-12.30am Tue-Thu, 10.30am-3am Fri & Sat) Cybercafé with extended hours.

Post Office (45 rue Jeanne d'Arc) Changes foreign currency.

Tourist Office (☎ 02 32 08 32 40; www.rouentourisme.com; 25 place de la Cathédrale; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sun & holidays May-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun & holidays Oct-Apr) Inside a Renaissance-style building from the 1500s. Hotel reservations cost €3. Audioguides (€5) are available in seven languages.

Sights & Activities

OLD CITY

The old city's main thoroughfare, rue du Gros Horloge, runs from the cathedral west to **place du Vieux Marché**, where 19-year-old Joan of Arc was executed for heresy in 1431. Dedicated in 1979, **Église Jeanne d'Arc** (☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Nov-Mar), with its fish-scale exterior, marks the spot where Joan was burned at the stake. The church's soaring modernist interior, lit by some marvellous 16th-century stained glass, is well worth a look.

Rue du Gros Horloge is spanned by the impressive **Gros Horloge** (Big Clock; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 2-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), a Gothic belfry with one-handed medieval clocks on each side. On the west side, check out the gilded Latin inscription dedicated to Ludovico XV (Louis XV) in 1732 – see if you can count how many times the suffix *-issimo* appears.

The ornately Gothic **Palais de Justice** (Law Courts; on Place Maréchal Foch), little more than a shell at the end of WWII, has been restored to its early-16th-century Gothic glory, though the 19th-century western facade is still pockmarked by bullet holes. The courtyard, with its impossibly delicate spires, gargoyles and statuary, is accessible via a metal detector from rue aux Juifs; this is also the entrance to use if you'd like to sit in on a trial. Under the staircase at the courtyard's eastern end is the **Monument Juif** (Jewish Monument; ☎ closed to the public), the oldest Jewish communal structure in France and the only reminder of Rouen's medieval Jewish community, expelled by Philippe le Bel in 1306.

If you ever find yourself being chased around Rouen by someone on horseback, just duck into **rue des Chanoines**, an impossibly narrow medieval alley that links 26 rue St-Romain with 29 rue St-Nicolas. For **window shopping**, head to rue des Carmes and nearby streets.

CATHÉDRALE NOTRE DAME

On a site occupied by churches since the 4th century, **Cathédrale Notre Dame** (Notre Dame Cathedral; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-6pm Sun & holidays mid-Mar-Oct; 7.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-6pm Sun & holidays Nov-mid-Mar) was painted repeatedly by Claude Monet, who was fascinated by the subtle changes of light and colour on the cathedral's towering French Gothic facade. Built between 1201 and 1514, it was damaged by time, WWII and a 1999 storm, and is still undergoing renovation. Monet would hardly recognise its recently cleaned facade, now almost white.

The Romanesque crypt, visitable on a tour, was part of a cathedral completed in 1062 and destroyed by a conflagration that flattened much of the city on Easter in the year 1200. The Flamboyant Gothic Tour de Beurre (Butter Tower; late 1400s), 75m high, was financed by local faithful who made donations to the cathedral in return for being allowed to eat butter during Lent – or so they say (some historians believe the name simply refers to the colour of the stone). The free **guided visits** (☎ 2.30pm Sat & Sun year-round, daily Jul, Aug & school holidays) to the crypt, ambulatory and Chapel of the Virgin are in French but some guides are happy to add English commentary.

MUSEUMS

Inside a desanctified Flamboyant Gothic church built in the early 1500s, the truly riveting **Musée Le Secq des Tournelles** (☎ 02 35 88 42 92; 2 rue Jacques Villon; adult/student/under 18yr €2.30/1.55/free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) is devoted to the blacksmith's craft. Displays include some 5000 wrought-iron items made between the 3rd and 19th centuries, including hanging shop signs, lots of locks and keys, and an elaborate choir grille from 1202.

The **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Fine Arts Museum; ☎ 02 35 71 28 40; esplanade Marcel Duchamp; adult/student/under 18yr €3/2/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon), housed in a grand structure erected in 1870, features a captivating collection of 15th- to 20th-century paintings, including canvases by Caravaggio, Rubens, Modigliani, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley (lots) and (of course) several works by Monet, including a study of Rouen's cathedral (in room 2.33). Some rooms have laminated art history sheets in English. Perfect for a rainy day.

Housed in a 17th-century building with a fine courtyard, the **Musée de la Céramique** (☎ 02 35 07 31 74; 1 rue du Faucon; adult/student/under 18yr €2.30/1.55/free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sat) is known for

its 16th- to 19th-century *faïence* (decorated earthenware) and porcelain. Tickets cost a bit more during temporary exhibitions.

A one-day ticket valid for all three municipal museums costs €5.35; an annual ticket is €9.15.

CHURCHES

The Flamboyant Gothic **Église St-Maclou** (Place Barthelemy; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Fri-Mon Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Nov-Mar) was built between 1437 and 1521 but much of the decoration dates from the Renaissance. It is partly surrounded by half-timbered houses inclined at curious angles. The entrance is half-a-block east of 56 rue de la République.

The **Abbatiale St-Ouen** (☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Nov-Mar), a 14th-century abbey, is a marvellous example of the Rayonnant Gothic style. The entrance is through a lovely garden along rue des Faulx.

AÎTRE ST-MACLOU

For a macabre thrill – perhaps accompanied by a tingly shudder down your spine – check out the courtyard of **Aître St-Maclou** (186 rue Martainville; admission free; ☎ 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, to 7pm Nov-Mar), a curious ensemble of half-timbered buildings built between 1526 and 1533. Decorated with lurid woodcarvings of skulls, crossbones, gravediggers' tools and hourglasses, it was used as a burial ground for plague victims as recently as 1781. Aître St-Maclou now houses the regional École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts).

PASTRY-MAKING CLASSES

Always wanted to learn how to make traditional French pastries or hand-made chocolate? This may be your chance! At **Coup de Pâte** (☎ 02 35 71 58 47; www.pastryclasses.blogspot.com; 11 rue des Faulx; ☎ 9am-12.30pm Mon-Fri & 1 weekend a month), in the courtyard next to the ABC Bookshop, you can study the art of the *pâtisier* and the *chocolatier* with Arnaud Houley, a congenial chef with decades of experience. A class costs €50 per group (of up to five people), including ingredients and simultaneous English translation. If possible, reserve by phone or email at least 48 hours ahead.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Hôtel Le Palais (☎ 02 35 71 41 40; 12 rue du Tambour; s/d €36/42, with hall shower €24/30) The rooms are basic

and not all have a private bathroom, but this old-school cheapie is bang in the middle of the old city – the best of Rouen is literally on your doorstep.

Hôtel Andersen (☎ 02 35 71 88 51; www.hotelandersen.com; 4 rue Pouchet; d €53-63, s/d with hall shower €40/45) Ensnconed in an early-19th-century mansion, this quiet hotel has an old-world atmosphere, classical music wafting through the lobby and 15 spare but imaginative rooms with Laura Ashley wallpaper. One of half-a-dozen hotels right around the train station.

Hôtel des Carmes (☎ 02 35 71 92 31; www.hoteldesarmes.com; in French; 33 place des Carmes; d €49-65, tr €67-77; ☎ ☒) This sweet little hotel, trimmed in an imaginative though rather haphazard fashion, has 12 rooms decked out with patchwork quilts and vibrant colours; some even have cerulean-blue cloudscapes painted on the ceilings. You can burn off some Camembert calories by taking one of the less pricey 4th-floor rooms.

MIDRANGE

Hôtel Le Cardinal (☎ 02 35 70 24 42; www.cardinal-hotel.fr; 1 place de la Cathédrale; s €47-59, d €58-72, q €96; ☒) In a supercentral spot facing the cathedral, this postwar hotel has 18 simply furnished rooms with lots of natural light and spacious showers. The 4th-floor rooms have fantastic private terraces overlooking the square.

Le Vieux Carré (☎ 02 35 71 67 70; www.vieux-carre.fr; 34 rue Ganterie; d €58-62) Set around a cute little garden courtyard, this quiet half-timbered hotel has a delightfully old-fashioned *salon de thé* (tearoom) and 13 smallish rooms eclectically decorated with old postcard blowups and slightly threadbare rugs.

Hôtel de la Cathédrale (☎ 02 35 71 57 95; www.hotel-de-la-cathedrale.fr; 12 rue St-Romain; d €66-93, q €115; ☎) Hiding behind a 17th-century half-timbered facade, this atmospheric hotel has 27 unexciting but quiet rooms in shades of white and light blue, decorated with romantic scenes from the 1700s; most overlook a tiny, plant-filled courtyard.

Hôtel Dandy (☎ 02 35 07 32 00; www.hotels-rouen.net; 93 rue Cauchoise; d €80-105) Decorated in a contemporary style spiced up with furniture Louis XV would have liked, this welcoming, family-run hotel has 18 rooms with flat-screen TVs and endearingly outdated bathrooms.

Hôtel du Vieux Marché (☎ 02 35 71 00 88; www.bestwestern.com; 33 rue du Vieux Palais; d €117-160) Its lobby bedecked with ship models and maritime prints,

this modernist hotel has just a smidge of Zen sophistication. The 48 rooms are handsome but uninspiring, with brass lamps, lots of dark wood and ordinary bathrooms. Almost within marsh-mallow range of place du Vieux Marché.

Eating

Little eateries crowd the north side of rue Martainville, facing Église St-Maclou; for ethnic cuisine head two blocks south to rue des Augustins. More restaurants can be found along rue de Fontenelle (a block west of Église Jeanne d'Arc), and a few blocks east of there along rue Ecuyère.

Thé Majuscule (☎ 02 35 71 15 66; 8 place de la Calende; plat du jour €10.50; ☎ restaurant noon-2pm Mon-Sat, salon de thé 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Downstairs it's a typically chaotic French second-hand bookshop, upstairs a homey tearoom with home-made *tartes* (including one vegetarian pie), salads (in summer), cakes and exotic teas (€3.30). Has a warm-season terrace.

Le P'tit Bec (☎ 02 35 07 63 33; www.leptitbec.com, in French; 182 rue Eau de Robec; lunch menus €13-15.50; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Fri & Sat, also open dinner Tue-Thu Jun-Aug) The down-to-earth menu is stuffed with pasta, salads, *œufs cocottes* (eggs with grated cheese baked in cream), a few vegetarian options and home-made desserts. Has a warm-season terrace.

Pascaline (☎ 02 35 89 67 44; 5 rue de la Poterne; menus €14.90-26.90; ☎ lunch & dinner) A top spot for a great-value *formule midi* (lunchtime fixed-price menu), this bustling bistro serves up traditional French cuisine in typically Parisian surroundings – think net curtains, white tablecloths and chuffing coffee machines. There's live piano nightly, and jazz nights are held two Thursdays a month.

Les Maraîchers (☎ 02 35 71 57 73; www.les-maraichers.fr, in French; 37 place du Vieux Marché; menus €16-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) All gleaming mirrors, polished wood and colourful floor tiles, this bistro – established in 1912 and classified a *café historique d'Europe* – has a genuine zinc bar and a warm and very French ambiance. Specialities include Normandy-raised beef.

Les Nymphéas (☎ 02 35 89 26 69; www.lesnymphes-eas-rouen.com, in French; 7-9 rue de la Pie; menus €27-64; ☎ 12.15-1.45pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Its formal table settings arrayed under 16th-century beams, this fine restaurant serves cuisine based on fresh local ingredients (including cider and Calvados), giving a rich Norman twist to dishes such as farm-raised wild duck.

Gill (☎ 02 35 71 16 14; www.gill.fr; 8-9 quai de la Bourse; lunch menu Tue-Fri €35, other menus €65-92; ☎ 12.15-1.45pm & 7.30-9.45pm Tue-Sat) *The place to go in Rouen for gastronomique French cuisine of the highest order, served in an ultrachic, ultramodern dining room. Specialities including fresh Breton lobster, scallops with truffles, Rouen-style pigeon and, for dessert, millefeuille à la vanille.*

SELF-CATERING

Halles du Vieux Marché (place du Vieux Marché; ☎ 7am-7pm Tue-Sat, 7am-1pm Sun) A small covered market with an excellent *fromagerie* (cheese shop).

Léon Déant Fromager (18 rue Rollin; ☎ 9am-12.45pm & 3-7.30pm Tue-Fri, morning Sat) Normandy cheeses are a speciality.

Marché U (place du Vieux Marché; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Supermarket.

Monoprix (65 rue du Gros Horloge; ☎ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat) Supermarket.

Drinking

There are several gay nightspots on rue St-Etienne des Tonneliers.

La Boîte à Bières (☎ 02 35 07 76 47; www.laboiteabieres.fr, in French; 35 rue Cauchoise; ☎ 5pm-2am Tue-Sat) Affectionately known as BAB, this lively, half-timbered corner bar is a good place to down a few local *bières artisanales* (microbrews) in the company of a loyal student following. Sometimes has karaoke, disco and concert nights.

Le Bateau Ivre (☎ 02 35 70 09 05; http://bateauivre.rouen.free.fr, in French; 17 rue des Sapins; ☎ 9pm or 10pm-4am Wed-Sat, sometimes open Tue, closed Wed in summer) A longstanding live venue with a varied program of concerts (French *chansons*, blues, rock reggae etc) except on Thursday, when anyone can join in the jam session.

Entertainment

The tourist office sells tickets to cultural events, as does the **Fnac Billeterie** (☎ 08 92 68 36 22; www.fnacspectacles.com, in French; cnr rue St-Lô & rue de la Poterne; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat).

Cinéma Le Melville (☎ 02 35 07 18 48; 75 rue Général Lederc) Screens only nondubbed films, many of them in English, in its four halls.

Théâtre des Arts (☎ 02 35 71 41 36; www.operade-rouen.com, in French; place des Arts) Home to the Opéra de Rouen, the city's premier concert venue also stages ballets.

Getting There & Away

From **Gare Rouen-Rive Droite** (rue Jeanne d'Arc), an art-nouveau edifice built from 1912 to 1928,

trains go direct to Paris' Gare St-Lazare (€19.30, 1¼ hours, 25 daily Monday to Friday, 14 to 19 daily weekends), Amiens (€17.10, four or five daily, 1¼ hours), Caen (€21.80, 1½ hours, eight daily), Dieppe (€9.90, 45 minutes, 10 to 15 daily Monday to Saturday, five Sunday) and Le Havre (€12.90, 50 minutes, 18 daily Monday to Saturday, 10 Sunday).

In the city centre, train tickets are sold at the **Boutique SNCF** (20 rue aux Juifs; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat).

For car rental try **ADA** (☎ 02 35 72 25 88; 34 av Jean Rondeaux), **Avis** (☎ 02 35 88 60 94; in train station above track 4), **Europcar** (☎ 03 32 08 39 09; in train station) or **Hertz** (☎ 02 35 70 70 71; 130 rue Jeanne d'Arc).

Getting Around

Free parking is available across the Seine from the city centre, eg along and below quai Jean Moulin.

Rouen's bus lines and partly underground light rail (metro) line are operated by **TCAR** (☎ 02 35 52 52 52; www.tc.fr, in French). The metro runs from 5am (6am on Sunday) to about 11pm and is useful for getting from the train station to the centre of town. One ticket costs €1.40 (10 tickets €10.70, and is valid for an hour; a pass valid for one day is €3.80 (two/three days €5.50/7.20). There are Espace Métrobus ticket offices inside the train station and at 9 rue Jeanne d'Arc.

Radio Taxi (☎ 02 35 88 50 50) operates 24 hours a day.

Cy'cl'ic (☎ 08 00 08 78 00; http://cyclic.rouen.fr), Rouen's version of Paris' Vélib' (p201), lets you rent a city bike from 14 locations around town. Credit card registration for one/seven days costs €1/5. Use is free for the first 30 minutes; the 2nd/3rd/4th-and-subsequent half-hours cost €1/2/4 each.

Rouen Bike (☎ 02 35 71 34 30; 45 rue St-Éloi; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat) rents out mountain bikes for €20/30 per day/weekend.

DIEPPE

pop 33,500

Sandwiched between limestone cliffs, Dieppe – a seaside resort since 1824 – is salty and a bit shabby but authentic, the kind of place where leather-skinned herring fishermen rub shoulders with British day trippers and summertime tourists licking oversized ice creams. It's an excellent spot to try some Norman seafood – the harbour is chock-full of restaurants serving local specialities such as scallops, mussels and sole.

Dieppe is proud of its International Kite Festival (www.dieppe-cerf-volant.org), held in early September in even-numbered years.

History

Privateers from Dieppe pillaged Southampton in 1338 and blockaded Lisbon two centuries later. Explorers based here include Florence-born Giovanni da Verrazano, who in 1524 became the first European to enter New York Harbour. The early European settlers in Canada included many Dieppois and the town was one of France's most important ports during the 16th century, when ships regularly sailed to West Africa and Brazil.

On 19 August 1942 a mainly Canadian force of over 6000 landed on the Dieppe beaches, in part to help the Soviets by drawing Nazi military power away from the Eastern Front. The results were nothing short of catastrophic but lessons learned here proved useful in planning the Normandy landings two years later.

Orientation

Quai Henri IV and almost-perpendicular quai Duquesne line the western side of the port area. Bd de Verdun runs along the lawns bordering the beach. Two blocks inland, most of Grande Rue and rue de la Barre is pedestrianised.

Information

There's no ATM at the ferry terminal.

Banque Populaire (15 place Nationale) One of several banks on place Nationale.

Cybercafé (☎ 02 35 83 13 84; 20 rue de l'Épée; ☎ 2-7pm Mon, 9am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat; per hr €2)

Laundrettes 44 rue de l'Épée (☎ 7am-9pm); 2 rue Notre Dame (☎ 7am-9pm) The latter faces the back of Église St-Jacques.

Post Office (2 bd Maréchal Joffre) Changes foreign currency.

Tourist Office (☎ 02 32 14 40 60; www.dieppetourisme.com; Pont Jehan Ango; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sun May, Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) Has useful English brochures on Dieppe and nearby parts of the Côte d'Albâtre.

Sights

The **port**, still used by fishing vessels but dominated by pleasure craft, makes for a bracing sea-air stroll. Two blocks west, the Norman Gothic-style **Église St-Jacques** (place St-Jacques) has

completely renovated in 2007, has several seawater pools heated to 28°C, including a 50m outdoor pool, and plenty of facilities for kids. Also boasts a fitness centre (adult €12) with a *hammam* (Turkish baths)/sauna and a beauty centre.

High above the city on the western cliff, the 15th-century **Château-Musée** (☎ 02 35 06 61 99; rue de Chastes; adult/student/under 12yr €3.50/2/free; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Jun-Sep, to 5pm Wed-Mon Oct-May) is Dieppe's most imposing landmark. The museum inside is devoted to the city's maritime and artistic history, which often involved separating West African elephants from their tusks and shipping the ivory back to Dieppe. The craft of ivory carving reached extraordinary heights here during the 17th century and the results are on display.

