

NORTHERN FRANCE SECRETS #6

Your insider's guide to authentic French experiences just across the Channel

Food & wine | Culture & History | Art de vivre



Take a breath
*A car-free weekend
at the sea*

Adventure
*Family time
at Belle Dune*

Bon appétit!
*A seafood
lesson with a
chef*

Fun & fancy
Explore Lille by 2CV

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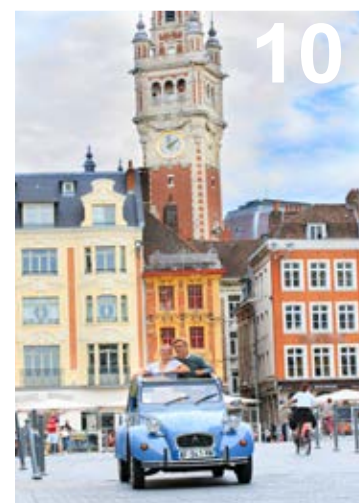
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SPRING & SUMMER EVENTS AGENDA



Welcome



The art of living in the present...

Deciding to slow down in order to fully inhabit the moment and what one is doing, letting go of mental habits in order to reacquaint ourselves with our sensory perceptions, reconnecting with oneself and being more present with others... All are ways to get back to what matters.

So dive into our latest magazine and escape from daily life, into seemingly endless skies and distant horizons. Let yourself be carried away by the sight of a beautiful cathedral or a forest walking trail in springtime, climb to the top of a hill in a historic former mining area to take a step back while feeling like you're on top of the world. Move, meet local people, laugh!

As the Danes maintain, sharing positive emotions as a couple or with children is the key to happiness.

The editorial team



Rhonda Carrier

With seaside, forests and fresh air galore, Hauts-de-France is perfect for outdoorsy families like mine. I especially love cycling and walking in the glorious Somme Bay.



Janine Marsh

*I am the author of *My Good Life in France: In Pursuit of the Rural Dream*, and editor of www.thegoodlifeinfrance.com*



Lucy Shrimpton

Do I have to share my secret? Well, it's a place where the squares are as romantic as a fairy tale, and where poignant WW1 history meets a spirited cultural scene... Arras.



Rachel Ifans

I'll never forget my nature tour of the bay with Maxim in St-Valery-sur-Somme. His passion and excitement at spotting flora, fauna and birds was only surpassed by mine at seeing the seal pups!"

Le Touquet in France a perfect place for a romantic weekend break



The seaside resort of Le Touquet in Northern France has always seduced the British with its elegance. H G Wells eloped here, Edward and Mrs Simpson holidayed here, Ian Fleming met his wife here – there's a distinct whiff of romance in the air.



It takes a dollop of audacity and a ladle of cash to create a holiday playground for the British elite.

But that's how Le Touquet was conceived on France's Opal Coast in the early 1900s. John Witley's recipe for success – forest, dunes, beach, hundreds of architect-designed villas, sports facilities, casino and airstrip – is a concoction that has stood the test of time for over 100 years.

Le Touquet : a romantic weekend break in France which marries well-being and slow tourism

First up: stow your car keys somewhere safe. It's the kind of place where cars are not needed and, like as not, by the time you've cleared your heads with sea air, fogged them up again with glorious food and wine, chatted and laughed like you did in days gone by, you won't remember where you put them when it's time to leave.

Next, set off on one of the cycle routes. Perched on your sit-up-and-beg rental bikes, you'll be on top of the world, the sedate pace and the flat, wooded and pine-scented roads revealing the calmer backdrop of Le Touquet's bustling seafront. You'll have time to marvel at Le Touquet as you ride and chat, two abreast along the wide, leafy avenues.

Hire bikes from the tourist office and grab a map, or join a group, lead by one of the passionate, educated and dexterous guides. How can they teach you about art and architecture, sup a tiny black coffee and ride their bikes at the same time? But they do!

Leaving the calm of the forest, you'll be spat out into the sunlight of the coast. Le Touquet's villas stretch to the beach on the northern side, so park and clamber on to the white-sand dunes. There's nothing more magical than setting off down a sandy path towards the sea, sporadic stick fences on either side, nothing in front of you but wide, blue sky.

