

## France: Normandy & Brittany

### Tour-Only Itinerary

As you step onto the causeway, the Benedictine monastery of Mont St. Michel rises like a pyramid from the sand flats ahead, its steeple piercing the midday sky. So continues the line-up of iconic sights on this Normandy and Brittany walking tour along France's spectacular north coast. One day, you're wandering Étretat's seaside bluffs, taking in the spectacular rock arches straight out of a Monet painting. The next, your leader is bringing World War II history alive on the sands of Omaha Beach. Along the way, decadent picnics featuring local cheeses, pastries, and cider, as well as meals in out-of-the-way restaurants, showcase the breadth of Norman and Breton cuisine. A walk across tidal flats leads to hidden nesting grounds for egrets, ducks, and marine seagulls. Best of all: you're exploring with warm and welcoming locals who call this exceptional region home.



### Highlights

- Walk scenic coastal landscapes immortalized by French Impressionists and important D-Day beaches where World War II history was made.
- Stay in the historical departure ports of French explorers Samuel de Champlain and Jacques Cartier.
- Explore the island monastery of Mont St. Michel, a UNESCO World Heritage site set in the postcard-perfect landscape of Northern France.
- Savor France's delectable cuisine in stunning coastal settings, trying fresh oysters, locally caught seafood, and creamy handmade cheeses paired with delightful local wines.

## On all Fully-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Air Packages include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

## Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 3 to 5 miles per day. Walks are along grassy trails, atop cliffs overlooking the sea, and over sand dunes. The terrain is smooth with few rocks or roots to negotiate, although there could be mud in some places after rain. There are daily ascents and descents, with gentle rolling hills and elevation change of up to 500 feet. Please note that the mileage when visiting the D-Day beaches and American Cemetery is minimal as the main focus is hearing about the history of that event. The itinerary presents a mixture of lovely seaside and rural landscapes, as well as birdlife, and focuses on the landing beaches of World War II and their accompanying history, the Viking and Norse invasions of the 9th century, medieval architecture and

history, and the traditional customs and food of both Normandy and Brittany. This tour covers a large area of France and therefore involves a few long bus trips which are broken up with walks and cultural visits.

## DAY 1

### Join your *France: Normandy & Brittany* tour

*4.5 miles, easy to moderate*

Your Country Walkers representative meets you at the Hotel l'Echiquier Opera Paris at 8:00 a.m. in the lobby.

Depart Paris and begin an approximately two-hour drive to Normandy. Your first stop in this region of northern France is the Manoir d'Apreval, a family-owned estate surrounded by an abundant apple orchard with 17 varieties of apples. The estate specializes in making cider and Calvados liqueur. At harvest time, a restored press is used to make cider, which eventually becomes Calvados after aging in oak barrels.

After a tour of the estate and a buffet lunch, you leave the Manoir d'Apreval on foot, entering the Bois du Breuil, a nature reserve. A forest trail alternates with views of the Seine Estuary and country lanes, bordered by Normandy's famous hedgerows. About one mile from Honfleur, you reach the Notre Dame de Grâce Chapel, a pilgrimage site for local fishermen adorned with message plaques from sailors and their families. You descend into Honfleur, taking in broad views that extend over the Seine River as it flows out to sea and the modern Normandy Bridge, linking Honfleur with the port of Le Havre. Famous 19th-century painters, such as Claude Monet and Gustave Courbet, depicted many of these same views.

Passing Honfleur's slate-shingled houses, you reach your enchanting hotel in the heart of town. Reconvene for dinner in the restaurant of your charming hotel, where the food reflects the fertile countryside and nearby coast. Monks in Normandy began developing the area's famous cheeses as early as the 11th century, and dinners may conclude with a rich Pont l'Évêque, Livarot, or, the best-known cheese, Camembert.

**Included Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 2

### Cliffs of Étretat

*3 miles, easy to moderate*

Awaken in the comfort of your historic hotel and enjoy a breakfast of fresh fruit and homemade baked goods with jam. You drive through the beautiful countryside of Pays de Caux, to the start of the day's walk. Your trail gently descends through an oak forest and into an open landscape of pasture and gorse along the dramatic coastline of "La Manche"—the English Channel. You soon have your first views of the towering cliffs and rock formations of Étretat, a favorite subject of the Impressionist painter Claude Monet.

You walk along the trail that takes you on the top of the cliffs and toward the famous Manneporte rock arch, the Porte d'Aval, and the Aiguille or "needle." The 19th-century French author Guy de Maupassant spent a good part of his childhood in the small fishing and resort town of Étretat.

Upon returning to your hotel, you have time to relax, and perhaps even indulge in a spa treatment or *hammam* (Turkish bath) on site before dinner on your own in Honfleur. There are plenty of restaurants to choose from, ranging from gourmet meals to a local *crêperie*.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 3

### Omaha Beach

*Lounges-sur-Mer Battery; .5 miles, easy. Omaha Beach to American Cemetery; 1.5 miles, easy*

Today's itinerary calls for minimal walking, as the day's main focus is visiting the D-day beaches and the American Military Cemetery. Travel approximately two hours to the German battery at Lounges-sur-Mer, where you meet a local historian who begins a discussion of the D-day landings.