Cité de la Mer (☎ 02 35 06 93 20; 37 rue de l'Asile Thomas; adult/student/4-16yr €5.50/4.50/3.50; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sep-May, open longer Jul & Aug) has exhibits on fishing, shipbuilding, the tides, Dieppe's cliffs and the Channel's sea and seaside habitats. Five large aquariums let you admire some especially large specimens of crustaceans and fish most often seen on French plates. An English-language brochure is available at the ticket desk.

There's a **Canadian military cemetery** 4km towards Rouen. Take av des Canadiens (the continuation of av Gambetta) south and follow the signs, or hop on bus 22 (eight to 10 daily Monday to Saturday).

Sleeping

Au Grand Duquesne (☎ 02 32 14 61 10; <http://augrandduquesne.free.fr>; augrandduquesne@orange.fr; 15 place St-Jacques; d €47-63, with hall shower €42) Central but without harbour views. The 12 blue-themed bedrooms aren't anything special but they're quiet and have floodlit bathrooms.

Hôtel de la Plage (☎ 02 35 84 18 28; www.plage.hotel.fr.st; 20 bd de Verdun; d €60-90, q €90-150; ☎) One of several somewhat faded places along the seafront, this hotel has 40 modern, modern rooms – three with jacuzzi bathtubs – decorated in pale tones of blue, green and red. Sea-view rooms come at a premium.

Les Arcades (☎ 02 35 84 14 12; www.lesarcades.fr, in French; 1-3 arcades de la Bourse; d €63-79, cheaper Sun-Thu Nov-Mar) Perched above a colonnaded arcade, this 21-room Logis de France hotel has lovely port views, a tiny lift and quiet rooms with yellow walls, blue rugs, efficient bathrooms and flat-screen TVs.

Eating & Drinking

Au Grand Duquesne (☎ 02 32 14 61 10; 15 place St-Jacques; menus €13.90-39.60) A good bet for cuisine that's both *traditionnelle* and *créative*, including fish and seafood. Specialities include *crêpiau deippois* (a thick, pear-filled crêpe). The veggie menu costs €18.50.

Le New Haven (☎ 02 35 84 89 72; 53 quai Henri IV; menus €17-29; ☎ 11.45am-2pm & 6.30-9.30pm Thu-Mon, daily Jul & Aug) The harbour front is lined with flashy restaurants but this elegant, though unpretentious fish place is one of the best. Freshly landed specialities include fish, prawns and Norway lobsters with *choucroute* (sauerkraut; €19) and *foie de lotte* (monkfish liver).

Au Goût du Jour (☎ 02 35 84 27 18; 16 rue Duquesne; menus €23-30; ☎ closed Mon, dinner Sun) At this jazzy restaurant, the reception is as warm and welcoming as the inventive French cuisine is fresh and tasty. Specialities include super-fresh fish, couscous with bass, and home-smoked salmon. Weekday menus ordered before 1.15pm and 9pm are €10.90 to 15.90.

SELF-CATERING

Boulangerie (15 quai Henri IV; ☎ Wed-Mon)

Food market (place Nationale; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm Tue & Thu)

Food market (cnr rue St-Jacques & Grande Rue; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm Sat)

Marché Plus (22 quai Duquesne; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Supermarket.

Getting There & Away

Dieppe is 65km north of Rouen, 108km north-east of Le Havre and 118km west of Amiens.

For information on car ferries from the **ferry terminal** to Newhaven, see p968.

Dieppe enjoys direct rail services to Rouen (€9.90, 40 to 60 minutes, 10 to 15 daily Monday to Saturday, six Sunday) but you usually have to change to get to Paris St-Lazare (€25.70, two to three hours, 11 daily Monday to Friday, six to eight weekends) and Le Havre (€20.70, 1½ to two hours, 12 daily Monday to Friday, six daily weekends).

Rental-car companies:

Europcar (☎ 02 35 04 97 10; 33 rue Thiers)

Hertz (☎ 02 32 14 01 70; 5 rue d'Écosse)

CÔTE D'ALBÂTRE

Stretching 130km from Le Tréport southwest to Étretat, the bone-white cliffs of the Côte d'Albâtre (Alabaster Coast) are strikingly reminiscent of the limestone cliffs of Dover, just

across the Channel. The dramatic coastline is dotted with small villages and hamlets, lovely gardens, several fine beaches and two nuclear powerplants (Paluel and Penly). The only towns of any note – in addition to Dieppe – are Fécamp, St-Valéry-en-Caux and Étretat.

Without a car, the Côte d'Albâtre is pretty inaccessible, though walkers can take the coastal **GR21 hiking trail**, which follows the Côte d'Albâtre all the way from Tréport to Le Havre. If you're driving west from Dieppe, take the coastal roads (D75, D68 and D79) rather than the inland D925.

Fécamp

pop 19,500

Fécamp was an ordinary fishing village until the 6th century, when a few drops of Christ's blood miraculously found their way here and attracted hordes of pilgrims. Benedictine monks soon established a monastery, and the fiery 'medicinal elixir' that a Venetian monk concocted in 1510 (using East Asian herbs) helped keep Fécamp on the map. The recipe, lost during the Revolution, was rediscovered in an old book in the 19th century. Today, *Bénédictine* is one of the most widely marketed *digestifs* in the world.

INFORMATION

Tourist Office (☎ 02 35 28 51 01; www.fecamp.tourisme.com, in French; quai Sadi Carnot; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat, Sun & holidays Apr-Jun, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sat Sep-Mar) Situated at the southern end of the pleasure port, across the parking lot from the train station. Has useful English-language brochures. A beachfront annex opens in July and August.

SIGHTS

The **port**, still used by fishing craft, is connected to the sea by the narrow *avant port* (outer harbour). North of there rises **Cap Fagnet** (110m), which offers fantastic views of the town and the coastline, while to the south is the **beach**, where you can rent catamarans, kayaks and windsurfers in summer.

All the *Bénédictine* liqueur in the world is made in the impossibly ornate **Palais Bénédictine** (☎ 02 35 10 26 10; www.benedictine.fr; 110 rue Alexandre Le Grand; adult/12-17yr/under 12yr €6.50/2/free; ☎ tickets sold 10am-6pm mid-Jul-Aug, 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Apr-mid-Jul & Sep-mid-Oct, 10-11.45am & 2-5pm mid-Oct-Mar, closed most of Jan), opened in 1900. Tours take you to a surprisingly interesting

collection of 13th- to 19th-century religious art and paintings assembled by the company's visionary founder, Alexandre Le Grand, and continue on to the production facilities, where you can admire copper alembics and touch and smell the natural ingredients used to make *Bénédictine* – the coriander seeds are the most fun to play with. As is only proper, adults end the visit with a shot of liqueur.

Built from 1175 to 1220 by Richard the Lion-Heart, **Abbatiale de la Ste-Trinité** (place des Ducs Richard; ☎ all day), 1.5km east of the beach (and a few blocks southeast of Fécamp's commercial centre), was the most important pilgrimage site in Normandy until the construction of Mont St-Michel (p302), thanks to the drops of holy blood that miraculously floated to Fécamp in the trunk of a fig tree.

Across from the abbey are the remains of the **fortified château** built by the earliest dukes of Normandy in the 10th and 11th centuries.

SLEEPING & EATING

Quite a few restaurants are situated on the south side of the port, along quai de la Vicomté and nearby parts of quai Bérigny.

Camping de Renéville (☎ 02 35 28 20 97; www.campingdereville.com; chemin de Nesmond; tent & 2 adults €11-13.50; ☎ Apr-mid-Nov) Dramatically situated on the western cliffs overlooking the beach. Also rents out chalets (€415 to €595 per week in high season, €240 to €320 per week in low season).

Hôtel Normandy (☎ 02 35 29 55 11; www.normandy-fecamp.com; 4 av Gambetta; s/d €50/62) In a smart fin-de-siècle building just up the hill from the train station, this quiet place has 32 newly refurbished rooms – some quite spacious – with light-yellow walls, baize-green carpets and lots of light. Rooms are often cheaper October to June.

La Ferme de la Chapelle (☎ 02 35 10 12 12; www.fermedelachapelle.fr; Côte de la Vierge; d/q €95/140, apt €145-220, cheaper Oct-mid-Feb; 🍷) High above town near Cap Fagnet, the 17 modern rooms and five kitchenette-equipped apartments overlook a grassy central courtyard, so there's no sea view – for that you'll have to step outside the compound. Guests are often greeted by four vociferous geese.

Le Maupassant (☎ 02 35 29 55 11; 4 av Gambetta; menus €11-24) On the ground floor of the Hôtel Normandy, this very popular brasserie – decorated with glassware suspended from on high – serves French and Norman cuisine, with a few exotic dishes thrown in for good measure.

Self-Catering

Marché Plus (83 quai Bérygny; ☎ 7am-9pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) A supermarket.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus 24, operated by **Cars Perier** (☎ 08 00 80 87 03; www.cars-perier.com), goes to Le Havre (€2, 1½ hours, eight daily) via Étretat.

Rail destinations include Le Havre (€7.50, 45 to 75 minutes, seven to 11 daily) and Rouen (€12.30, 1¼ hours, seven to 10 daily).

Étretat

pop 1610

The small village of Étretat, 20km southwest of Fécamp, is known for its twin **cliffs**: the Falaise d'Aval and the Falaise d'Amont, positioned on either side of the pebbly beach.

The **Falaise d'Aval** is renowned for its free-standing arch – compared by French writer Maupassant to an elephant dipping its trunk in the sea – and the adjacent Aiguille, a 70m-high spire of chalk-white rock rising from the surface of the waves. Further along the cliff is a second impressive arch, known as La Manneporte, reached by a steep path up the cliff from the western end of Étretat's beach. On the **Falaise d'Amont**, a memorial marks the spot where two aviators were last seen before their attempt to cross the Atlantic in 1927.

The **tourist office** (☎ 02 35 27 05 21; www.etretat.net; place Maurice Guillard; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat rest of year, open Sun during school holidays) has accommodation lists for the area (also available on the website) and a map of the cliff trails.

Bus 24, operated by **Cars Perier** (☎ 08 00 80 87 03; www.cars-perier.com), goes to Le Havre (€2, one hour, eight daily) and Fécamp (€2, 30 minutes, eight daily).

LE HAVRE

pop 183,600

All but obliterated in September 1944 by Allied (mainly British) bombing raids that killed 3000 civilians, Le Havre's city centre was totally rebuilt after the war by Belgian architect Auguste Perret, and what emerged from the rubble is something of a love letter to concrete: endless rows of modernist, breeze-block buildings along ruler-straight boulevards that express some of the energy and optimism of 1950s France. Listed by

Unesco as a World Heritage Site in 2005, it's a strange and oddly fascinating city, and while it's probably not where you'd want to spend your honeymoon, Le Havre is worth a visit as one of the great examples of idealistic postwar planning.

Orientation

From place de l'Hôtel de Ville, the city's main square, av Foch runs west to the pleasure port; arcaded rue de Paris cuts south past cultural centre Le Volcan; and bd de Strasbourg goes eastward to the train station. Église St-Joseph, whose 107m-high tower makes a good reference point, is three blocks south of the middle of av Foch. Quartier St-François, Le Havre's 'old city', is five blocks southeast of Le Volcan.

Information

There are a number of banks along bd de Strasbourg.

Change Collections (41 chaussée Kennedy; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) An exchange bureau half a block west of the southern end of rue de Paris.

E-Mega (☎ 02 35 42 67 55; 119 rue Victor Hugo; per half-hr/1hr/2hr €2.50/4/6; ☎ 10am-7pm Wed & Sat, noon-7pm Fri, 2-7pm Tue & Thu) Prepaid internet access a block north of Le Volcan.

Laundrette (5 rue Georges Braque; ☎ 7.45am-5pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 8.30am-5pm Sat) Half a block northwest of the *hôtel de ville* (town hall).

Microminute (☎ 02 35 22 10 15; 7 rue Casimir Perrier; per hr €3.60; ☎ 2-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Sat) Internet access a block east of the *hôtel de ville*.

Post Office (place des Halles Centrales)

Tourist Office (☎ 02 32 74 04 04; www.lehavretourisme.com; 186 bd Clemenceau; ☎ 9am-6.45pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.45pm Sun & holidays Easter-Oct; 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.15pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Sun & holidays Nov-Easter) A bit south of the western end of av Foch.

Sights & Activities

ARCHITECTURE

The tourist office can supply you with an English map-brochure for a two-hour self-guided walking tour of the city centre's architectural highlights. As you stroll, your eyes and nose will have trouble missing the city's original, mid-century **pissoirs** (public urinals), once a common sight in French cities.

Le Havre is dominated by Perret's centre-piece, the 107m-high **Église St-Joseph** (bd François 1er), begun in 1951 and inaugurated in 1959,

whose 13,000 panels of coloured glass make the interior particularly striking when it's sunny.

The **Appartement Témoin** (Show Apartment; adult/under 18yr €3/free; ☎ tours 2pm, 3pm, 4pm & 5pm Wed, Sat & Sun), furnished in impeccable 1950s style, can be visited on a one-hour guided tour that starts at 1 place de l'Hôtel de Ville (in front of the Caron shoe shop). The tourist office has details.

Although it's been compared to a truncated cooling tower or, even worse, a toilet bowl, **Le Volcan** (The Volcano; www.unvolcandanslaville.com, in French; espace Oscar Niemeyer) – one look and you'll know how it got its name – is one of the city's premier cultural venues, with concert halls and an art cinema, L'Eden. It was conceived by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, who also designed Brasilia.

Le Havre's avant-garde architectural ambitions continue to shape the city, as a run-down docklands area, on the far side of Bassin Vauban from the train station, is redeveloped into **Quartier des Docks**. This cutting-edge magnet for shopping, culture and the arts, designed by Jean Nouvel, is set to open over the next few years.

OTHER SIGHTS

The **Musée Malraux** (☎ 02 35 19 62 62; 2 bd Clemenceau; adult/student/under 18yr €5/3/free; ☎ 11am–6pm Mon–Fri, 11am–7pm Sat & Sun), at the city centre's southwestern tip, houses a truly fabulous collection of Impressionist works – perhaps the finest in France outside of Paris – by luminaries such as Degas, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley and Le Havre native Eugène Boudin. A section is devoted to Fauvist Raoul Dufy, also born in Le Havre.

Le Havre's pebbly **beach** is a few hundred metres northwest of the tourist office.

An old hilltop fortress a bit over 1km north of the tourist office has been transformed into the **Jardins Suspendus** (Hanging Gardens; admission gardens free, hothouses adult/under 12yr €1/free; ☎ gardens 10.30am–8pm mid-Jun–Sep, 1–8pm Mon–Fri & 10.30am–8pm Sat, Sun & holidays May–mid-Jun, 1–5pm Mon–Fri & 10.30am–5pm Sat, Sun & holidays Oct–Apr, hothouses 10.30am–5pm daily mid-Jun–Sep, Sat, Sun & holidays Oct–mid-Jun), whose hothouses and outdoor spaces feature rare plants and cacti from five continents.

Sleeping

Hôtel Voltaire (☎ 02 35 19 35 35; hotel.voltaire@free.fr; 14 rue Voltaire; d/q €39/66, s with hall shower €34) Le Havre's cheapest hotel has cheery orange

hallways and 20 unsurprising rooms with period-appropriate linoleum floors. In a Perret building one block south and around the corner from Église St-Joseph.

Le Petit Vatel (☎ 02 35 41 72 07; www.lepetitvatel.com; 86 rue Louis Brindeau; d €58–71, with hall shower €47; ☎) Situated two blocks east of Église St-Joseph, this family-run, two-star hotel, renovated in 2008, has 25 well-kept, space-efficient rooms with straightforward decor.

Hôtel Vent d'Ouest (☎ 02 35 42 50 69; www.ventdouest.fr; 4 rue de Caligny; d €98–128, q €194; ☎) The three-star, 38-room West Wind, around the corner from Église St-Joseph, is decorated in shipshape maritime fashion, with nautical memorabilia downstairs and a range of stylish cream-walled rooms upstairs.

Eating

In Quartier St-François, rue du Général Faidherbe and perpendicular rue Jean de la Fontaine are lined with eateries. There are several more restaurants around the periphery of Le Volcan.

Le Bistrot des Halles (☎ 02 35 22 50 52; 7 place des Halles; lunch menu €14.70, other menu €31.50; ☎ Mon–Sat) Serves classic French food in a traditional bistro atmosphere, with no concrete, steel or glass in sight. Expect brasserie standards (mainly steaks and seafood) and some fine chocolate dessert options.

L'Odysée (☎ 02 35 21 32 42; 41 rue du Général Faidherbe; menus €30–40; ☎ closed lunch Sat, dinner Sun & Mon) Elegantly marine in its decor, this French restaurant's specialities include sole, bass, turbot and – in season – scallops.

SELF-CATERING

Halles Centrales (place des Halles Centrales; ☎ 8.30am–7.30pm Mon–Sat) A covered market with a dozen food shops and a Marché U supermarket. Situated one block south and two blocks east of Église St-Joseph.

Entertainment

Le Cabaret Electric (☎ 02 35 19 91 32; www.cabaret-electric.fr, in French; espace Oscar Niemeyer; ☎ bar 6–11pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 2–11pm Wed, 2–8pm Sat, during concerts) Not only do you get to see the inside of Le Havre's most striking building but this funky bar is the city's best venue for live gigs.

Getting There & Away

For details on ferry services to Portsmouth and Newhaven, see p968.

BUS

Bus 20, run by Caen-based **Bus Verts** (☎ 08 10 21 42 14; www.busverts.fr) links the bus station (next to the train station) with Honfleur (€4, 35 minutes), Deauville and Trouville (€6, one hour), and Caen (€10, 2½ hours). There are also express buses to Caen (€14, 1½ hours, four daily Monday to Saturday, two Sunday) via Honfleur.

Bus 24, operated by **Cars Perier** (☎ 08 00 80 87 03; www.cars-perier.com), goes to Fécamp (€2, 1½ hours, eight daily) via Étretat.

CAR

Cars can be hired from **Avis** (☎ 02 35 22 77 73; 87 quai Southampton), **France Cars** (☎ 02 35 19 64 64; 161 bd de Strasbourg) and **National/Citer** (☎ 02 35 21 30 81; 91 quai de Southampton).