Le Touquet lighthouse: a top tourist attraction in Northern France

Seagulls screech, the seafront is alive, so retreat to the streets for some peace and café-a-deux before climbing the lighthouse. It's an elegant red-brick octagonal tower which stands proud in the centre of town and the view from the top is unforgettable.

One of a pair for many years before the Second World War as the harshness of the sea meant a double signal was required to stem the flow of shipwrecks, both lighthouses were bombed by the Germans, with only one being rebuilt in the 1950s.



French cuisine in Le Touquet : eat well and live well

When evening comes, Le Touquet comes up trumps. Rue de Metz runs parallel to the seafront and is awash with lively bars and restaurants.

Chez Perard is a 50-year-old fish restaurant that's perfect for sharing the catch of the day. If you're not in the market for a full meal, stop in its gleaming bar-a-huitres and do as the French do – a plate of oysters and a white wine at any time of day. Or if it's dinnertime, order one of their specialties. Although the soup-making Perard family sold the restaurant to Estelle Forget in 2002, the current owners also boast extraordinary skill in fish cooking, serving up ladlefuls of warm, smooth soup served with rouille and cheese, not to mention other French classics like Bouillebaisse and Escargots-Chablis.

Saturday morning is when you get a taste of le vrai Touquet, thanks to the covered market. Circling half the square like a croissant, it's filled with stalls selling everything from fish, cheese jam, fruit and veg, meat, cooked dishes, olives, flowers and more, to clothes, household and garden items. It's a French market on steroids! Tuck yourselves away in Les Arcades, the locals' café in the corner of the square, and watch it fill up around you. Once it's packed to bursting, escape to the indie boutiques that line the grid-like streets stemming from the market.



Useful information

- **Le Touquet: 1 hour and a half drive from Calais**

PLACES TO VISIT

- **Le Touquet lighthouse**
- 407 Avenue des Phares
- F-62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
- Tel: +33 3 21 06 72 00

WHERE TO STAY ?

- **Hôtel Westminster**
- Avenue du Verger
- F- 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
- Tel : +33 3 21 05 48 48

- **Le Belvédère**
- Allée des Bleuets
- F- 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
- Tel : +33 3 21 05 40 35

- **Hôtel Novotel Thalassa**
- (with sea view)
- F- 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
- Tel : +33 3 21 09 85 00

- **Hôtel Bristol**
- 17 Rue Jean Monnet
- F- 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
- Tel : +33 3 21 05 49 95

WHERE TO EAT ?

Chez Perard (seafood restaurant)
67 Rue de Metz
F- 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
Tel : +33 3 21 05 13 33
<http://www.perard-letouquet.fr>

Les Arcades (restaurant)
128 Rue de Metz
F-62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
Tel: +33 3 21 05 17 98

Le Paris
88 rue de Metz
F- 62520 Le Touquet – Paris-Plage
Tel : +33 3 21 05 79 33

SHOPPING GOURMAND

Chocolaterie Véron
21 Rue Saint-Jean
F- 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
Tel : +33 3 21 05 32 55

Covered Market - Le Touquet
31 Rue Jean Monnet.
F-62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
Tel : +33 3 21 06 72 00



Chapelle des Marins, Saint-Valery-sur-Somme

A weekend at the sea

Book a car-free and carefree weekend in Saint-Valery-sur-Somme

Park up in Saint-Valery-sur-Somme with its unforgettable nature reserve and slam the door on urban stresses and strains. Your transport will be on foot or two wheels during this adventure – zero carbon and maximum fun !



A car-free weekend in Saint-Valery-sur-Somme

Saint-Valery-sur-Somme is a French village on the Somme Bay an hour or so south of the bigger – and more bourgeois – Le Touquet, and spitting distance from Le Crotoy, the only south-facing beach town in Northern France. It's just as smart as Le Touquet, with bars and boutiques aplenty, and it's calmer. Your busy brain will be lulled by the sounds of leaves blowing, birds tweeting, pedals pushing. There's time to chat, to be the two of you.