After lunch in a nearby restaurant, you walk along the sands of Omaha Beach to the American Military Cemetery, where 9,387 American soldiers are buried. The Star of David or a white cross marks each of the graves—this is the first American World War II cemetery on European soil. Your leader provides

context about the battle, explaining why the casualties along Omaha Beach were far worse than at other locations along the D-day beaches. Here, Allied soldiers ran inland toward the German positions on the nearby ridge.

After a moving visit to the American Military Cemetery, you travel a short distance to the village of Guéron, just outside of Bayeux, where you settle into your home for the next two nights. This 18<sup>th</sup>-century château boasts six acres of property that harkens back to true countryside living; complete with orchards, farm animals, a large vegetable garden and even beehives. For dinner this evening, you are warmly welcomed for a brasserie barbeque in the hotel's garden

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 4

### Arromanches

*4.5 miles, easy. Bayeux; 1 mile, easy*

Today's walk takes you to the coastal town of Arromanches, which played a vital role in the D-day landings. A short shuttle from the hotel returns you to the village of Lounges-sur-Mer. From here, trace a popular walking and biking path through green fields and along the coast before you descend into Arromanches-les-Bains. Here, Allies built one of their famous Mulberry harbors—a portable, temporary structure that helped transfer troops and supplies. The remains can still be seen at low tide.

Enjoy free time and lunch on your own. Learn more about the harbor and the landings at the D-day Museum or hike up to Churchill cliff (1-mile, round trip) to view Arromanches 360, a circular theater showing a fascinating film about D-day and its aftermath using wartime footage and modern images.

Meet with your group again and travel to nearby Bayeux. A short walk along the river stretches your legs before you reach the heart of this medieval city where you can further enjoy free time. You may choose to visit Bayeux's stunning cathedral, consecrated in 1077 in the presence of William the Conqueror or to visit the museum housing the intricate 11th-century Bayeux tapestry, a treasured fabric over 220 feet long depicting the Battle of Hastings and the victory of William the Conqueror over the English. In pedestrian-friendly Bayeux, you might also wish to walk to the Battle of Normandy Memorial Museum. Return to your countryside château where you have time to relax. Perhaps take time to stroll through the property's

parklands or visit the outdoor pool, sauna and jacuzzi. Tonight, you have the night free to enjoy dinner at the hotel or with a shuttle back into town.

*Note: the Bayeux Tapestry Museum will close on September 1, 2025 for renovation and is scheduled to open again in 2027.*

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 5

### Coastal walk and guided visit of Mont St. Michel

*3 miles, easy to moderate and 2 miles, easy with moderate sections*

Today's itinerary takes you from Normandy into Brittany, starting with a drive toward the Baie du Mont St. Michel, known for its extreme tides. The trip provides a panoramic view of the bay and the pyramid-shaped island monastery of Mont St. Michel. Tombelaine Island, a protected sanctuary for nesting shell ducks, marine and brown seagulls, and white egrets, lies opposite the almost fantastical Mont St. Michel. After a scenic walk along the coast, you continue to the monastery—one of the most impressive constructions of the Middle Ages, a quintessential image of northern France, and a UNESCO World Heritage site. You cross the causeway to the small island just a half-mile off the coast, where you're lead through the cobbled streets, winding your way to the top of the mount at the door of the Benedictine Abbey, dating from the 8th century. The majority of the buildings here were built, however, in the 11th century, and the church's main façade dates from the 12th century. You learn about the lives of medieval monks and village life, with an emphasis on the island's extraordinarily well-preserved architecture. Please note that the tour of the abbey includes many steps, if you prefer to skip the guided tour, you are welcome to explore the narrow back streets and charming shops of the village on your own.

Afterward, you travel to your home for the next two nights in Saint Malo, Brittany, a medieval fortified city that was once the home of French "corsair" privateers, as well as Jacques Cartier, considered the first European explorer of Canada. Today, it is a popular seaside resort, with a long sandy beach and promenade leading to the granite city walls. Your oceanfront hotel is perfectly located to stroll along the promenade or to Saint Malo's old town. After checking in, your leaders will provide recommendations for dinner.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 6

### Pointe du Grouin. Independent exploration of Saint Malo

*3.5 miles, easy to moderate*

Today's walk takes place on the westernmost tip of the Bay du Mont St. Michel along the Pointe du Grouin, a windswept headland with expansive views north to the Chausey Islands and west along the coast toward Saint Malo. Fifteen miles to the east, Mont St. Michel appears as a speck on the horizon. A German pillbox coastal fortification now serves as an ornithological observatory looking over a bird sanctuary island. The coastal path winds into a string of tiny coves, some with little ports tucked into them.

Later this afternoon, stroll the ramparts of Saint Malo, past the mast-filled port, perhaps pausing to visit La Maison de Corsaire, or The Great Aquarium, which houses more than 600 species. Or relax by the hotel pool or book a spa treatment.

Tonight, celebrate the week's adventures at a sumptuous farewell dinner in your hotel's fine dining restaurant.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 7

### Your *France: Normandy & Brittany* tour concludes

*Au revoir!* After a plentiful breakfast, you are free to continue your exploration of Brittany or depart for your next destination.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## What's Included

### Air Package

### Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓	✓
15 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 3 dinners	✓	✓
Local leaders with you throughout tour	✓	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓	✓
Roundtrip airfare	✓	
Two extra nights in Paris	✓	
Airport car service for arrival and departure	✓	
Pre- and post-tour breakfasts	✓	
Business-class upgrades available	✓	