TRAIN

Le Havre's **train station** (cours de la République) is 2km east of the *hôtel de ville* at the eastern end of bd de Strasbourg. Destinations include Paris' Gare St-Lazare (€28.10, 2¼ hours, hourly), Rouen (€12.90, 50 minutes, 18 daily Monday to Saturday, 10 Sunday) and Fécamp (€7.50, 45 to 75 minutes, seven to 11 daily).

Getting Around

Year-round, **Vélocéane bicycles** (per 2hr/half-day/full day €2/3/5) can be hired at five sites (seven in summer), including the tourist office (which has bike path maps) and the train station. Tandems and kids' bikes are also on offer.

EURE

Lovely day trips can be made from Rouen, particularly in the landlocked Eure *département* (www.cdt-eure.fr). The beautiful gardens of Claude Monet are at Giverny, while the 12th-century Château Gaillard in Les Andelys affords a breathtaking panorama of the Seine.

LES ANDELYS

pop 9000

Some 40km southeast of Rouen, on a hairpin curve in the Seine, lies Les Andelys (the s is silent), crowned by the ruins of Château Gaillard, the 12th-century hilltop fastness of Richard the Lion-Heart.

Orientation & Information

The town consists of Petit Andely, along the mighty Seine, and long, narrow Grand Andely, whose main square, place Poussin, is 2km east of the river.

Tourist Office (☎ 02 32 54 41 93; http://office-tourisme.ville-andelys.fr, in French; 24 rue Philippe Auguste; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Apr-May, longer hr Jun-Sep, 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Nov-Feb, longer hr Oct & Mar) In Petit Andely below the château.

Sights

Built from 1196 to 1197, **Château Gaillard** (☎ 02 32 54 41 93; adult/student & senior €3/2.50; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon mid-Mar-mid-Nov) – whose grounds are always open free-of-charge – secured the western border of English territory along the Seine until Henry IV ordered its destruction in 1603. Fantastic views of the Seine's white cliffs can be enjoyed from the platform a few hundred metres up the one-lane road from the castle. The tourist office has details on tours (€5; in French with English-speaking guides).

From Petit Andely, the château is a 500m climb along a narrow road you can pick up 50m north of the tourist office. By car, take the turn-off opposite Église Notre Dame in Grand Andely and follow the signs.

Sleeping & Eating

our pick **Hôtel & Restaurant de la Chaîne d'Or** (☎ 02 32 54 00 31; www.hotel-lachainedor.com; 27 rue Grande, Petit Andely; d €72-120, ste €132; lunch menus €18-29, other menus €45-78; ☎ closed Jan, restaurant closed lunch Mon & lunch Tue year-round, dinner Sun & dinner Mon Nov-Mar; ☎ ☎) Right on the Seine, this little rural hideaway, packed with character, is rustically stylish without being twee. The 12 rooms are spacious, tasteful and romantic, with antique wood furnishings and plush rugs; some are so close to the river you could almost fish out the window. The classy French restaurant is one of the best for miles around – specialties include lobster, escargots and cider sorbet.

GIVERNY

pop 520

The tiny country village of Giverny, 15km south of Les Andelys, is a place of pilgrimage for devotees of Impressionism. Monet lived here from 1883 until his death in 1926, in a rambling house – surrounded by flower-filled gardens – that's now the immensely

CLAUDE MONET

Everyone discusses my art and pretends to understand, as if it were necessary to understand, when it is simply necessary to love.

Claude Monet

The undisputed leader of the Impressionists, Claude Monet was born in Paris in 1840 and grew up in Le Havre, where he found an early affinity with the outdoors. Monet disliked school and spent much of his time sketching his professors in the margins of his exercise books. By 15 his skills as a caricaturist were known throughout Le Havre, but Eugène Boudin, his first mentor, convinced him to turn his attention away from portraiture towards the study of colour, light and landscape.

In 1860 military service interrupted Monet's studies at the Académie Suisse in Paris and took him to Algiers, where the intense light and colours further fuelled his imagination. The young painter became fascinated with capturing a specific moment in time, the immediate impression of the scene before him, rather than the precise detail.

From 1867 Monet's distinctive style began to emerge, focusing on the effects of light and colour and using the quick, undisguised broken brushstrokes that would characterise the Impressionist period. His contemporaries were Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley, Cézanne and Degas. The young painters left the studio to work outdoors, experimenting with the shades and hues of nature, arguing and sharing ideas. Their work was far from welcomed by critics; one of them condemned it as 'impressionism', in reference to Monet's *Impression: Sunrise* (1874). Much to the critic's chagrin, the name stuck.

From the late 1870s Monet concentrated on painting in series, seeking to re-create a landscape by showing its transformation under different conditions of light and atmosphere. *Haystacks* (1890–91) and *Rouen Cathedral* (1891–95) are some of the best-known works of this period. In 1883 he moved to Giverny, planting his property with a variety of flowers around an artificial pond, the Jardin d'Eau, (below), in order to paint the subtle effects of sunlight on natural forms. It was here that he painted the *Nymphéas* (Water Lilies) series. The huge dimensions of some of these works, together with the fact that the pond's surface takes up the entire canvas, meant the abandonment of composition in the traditional sense and the virtual disintegration of form. A *Nymphéas* canvas from 1919, likely to be the last ever to come up for auction, sold in June 2008 for an astounding US\$80 million.

For more info on Monet and his work, visit www.giverny.org.

popular Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet. The nearby Musée d'Art Américain is also worth a visit.

Sights

Monet's home for the last 43 years of his life is now the delightful **Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet** (☎ 02 32 51 28 21; www.fondation-monet.com; adult/student/7-12yr €5.50/4/3, gardens only €4; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct). His pastel-pink house and Water Lily studio stand on the periphery of the **Clos Normand**, with its symmetrically laid-out gardens bursting with flowers. Monet bought the **Jardin d'Eau** (Water Garden) in 1895 and set about creating his trademark lily pond, as well as the famous Japanese bridge (since rebuilt).

Draped with purple wisteria, the bridge blends into the asymmetrical foreground

and background, creating the intimate atmosphere for which the 'painter of light' was renowned.

Seasons have an enormous effect on Giverny. From early to late spring, daffodils, tulips, rhododendrons, wisteria and irises appear, followed by poppies and lilies. By June, nasturtiums, roses and sweet peas are in flower.

Around September, there are dahlias, sunflowers and hollyhocks.

The **Musée d'Art Américain** (☎ 02 32 51 94 65; www.maag.org; 99 rue Claude Monet; adult/student & senior/12-18yr €5.50/4/3; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), also surrounded by gardens, displays works by American Impressionist painters who flocked to France in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It's 100m down the road from the Maison de Claude Monet.

Getting There & Away

Giverny is 76km northwest of Paris and 66km southeast of Rouen.

From Paris' Gare St-Lazare two early morning trains run to Vernon (€11.90, 50 minutes), 7km to the west of Giverny. For the return trip there's one direct train every hour or two from 3pm till at least 8.40pm (10pm on Sunday). From Rouen (€9.60, 40 minutes) several trains leave before noon; to get back, there's about one train every hour between 5pm and 10pm (till 9pm on Saturday).

Shuttle buses (€2; seven daily Tuesday to Sunday April to October), run by **Veolia** (☎ 08 25 07 60 27; www.mobiregion.net, in French), meet most trains to and from Paris.

Facing the train station, you can rent a bike at the **Café de Chemin de Fer** (L'Arrivée de Giverny; ☎ 02 32 21 16 01; ☹ 7am-1am) for €12 a day.

CALVADOS

The *département* of Calvados (www.calvados-tourisme.com) stretches from Honfleur to the east to Isigny-sur-Mer in the west and includes Caen, Bayeux – world-renowned for its tapestry – and the D-Day beaches. The area is famed for its rich pastures and farm products, including butter, cheese, cider and the distinctive apple brandy that bears the name of the *département*.

BAYEUX

pop 14,600

Bayeux has become famous throughout the English-speaking world thanks to a 68m-long piece of painstakingly embroidered cloth: the 11th-century Bayeux Tapestry, whose 58 scenes vividly tell the story of the Norman invasion of England in 1066. But there's more to Bayeux than this unparalleled piece of needlework – the first town to be liberated after D-Day (on the morning of 7 June), it is one of the few in Calvados to have survived WWII practically unscathed. A great place to soak up the Norman atmosphere, Bayeux' delightful city centre is crammed with 13th- to 18th-century buildings, including lots of wood-framed Norman-style houses, and a fine Gothic cathedral.

Bayeux makes an ideal launch pad for exploring the D-Day beaches just to the north.

Orientation

Central Bayeux is surrounded by France's very first ring road (bd de Einhoven, bd Maréchal Leclerc etc), built by British military engineers right after D-Day. The cathedral, 1km northwest of the train station, is the most visible landmark in the city centre. The main commercial streets are east-west rue St-Martin and rue St-Jean.

Information

La Pailotte (☎ 02 31 10 08 73; 25 rue Montfiquet; ☹ 5pm-2am, to 3am Fri & Sat, closed Sun & Mon in winter) A laid-back pub with a tropical vibe and internet access.

Laudrettes 67 rue des Bouchers (☹ 7am-9pm); 13 rue Maréchal Foch (☹ 7am-9pm)

Post Office (14 rue Larcher) Changes foreign currency.

Pub Fiction (☎ 02 31 10 17 41; 14 rue du Petit Rouen; per 15min €1; ☹ 8.30pm-2am, to 3am Fri & Sat, from 6pm Jul & Aug) A popular, saloon-style pub with three internet computers.

Société Générale (26 rue St-Malo) A bank.

Tourist Office (☎ 02 31 51 28 28; www.bayeux-bessin-tourism.com; pont St-Jean; ☹ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun & holidays Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Nov-Mar) Covers both Bayeux and the surrounding Bessin region, including the D-Day beaches. Has a walking tour map of town, English books on D-Day and the tapestry, and bus and train schedules. Charges €2 to book hotels and B&Bs.

Sights

BAYEUX TAPESTRY

Undoubtedly the world's most celebrated embroidery, the **Bayeux Tapestry** (wool thread embroidered onto linen cloth) vividly recounts the story of the Norman conquest of England in 1066. Divided into 58 scenes briefly captioned in almost-readable Latin, the main narrative – told from an unashamedly Norman perspective – fills up the centre of the canvas, while religious allegories and depictions of daily life in the 11th century unfold along the borders. The final showdown at the Battle of Hastings is depicted in truly graphic fashion, complete with severed limbs and decapitated heads (along the bottom of scene 52). Halley's comet, which blazed across the sky in 1066, makes an appearance at the top of scene 32, while at the bottom of scene 15 there's – no, it can't be! – an 11th-century 'full Monty'.

Scholars believe that the 68.3m-long tapestry was commissioned by Bishop Odo

BAYEUX

0 500 m
0 0.3 miles

To Omaha Beach (15km); American Cemetery at Colleville (17km)

To German Cemetery at La Cambe (25km); Cherbourg (92km)

To Arromanches Beach (10km); Juno Beach (20km); Canadian Cemetery at Bery-sur-Mer (20km)

INFORMATION

La Paillote.....	1	B2
Laundrette.....	2	C3
Laundrette.....	3	B2
Post Office.....	4	C3
Pub Fiction.....	5	D3
Société Générale.....	6	C3
Tourist Office.....	7	C3

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Bayeux War Cemetery.....	8	A4
Bayeux Tapestry.....	(see 12)	
Cathédrale Notre Dame.....	9	C3
Conservatoire de la Dentelle.....	10	C3
Memorial.....	11	A4
Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux.....	12	C4
Musée Mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie.....	13	A4
Mémorial des Reporters.....	14	A4

EATING 🍴

Food Market.....	20	B2
Food Market.....	(see 7)	
La Rapière.....	21	D3
La Reine Mathilde.....	22	C3
La Table du Terroir.....	23	D3
Le Pommier.....	24	C3
Marché Plus.....	25	D3

TRANSPORT

Bus Verts Office.....	26	D5
Normandy Tours.....	(see 18)	
Vélos Location.....	27	C3

Hôtel d'Argouges..... 17 B2
Hôtel de la Gare..... 18 D5
Hôtel Mogador..... 19 B2

SLEEPING 🛏

Family Home.....	15	B3
Grand Hôtel du Luxembourg.....	16	C3

5

NORMANDY

of Bayeux, William the Conqueror's half-brother, in southern England (probably Canterbury) for the opening of Bayeux cathedral in 1077.

The tapestry is housed in the **Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux** (☎ 02 31 51 25 50; www.tapisserie-bayeux.fr; rue de Nesmond; adult/student in audioguide €7.80/3.80; 🕒 9am-6.30pm mid-Mar-mid-Nov, to 7pm

May-Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm mid-Nov-mid-Mar). Upstairs is an excellent new exhibition on the tapestry's creation, its remarkable history and its conservation; a new 15-minute film is screened alternately in English and French.

For an animated version of the Bayeux Tapestry, check out David Newton's very creative short film on YouTube.

CATHÉDRALE NOTRE DAME

Most of Bayeux' spectacular Norman Gothic **Cathédrale Notre Dame** (rue du Bienvenu; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Jul-Sep, 8.30am-6pm Apr-Jun & Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar) dates from the 13th century, though the crypt (accessible from the north side of the choir), the arches of the nave and the lower portions of the entrance towers are 11th-century Romanesque. The central tower was added in the 15th century; the copper dome dates from the 1860s. First prize for tackiness has got to go to 'Litanies de la Sainte Vierge', a 17th-century retable in the first chapel on the left as you enter the cathedral.

CONSERVATOIRE DE LA DENTELLE

At the **Conservatoire de la Dentelle** (Lace Conservatory; ☎ 02 31 92 73 80; <http://dentelledebayeux.free.fr>; 6 rue du Bienvenu; admission free; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat), dedicated to the preservation of traditional Norman lacemaking, you can watch some of France's most celebrated lacemakers create intricate designs using dozens of bobbins and hundreds of pins. At its height, the local lace industry employed 5000 lacemakers.

MUSÉE MÉMORIAL DE LA BATAILLE DE NORMANDIE

Using well-chosen photos (some in original colour), personal accounts, dioramas and wartime objects, this **museum** (☎ 02 31 51 46 90; bd Fabien Ware; adult/student €6.50/3.80; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm May-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Oct-Apr) offers a first-rate introduction to WWII in Normandy. Signs are in French and English. A new 25-minute film on the Battle of Normandy is screened in English three to five times a day.

BAYEUX WAR CEMETERY

This peaceful **cemetery** (bd Fabien Ware), a few hundred metres west of the Musée Mémorial, is the largest of the 18 Commonwealth military cemeteries in Normandy. It contains 4848 graves of soldiers from the UK and 10 other countries, including Germany. Across the road is a memorial for 1807 Commonwealth soldiers whose remains were never found; the Latin inscription across the top reads 'We, whom William once conquered, have now set free the conqueror's native land'. See p290 for details on other war cemeteries.

MÉMORIAL DES REPORTERS

Just west of the Musée Mémorial, this landscaped promenade lists the names of nearly

2000 journalists killed in the line of duty since 1944. A project of Reporters Without Borders (www.rsf.org) and the City of Bayeux, it was inaugurated in 2006.

Sleeping

The tourist office has a list of *chambres d'hôtes* (B&Bs; €40 to €80) around Bayeux.

Family Home (☎ 02 31 92 15 22; www.fuaj.org; 39 rue Général de Dais; dm/s €19/30) One of France's most charming youth hostels, this place – in a mainly 18th-century neighbourhood – sports a 17th-century dining room, a delightful 16th-century courtyard and 80 beds in rooms for one to four people. Check-in is possible all day – if reception isn't staffed, phone and someone will pop by.

Hôtel de la Gare (☎ 02 31 92 10 70; www.normandy-tours-hotel.com; 26 place de la Gare; d with hall bathroom €28, d/q with shower €38/55) Across the parking lot from the train station, this place has 15 tired but serviceable rooms. Pay when you check in.

Hôtel Mogador (☎ 02 31 92 24 58; hotel.mogador@wanadoo.fr; 20 rue Alain Chartier; d €44-54; ☎) Situated on the main market square, this friendly, family-run, two-star hotel has 14 rooms with pastel curtains and lots of old wood beams. The small patio is a lovely spot for a morning croissant. An excellent bet.

Grand Hôtel du Luxembourg (☎ 02 31 92 00 04; www.hotels-bayeux-14.com; 25 rue des Bouchers; r €80-145) With its grand 17th-century facade, this Best Western-affiliated hotel has 27 comfortable rooms with old-time touches. There are 34 less-expensive rooms, smallish and nondescript, in the adjacent Hôtel de Brunville.

Hôtel d'Argouges (☎ 02 31 92 88 86; www.hotel-dargouges.com; 21 rue St-Patrice; d €90-120, q €280) This graceful three-star hotel, in a stately 18th-century residence, has an elegant breakfast room overlooking a private garden, squeaky parquet floors and 28 rooms, some with period features such as marble chimneys.

our pick **Château de Bellefontaine** (☎ 02 31 22 00 10; www.hotel-bellefontaine.com; 49 rue de Bellefontaine; d €125-140, ste €160; ☎) Swans and a bubbling brook welcome you to this majestic 18th-century château, which is surrounded by a 2ha private park and has 20 enormous rooms, some with marble chimneys and period mouldings. The decor is an intelligent mix of tradition and modernity, and the rural location couldn't be more pastoral. Situated 1.5km southeast of the tourist office (500m south of rond-point Eisenhower).

PASSIONATE ABOUT THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY

Looking back on her life, Isabelle Robert-Attard can hardly believe how lucky she is to be the director of the Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux (p279), a job that 'brings together everything I love – archeology, history, tourism and the Vikings, or at least Scandinavia'.

Robert-Attard grew up with the tapestry – or, more precisely, with a 1:10-scale poster of it hung on the wall of her family's living room in Orléans. She visited the real tapestry for the first time at age two and returned as a teenager, shocked to discover how 3-D the scenes appeared.

While attending a sports high school in the Pyrenees, Robert-Attard specialised in orienteering – precisely the skill that Harold lacked when he got lost on the Norman coast; in 1986 she was France's national junior orienteering champion. However, she admits that the first time she walked around the museum as director, 'I got lost', adding, 'I do better in the woods'. She has since had the route visitors follow redesigned.

For family reasons Robert-Attard ended up living for five years in Sweden – in fact, in Lapland, where she studied Nordic archeology and set up a tourism consulting company. But life that far north 'was quite extreme. You have nine months of winter and snow and two months of summer and mosquitoes'. Like the Viking Normans over a millennium earlier, she decided that France was a more convivial place to live. In 2007 Robert-Attard found herself transformed into a character named Pénélope Breuil in an erudite, *Da Vinci Code*-like best-seller, *Intrigue à l'Anglaise* by Adrien Goetz, which purports to solve a thousand-year-old mystery: the circuitous fate of 3m of scenes missing from the end of the Bayeux Tapestry. Some people, it seems, want to get their hands on them badly enough to commit murder!