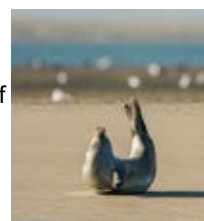
It's impossible to go from the breakneck, 100mph speeds at which we live our lives to zero at the pull of a handbrake, so a weekend here is more a change of pace, an opportunity to swap four wheels for two, exchange a marathon for a mooch and replace the bobbing heads of a sea of commuters with the sight of playful seal pups.

To escape the demands of modern urban life, what better than a carbon-free weekend which really exploits the great outdoors? We recommend a tour of the bay; breathe the sea air, learn about flora and fauna, and admire the ever-changing landscape of the bay.

A great place to visit in Northern France

At low tide the salt marsh is grassy, with clumps of glasswort and artimisia maritime, interspersed with ponds and migratory birds, like long-beaked curlews who are – just like you – here for a few days (on their way south to Africa). The Pre-salé lambs graze, the seals play in the sea towards Cayeux-sur-Mer and you have front row seats for the whole movie, watching it through your guide's telescope, and snapping pictures as you go. If you want to go it alone, hire a bike in one of the shops in town and follow the cycle routes to the lighthouse. You may see fishermen on foot, plucking abundant cockles from the bed, or the gardeners of the bay, picking samphire from the floor.

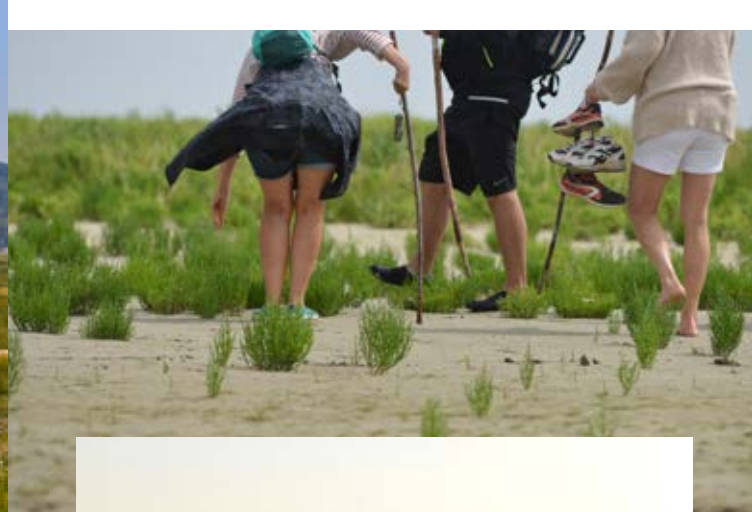
Past the lighthouse it's the seal show. They 'banana' in the sea, keeping their blubbery bellies in the water but pulling up their extremities to keep warm. The new pups, of which there were 130 this year in the bay, are speedy, power napping every 30 minutes between bursts of activity. (We learnt so much on our nature tour with Maxim Marzi and urge you to book with him too.)



You're well placed here to wander up a path to Chapelle des Marins. Fishermen and their families would pray here for the safe return of loved ones and the checkerboard chapel is a fascinating and beautiful stop. La cité medievale is yet another dimension to Saint-Valery-sur-Somme where boat-building workshops are squashed in with terraced cottages, flowered alleys, squares and churches.



The Somme bay



Useful information

**Saint-Valery-sur-Somme: 2 hours
drive from Calais**

**Tourist Board Information of
Saint-Valery-sur-Somme**
2 Place Guillaume le Conquérant
F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
Tel: +33 3 22 60 93 50

WHERE TO HAVE A DRINK?

Buvette de la Plage
445 Quai Jeanne d'Ar
F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
Tel: +33 3 22 30 45 79

Relais de la Baie (Pippa Darbyshire's gallery and café)
1 Route du Crotoy
F-80860 Noyelles-sur-Mer
Tel: +33 3 22 23 50 20

SHOPPING GOURMAND

La Sardine
9 Rue de la Ferté
F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
Tel: +33 3 22 60 08 68



WHERE TO RELAX?

Spa Samaris
118 Rue des Moulins
F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
Tel: +33 3 22 61 30 68

French cuisine in Saint-Valery-sur-Somme

After your bay tour, stop at Friterie DeBeauvais on the route back into town. A locals' favourite, its moules-frites are fantastic. Debeauvais is on the junction of two roads, looking for all the world like a truckstop, but get in early as it fills up, and don't expect cutlery. They eat their mussels the proper way here: one shell pincers the next mussel.

A siesta, some shopping or something sweet in a café in town will see you through to sunset, and they don't get bigger than the ones here. Take an aperitif in your knapsack and quaff it on one of the grassy edges of Cap Hornu. At high tide the water comes up to the cliff edge covering the grassland, and in darkness the place comes alive with birdsong. Hard to imagine anything more romantic, but if the weather doesn't suit, Buvette de la Plage will offer you a sheltered welcome from where to admire the view.



- **PLACES TO VISIT**
- **Maxim Marzi**
- Tel: +33 6 13 22 00 02
- www.guide-baie-somme.com
- **WHERE TO STAY?**
- **Les Pilotes**
- 62 Rue de la Ferté
- F- 80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
- Tel: +33 3 22 60 80 39
- **Château du Romerel**
- 15 Quai du Romerel
- F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
- Tel: +33 3 22 23 68 70
- Tel: +33 6 15 28 09 97
- **WHERE TO EAT?**
- **Les Tourelles**
- 2-4 Rue Pierre Guerlain
- F-80550 Le Crotoy France
- Tel: +33 3 22 2716 33
- **Le Mathurin** (seafood restaurant)
- 1 Place des Pilotes
- F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
- Tel: +33 3 22 60 73 06
- **Au Vélocipède**
- 1 Rue du Puits Salé
- F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
- Tel: +33 3 22 60 57 42

Gerberoy and an unforgettable French garden to visit

Romantic weekend breaks don't get any better than those afforded by Gerberoy in Northern France, with its incredible garden to visit – the Jardin des Ifs.



One of the 'Most Beautiful Villages in France', Gerberoy is the most heavenly of destinations for romantic weekend breaks, complete with half-timbered buildings clad in roses, gorgeous gardens and wonderful places to eat. As such, it's perfect for couples looking to slow down, disconnect from daily life and reconnect both with nature and with each other while discovering some of the very best France tourist attractions and being enriched by the wonderful culture on offer.

Le Jardin des ifs: a Remarkable Garden

Although Gerberoy has no 'sights' as such (leaving you free to soak up the atmosphere, browse one of the tiny art galleries and relax in a tea-room or country bistro), don't miss a tour of **Le Jardin des ifs**, listed as a Jardin

Remarquable for being one of the beautiful gardens in all of France and because the rarity of its yew trees. The jury welcomed the gardens into its list of around only 400 gardens across France due to the sustained work needed over the course of centuries to create such a stunning result. Symmetrically conceived, decorated with topiary and boasting an enclosed rose garden, the 'Garden of Yews' is typical of the classical style of Olivier de Serres (1539–1619), a favourite of Henri IV.

It also has an organic and sustainable permaculture kitchen garden that provides many of the vegetables, aromatic herbs and flowers used in the atmospheric on-site restaurant with its incredible and creative cuisine. Come here to feast on the likes of farm pork marinated with honey and rosemary,

served with roasted vegetables, and feuilleté with rollot, the favourite cheese of Louis XIV. The restaurant at the Jardin des Ifs is the perfect spot for spending time together and enjoying a little self-indulgence in a way that encapsulates that famous French *art de vivre* !

Gerberoy: a Place for a Romantic Weekend

At least 1,000 years old, Gerberoy is a remarkable survivor of the turbulent past of Northern France. An important Norman stronghold due to its elevated position, it survived both the French Revolution and World War I. That said, three large fires shrank it dramatically – despite technically being a town (one of the smallest in all France), its population numbers only 115, including those with holiday homes.