More usually, the Bayeux Tapestry is the subject of scholarly rather than novelistic interest, and every year a new PhD is written about it. Though more reputable research is the norm, Robert-Attard says that 'in 1941 the Nazis studied the tapestry, looking for their Aryan and Germanic ancestors' among the supposedly Aryan Normans.

Despite the publication of innumerable academic works, Robert-Attard says, 'there are many things that we can't explain because we have lost the clues to read them properly. Why do a fox and a crow appear on the tapestry three times? Is the fox William and the crow Harold?'

She adds: 'I am also passionate about the object itself, which survived so many things – there were fires in the cathedral, and during the Revolution they tried to cut it into small pieces to cover horse-drawn carriages. I won't say the fact of its survival is a miracle – I don't like that word – but it certainly involved an amazing quantity of luck.' One factor that seems to have worked in its favour is the fact that 'the tapestry was made of common materials. It's wool and linen, not silk and silver and gold so there was no value in the materials and therefore no reason to steal it'.

As for the question of the Bayeux Tapestry's name, Robert-Attard acknowledges that there's no simple solution. The object is not, in fact, a *tapisserie* (tapestry) at all but rather a *broderie* (embroidery), 'but it's too late to change the name to "Broderie de Bayeux" – people won't recognise it. And a small *toile* (piece of cloth) is a *toilette*. I'm afraid "Toilette de Bayeux" won't do either'.

Eating

Local specialities to keep an eye out for include *cochon de Bayeux* (Bayeux-style pork). Rue St-Jean and rue St-Martin are home to a variety of eateries and food shops. Appropriately, rue des Cuisiniers (north of the cathedral) also has some restaurants.

La Reine Mathilde (☎ 02 31 92 00 59; 47 rue St-Martin; cakes €2.30; ☎ 8.30am–7.30pm Tue–Sun) A sumptuous, c 1900-style *pâtisserie* and *salon de thé* that's ideal if you've got a hankering for something soft and sweet.

La Table du Terroir (☎ 02 31 92 05 53; 42 rue St-Jean; lunch menus €12.50–14, dinner menus €21–28; ☎ closed dinner

Sun) At this country-style restaurant, crimson chairs and white tablecloths provide an enjoyable backdrop for specialities such as grilled salmon, pork fillet and *tripes à la Caen*.

Le Pommier (☎ 02 31 21 52 10; www.restaurantlepommier.com; 38–40 rue des Cuisiniers; lunch menu €14, other menus €23–36.25; ☎ closed Tue & Wed Nov–mid-Mar) Specialities at this smart restaurant include filet of roast duck, *filet mignon de porc* and a varied selection of imaginative French dishes made with fresh Norman products, including rare legacy vegetables.

La Rapière (☎ 02 31 21 05 45; 53 rue St-Jean; lunch menu €15, dinner menus €27–33; ☎ closed Wed & Thu)

Housed in a late-1400s mansion held together by its original oak beams, this restaurant specialises in hearty home cooking – the *timbale de pêcheur* (fisherman's stew) is served up piping hot in a cast-iron pan. For dessert, an excellent option is *trou normand* (apple sorbet with a dash of Calvados).

SELF-CATERING

Food markets rue St-Jean (📞 Wed morning); place

St-Patrice (📞 Sat morning)

Marché Plus (16 rue St-Jean; 📞 7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-12.30pm Sun) Supermarket.

Getting There & Away

Bus Verts (📞 08 10 21 42 14; www.busverts.fr), whose **office** (📞 9.30am-1.15pm & 2.30-4.45pm Mon-Sat early Jun–Aug; 8.30am-12.05pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri Sep, 10am-noon Mon & 3-5pm Wed & Fri Oct–early Jun) faces the train station, links the train station and place St-Patrice with Caen (bus 30; €4, one hour, three or four daily Monday to Friday except holidays). Travellers under 25 get a 15% discount.

Bus Verts also runs regular buses to the D-Day beaches (see p284).

Train destinations from Bayeux include Caen (€5.50, 20 minutes, 13 to 19 daily Monday to Saturday, eight Sunday), whence there are connections to Paris' Gare St-Lazare (€32) and Rouen (€24.60); Cherbourg (€14.60, one hour, 11 daily Monday to Friday, three to five on weekends); Coutances (€11.40, 50 minutes, eight daily Monday to Saturday, four Sunday); and Pontorson (Mont St-Michel; €19.60, 1½ hours, two or three direct daily). To get to Deauville change at Lisieux.

Getting Around

A **taxi** (📞 02 31 92 92 40) can take you around Bayeux or out to the D-Day sites.

Vélos Location (Le Verger de l'Aure; 📞 02 31 92 89 16; 5 rue Larcher; per half-/full day €10/15; 📞 8am-8pm) Offers year-round bike rental in a grocery store near the tourist office.

D-DAY BEACHES

Code-named 'Operation Overlord', the D-Day landings (p286) were the largest military operation in history. On the morning of 6 June 1944, swarms of landing craft – part of an armada of over 6000 ships and boats – hit the northern Normandy beaches and tens

of thousands of soldiers from the USA, the UK, Canada and elsewhere began pouring onto French soil.

The majority of the 135,000 Allied troops stormed ashore along 80km of beaches north of Bayeux code-named (from west to east) Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. The landings on D-Day – known as 'Jour J' in French – were followed by the 76-day Battle of Normandy, during which the Allies suffered 210,000 casualties, including 37,000 troops killed. German casualties are believed to be around 200,000; another 200,000 German soldiers were taken prisoner. About 14,000 French civilians also died.

Caen's Mémorial (p288) and Bayeux' Musée Mémorial (p281) provide a comprehensive overview of the events of D-Day, and many of the villages near the landing beaches (eg Arromanches) have local museums with insightful exhibits.

If you've got wheels, you can follow the D514 along the D-Day coast or several sign-posted circuits around the battle sites – look for signs for 'D-Day-Le Choc' in the American sectors and 'Overlord-L'Assaut' in the British and Canadian sectors. A free booklet called *The D-Day Landings and the Battle of Normandy*, available from tourist offices, has details on the eight major visitors' routes

For details on D-Day and its context, see www.normandiememoire.com and www.6juin1944.com.

INFORMATION

Maps of the D-Day beaches are available at *tabacs* (tobacconists), newsagents and bookshops in Bayeux and elsewhere. The area is also sometimes called the Côte de Nacre (Mother-of-Pearl Coast). Towns along the coast, including Arromanches, have lots of small hotels.

TOURS

An organised minibus tour is an excellent way to get a sense of the D-Day beaches and their place in history. The Bayeux tourist office can handle reservations.

Normandy Sightseeing Tours (📞 02 31 51 70 52; www.normandywebguide.com) From May to October (and on request the rest of the year), this experienced outfit offers morning (adult/student/under 10 years €40/35/25) and afternoon tours (€45/40/30) of various beaches and cemeteries. These can be combined into an all-day excursion (€75/65/45).

WILLIAM CONQUERS ENGLAND

Born out of wedlock to Robert the Magnificent, future Duke of Normandy, and Arlette, daughter of a furrier, William the Bastard (1027–87) – better known to posterity as William the Conqueror – became Duke of Normandy at the tender age of eight when his father died while on the way back from Jerusalem. Having survived several assassination attempts by rivals, including members of his own family, William assumed full control of the province at age 15 and set about regaining his lost territory and quashing rebellious vassals.

William had twice been promised the throne of England: once by the king himself, Edward the Confessor (his cousin), and once by the most powerful Saxon lord in England, Harold Godwinson of Wessex, who had the misfortune of being shipwrecked on the Norman coast. But in January 1066 Edward died without an heir and Harold was immediately crowned king with the support of the great nobles of England.

One of several pretenders to the throne, William was preparing to send an invasion fleet across the Channel when a rival army (consisting of an alliance between Harold's estranged brother Tostig and Harold Hardrada of Norway) landed in the north of England. After a September battle at Stamford Bridge, near York, Hardrada was hard done by and Tostig was toast – in short, Harold defeated and killed them both.

Meanwhile, William had crossed the Channel unopposed with an army of about 6000 men, including a large cavalry force. They landed at Pevensey before marching to Hastings, where, on 13 October, Harold faced off against William with about 7000 men from a strong defensive position. The battle began the next day.

Although William's archers scored many hits, the Saxon army's ferocious defence ended a charge by the Norman cavalry and drove them back in disarray. William faced the real possibility of losing the battle. Summoning the experience and tactical ability he had gained in numerous campaigns against rivals back in Normandy, he used the cavalry's rout to draw the Saxon infantry out of their defensive positions, whereupon the Norman infantry turned and caused heavy casualties among the undisciplined Saxon troops. Late in the afternoon the battle started to turn against Harold, who was slain – by an arrow through the eye, according to the Bayeux Tapestry. The embattled Saxons fought on until sunset and then fled. William immediately marched to London, ruthlessly quelled the opposition, and was crowned king of England on Christmas Day.

William thus became the ruler of two kingdoms, bringing England's feudal system of government under the control of Norman nobles. Ongoing unrest among the Saxon peasantry soured William's opinion of the country and, after 1072, he spent the rest of his life in Normandy, only going to England when compelled to do so. William left most of the governance of the country to the bishops.

In Normandy William continued to expand his influence through military campaigns, strategic marriages and the ruthless elimination of all opposition. In 1087 he was injured during an attack on Mantes. He died at Rouen a few weeks later and was buried in Caen (see p291).

Normandy Tours (☎ 02 31 92 10 70; www.normandy-tours-hotel.com; 26 place de la Gare; adult/student €41/36; 🗓 year-round) This local operator offers four- or five-hour tours of the main sites at 8.15am and 1.15pm, as well as personally tailored trips. Based at Bayeux' Hotel de la Gare (p281).

Mémorial (☎ 02 31 06 06 45; www.memorial-caen.fr; adult/under 18yr €69/55; 🗓 1pm Oct-Mar, 9am & 2pm Apr-Sep) Conducts excellent four- to five-hour minibus tours around the landing beaches. The price includes entry to the Mémorial (p288). You can book online (under Day Pass) or by telephone.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Run by **Bus Verts** (☎ 08 10 21 42 14; www.busverts.fr, in French), bus 70 (two or three daily Monday to Saturday, more frequently and on Sunday and holidays in summer) goes northwest from Bayeux to Colleville-sur-Mer (Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery; €2, 35 minutes), Pointe du Hoc (€4) and Grandcamp-Maisy. Bus 74 (bus 75 in summer; three or four daily Monday to Saturday, more frequently and on Sunday and holidays in summer) links Bayeux with Arromanches (€2, 30 minutes),

Gold and Juno Beaches, and Courseulles (€3, one hour).

The D-Day sites can also be visited by bicycle, eg from Bayeux.

Arromanches

To make it possible to unload the vast quantities of cargo needed by the invasion forces without having to capture – intact! – one of the heavily defended Channel ports (a lesson of the 1942 Dieppe Raid; see p271), the Allies set up prefabricated marinas, code-named **Mulberry Harbours**, off two of the landing beaches. These consisted of 146 massive cement caissons towed over from England and sunk to form a semicircular breakwater in which floating bridge spans were moored. In the three months after D-Day, the Mulberries facilitated the unloading of a mind-boggling 2.5 million men, four million tonnes of equipment and 500,000 vehicles.

The harbour established at Omaha was completely destroyed by a ferocious gale just two weeks after D-Day, but the remains of the second, **Port Winston** (named after Winston Churchill), can still be seen near **Arromanches**, 10km northeast of Bayeux. At low tide you can walk out to one of the caissons from the beach. The best view of Port Winston and nearby **Gold Beach** is from the hill east of town, marked with a statue of the Virgin Mary.

Right on the beach, the **Musée du Débarquement** (Landing Museum; ☎ 02 31 22 34 31; www.normandy1944.com; place du 6 Juin; adult/student €6.50/4.50; ☎ 9am–7pm May–Aug, 9am–6pm Sep, 9.30am–12.30pm & 1.30–5.30pm Mar, Apr & Oct, 10am–12.30pm & 1.30–5pm Feb, Nov & Dec, closed Jan), redesigned in 2004 for the 60th anniversary of D-Day, makes an informative stop before visiting the beaches. Dioramas, models and two films explain the logistics and importance of Port Winston. Written material is available in 18 languages.

Juno Beach

Dune-lined **Juno Beach**, 12km east of Arromanches, was stormed by Canadian troops on D-Day. A Cross of Lorraine marks the spot where General Charles de Gaulle came ashore shortly after the landings. He was followed by Winston Churchill on 12 June and King George VI on 16 June.

The area's only Canadian museum, **Centre Juno Beach** (☎ 02 31 37 32 17; www.junobeach.org; adult/concession €6.50/5, WWII veterans & widows free; ☎ 9.30am–

7pm Apr–Sep, 10am–6pm Mar & Oct, 10am–1pm & 2–5pm Feb, Nov & Dec, closed Jan), has multimedia exhibits on Canada's role in the war effort and the landings. Guided tours of Juno Beach (€4.50) are available from April to October.

Longues-sur-Mer

Part of the Nazis' Atlantic Wall, the massive casemates and 150mm German guns near Longues-sur-Mer, 6km west of Arromanches, were designed to hit targets some 20km away, including both Gold Beach (to the east) and Omaha Beach (to the west). Over six decades later, the mammoth artillery pieces are still in their colossal concrete emplacements – the only in situ large-calibre weapons in Normandy. For details on tours (€4), available from April to October, contact the **Longues tourist office** (☎ 02 31 21 46 87).

Parts of the classic D-Day film, *The Longest Day* (1962), were filmed both here and at Pointe du Hoc. On clear days, Bayeux' cathedral, 8km away, is visible to the south.

Omaha Beach

The most brutal fighting on D-Day took place on the 7km stretch of coastline around Vierville-sur-Mer, St-Laurent-sur-Mer and Colleville-sur-Mer, 15km northwest of Bayeux, known as 'Bloody Omaha' to US veterans. Sixty years on, little evidence of the carnage unleashed here on 6 June 1944 remains except for concrete German bunkers, though at very low tide you can see a few remnants of the Mulberry Harbour (left).

These days Omaha is a peaceful place, a glorious stretch of fine golden sand partly lined with sand dunes and summer homes. Near the car park in St-Laurent, a memorial marks the site of the first US military cemetery on French soil. There's also a sculpture on the beach called *Les Braves*, by the French sculptor Anilore Banon, commissioned to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the landings in 2004. **Circuit de la Plage d'Omaha**, trail-marked with a yellow stripe, is a self-guided tour all along Omaha Beach.

On a bluff above the beach, the huge **Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial** (Cimetière Militaire Américain; ☎ 02 31 51 62 00; www.abmc.gov; Colleville-sur-Mer; ☎ 9am–6pm mid-Apr–mid-Sep, 9am–5pm mid-Sep–mid-Apr), 17km northwest of Bayeux at Colleville-sur-Mer, is the largest American cemetery in Europe. Featured in the opening scenes of Steven Spielberg's

THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY

In early 1944 an Allied invasion of Continental Europe seemed inevitable. Hitler's disastrous campaign on the Russian front and the Luftwaffe's inability to control the skies over Europe had left Germany vulnerable. Both sides knew a landing was coming – the only questions were where and, of course, when.

Several sites were considered. After long deliberations, it was decided that the beaches along Normandy's northern coast – rather than the even more heavily fortified coastline further north around Calais, where Hitler was expecting an attack – would serve as a surprise spearhead into Europe.

Code-named 'Operation Overlord', the invasion began on the night between 5 and 6 June 1944 when three paratroop divisions were dropped behind enemy lines. At about 6.30 on the morning of 6 June, six amphibious divisions stormed ashore at five beaches, backed up by an unimaginable 6000 sea craft and 13,000 aeroplanes. The initial landing force involved some 45,000 troops; 15 more divisions were to follow once successful beachheads had been established.

The narrow Straits of Dover had seemed the most likely invasion spot to the Germans, who set about heavily reinforcing the area around Calais and the other Channel ports. Allied intelligence went to extraordinary lengths to encourage the German belief that the invasion would be launched north of Normandy: double agents, leaked documents and fake radio traffic, buttressed by phoney airfields and an entirely fictitious American army group, supposedly stationed in the southeast of England, all suggested the invasion would centre on the Pas de Calais.

Because of the tides and unpredictable weather patterns, Allied planners had only a few dates available each month in which to launch the invasion. On 5 June, the date chosen, the worst storm in 20 years set in, delaying the operation. The weather had only marginally improved the next day, but General Dwight D Eisenhower, Allied commander-in-chief, gave the go-ahead: 6 June would be D-Day.

In the hours leading up to D-Day, teams of the French Resistance set about disrupting German communications. Just after midnight on 6 June, the first Allied troops were on French soil. British commandos and glider units captured key bridges and destroyed German gun emplacements, and the American 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions landed west of the invasion site. Although the paratroops' tactical victories were few, they caused confusion in German ranks and, because of their relatively small numbers, the German high command was convinced that the real invasion had not yet begun.

Omaha & Utah Beaches

The assault by the US 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions on Omaha Beach (Vierville, St-Laurent and Colleville) was by far the bloodiest of the day. From the outset the Allies' best-laid plans were thrown into chaos. The beach was heavily defended by three battalions of heavily armed, highly trained Germans supported by mines, underwater obstacles and an extensive trench system. Strong winds blew many of the landing craft far from their carefully planned landing sectors. Many troops, overloaded with equipment, disembarked in deep water and simply drowned; others were cut to pieces by machine-gun and mortar fire from the cliffs. Only two of the 29 Sherman tanks expected to support the troops made it to shore and it proved almost impossible to advance up the beach as planned.

By noon the situation was so serious that General Omar Bradley, in charge of the Omaha Beach forces, considered abandoning the attack; but eventually, metre by metre, the GIs gained a precarious toehold on the beach. Assisted by naval bombardment, the US troops blew through a key German strongpoint and at last began to move off the beach. But of 2500 American casualties sustained there on D-Day, over 1000 were fatalities, most of them killed within the first hour of the landings.

The soldiers of the US 4th and 8th Infantry Divisions who landed at Utah fared much better than their comrades at Omaha. Most of the landing craft came ashore in a relatively lightly protected sector, and by noon the beach had been cleared and soldiers of the 4th Infantry had linked with paratroopers from the 101st Airborne. By nightfall, some 20,000 men and 1700 vehicles had arrived on French soil via Utah Beach. However, during the three weeks it took to get from this sector to Cherbourg, US forces suffered one casualty for every 10m they advanced.

Sword, Juno & Gold Beaches

These beaches, stretching for about 35km from Ouistreham to Arromanches, were attacked by the British 2nd Army, which included significant Canadian units and smaller groups of Commonwealth, Free French and Polish forces.