Gerberoy



Jardin des Ifs tea room



Rose garden at Château de Rambures



Château de Rambures

This wonderfully French village is one of those places tailor-made for ambling around at your own pace, with winding streets lined by colourful rose bushes growing up the walls of medieval houses and in every nook and cranny. Noteworthy places are the 11th-century church, another garden to visit – the Italianate Jardins Henri le Sidaner, founded by the intimist painter and also filled with roses – and the ramparts walk circling the village, with views over Normandy. Those with more time can also tackle the 33-kilometre Boucle des Deux Châteaux walking/mountain-biking trail through local countryside and villages.

On the Route des Roses

As well as inspiring a famous song that figured on the *Downton Abbey* soundtrack, the roses from this region feature in local cuisine, including the cheese made with roses that you can pick

up in the market in the vibrant city of Amiens.

Gerberoy is perhaps best known for its Rose Festival on the third Sunday of every June, with floral decorations and food. It's part-organised by Rosemary Brown, a British writer who is also a founding member of the Clos Gerberoy vineyard, helped restore the Sidaner gardens, and is a member of the June music festival Les Moments Musicaux de Gerberoy.

An hour from Gerberoy, in the Somme, lies the medieval **Château de Rambures** with another very fine rose garden. Also labelled a Jardin Remarquable and highly recommended among France tourist attractions, it contains around 2,500 rose bushes representing more than 390 varieties, as well as a medieval-style jardin des simples of medicinal plants and an arboretum of about 30 noteworthy trees, including an ancient white mulberry tree and a giant sequoia.

Useful information

Gerberoy : 2 hours and a half drive from Calais

Tourist Board Information of Gerberoy and around

20 Rue du Logis du Roy
F-60380 Gerberoy
Tel: + 33 3 44 46 32 20

PLACES TO VISIT

Jardins des Ifs
3 Impasse du Vidame
F- 60380 Gerberoy
Tel: +33 7 66 20 51 41

Château de Rambures

8, rue du Château
F-80140 Rambures
Tel: + 33 3 22 25 10 93

WHERE TO STAY?

Les Chambres de l'Abbaye

(B&B – sharing diner)
2 Rue Michel Greuet
F-60850 Saint-Germer-de-Fly
Tel: + 33 3 44 81 98 38

WHERE TO EAT?

Jardins des Ifs (restaurant & tea room, open from May to end of September)

3 Impasse du Vidame
F- 60380 Gerberoy
Tel: +33 7 66 20 51 41

L'Atelier gourmand de Sarah (open from May to end of September)

1 ruelle Saint Amant
F- 60380 Gerberoy
Tel: +33 6 73 19 02 06



Fun and fanciful things to do in Lille: Explore Lille by 2CV

For a romantic weekend head to Lille in northern France. We take a look at some of the most fun and authentic things to do in Lille including a tour by 2CV car.

Lille is just 82 minutes from London by Eurostar and less than 1.5 hours from Calais by car – the perfect city break destination for couples.



The cobbled streets of Lille by iconic 2CV

Discover Lille's glittering hub of culture with a nostalgic 2CV tour! Bounce along the cobbled streets in this iconic car and explore Lille's fascinating past, emblematic monuments and secrets. The old town is brimming with stunning 17th and 18th century buildings and plenty of Flemish flair. With the roll top down on a sunny day, vintage upholstery, and the unmistakeable sound of its tiny engine (2CV literally means 2-horsepower), it's a unique way to get to know the city. Opt for a tasting tour and enjoy local specialities, then finish with a glass of Champagne at a picturesque spot – perfect for a photo souvenir.



Things to do in Lille: Unesco heritage and Le Furet

Discover the city's rich history through its diverse museums and galleries such as the Palais des Beaux Arts which contains the second most important collection of general art in France. The town has a history of recycling heritage industrial buildings into contemporary art centres, restaurants and trendy bars, holds cutting edge exhibitions and delivers a fresh experience on every visit.

You can't visit Lille and not experience its monumental 104-metre high Belfry, the tallest civic belfry in Europe. The UNESCO listed monument dominates the skyline of the city and from your lofty perch you'll enjoy magnificent 360-degree panoramic views over Lille and the surrounding countryside. It's said that on a clear day you can see as far as the mountains of Flanders.

Back on the ground pop into Le Furet, which is no ordinary book store. Spread over several floors, attracting some three million visitors a year, you can't help but be impressed by its grandeur. Though most of the books are in French, it's an excellent place to pick up gifts and you'll also get a birds-eye view over the imposing Grand Place. The huge square is watched over by the "Goddess", as the locals call the statue on top of the column which commemorates the Siege of Lille in 1792.

From here wander the winding streets and picturesque squares. Enjoy the historic buildings, canals, parks and thriving café society. There are around 4000 shops in the city, from French high street favourites to unique boutiques.

Discover l'art de vivre: French chefs in Lille

The guides love to share details of their favourite bars and restaurants and with hundreds to choose from you're really spoiled for choice. Over the past few years Lille has quietly become one of the most influential gastronomic destinations in France. Dynamic chefs like Florent Ladeyn of the restaurant Bloempot, embrace innovative cuisine as well as cherishing the flavours of the past. Head to Au Vieux de la Vieille, an estaminet (a Flemish word for a traditional style café) where the typically northern dishes burst with local flavours.

Shopping gourmand in Lille: Wazemmes market and Patisserie Aux Merveilleux de Fred



However, for a bit of bargain shopping, there are several markets in Lille. Wazemmes Market (Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday mornings) is one of the best and biggest markets in

France. There are hundreds of stalls selling just about everything from the most scrumptious cheeses to cakes and kayaks, bric-a-brac to bags. It's like a giant bazaar complete with delectable smelling street food, terraced cafés and buskers. You'll even find spontaneous dancing breaking out in places at this bustling market with a buzzing ambience. While you're there, don't miss a nibble on a renowned meringue speciality from Patisserie Aux Merveilleux de Fred.



Michelin-starred chef
Florent Ladeyn



WHERE TO EAT?

Bloempot (restaurant)
22 Rue des Bouchers
F-59800 Lille

Elizabeth's (tea room)
71 rue Basse
F-59800 Lille
Tel: +33 3 28 52 47 37
<http://www.elizabeths.fr/716/>

Laksøn
21 Rue du Cure Saint-Etienne
F- 59800 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 31 19 96

La Capsule (Beers)
25 Rue des Trois Mollettes
F- 59800 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 42 14 75

SHOPPING GOURMAND

Meert (original waffle)
27 Rue Esquermoise
F- 59800 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 57 07 44

Aux Merveilleux de Fred
67 Rue de la Monnaie
F-59800 Lille
Tel: + 33 3 20 51 99 59

Wazemmes Market
Place Nouvelle Aventure
F-59000 Lille

SHOPPING

Nostalgie
57 Rue de la Monnaie
F- 59800 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 78 10 33

La Mère Vieille
33 Rue Colette
F- 59000 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 06 89 84

Funny vintage
23 Rue de la Barre
F- 59800 Lille
Tel: +33 6 89 32 86 49

Useful information

Lille 1 hour and a half drive from Calais

Tourist Board Information of Lille
1 Rue du Palais Rihour
F- 59000 Lille
Tel: +33 8 91 56 20 04 (phone paid service)
<https://en.lilletourism.com/>

PLACES TO VISIT

Tradi'Balade Lille
28 Place Charles de Gaulle
F-59800 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 51 10 29
<https://en.lilletourism.com/guided-tour-of-lille-in-a-convertible-2cv-during-1-hour.html>

Palais des Beaux-Arts
18 bis Rue de Valmy
F- 59000 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 06 78 00
<http://www.pba-lille.fr/en>

Furet du Nord
15 place Général de Gaulle
F-59800 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 78 43 43

WHERE TO STAY?

Clarance Hôtel
32 Rue de la Barre
F- 59800 Lille
Tel: + 33 3 59 36 35 59
<https://www.clarancehotel.com/en/>

Best Western - Why Hotel
7 Square Morisson
F- 59800 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 50 30 30

La Maison du Champlain B&B
13 Rue Nicolas Leblanc
F- 59000 Lille
Tel: +33 3 20 54 01 38



Amiens, Technically bold from a Cathedral to a brilliant Chef

Amiens in Northern France, a city where man has demonstrated triumphs of ingenuity for centuries, from its Gothic cathedral to the excellence of a gifted chef.