At Sword Beach, initial German resistance was quickly overcome and the beach was secured within hours. Infantry pushed inland from Ouistreham to link up with paratroops around Ranville, but they suffered heavy casualties as their supporting armour fell behind, trapped in a massive traffic jam on the narrow coastal roads. Nevertheless, they were within 5km of Caen by 4pm, but a heavy German counterattack forced them to dig in and Caen was not taken on the first day as planned.

At Juno Beach, Canadian battalions landed quickly but had to clear the Germans trench by trench before moving inland. Mines took a heavy toll on the infantry, but by noon they were south and east of Creully.

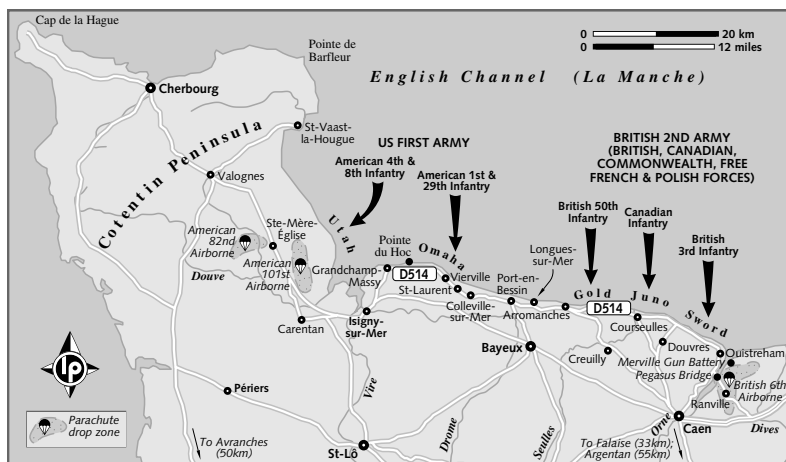
At Gold Beach, the attack by the British forces was at first chaotic, as unexpectedly high waters obscured German underwater obstacles. By 9am, though, Allied armoured divisions were on the beach and several brigades pushed inland. By afternoon they'd linked up with the Juno forces and were only 3km from Bayeux.

The Beginning of the End

By the fourth day after D-Day, the Allies held a coastal strip about 100km long and 10km deep. British Field Marshal Montgomery's plan successfully drew the German armour towards Caen, where fierce fighting continued for more than a month and reduced the city to rubble. The US Army, stationed further west, pushed northwards through the fields and *bocage* (hedgerows) of the Cotentin Peninsula.

The prized port of Cherbourg fell to the Allies on 27 June after a series of fierce battles. However, its valuable facilities were sabotaged by the retreating Germans and it remained out of service until autumn. Having foreseen such logistical problems, the Allies had devised the remarkable Mulberry Harbours (p285), two huge temporary ports set up off the Norman coast.

By the end of July, US army units had smashed through to the border of Brittany. By mid-August, two German armies had been surrounded and destroyed near Argentan and Falaise (the so-called 'Falaise Pocket'), and on 20 August US forces crossed the Seine at several points about 40km north and south of Paris. Led by General Charles de Gaulle, France's leader-in-exile, Allied and Free French troops arrived on the streets of Paris on 25 August and by that afternoon the city had been liberated.



Saving Private Ryan, it contains the graves of 9387 American soldiers, including 41 pairs of brothers, and a memorial to 1557 others whose remains were never found. White marble crosses and Stars of David stretch off in seemingly endless rows, surrounded by an immaculately tended expanse of lawn. The cemetery is overlooked by a large colonnaded memorial, centred on a statue dedicated to the spirit of American youth. Nearby is a reflective pond and a small chapel.

Opened in 2007, the **Visitor Center** (admission free), mostly underground so as not to detract from the site, has an excellent multimedia presentation on the D-Day landings, told in part through the stories of individuals. Be prepared for airport-type security. **Tours** of the cemetery (one in the afternoon year-round, a second in the morning in summer) focus on personal stories.

Pointe du Hoc Ranger Memorial

At 7.10am on 6 June 1944, 225 US Army Rangers commanded by Lt Col James Earl Rudder scaled the 30m cliffs at Pointe du Hoc, where the Germans had a battery of huge artillery guns perfectly placed to rain shells onto the beaches of Utah and Omaha. Unbeknown to Rudder and his team, the guns had already been transferred inland, and they spent the next two days repelling fierce German counterattacks. By the time they were finally relieved on 8 June, 81 of the rangers had been killed and 58 more had been wounded.

Today the **site** (☎ 02 31 51 90 70; admission free; 🕒 24hr), which France turned over to the US government in 1979, looks much as it did half a century ago. The ground is pockmarked with bomb craters, and the German command post (no longer open to the public because it's too close to the eroding cliff) and several of the concrete gun emplacements are still standing, scarred by bullet holes and blackened by flame-throwers.

As you face the sea, Utah Beach is 14km to the left.

Utah Beach

This beach is marked by memorials to the various divisions that landed here and the **Musée du Débarquement** (Landing Museum; ☎ 02 33 71 53 35; www.utah-beach.com; Ste-Marie du Mont; adult/6-14yr €5.50/2.50; 🕒 9.30am-7pm Jun-Sep, 10am-6pm Apr, May & Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm 1-15 Nov, Feb & Mar, also open Sat, Sun & school holidays mid-Nov-Dec).

CAEN

pop 108,900

Founded in the 11th century by William the Conqueror, Caen – capital of the Basse Normandie region – was 80% destroyed during the 1944 Battle of Normandy. Rebuilt in the 1950s and '60s in a typically utilitarian style, modern-day Caen offers visitors a walled medieval château, two ancient abbeys and a clutch of excellent museums, including a groundbreaking museum of war and peace.

The city can be used as a base for exploring the D-Day beaches but Bayeux is more atmospheric.

Orientation

Just south of the château lies Caen's modern commercial heart, centred around pedestrianised, east-west-oriented rue St-Pierre. From there, av du 6 Juin – and its tram line – heads southeast, crossing the river Orne on the way to the train station. What remains of Caen's old city can be found around rue du Vaugueux, just east of the château.

Information

There are several ATMs along rue St-Pierre.

Hémisphères (☎ 02 31 86 67 26; 15 rue des Croisières; 🕒 Mon afternoon & Tue-Sat) Carries Lonely Planet titles, including some in English.

Laundrette (3 rue de Geôle; 🕒 7am-9pm)

L'Espace (☎ 02 31 93 37 14; 1 rue Basse; per hr €3.80;

🕒 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat, 10am-2pm & 3-9pm Sun) A deluxe cybercafé.

Tourist Office (☎ 02 31 27 14 14; www.tourisme.caen.fr; place St-Pierre; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Mar-Jun & Sep, 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Oct-Feb)

Sights

MÉMORIAL – UN MUSÉE POUR LA PAIX

Situated 3km northwest of the city centre, the innovative **Mémorial – Un Musée pour la Paix** (Memorial – A Museum for Peace; ☎ 02 31 06 06 45; www.memorial-caen.fr; esplanade Général Eisenhower; adult/student/under 10yr & war veteran €16/15/free; 🕒 9am-7pm Mar-Oct, 9.30am-6pm Nov-Feb, closed last 3 weeks Jan) provides an insightful and vivid account of the Battle of Normandy. Tickets bought after 1pm can be used to re-enter until 1pm the next day. All signs are in French, English and German.

The visit begins with a whistle-stop overview of Europe's descent into total war,



CAEN

INFORMATION

Hemisphères.....	1	C2
Laundrette.....	2	C1
L'Espèce.....	3	D1
Post Office.....	4	C3
Tourist Office.....	5	C2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Abbaye aux Dames.....	6	E1
Abbaye aux Hommes.....	7	A2
Château de Guillaume le		
Conquérant.....	8	C1

Echiquier.....	9	C1
Eglise St-Georges.....	10	C1
Jardin des Simples.....	11	C1
Maison des Quatrans.....	12	C1
Musée de la Poste.....	13	C2
Musée de Normandie.....	14	C1
Musée des Beaux-Arts.....	15	C1

SLEEPING

Hôtel des Quatrans.....	16	C2
Hôtel Le Dauphin.....	17	C1
Hôtel St-Etienne.....	18	B2

EATING

Abracadabra.....	19	D1
Le P'tit B.....	20	D1
Monoprix.....	21	C2
Restaurant A Table.....	22	B2
Spair.....	23	C2

DRINKING

O'Donnell's Irish Pub.....	24	D2
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ENTERTAINMENT

Le Cargo.....	25	F2
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TRANSPORT

ADA.....	26	E4
Avis.....	(see 29)	
Bus Station.....	27	F4
Bus Verts Information Office & Bus Stops.....	28	D1
Europcar.....	(see 29)	
Hertz.....	29	F4
SNCF Boutique.....	30	C2

FIELDS OF THE FALLEN

The military cemeteries scattered across Normandy are a powerful reminder of the true cost of the liberation of Europe from Nazi domination. Strolling around the cemeteries, it's impossible not to be moved by the sheer scale of the devastation – and to marvel at the courage of the men who gave their lives to liberate Europe.

The largest of the D-Day cemeteries is the **Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial** (p285) above Omaha Beach, established in the late 1940s when American war dead were brought here from temporary cemeteries established during the fighting. The **Brittany American Cemetery & Memorial**, technically just inside Normandy, is 25km southeast of Mont St-Michel, just outside the village of St-James. Only about 40% of American D-Day war dead are interred in Normandy – the rest were repatriated to the United States at the request of next-of-kin.

By tradition, soldiers from the Commonwealth killed in the war were buried near where they fell. Consequently, the 18 **Commonwealth Military Cemeteries** (www.cwgc.org) in Normandy follow the line of advance of British and Canadian troops. The largest is in **Bayeux** (p281), but there are many others, including the **Canadian Military Cemetery** at Bény-sur-Mer, a few kilometres south of Juno Beach and 18km east of Bayeux. Many graves bear highly personal epitaphs, specially written by the families of the fallen. The final resting places of men whose bodies were recovered but never identified bear the words 'A Soldier of the 1939–1945 War Known unto God'.

Established during the war by the American Graves Registration Service as a temporary cemetery for both American and German war dead, **La Cambe German Military Cemetery** (www.volksbund.de, in German), about 25km west of Bayeux, now contains the remains of 21,139 German soldiers, buried two or three to a grave. Here there are no flags or noble inscriptions – each grave bears a simple ground-level plaque. Nearby is a **Peace Garden** planted with 1200 maples. Hundreds of other German dead are buried in Commonwealth cemeteries, including the one in Bayeux.

tracing events from the end of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles, through the rise of fascism in Europe and the German occupation of France, right up through the Battle of Normandy. It's a hugely impressive affair, using sound, lighting, film, animation and audio testimony, as well as a range of artefacts and exhibits, to graphically evoke the realities of war, the trials of occupation and the joy of liberation.

A second section focuses on the Cold War and, till mid-2010, will house an exhibition on the 9/11 attacks in the United States. There's also an underground gallery dedicated to winners of the Nobel Peace Prize, located in bunkers used by the Germans in 1944.

To get here take bus 2 from place Courtonne. By car, follow the signs marked 'Mémorial'.

CHÂTEAU DE GUILLAUME LE CONQUÉRANT

Looming above the centre of the city and surrounded by a dry moat and massive battlements, the **Château de Guillaume le Conquérant** (www.chateau.caen.fr; admission free) was established by William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, in 1060 and extended by his son

Henry I. Visitors can walk around the **ramparts**; visit the 12th-century **Église St-Georges** (open during temporary exhibitions) and the **Échiquier** (Exchequer), which dates from about 1100 and is one of the oldest civic buildings in Normandy; and check out the **Jardin des Simples**, a garden of medicinal and aromatic herbs cultivated during the Middle Ages – some of them poisonous.

The **Musée de Normandie** (☎ 02 31 30 47 60; www.musee-de-normandie.caen.fr; admission free except temporary exhibitions; ☎ 9.30am–6pm Wed–Mon Oct–May, daily Jun–Sep) looks at traditional life in Normandy and the region's history and archeology.

The **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Fine Arts Museum; ☎ 02 31 30 47 70; www.ville-caen.fr/mba; admission free except temporary exhibitions; ☎ 9.30am–6pm Wed–Mon) takes you on a tour through the history of Western art from the 15th to 21st centuries. The collection includes works by Rubens, Tintoretto, Géricault, Monet, Bonnard, Braque, Balthus and Dubuffet, among many others.

Near the château are two of the only pre-war buildings left in the city centre: the half-timbered, 16th-century **Musée de la Poste** (Postal Museum; 52 rue St-Pierre); and the 15th-century **Maison des Quatrans** (25 rue de Geôle).

ABBEYS

Caen's two Romanesque abbeys were founded in the mid-11th century by William the Conqueror and his wife, Matilda of Flanders, as part of a deal in which the Church pardoned these 5th cousins for having semi-incestuously married each other.

The **Abbaye aux Hommes** (Men's Abbey; ☎ 02 31 30 42 81; adult/student/under 18yr €2.20/1.10/free, admission free Sun; ☎ 8.15am-noon & 2-7.30pm except during services, tours 9.30am, 11am, 2.30pm & 4pm), with its multiturreted Église St-Étienne, is near the western end of rue Écuyère. This was William's final resting place, though the original tomb was ruined by a 16th-century Calvinist mob and, in 1793, by fevered Revolutionaries – a solitary thighbone is all that's left of Will's mortal remains. Today, the 18th-century convent buildings house the town hall.

The **Abbaye aux Dames** (Women's Abbey; ☎ 02 31 06 98 98; ☎ tours 2.30pm & 4pm), at the eastern end of rue des Chanoines, includes the Église de la Trinité. Access to the abbey, which houses regional government offices, is by guided tour (free). Look for Matilda's tomb behind the main altar.

Sleeping

There are several hotels around the north-western end of Bassin St-Pierre.

Hôtel St-Étienne (☎ 02 31 86 35 82; www.hotel-saint-etienne.com; 2 rue de l'Académie; s €27-38, d €42-46; ☒) Friendly and upbeat, this classic budget hotel – in a charming late-18th-century building with creaky wooden stairs – has just 11 rooms, some with old-fashioned features such as wooden wardrobes and stone fireplaces.

Hôtel des Quatrans (☎ 02 31 86 25 57; www.hotel-des-quatrans.com; 17 rue Gémare; s/d/q €56/65/75) Named after a historically prominent local family, this tidy, two-star hotel, built mid-century in a modern style, has 47 comfy, unfussy rooms, some with balconies and all with subdued furnishings in pleasing colours.

Hôtel Le Dauphin (☎ 02 31 86 22 26; www.le-dauphin-normandie.com; 29 rue Gémare; d €85-190; ☒) Although this Best Western-affiliated hotel is partly housed in a former priory, the facilities – including a sauna and a fitness room – are thoroughly modern. Some of the 35 rooms have antique furniture and ancient exposed beams. The pricier rooms are cheerier.

Eating

A variety of eateries line rue du Vaugueux and the streets running off it, home to some of Caen's few surviving medieval buildings. More restaurants can be found three blocks to the southeast along quai Vandœuvre.

Abbracadabra (☎ 02 31 43 71 38; 4 rue du Vaugueux; pizzas €7-15; ☎ closed lunch Sun & Wed) A local favourite since 1995, this superconvivial pizzeria serves up 40 kinds of pizzas, each with its own often-surprising name, as well as pasta and salads. Even some of the desserts are served in pizza crust.

Restaurant À Table (☎ 02 31 86 57 75; 43 rue St-Sauveur; menus €14.90-20; ☎ closed Sun & Mon) An excellent option for traditional French cuisine – including four fish and four meat mains – at reasonable prices. Specialities include home-smoked salmon and some scrumptious desserts.

Le P'tit B (☎ 02 31 93 50 76; 15 rue du Vaugueux; menu €25; ☎ lunch & dinner) This classy little stone-walled eatery gives traditional flavours a contemporary twist – the *wok de trois poissons* (three-fish stew) and beef filet are a treat for the taste buds. The menu changes four times a year.

SELF-CATERING

There are several food shops along rue St-Pierre.

Monoprix (45 bd Maréchal Leclerc; ☎ 8.30am-8.50pm Mon-Sat) Supermarket.

Spar (23 rue St-Pierre; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) Supermarket.

Drinking & Entertainment

O'Donnell's Irish Pub (☎ 02 31 85 51 50; 20 quai Vandœuvre; ☎ 4.30pm-2.30am Mon, Tue & Thu, to 3.30pm Wed, Fri & Sat, to midnight Sun) This Irish-style bar, with posters on the ceiling and upside-down barrel-tables on the terrace, serves over 30 whiskies as well as Guinness and Beamish Red on tap. Popular with Anglophone students, it screens football and rugby matches and has live music from 10pm on Friday.

Le Cargö (☎ 02 31 86 79 31; www.lecargö.fr, in French; 9 cours Caffarelli; admission free-€20) At the far end of the pleasure port, this *scène de musique actuelle* (venue for contemporary music) presents cutting-edge local bands with names like Sickbag, Psykoside and Pain Society, as well as more-established groups.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Skysouth (www.skysouth.co.uk) has three flights a week from Brighton to **Caen-Carpiquet airport** (☎ 02 31 71 20 10; www.caen.aerport.fr), 5km west of town.

BUS

Run by Caen-based **Bus Verts** (☎ 08 10 21 42 14; www.busverts.fr, in French; place Courtonne; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat), bus 20 goes to Le Havre (€10, 2½ hours) via Deauville, Trouville and Honfleur. The Caen–Le Havre route is also served by an express bus (€14, 1½ hours, four daily Monday to Saturday, two Sunday) via Honfleur.

Bus 30 goes to Bayeux (€4, on the hour, three or four daily Monday to Friday except holidays); bus 1 serves the ferry port at Ouistreham; and bus 3 will get you to Courseulles-sur-Mer.

See p284 for details on buses serving the D-Day beaches.

In Caen, most buses stop at the bus station and place Courtonne. When arriving or departing, your Bus Verts ticket is valid for an hour on Caen's buses and trams.

CAR

Rental places include **ADA** (☎ 02 31 34 88 89; 34 rue d'Auge), **Avis** (☎ 08 20 61 16 81; 44 place de la Gare), **Eurocar** (☎ 08 25 89 54 70; 36 place de la Gare) and **Hertz** (☎ 02 31 84 64 50; 34 place de la Gare).

FERRY

For details on ferries from Portsmouth to Ouistreham, 14km northeast of Caen, see p968.

TRAIN

Caen, on the Paris–Cherbourg line, has regular connections to Paris' Gare St-Lazare (€29.10, two hours, 12 daily), Bayeux (€5.50, 20 minutes, 13 to 19 daily Monday to Saturday, eight Sunday), Cherbourg (€18.40, 1¼ hours, seven to 13 daily), Deauville (€11.70, one hour, eight to 10 daily), Dieppe (€9.90, 45 minutes, 10 to 15 daily Monday to Saturday, five Sunday), Pontorson (Mont St-Michel; €22.80, two hours, three or four daily) and Rouen (€21.80, 1½ hours, eight daily).