Amiens: Mans genius, ingenuity and fortitude magnificently manifest

A little over an hour and a half's drive from Calais in northern France lies the ancient city of Amiens. The bustling and dynamic town has buckets of charm and plenty to see and do. Must-see sites include the home of French writer and visionary, Jules Verne. He was inspired to write *"Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea"* whilst living here.

Enjoy the colourful old district of Saint-Leu, perfect for relaxing at a café along the quayside of the River Somme which runs through the town, before discovering its masterful gems. Sitting here, watching the world go by, as the cathedral bells chime, is one of life's true pleasures.

Things to do in Amiens: Unesco Heritage and the biggest Cathedral in France

The number one visit is the spectacular and monumental Amiens Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage monument. The biggest cathedral in France, its soaring majesty can only truly be appreciated in person.

You can't help but wonder how on earth the builders of 800 years ago could possibly have created such incredible architecture, especially when you discover it was largely completed in just 50 years. Without the use of machinery, the immense stones carried by animals, worked by the hand of man -an almost miraculous undertaking in its day. Its enormity is breath-taking and the incredible carvings and sculptures on its façades, the gargoyles, turrets and towers are astonishing, especially when contemplated from above. Climb the narrow steps, all 307 of them, to the top, for stupendous views over the town. It's well worth the effort but not for those with vertigo or claustrophobia, instead stay on the ground and admire its beauty, venerated by the 19th century essayist John Ruskin in his book *The Bible of Amiens*, which was translated into French by Proust.

Inside, stained-glass windows cast a soft light over the ancient labyrinth, topped by a vaulted ceiling. Look out for the weeping angel, a wonderful statue which forms part of a 17th century mausoleum behind the High Altar. It was featured on a popular postcard sent by soldiers in the Somme during WWI. In summer and December, you'll see Amiens Cathedral in a different light as the façade is lit up, an ingenious fete of engineering in itself.



Discover the astonishing floating gardens of Amiens

When King Louis XI visited Amiens in the 15th century he called it "my little Venice" referring to its watery arteries and they remain a key feature of Amiens. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Hortillonnages, an area in which the arms of the River Somme weave their way to create a latticework of floating gardens. Cultivated since Roman times, the Hortillonnages are now maintained by market gardeners and locals, to this day applying ancient savoir-faire to make use of natural resources to water the land. You can explore this lush mosaic of wetlands in a flat bottomed boat from April to October. And, if you 'd like to taste the delicious produce, head to the Saint-Leu district on Saturdays to buy direct at the water market.

Savour the culinary arts

There are plenty of restaurants and bars in Amiens but a few minutes' drive to Dury on the outskirts of the city will bring you to one of the most renowned restaurants in the area, L'Aubergade, run by Picardy-born chef Eric Boutté. Chef Boutté has been cooking for almost three decades. Years spent honing his culinary skills in top kitchens across France, including that of the late, great, renowned Joël Robuchon are reflected in dishes that are technically brilliant, blending tastes and textures with an emphasis on local and seasonal products. Utterly delicious.

Useful information

Amiens: 1 hour and a half drive from Calais

Tourist Board Information of Amiens

23 Place Notre Dame
F-80000 Amiens
Tel: +33 3 22 71 60 50
<http://www.visit-amiens.com/accueil>

PLACES TO VISIT

Maison des Hortillonnages
54 Boulevard de Beauville
F-80000 Amiens
Tel: +33 3 22 92 12 18

Jules Verne House
2 Rue Charles Dubois
F-80000 Amiens
Tel: +33 3 22 45 45 75

WHERE TO EAT ?

L'Aubergade
78 route Nationale
F-80480 Dury
Tel: +33 3 22 89 51 41

Leu Duo
60 rue Vanmarcke
F-80000 Amiens
Tel: +33 9 81 32 42 55

WHERE TO STAY ?