In the city centre, tickets are sold at the **SNCF Boutique** (8 rue St-Pierre; ☎ 9.15am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat).

Getting Around

Twisto (☎ 02 31 15 55 55; www.twisto.fr, in French) runs the city's buses and the two tram lines, A and B, which link the train station with the city centre. A single/24-hour ticket costs €1.25/3.30.

For a taxi call **Abbeilles Taxi** (☎ 02 31 52 17 89).

Veol (☎ 08 00 20 03 06; www.veol.caen.fr, in French; 1st 30min free), Caen's answer to Paris' Velib' (p201), has 350 bicycles available at 40 automatic stations. The only problem: you need to sign up (one week/year €1/15).

TROUVILLE & DEAUVILLE

The twin seaside towns of Trouville (population 5400) and Deauville (population 4400), 15km southwest of Honfleur, are hugely popular with Parisians, who flock here year-round on weekends and all week long from April to September.

Chic Deauville – once a swamp, as Trouvillians are quick to point out – has been a playground of the wealthy ever since it was founded by Napoleon III's half-brother, the Duke of Morny, in 1861. Exclusive, expensive and brash, it's packed with designer boutiques, deluxe hotels and public gardens of impossible neatness, and is home to two racetracks and a high-profile American film festival.

Trouville, also a veteran beach resort, is in addition a working fishing port and, in many ways, a much more attractive place to visit. The town was frequented by painters and writers during the 19th century, including Mozin and Flaubert, and many French celebrities have holiday homes here, lured by the sandy, 2km-long beach and the laid-back seaside ambience.

To see what's on many visitors' minds, check out the windows of the many real-estate agencies in both towns.

Orientation

From the mouth of the River Touques, Deauville is to the west, while Trouville is to the east; both have long beaches along their northern sides. In Trouville, bd Fernand Moureaux runs along the river.

The towns are linked by pont des Belges, just east of Deauville's train and bus stations, and by a low-tide footpath near the river's mouth (replaced at high tide by a boat that runs from mid-March to September and on weekends and during school holidays the rest of the year).

CIDER HOUSE RULES

Normandy's signposted 40km **Route du Cider** (Cider Route) circuit, about 20km east of Caen, wends its way through the **Pays d'Auge**, a rural area of orchards, pastures, hedgerows, half-timbered farmhouses and stud farms, through picturesque villages such as **Cambremer** (www.cambremer.com) and **Beuvron-en-Auge**. Along the way, signs reading **Cru de Cambremer** indicate the way to about 20 small-scale, traditional producers who are happy to show you their facilities and sell you their home-grown cider (€3 a bottle) and Calvados. The area's AOC cider, made with a blend of apple varieties, is known for being fruity, tangy and slightly bitter – nothing like the mass-produced, pasteurised 'cidre' sold in French supermarkets.

Traditional Normandy **cider** takes about six months to make. The apples are shaken off the trees – traditionally planted only 100 per hectare to ensure maximum sunlight – or gathered from the ground sometime between early October and early December. After being stored for two or three weeks to let them mature, they are pressed. The next step is *défécation* (purification), a process that separates the *chapeau brun* ('brown hat'), ie the floating solid matter, from the clear juice, which is then slow-fermented at 10°C or less for three months. Finally, the partly fermented juice is bottled – using a bottling machine towed from farm to farm by a tractor – with just the right amount of yeast so that over the course of two months, the cider becomes naturally carbonated (but not explosively so) inside the bottle, just like Champagne (p79). Alcohol levels range from about 3% for *doux* (sweet) to 4% or 5% for *brut* (dry), with *demi-sec* (semi-dry) coming in at 3% or 4%.

Making **Calvados** (apple brandy) – 'the finest destiny of the apple' – takes even longer. First the raw apple juice – including the solid matter left by the pressing – is fermented for six months, with a fast fermentation followed by a slow one. When all the sugar has turned to alcohol, the juice is distilled, usually twice. The resulting liquid is clear but takes on a delicate golden colour from the oak casks in which it's aged for anything from two years to many decades. As with Cognac (p668), ageing ends the moment Calvados is bottled.

Another Normandy favourite is **pommeau**, an amber-coloured aperitif made by mixing unfermented apple juice with Calvados.

Information

Deauville Post Office (rue Robert Fossorier) Exchanges currency.

Deauville Tourist Office (☎ 02 31 14 40 00; www.deauville.org; place de la Mairie; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Sat, 10am–6pm Sun & holidays Jul–mid-Sep, 10am–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–1pm & 2–5pm Sun & holidays mid-Sep–Jun) Situated about 400m west of the train station. Can supply you with an English-language walking tour brochure and a Deauville map from which Trouville is completely missing.

Internet (per 15min €1) At the Trouville tourist office.

Laundrette (91 rue des Bains, Trouville; ☎ 7am–8pm)

Société Générale (9 place Morny, Deauville & 6 rue Victor Hugo, Trouville) Bank.

Trouville Tourist Office (☎ 02 31 14 60 70;

www.trouville-surmer.org; 32 bd Fernand Moureaux;

☎ 9.30am–7pm Mon–Sat, 10am–4pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am–6.30pm Mon–Sat & 10am–1pm Sun Apr–Jun, Sep & Oct, 9.30am–6pm Mon–Sat & 10am–1pm Sun Nov–Mar) Situated about 200m north of pont des Belges. Has a free, Deauville-less map of Trouville and sells maps for a self-guided architectural tour and two rural walks (7km and 11km).

Sights & Activities

In Deauville, the rich and beautiful strut their stuff along the beachside **Promenade des Planches**, a 643m-long boardwalk lined with cabins named after famous Americans (mainly film stars), before swimming in the nearby 50m covered **Piscine Olympique** (Olympic swimming pool; ☎ closed 3 wks in Jan & 2 wks in Jun) or losing a wad at the **casino** 200m inland. Trouville, too, has a **casino**, and a 583m **boardwalk** where you can swim in freshwater swimming pools, rent sailboats, windsurf and even surf. Nearby are lots of imposing **19th-century villas**.

The **Musée de Trouville** (☎ 02 31 88 16 26; 64 rue du Général Leclerc; adult/student €2/1.50; ☎ 11am–1pm & 2pm–5.30pm or 6pm Wed–Mon Easter–mid-Nov), in the fine Villa Montebello, is 1km to the northeast of the Trouville tourist office. With a panoramic view over the beach, the museum recounts Trouville's history and features works by Charles Mozin and Eugène Boudin.

Trouville's beach is home to the **Natur Aquarium** (☎ 02 31 88 46 04; www.natur-aquarium.com, in French; 17 rue de Paris; adult/3–14yr €7/5; ☎ 10am–noon

& 2-6.30pm daily Easter-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Nov-Easter), an aquarium packed with multicoloured fish, fearsome reptiles and weird insects.

Festivals & Events

Deauville's 10-day **American Film Festival** (www.festival-deauville.com) is an altogether more welcoming affair than its better-known cousin at Cannes. Tickets for most screenings are on sale to the public, and you're bound to catch glimpses of a few Hollywood stars when the festival's in full swing in early September. There's also an **Asian Film Festival** (www.deauvilleasia.com) for five days in mid-March.

Deauville is renowned for its equestrian tradition. **Horse racing** takes place in July, August and October – with a few winter races – at two *hippodromes* (racetracks; www.hippodromesdedeauville.com, in French); La Touques for flat races; and Clairefontaine (www.hippodrome-deauville-clairefontaine.com) for flat, trotting and jumping races (steeplechases and hurdles).

Sleeping

Trouville offers much better accommodation value than Deauville. Prices are highest in July and August and on weekends, and lowest from October to Easter except during Paris' school holidays.

Le Trouville (☎ 02 31 98 45 48; www.hotelletrouville.com, in French; 1-5 rue Thiers, Trouville; s/d €40/58) This two-star, family-run hotel may be small and simple but the rates are great, especially considering its proximity to the beach. The colourful bedcovers and wallpaper add a hint of much-needed character to the 15 smallish rooms.

La Maison Normande (☎ 02 31 88 12 25; www.maisonnormande.com, in French; 4 place de Lattre de Tassigny, Trouville; d €46-66; ☒) Stay in this late-17th-century Norman house and you'll feel like you're visiting your new Norman grandma. The 17 rooms are decorated in warm colours and some have views of the church. Situated right across from the church on rue Victor Hugo.

Le Fer à Cheval (☎ 02 31 98 30 20; www.hotel-trouville.com; 11 rue Victor Hugo, Trouville; d €85-97 Jul, Aug, Sat & holidays, €73-85 rest of year) Occupying three beautiful turn-of-the-20th-century buildings, this modern hotel has 34 comfortable rooms with big windows, horse-themed decor and bright bathrooms. Owned by a retired *boulangier* (baker) who loves to bake fresh croissants.

FRESH OYSTER PICNIC

The **Poissonnerie** (fish market; cnr bd Fernand Moureaux & rue des Bains, Trouville; ☎ 9am-7pm) is the place in Trouville to head for a waterfront picnic of fresh oysters with lemon (just €6.50 to €8.50 a dozen) – or for locally caught raw fish. Everything is fresh so no energy is wasted on freezing, and since there are almost no middlemen you pay reasonable prices and the fishermen get a fair share of the proceeds. It's housed in temporary stalls while the market building – which burned down in 2006 – is being rebuilt.

Eating

In Trouville, there are lots of restaurants along bd Fernand Moureaux and perpendicular rue des Bains.

Brasserie Le Central (☎ 02 31 88 13 68; 158 bd Fernand Moureaux, Trouville; menus €18.40-27.50; ☎ 7.30am-midnight or later) This buzzy brasserie adds a touch of Parisian class to the Trouville waterfront. The menu offers few surprises – fresh fish (all of it wild except for the salmon), mussels and seafood are the mainstays – but the atmosphere is fantastic on a summer evening.

SELF-CATERING

Champion (49 av de la République, Deauville; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Supermarket.

Food market (☎ Wed morning) In Trouville along bd Fernand Moureaux between pont des Belges and the Poissonnerie.

Monoprix (166 bd Fernand Moureaux, Trouville; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Supermarket.

Entertainment

Nightlife is centred in Deauville.

Bar Le Zoo (☎ 02 31 81 02 61; www.lezoo.fr, in French; 53 rue Désiré-le-Hoc, Deauville; ☎ 6pm-3am) A sleek and sophisticated urban-style hang-out, tailor-made for cocktails (€8.50) and checking out the beautiful people. Has a DJ from 10pm on Friday and Saturday, when you can dance in the cellar. The website has details on theme nights.

Shopping

Shopping in Deauville (for instance right around the casino and along rue Eugène Colas) tends towards well-known Parisian brand names, while Trouville features less-

glitzy wares along its main commercial street, rue des Bains.

Getting There & Around

Nine-seat Pipers operated by **Skysouth** (✈ in UK 01273-446 400; www.skysouth.co.uk) link **Aéroport de Deauville-St-Gatien** (✈ 02 31 65 65 65; www.deauville.aeroport.fr), 10km northeast of Deauville and Trouville, with Brighton Shorham.

From next to Deauville's train station, **Bus Verts** (✈ 08 10 21 42 14; www.busverts.fr, in French) has hourly services to Caen (€5, 1¼ hours), Honfleur (€2, 40 minutes) and Le Havre (direct or via Honfleur; €6, 1¼ hour).

Except for a handful of direct trains to Paris' Gare St-Lazare (€27.40, 2¼ hours, six to nine daily), rail travel to and from Deauville and Trouville requires a change at Lisieux (€5.50, 20 minutes, eight to 12 daily). Destinations include Caen (€11.70, one hour, eight to 10 daily) and Rouen (€19.80, 1½ to two hours, four daily).

For a cab, call **Central Taxis** (✈ 02 31 87 11 11).

HONFLEUR

pop 8200

Long a favourite with painters but now more popular with the Parisian jet set, Honfleur is arguably Normandy's most charming seaside town.

Its heart is the Vieux Bassin (Old Harbour), from where explorers once set sail for the New World. Now filled with pleasure vessels, this part of the port is surrounded by a jumble of brightly coloured buildings that evoke maritime Normandy of centuries past.

History

Honfleur's seafaring tradition dates back over a millennium. After the Norman invasion of England in 1066, goods bound for the conquered isle were shipped across the Channel from here.

In 1608 Samuel de Champlain set sail from Honfleur on his way to founding Quebec City, and in 1681 Cavalier de La Salle set out from here to explore the New World, reaching the mouth of the Mississippi and naming the area Louisiana in honour of Louis XIV.

During the 17th and 18th centuries Honfleur achieved a degree of prosperity through maritime trade – including slave trade – with the west coast of Africa, the West Indies and the Azores.

Orientation

Honfleur's focal point is the rectangular Vieux Bassin. Along its northwest side is café-lined quai Ste-Catherine; on its northeast edge are the ancient stone Lieutenantance building, the Avant Port (Outer Harbour) and a draw-bridge; from its southwestern side, rue de la République, the town's main commercial thoroughfare, heads southwest; and on its southeast side lies an old quarter known as the Enclos.

The tourist office is south across the street from the Enclos' southern edge. From the Lieutenantance, quai des Passagers leads 100m north to bd Charles V.

Information

CIC-Banque (7 quai Lepaulmier) Currency exchange across the little park from the tourist office.

Jardin des Peintres (11 bd Charles V; per hr €4; ✈ 9am-9pm, closed Wed) A café with internet computers and free wi-fi.

Laundrette (4 rue Notre Dame; ✈ 7am-8pm) Around the corner from the tourist office.

Médiathèque (quai Lepaulmier; per 30min €2.50; ✈ 2.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 2.30-5.30pm Sat, also open 9.30am or 10am-12.30pm Wed & Sat) This public library has several internet computers.

Post Office (7 cours Albert Manuel) On the southwestern continuation of rue de la République. Changes foreign currency.

Tourist Office (✈ 02 31 89 23 30; www.ot-honfleur.fr; quai Lepaulmier; ✈ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2pm-6pm or 6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Sep-Jun, closed Sun afternoon Oct-mid-Mar) Situated inside the Médiathèque (library) building. Has a free map detailing a 2km walking circuit. Internet access costs €5 for 30 minutes.

Sights

HARBOURS & WALKS

On the west side of the Vieux Bassin, with its many pleasure boats, **quai Ste-Catherine** is lined with tall, taper-thin houses – many protected from the elements by slate tiles – dating from the 16th to 18th centuries. The **Lieutenantance**, at the mouth of the old harbour, was once the residence of the town's royal governor. The **Avant Port**, just northeast of the Lieutenantance, is home to Honfleur's 30 or so fishing vessels, which moor in the area northeast of quai de la Quarantaine.

There are quite a few **art galleries** around Église Ste-Catherine (for instance on the

CAMEMBERT COUNTRY

Some of the most enduring names in the pungent world of French *fromage* come from Normandy, including **Pont L'Évêque**, **Livarot** and, most famous of all, **Camembert**, all of which are named after towns south of Honfleur, on or near the D579.

It's thought that monks first began experimenting with cheese-making in the Pays d'Auge sometime in the 11th century, but the present-day varieties didn't emerge until around the 17th century. The invention of Camembert is generally credited to Marie Herel, who was supposedly given the secret of soft cheese-making by an abbot from Brie on the run from Revolutionary mobs in 1790. Whatever the truth of the legend, the cheese was a huge success at the local market in Vimoutiers, and production of Camembert quickly grew from a cottage industry into an international operation – it even received the imperial seal of approval from Napoleon III at the World Fair in 1855.

Since 1983 the Camembert name has been protected by an official AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) designation, just like fine French wines. Between 10,000 and 15,000 tonnes of Camembert are produced in Normandy every year and it remains one of the country's most popular cheeses – two-thirds of French cheese buyers consider it an essential element of any self-respecting cheeseboard.

Camembert is traditionally made from unpasteurised cow's milk and requires two special moulds – *Penicillium candida* and *Penicillium camemberti* – to mature, a process that usually takes around three weeks. The distinctive round wooden boxes in which Camembert is wrapped have been around since 1890; they were designed by a local engineer by the name of Monsieur Ridel to protect the soft disk during long-distance travel.

If you're interested in seeing how the cheese is made, you can take a guided tour of the **Président Farm** (☎ 02 33 36 06 60; www.fermepresident.com; adult/child €5/2; 🕒 10am–noon & 2–6pm Jun–Aug, by reservation Mar–May, Sep & Oct), an early 19th-century farm restored by Président, one of the region's largest Camembert producers. It's in the centre of the town of Camembert, which is about 60km south of Honfleur.

And in case you're new to the world of Camembert, here are a couple of tips from those in the know. Most French people squeeze their cheese before buying it to test its ripeness – the texture should be soft, but not runny. A good Camembert should have a white rind with a sprinkling of reddish spots, and the taste should be strong and quite fruity. Remove it from the fridge a couple of hours before eating and let it rest at room temperature. Serve on crusty French bread.

narrow cobblestone streets northwest of place Hamelin and in the Enclos quarter.

Honfleur is superb for aimless ambling. One option is to head north from the Lieutenantie along quai des Passagers to **Jetée de l'Ouest** (Western Jetty), which forms the west side of the Avant Port, out to the broad mouth of the Seine. Possible stops include the **Jardin des Personalités**, a park featuring figures from Honfleur history; **Naturospace** (☎ 02 31 81 77 00; www.naturospace.com, in French; bd Charles V; adult/under 15yr €7.70/5.90; 🕒 10am–1pm & 2–7pm Apr–Sep, to 5.30pm Feb, Mar, Oct & Nov, 10am–7pm Jul & Aug), a tropical greenhouse filled with 60 different species of free-flying butterflies; and the **beach**.

Built between 1600 and 1613, **Chapelle Notre Dame de Grâce** is at the top of the Plateau de Grâce, a wooded, 100m-high hill about 2km west of the Vieux Bassin. There's a great view of the town and port.

ÉGLISE STE-CATHERINE

Initially intended as a temporary structure, this extraordinary **church** (place Ste-Catherine; 🕒 9am–6pm Easter–Sep, to 5.15pm Oct–Easter) has been standing in the square for over 500 years. Built by the people of Honfleur during the late 15th and early 16th centuries after its stone predecessor had been destroyed during the Hundred Years' War, wood was used in an effort to save funds for strengthening the fortifications around the Enclos. The structure is particularly notable for its double-vaulted roof and its twin naves, which from the inside resemble a couple of overturned ships' hulls.

Across the square is the church's free-standing wooden bell tower, **Clocher Ste-Catherine** (☎ 02 31 89 54 00; admission €2; 🕒 10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Mon mid-Mar–Sep, 2.30–5pm Mon & Wed–Fri, 10am–noon & 2.30–5pm Sat & Sun Oct–mid-Nov, closed mid-Nov–mid-Mar), supposedly built away from the

church in order to avoid lightning strikes and damage from the clock's clanging bells.

MUSÉE EUGÈNE BOUDIN

Named in honour of Eugène Boudin, an early Impressionist painter born here in 1824, this **museum** (☎ 02 31 89 54 00; opposite 50 rue de l'Homme de Bois; adult/student & senior €4.70/3, Jul-Sep €5.40/3.90; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon mid-Mar-Sep, 2.30-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-noon & 2.30-5pm Sat & Sun Oct-mid-Mar) is three blocks northwest of the Lieutenant. It features a collection of Impressionist paintings from Normandy, including works by Dubourg, Dufy and Monet. One room is devoted to Boudin, whom Baudelaire called the 'king of skies' for his luscious skyscapes.

LES MAISONS SATIE

The quirky **Les Maisons Satie** (☎ 02 31 89 11 11; 67 bd Charles V; adult/student & senior/under 10yr €5.40/3.90/free; 🕒 10am-7pm Wed-Mon May-Sep, 11am-6pm Wed-Mon Oct-Apr, closed Jan) captures the spirit of the eccentric, avant-garde composer Erik Satie (1866-1925), who lived and worked in Honfleur and was born in the half-timbered house that now contains the museum. 'Esoteric' Satie was known for his surrealist wit as much as for his starkly beautiful piano compositions. Visitors wander through the museum with a headset playing Satie's music and excerpts from his writings (in French or English). Each room is a surreal surprise – winged pears and self-peddalling carousels are just the start.

MUSÉE DE LA MARINE

Located in the Enclos quarter, the **Musée de la Marine** (☎ 02 31 89 14 12; quai St-Etienne; adult/student & senior €3.30/2.10; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-mid-Nov & mid-Feb-Mar, closed mid-Nov-mid-Feb) has nautically themed displays of model ships, carpenters' tools and engravings. It is inside the deconsecrated 13th- and 14th-century Église St-Étienne.

MUSÉE D'ETHNOGRAPHIE ET D'ART POPULAIRE NORMAND

Next to the Musée de la Marine, the **Musée d'Ethnographie et d'Art Populaire Normand** (rue de la Prison; adult/student & senior €3.30/2.10; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-mid-Nov & mid-Feb-Mar, closed mid-Nov-mid-Feb) occupies a couple of period houses and a former prison. Its nine rooms

PONT DE NORMANDIE

Opened in 1995, this futuristic bridge (€5 each way) stretches in a soaring 2km arch over the Seine between Le Havre to Honfleur. It's a typically French affair, as much sophisticated architecture as engineering, with two huge V-shaped columns – somewhat reminiscent of giant toast tongs – holding aloft a delicate net of cables. Crossing is quite a thrill – and the views of the Seine are magnificent. In each direction there's a narrow footpath and a bike lane.

re-create the world of Honfleur during the 16th to 19th centuries using a mix of costumes, furniture and artefacts. A combined ticket with the Musée de la Marine costs €4.50 for adults, or €2.90 for students and seniors.

Tours

Some of the tourist office's 1½- to two-hour **walking tours** (€7) of Honfleur are in English, including one that leaves at 3pm every Wednesday in May and June and from September to mid-October. Atmospheric night-time tours begin at 9pm on Friday and Saturday in May and June and from September to mid-October, and on Saturday in July and August.

From about March to mid-October, you can take a **boat tour** from the Avant Port (across the street from the Lieutenant) out to the Seine Estuary and the Pont de Normandie (above) – look for the *Cap Christian*, *L'Évasion III* or the larger *Jolie France*.

Sleeping

Etap Hôtel (☎ 08 92 68 07 81; rue des Vases; www.etaphotel.com; d €38.60-46.60) Has 63 cheap, charmless, chain-hotel rooms.

Hôtel Belvédère (☎ 02 31 89 08 13; www.hotel-belvedere-honfleur.com; 36 rue Emile Renouf; d €66) Offering the best value in town, this cosy, welcoming hotel has nine well-kept rooms, some with views of the Pont de Normandie, others of the delightful, grassy back garden. Situated 1km southeast of the tourist office.

Hôtel du Dauphin (☎ 02 31 89 15 53; www.hoteldudauphin.com; 10 place Pierre-Berthelot; d €69-98, q €139) Behind a 17th-century, slate and half-timbered facade, this welcoming hotel has 34 modern, smallish rooms with brass lamps and marine prints. The pricier rooms even

have spa bathtubs with water jets. Situated one block south of Église Ste-Catherine.

Hôtel L'Écrin (☎ 02 31 14 43 45; www.honfleur.com/default-ecrin.htm; 19 rue Eugène Boudin; d €100-190, ste €220-250; ☑ ☒ ☓) The parlour and public spaces of this lavish Norman manor house are stuffed with porcelain, oil paintings and antique furniture, re-creating the opulence of times long past. The 30 three-star rooms, which come with thoroughly modern bathrooms, retain touches of the 1800s – alongside thin-screen TVs hung on the walls like oil paintings. To get here from Église Ste-Catherine, go southwest along rue Brûlée and turn right.

our pick La Maison de Lucie (☎ 02 31 14 40 40; www.lamaisondelucie.com; 44 rue des Capucins; d €150-220, ste €315) Former home of the novelist Lucie Delarue Mardrus (1874-1945), this marvellous little hideaway has just 10 rooms and two suites, the latter decorated with a mixture of antiques and contemporary objects d'art from far-off lands. Some of the bedrooms, panelled in oak, have Moroccan-tile bathrooms and boast fantastic views across the harbour to the Pont de Normandie. The shady terrace is a glorious place for a summer breakfast. There's a chic jacuzzi in the old brick-vaulted cellar. Situated five short blocks west of the Lieutenant.

Eating

Quai Ste-Catherine is lined with brasseries and restaurants with warm-season terraces, chock-a-block with sharply dressed Parisians on summer weekends. More eateries can be found around place Hamelin and adjacent rue de l'Homme de Bois, one block northwest of the Lieutenant, and on the cobblestone streets just north of the tourist office.

La Cidrerie (☎ 02 31 89 59 85; 26 place Hamelin; menu incl drink €10.90; ☒ closed Tue & Wed except Jul, Aug & school holidays) This tidy little crêperie – down a short alleyway – is a good find if you fancy washing your meal down with *cidre Normand*.

La Tortue (☎ 02 31 81 24 60; www.restaurantlatortue.fr, in French; 36 rue de l'Homme de Bois; lunch menu €13, other menus €19-34; ☒ closed Tue & dinner Mon Oct-Mar) This traditionally styled eatery serves up French cuisine with Norman touches, offering four meat and six fish mains. Starters include oysters in aniseed sauce (€9). Situated two blocks northwest of the Lieutenant.

L'Ascot (☎ 02 31 98 87 91; 76 quai Ste-Catherine; menus €24.50-30.50; ☒ closed Tue) A great spot for fresh seafood on a summer evening, with tightly packed tables on the outside terrace

and an intimate candle-lit ambience inside. Also serves eight kinds of fish and several steak options.

L'Absinthe (☎ 02 31 89 39 00; 10 quai de la Quarantaine; menus €33-68; ☒ lunch & dinner) Facing the Vieux Port, this well-regarded restaurant serves up sumptuous, sophisticated French cuisine – made with seasonally fresh products – in the finest *gastronomique* tradition. Specialities include fillet of bass, roasted pigeon and blue Breton lobster. It's a good idea to reserve ahead for Saturday dinner and Sunday lunch.

SELF-CATERING

There are several food shops along rue de la République.

Champion (opp 55 rue de la République; ☒ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, no midday closure Sat) Supermarket.

Food market (place Ste-Catherine; ☒ 8am-1pm Sat)

Organic food market (place Ste-Catherine; ☒ 8am-1pm Wed)

Petit Casino (16 quai Lepalmier; ☒ 8am-1pm & 3-8pm Tue-Fri, no midday closure Sat, to 7pm Sun) A supermarket a block east of the tourist office.

Drinking

Café L'Albatros (☎ 02 31 89 25 30; 32 quai Ste-Catherine; ☒ 8am-1am Oct-Apr, to 2am May-Sep) Sailors, students, philosophers and layabouts are all at home at this café-bar, from breakfast through sandwiches and beer and on to nightcaps. Serves light meals till 10pm.

Le Perroquet Vert (☎ 02 31 89 14 19; 52 quai Ste-Catherine; ☒ 8am-1am Oct-Mar, to 2am Apr-Sep) The brick-vaulted 'green parrot' has an excellent selection of beers and a fine terrace for people-watching. Serves breakfast, afternoon sandwiches (noon to 3pm) and tapas (7pm to closing).

Getting There & Around

The **bus station** (☎ 02 31 89 28 41) is two blocks east of the tourist office. Bus 20, operated by **Bus Verts** (☎ 08 10 21 42 14; www.busverts.fr, in French), goes via Deauville and Trouville (€2, 30 minutes) to Caen (€7, two hours, 12 daily Monday to Saturday, six Sunday) and, in the other direction, to Le Havre (€4, 30 minutes, eight daily Monday to Saturday, four Sunday) via the Pont de Normandie. There's also an express bus to Caen (€9.80, one hour).

To catch the train (eg to Paris), take the bus to Deauville, Le Havre or Lisieux (€4, 50 minutes, four or five daily).

Free parking is available next to Naturospace, which is 600m from the Avant Port on bd Charles V. East of the Avant Port at Parking du Mole, you can park all day for €2.

MANCHE

The Manche *département* (www.manche-tourisme.com) encompasses the entire Cotentin Peninsula, stretching from Utah Beach northwest to Cherbourg and southwest to the magnificent Mont St-Michel. The peninsula's northwest corner is especially captivating, with unspoiled stretches of rocky coastline sheltering tranquil bays and villages. The fertile inland areas, criss-crossed with hedgerows, produce an abundance of cattle, dairy products and apples. The British crown dependencies of Jersey and Guernsey lie 22km and 48km offshore, respectively.

Manche is also known for its nuclear facilities, including an electricity-generating complex at Flamanville, a reprocessing facility at Cap de la Hague and a shipyard for building nuclear submarines at Cherbourg.

For details on Utah Beach, see p288.

CHERBOURG

pop 40,500

At the top of the Cotentin Peninsula sits Cherbourg, the largest – but hardly the most appealing – town in this part of Normandy. Transatlantic cargo ships, passenger ferries from Britain and Ireland, yachts and warships pass in and out of Cherbourg's monumental port. During WWII, most of the petrol used by the Allied armies during the Normandy campaign was supplied by an underwater pipeline laid from England to Cherbourg shortly after D-Day.

Modern-day Cherbourg – now united with adjacent Octeville – is a far cry from the romantic city portrayed in Jacques Demy's 1964 film *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (The Umbrellas of Cherbourg) but it's a useful base if you're crossing the Channel by ferry.

Orientation

The city centre is west of the Bassin du Commerce, with lots of shopping around rue Maréchal Foch and the pedestrian streets north of there. The attractive Avant

Port (Outer Harbour) is north of pont Tournant; further north, east across the harbour entrance from the pleasure port, is Cité de la Mer, with the ferry terminal further east.

Information

Archsyes (☎ 02 33 53 04 93; 16 rue de l'Union; per 6min/hr €0.50/5; ☎ 11.30am-10pm Tue-Fri, 11.30am-midnight Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Internet access.

Change Bourse Monnaies (☎ 02 33 20 08 27; 53 rue Maréchal Foch; ☎ 8.30am-12.15pm & 1.45-6.15pm Mon-Fri & 8.30am-12.15pm Sat) Currency exchange.

Forum Espace Culture (☎ 02 33 78 19 30; place Centrale; per 10/30min €1.50/2.35; ☎ 2-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Sat) This bookshop has an internet café on the upper floor.

Laundrette (62 rue au Blé; ☎ 7am-8pm)

Post Office (1 rue de l'Ancien Quai) Exchanges currency.

Tourist Office (☎ 02 33 93 52 02; www.ot-cherbourg-cotentin.fr; 2 quai Alexandre III; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun, to 6.30pm Jul & Aug) Has useful information on visiting the city, the Cotentin Peninsula and D-Day sites.

Tourist Office Annexe (☎ 02 33 44 39 92; ferry terminal) Open for ferry arrivals.

Sights & Activities

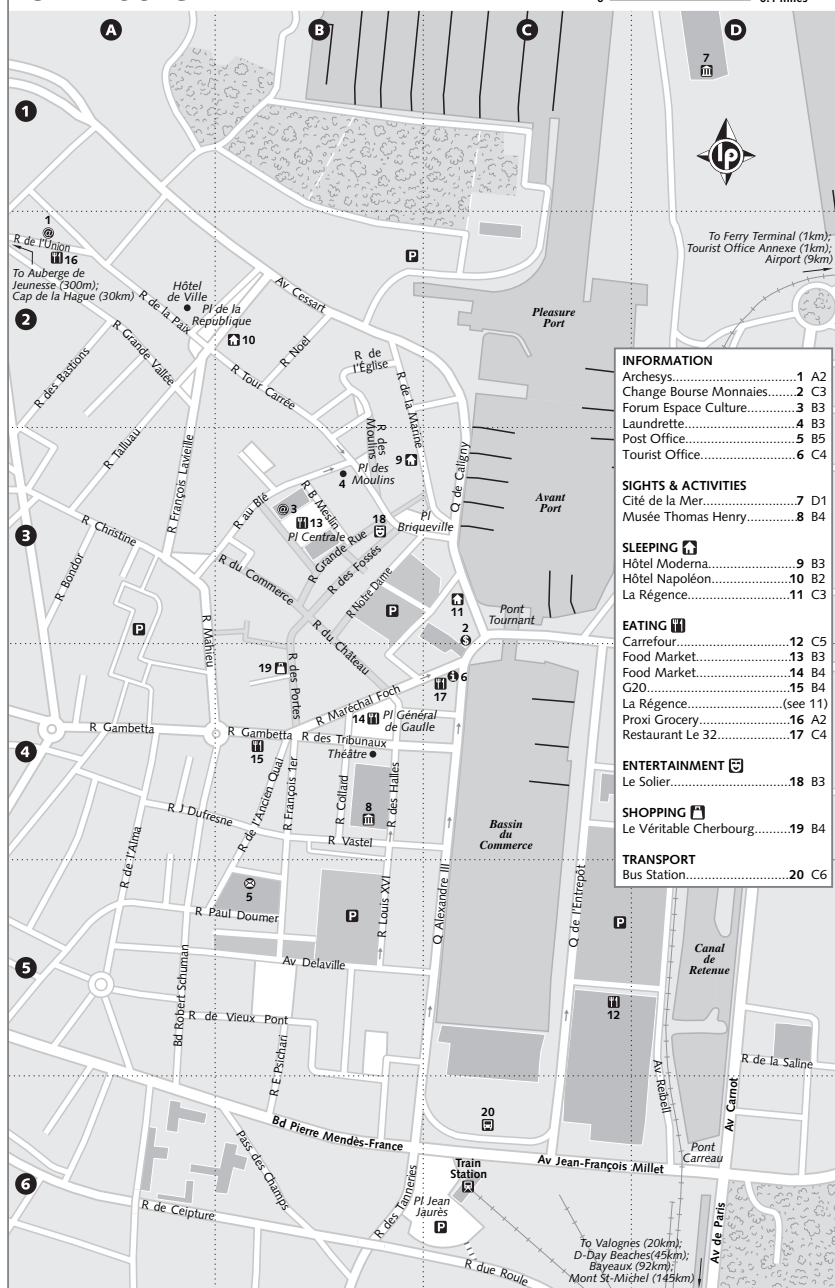
Housed in Cherbourg's art-deco transatlantic ferry terminal, built in the 1930s, **Cité de la Mer** (☎ 02 33 20 26 26; www.citedelamer.com; Gare Maritime Transatlantique; adult/child €14/10; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-6.30pm May, Jun, Sep & school holidays, 10am-6pm Feb-Apr & Oct-Dec, closed Jan) is both an aquarium – the deepest in Europe – and a showcase for French submarine prowess. This may be your only chance to go inside a French nuclear submarine, *Le Redoubtable*, in service from 1967 to 2016.

Musée Thomas Henry (☎ 02 33 23 39 30; 4 rue Vastel; admission free; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 2-6pm Sun & Mon May-Sep, 2-6pm Wed-Sun Oct-Apr) has 300 works by French and European artists, including Fra Angelico, David, Camille Claudel and Cotentin-born Jean-François Millet.

Sleeping

Auberge de Jeunesse (☎ 02 33 78 15 15; www.fuaj.org; 55 rue de l'Abbaye; dm €16.80; ☎ check-in 9am-1pm & 6pm-11pm; ☑) Situated 1km northwest of the tourist office, this 99-bed hostel, opened in 1998 in the French navy's old archives buildings, has a small kitchen for self-caterers. Rooms have two to five beds. Take bus 3 or 5 to the Hôtel de Ville stop.

CHERBOURG

0 200 m
0 0.1 miles

INFORMATION

- Archveys.....1 A2
Change Bourse Monnaies.....2 C3
Forum Espace Culture.....3 B3
Laundrette.....4 B3
Post Office.....5 B5
Tourist Office.....6 C4

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

- Cité de la Mer.....7 D1
Musée Thomas Henry.....8 B4

SLEEPING

- Hôtel Moderna.....9 B3
Hôtel Napoléon.....10 B2
La Régence.....11 C3

EATING

- Carrefour.....12 C5
Food Market.....13 B3
Food Market.....14 B4
G20.....15 B4
La Régence.....(see 11)
Proxi Grocery.....16 A2
Restaurant Le 32.....17 C4

ENTERTAINMENT

- Le Solier.....18 B3

SHOPPING

- Le Véritable Cherbourg.....19 B4

TRANSPORT

- Bus Station.....20 C6

Hôtel Napoléon (☎ 02 33 93 32 32; www.hotel-napoleon.fr; 14 place de la République; s €24-40, d €35-52) In one of the area's few surviving 19th-century buildings, the Napoléon offers 14 upbeat, pastel bedrooms, some with a limited view across the port.

Hôtel Moderna (☎ 02 33 43 05 30; www.moderna-hotel.com; 28 rue de la Marine; s €36-42, d €41-51, q €67; ☒) In a classic 1950s building, this friendly hotel has 25 rooms whose rich colours add a warm, homey feeling. Has a patio for breakfast. Excellent value.

La Régence (☎ 02 33 43 05 16; www.laregence.com; 42-44 quai de Caligny; d €51-99) This three-star Logis de France establishment offers 21 tasteful, well-kept rooms (most of modest size) with brass light fittings. The pricier rooms have great harbour views.

Eating & Entertainment

Restaurants can be found north of the tourist office on quai de Caligny and northwest along rue Tour Carrée and rue de la Paix.

Restaurant Le 32 (☎ 02 33 94 30 39; 32 rue Maréchal Foch; 2-/3-course menus €10.50/20; ☒ closed Sun, Mon & holidays) Good-value, home-made French cuisine is the order of the day at this unpretentious, family-run *resto*. Specialities include beef carpaccio and scallops on skewers.

La Régence (☎ 02 33 43 05 16; 42-44 quai de Caligny; mains €19-34; ☒ lunch & dinner) An old-time French restaurant with traditional fish, seafood and meat mains. Specialities include mussels, fish soup and *tartiflette au Camembert*.

Le Solier (☎ 02 33 94 76 63; 52 rue Grande Rue; ☒ 6pm-1am Tue-Sat Oct-May, to 2am Jun-Sep) Opened in 1982, this convivial place is a cross between an English pub and a French bar. Hosts live traditional Irish music on the 2nd Thursday of the month and jazz the last Thursday.

SELF-CATERING

Carrefour (quai de l'Entrepôt; ☒ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 9.30pm Fri) Supermarket.

Food markets place Centrale & around (☒ to 4pm Thu & morning Sat); place Général de Gaulle (☒ Tue morning)

G20 (57 rue Gambetta; ☒ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Supermarket.

Proxi grocery (15 rue de l'Union; ☒ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.45pm & 5-8pm Sun & holidays)

Shopping

For a fine selection of top-quality *parapluies* (umbrellas), check out **Le Véritable Cherbourg** (☎ 02 33 93 23 77; www.papapluie-cherbourg.com; 30 rue

des Portes; ☒ closed Mon morning & Sun). Prices range from €85 to €150.

Getting There & Away

Cherbourg is 92km northwest of Bayeux and 145km north of Mont St-Michel.

For details on car ferry services from Cherbourg's **ferry terminal** (www.port-cherbourg.com) to Poole, Portsmouth and Rosslare (Ireland), see p968 and p967.

Direct trains go to Paris' Gare St-Lazare (€41.20, 3½ hours, two to four direct daily), Bayeux (€14.60, one hour, 11 daily Monday to Friday, three to five daily weekends) and Caen (€18.40, 1¼ hours, seven to 13 daily). With a change at Lison, there are services to Coutances (€17.30, 1½ hours, five to 10 daily) and Pontorson (Mont St-Michel; €24.50, 2¼ hours, two daily).

Getting Around

In the warm months, a shuttle-bus service links the ferry terminal with the town centre and the train station.

For a taxi, call ☎ 02 33 53 36 38. A daytime trip between the train station and ferry terminal costs about €9.

COUTANCES

pop 9500

A fine Norman Gothic cathedral and a lovely landscape garden make Coutances, a medieval hilltop town 77km south of Cherbourg, worth a stop, perhaps on the way to or from Mont St-Michel.

Orientation & Information

The main north-south street is known as rue Geoffroy de Montbray south of the cathedral and place du Parvis (home of the town hall), and as rue Tancrede north of there. The train and bus stations are 1km southeast of the cathedral.

Post Office (10 rue St-Dominique) Exchanges money.

Tourist Office (☎ 02 33 19 08 10; tourismecoutances@wanadoo.fr; place Georges Leclerc; ☒ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, no midday closure Thu, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sat Sep-Jun) Around the side of the battle-scarred town hall, which is on the square in front of the cathedral. Has several excellent brochures on Coutances. Internet costs €2 per hour.

Sights & Activities

Built on elements left over from its 11th-century Romanesque predecessor, the

PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL DU COTENTIN ET DU BESSIN

Inland from Utah Beach, to the south and southwest, is the 1450-sq-km **Parc Naturel Régional du Cotentin et du Bessin** (www.parc-cotentin-bessin.fr), with its waterways, marshes, moors and hedgerows. For details on hiking and cycling in the park and elsewhere in the Manche *département*, see www.mancherandonnee.com (in French).

13th-century **Cathédrale de Coutances** (admission free; ☎ 9am-7pm) has an airy, if sober, Norman Gothic design enhanced by the use of light-hued limestone.

Interior highlights include several 13th-century windows, a 14th-century fresco of St Michel skewering the dragon, and an organ and high altar from the mid-1700s. You can climb the lantern tower on a **tour** (adult/student €6.50/5.50; ☎ in French 11am & 3pm Mon-Fri, 3pm Sun Jul & Aug, in English 11.45am Tue Jul & Aug). The tourist office has an excellent trilingual brochure on the cathedral.

About 100m west of the tourist office, across the square, is the splendid **Jardin des Plantes** (☎ 9am-11.30pm Jul & Aug, 9am-8pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Mar), a grand landscape garden laid out in the 1850s that mixes French-, Italian- and English-style elements in its terraces, flower beds, fountains, statues and maze. On summer evenings (July and August), classical music wafts through the gardens.

Both the cathedral and gardens light up with a son-et-lumière (sound-and-light) show on summer nights.

Sleeping

Hôtel La Pocatière (☎ 02 33 45 13 77; www.hotelapocatiere.com; 25 bd Alsace-Lorraine, D971; d €29-49, q €63) Situated at the northern tip of the old city (750m north of the cathedral), this welcoming two-star hotel has 18 spotless, newly renovated rooms with red or blue drapes, cheery wallpaper and bright little bathrooms.

Hotel La Taverne du Parvis (☎ 02 33 45 13 55; lataverneduparvis@wanadoo.fr; place du Parvis; s/d/q €34/43/57) Facing the cathedral's west facade, this brasserie-cum-hotel has 12 good-value rooms without frills, some with great cathedral views.

Eating

Several restaurants are clustered around the tourist office. Food shops can be found on rue Tancrede.

La Taverne du Parvis (☎ 02 33 45 13 55; place du Parvis; 2-course lunch menu €12.50, other menus €21.50) A popular café-brasserie facing the cathedral.

SELF-CATERING

Food market (place du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 7am-1pm Thu) Below the retaining wall at the back of the cathedral garden. Look for the delicious local Coutances cheese.

Marché Plus (23 rue Tancrede; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Supermarket about 100m north of the cathedral.

Getting There & Around

The SNCF runs buses to the seaside town of Granville (€7.20, 30 minutes, three or four daily, more in summer). Bus 110, operated by **Manéo** (☎ 08 00 15 00 50; www.mobi50.com, in French), goes to several beaches south of Gouville-sur-Mer.

Train destinations include Bayeux (€11.40, 50 minutes, eight daily Monday to Saturday, four Sunday), Cherbourg (€17.30, 1½ hours, five to 10 daily) and Pontorson (Mont St-Michel; €10.50, 40 minutes, two or three daily).

City centre parking is free if your car is not registered in the Manche *département*.

MONT ST-MICHEL

pop 46

It's one of France's most iconic images: the slender towers and sky-scraping turrets of the abbey of Mont St-Michel rising from stout ramparts and battlements, the whole ensemble connected to the mainland by a narrow causeway. Fortunately, although it's visited by huge numbers of tourists, both French and foreign, the Mont still manages to whisk you back to the Middle Ages, its fantastic architecture set against the backdrop of the area's extraordinary tides.

The bay around Mont St-Michel is famed for having Europe's highest tidal variations. Depending on the gravitational pull of the moon and the sun (greatest 36 to 48 hours after the full and new moon, when both bodies are lined up with the earth), the difference between low and high tides can reach an astonishing 15m, although the Mont is only completely surrounded by the sea every month or two, when the tidal coefficient is above 100

and high tide above 14m. Regardless of the time of year, the waters sweep in at an astonishing clip, said to be as fast as a galloping horse. At low tide the Mont is surrounded by bare sand for kilometres around, but at high tide, barely six hours later, the whole bay – including some of the Mont's car parks – can be submerged.

Be prepared for lots of steps, some of them spiral – alas, the Mont is one of the least wheelchair-accessible sites in France.

Mont St-Michel's 1300th anniversary is being celebrated in 2008 and 2009 – the tourist office website has details on events.

History

According to Celtic mythology, Mont St-Michel was one of the sea tombs to which the souls of the dead were sent. Bishop Aubert of Avranches is said to have built a devotional chapel at the summit of the island in 708, following his vision of the Archangel Michael, whose gilded figure, perched on the vanquished dragon, crowns the tip of the abbey's spire. In 966 Richard I, duke of Normandy, gave Mont St-Michel to the Benedictines, who turned it into a centre of learning and, in the 11th century, into something of an ecclesiastical fortress, with a military garrison at the disposal of the abbot and the king.

In the 15th century, during the Hundred Years' War, the English blockaded and besieged Mont St-Michel three times. The fortified abbey withstood these assaults and was the only place in western and northern France not to fall into English hands. After the Revolution, Mont St-Michel was turned into a prison. In 1966 the abbey was symbolically returned to the Benedictines as part of the celebrations marking its millennium. Mont St-Michel and the bay became a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1979.

Orientation

The only opening in the ramparts, Porte de l'Avancée, is to the left at the end of the causeway. The Mont's single street – an alley deceptively called Grande Rue – is lined with restaurants, a few hotels and an exuberant array of tacky souvenir shops.

There are several large car parks (€4 per day) along the causeway. Unless you're trying to get rid of your car in an insurance scam, it's a good idea to pay attention to the signs

that warn visitors which areas will soon be under water due to the incoming tide. Tides above 13.10m submerge the two lots closest to the Mont.

Pontorson (population 4200), the nearest real town to Mont St-Michel, is 9km to the south and is the base for many travellers. The north-south-oriented D976 links Mont St-Michel with Pontorson's main thoroughfare, east-west-oriented rue du Couesnon.

Information

Internet – Mont St-Michel (Hôtel de la Croix Blanche, Grande Rue; per hr €4) If you're so addicted to email that not even one of the glories of the Middle Ages can tear you away, this hotel, halfway up the Grande Rue, has a terminal.

Internet – Pontorson (per 30min/1hr €4.50/8) In the tourist office.

Post Office – Mont St-Michel (Grande Rue) Changes currency and has an ATM.

Post Office – Pontorson (place de l'Hôtel de Ville) Changes currency.

Tourist Office – Mont St-Michel (☎ 02 33 60 14 30; www.ot-montsaintmichel.com; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun Oct-Mar) Just inside Porte de l'Avancée, up the stairs to the left. An *horaire des marées* (tide table) is posted just inside the door. A detailed map of the Mont costs €3.

Tourist Office – Pontorson (☎ 02 33 60 20 65; www.mont-saint-michel-baie.com, in French; place de l'Hôtel de Ville; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Sat, 10am-noon Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 3-6pm Sat Sep-Jun) Has details on traversing the Bay of Mont St-Michel on foot and on local events. Situated on rue St-Michel half a block south of rue Couesnon.

Société Générale (Mont St-Michel) ATM just inside Porte de l'Avancée.

Sights

ABBAYE DU MONT ST-MICHEL

The Mont's major attraction is the stunning **abbey** (☎ 02 33 89 80 00; www.monuments-nationaux.fr; adult/18-25yr/under 18yr incl guided tour €8.50/5/free; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Aug, 9.30am-6pm Sep-Apr, last entry 1hr before closing), at the top of the Grande Rue and up a steep stairway. From Monday to Saturday in July and August, there are illuminated *nocturnes* (night-time visits) with music from 7pm to 10pm.

Most rooms can be visited without a guide but it's worth taking the one-hour tour,

included in the ticket price. The frequency of English tours ranges from twice a day (11am and 3pm) in the dead of winter to hourly in summer; the last leaves at least 1½ hours before closing time. Audioguides (one for €4, two for €6) are available in six languages. Don't forget to pick up the excellent brochure-guide, available in 10 languages.

The **Église Abbatiale** (Abbey Church) was built at the rocky tip of the mountain cone. The transept rests on solid rock, while the nave, choir and transept arms are supported by the rooms below. The church is famous for its mix of architectural styles: the nave and south transept (11th and 12th centuries) are solid Norman Romanesque, while the choir (late 15th century) is Flamboyant Gothic. Mass is held at 12.15pm from Tuesday to Sunday and at 11.30am on Sunday.

The buildings on the northern side of the Mont are known as **La Merveille** (The Marvel). The famous **doître** (cloister) is surrounded by a double row of delicately carved arches resting on granite pillars. The early-13th-century, barrel-roofed **réfectoire** (dining hall) is illuminated by a wall of recessed windows – remarkable, given that the sheer drop precluded the use of flying buttresses. The Gothic **Salle des Hôtes** (Guest Hall), dating from 1213, has two enormous fireplaces. Look out for the **promenoire** (ambulatory), with one of the oldest ribbed vaulted ceilings in Europe, and the **Chapelle de Notre Dame sous Terre** (Underground Chapel of Our Lady), one of the abbey's oldest rooms, rediscovered in 1903.

The masonry used to build the abbey was brought to the Mont by boat and pulled up the hillside using ropes. The contraption that looks like a treadmill for gargantuan gerbils was in fact powered in the 19th century by half-a-dozen prisoners who, by turning the wheel, hoisted the supply sledge up the side of the abbey. Experts doubt that they sang the Oompah-Loompah song while trudging round and round.

GRANDE RUE

None of the four private **museums** (adult/child €8/4.50, for all 4 museums €16/9) along Grande Rue is up to much, although a couple might intrigue the kids. The **Archéoscope** (☎ 02 33 89 01 85) is a smart 20-minute multimedia history of the Mont with lights, video and even a few spurts of dry ice, while the **Musée de la Mer et de**

l'Écologie explains Mont St-Michel's complex tidal patterns.

Tours

When the tide is out, you can walk all the way around Mont St-Michel, a distance of about 1km. Straying too far from the Mont can be very risky: you might get stuck in wet sand – from which Norman soldiers are depicted being rescued in one scene of the Bayeux Tapestry (p279) – or be overtaken by the incoming tide, providing your next-of-kin with a great cocktail party story.

Experienced outfits offering **guided walks** (€6.50) out into – or even across – the bay include **Découverte de la Baie du Mont-Saint-Michel** (☎ 02 33 70 83 33; www.decouvertebaie.com, in French) and **Chemins de la Baie** (☎ 02 33 89 80 88; www.cheminsdelabaie.com, in French), both based across the bay from Mont St-Michel in Genêts. Local tourist offices have details.

Sleeping

There are eight rather pricey hotels on the Mont itself but most people choose to stay in one of the chain-style hotels in Beauvoir, on the mainland, or in the rather ordinary town of Pontorson, 9km due south of the Mont. The places mentioned below are in Pontorson.

Auberge de Jeunesse (Centre Duquesclin; ☎ 02 33 60 18 65; aj.pontorson@wanadoo.fr; 21 bd du Général Patton, Pontorson; dm €11.30; ♻️ mid-Apr–Sep) Situated 1km west of the train station near the new Gendarmerie building, this modern, 62-bed hostel has four- to six-bed rooms and kitchen facilities. Reception closes from noon to 5pm (except from mid-July to late August) but there's no curfew.

Hôtel La Tour Brette (☎ 02 33 60 10 69; www.latourbrette.com; 8 rue du Couesnon, Pontorson; d €36-42) A family-run place with 10 unsurprising, good-value rooms.

Hôtel de Bretagne (☎ 02 33 60 10 55; www.lebretagnepontorson.com; 59 rue du Couesnon, Pontorson; d/q €59/79; ♻️ closed mid-Jan–Feb) This half-timbered, two-star place looks a bit shabby from the outside but the flowery bedspreads and curtains add a touch of brightness to the 12 spacious but otherwise average rooms.

Hôtel Montgomery (☎ 02 33 60 00 09; www.hotel-montgomery.com; 13 rue du Couesnon, Pontorson; d €93-117, ste €180-250) In a 16th-century mansion, this three-star, Best Western-affiliated hotel has a vine-covered Renaissance facade and, inside, creaky wood-panelled corridors

and 32 rooms. One room comes with hefty Renaissance furniture and a four-poster bed just 135cm wide!

Eating

MONT ST-MICHEL

The Grande Rue is jammed with sandwich shops and crêperies.

Crêperie La Sirène (☎ 02 33 60 03 60; crêpes €2.10-8.60; 🕒 9am-8pm, to 10.30pm or 11.30pm summer) Not a bad budget option, with a good selection of sweet crêpes and savoury galettes and salads. Up an ancient spiral staircase from a souvenir shop.

La Mère Poulard (☎ 02 33 89 68 68; lunch menu €39, dinner menus €65-85; 🕒 11.45am-4.30pm & 6.45-9.30pm, no afternoon closure in summer) Established in 1888, this tourist institution churns out its famous soufflé omelettes, cooked in a wood-fired oven, and charges astronomical prices for them.

PONTORSON

Rue du Couesnon has a few cheap eateries but the best restaurants belong to the hotels.

Hôtel La Tour Brette (☎ 02 33 60 10 69; 8 rue du Couesnon; menus €11.30-33; 🕒 closed Wed) Home-style French and Normandy cuisine, including oysters, mussels and fish soup.

Hôtel Montgomery (☎ 02 33 60 00 09; 13 rue du Couesnon; mains €12.60-19.60; 🕒 7.15-9.15pm) One of Pontorson's best restaurants for French, Normandy and Brittany cuisine.

Hôtel de Bretagne (☎ 02 33 60 10 55; 59 rue du Couesnon; lunch menu €12.90, dinner menus €15.90-26.90; 🕒 closed lunch Mon & Sun) A formal restaurant that serves up local specialities such as oysters with Camembert, and scallops cooked in cider.

SELF-CATERING

Pontorson has five full-size supermarkets, all well signposted.

Proxi (5 rue du Couesnon, Pontorson; 🕒 8am-12.45pm & 2.30-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun year-round, also 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon Jun-Aug) Supermarket.

Super Marché (Beauvoir) Supermarket about 2km from the Mont near the end of the causeway.

Getting There & Around

Mont St-Michel is linked to Beauvoir (eight minutes) and Pontorson (€2; 13 minutes) by bus 6, operated by **Manéo** (☎ 08 00 15 00 50; www.mobi50.com, in French), six to eight times daily (more frequently in July and August). Times are coordinated with the arrival in Pontorson of some trains from Caen and Rennes. **Les Couriers Bretons** (☎ 02 99 19 70 80) links Pontorson with St-Malo (1¼ hours, one round trip daily); times are coordinated with bus 6.

Train destinations from Pontorson include Bayeux (€19.60, 1¼ hours, two or three direct daily), Cherbourg (€24.50, 2¼ hours, two daily), Coutances (€10.50, 40 minutes, two or three daily) and Rennes (€11.90, 1¼ hours, two or three daily).

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