Hôtel Marotte
3 Rue Marotte
F-80000 Amiens
Tel: +33 3 60 12 50 00
<https://www.hotel-marotte.com/en/>

Hôtel Le Prieuré
17 Rue Porion
F-80000 Amiens
Tel: +33 3 22 71 16 71
<http://www.hotel-prieure-amiens.com/en/>



WW1 soldiers united in peace at Notre-Dame de Lorette

Painful yet uplifting, the most powerful way to pay tribute to the life of a First World War soldier is at this thought-provoking memorial just across the Channel



Alongside Notre Dame de Lorette war cemetery just over an hour's drive from Calais in Northern France, where once sprawled battlefields of barbed wire, trenches and mud, there's a WW1 memorial and thing-of-beauty that speaks far louder than words.

Search up your WW1 namesake at this special place of commemoration

Here, in Ablain-Saint-Nazaire near Arras, stand 500 metal panels in an oval shape, like a ring of children joining hands. It's called Anneau de la Mémoire – 'ring of remembrance' – and like a disembodied rollcall, alphabetically lists every one of the 579,606 soldiers who died in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais departments during WW1.

The ring of remembrance's message of peace

The most poignant message here is that soldiers are not listed accordingly to their nationality but are presented as a single, integrated list. No 'them-and-us', just a powerful message of unity and hope that hangs in the air once toxic with shellfire.

Find your soldier's name, run your fingers along the letters, step back until the names blur, then turn a complete 360° to see the whole installation in one contemplative sweep. It's a sharp-intake-of-breath effect that conveys the scale of loss like no other WW1 memorial has done before.

Leave your own trace at the 'Mémorial 14-18', here in Ablain st Nazaire

Write your thoughts and reflections at the on-site visitor centre and take the opportunity to search the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's records. On Armistice Day, you can even participate in a moving torch-lit procession; the collective compassion of strangers is empowering.

Hop off the ferry or tunnel and find all the rich character of Northern France right on your doorstep

Visiting the WW1 memorials can leave you wanting to grab life with both hands. If this is your first taste of France, there are some fitting ways to do just that: gastronomy, art, architecture and... UNESCO world heritage.

Loos-en-Gohelle for unique outdoor activities

Looking out from the Mémorial 14-18 museum, you might find yourself wondering what the twin peaks are on the horizon. They're actually coalmining slag heaps, at the heart of the UNESCO-listed Nord-Pas-de-Calais Mining Basin - one of France's most unique tourist attractions. The 'terrils' as they are known, are not just there to look at: walking up or cycling up is a local passion and unique outdoor activity, the descent by bike particularly thrilling.

Lens for the Louvre, then lunch at one of the region's finest Michelin-starred restaurants

Did you know that there's a Louvre museum in nearby Lens? Explore the state of the art travel-through-time galleries, then go just next-door to the on-trend Atelier Marc Meurin, one of the best Michelin-starred restaurants you'll find in France. Boasting a locally-sourced and inventive cuisine and an über-modern, light-filled setting, this restaurant comes from the heart – Marc's a local lad.



the Ring of Remembrance, Notre-Dame de Lorette



Wellington Quarry, Arras

FREDERICK CHARLES • STANDING FREDERICK
• STANDING BUFFALO JOSEPH • STANDI
JOHN BEVERLEY • STANDISH JOSEPH • STA
WILLIAM HONE • STANDLICK JAMES ARCHIBA

Arras for awe-inspiring architecture and the Wellington Quarry

There are umpteen reasons why Arras should be on your radar. For starters, there's the exquisite picture-postcard architecture of its Flemish squares. Take it all in with a coffee or beer at one of the restaurant terraces, a chance to savour the slow pleasures of French café society in the shade of the imposing UNESCO-listed belfry. Between the two squares, Chez Marcel and Baramousse are amongst the locals' favourite haunts.

And there's the poignant Wellington Quarry visit, taking you underground to see where WW1 soldiers secretly tunnelled in preparation for an attack on German lines. Tear-inducing reminders of their courage are still in situ, such as the image of a soldier's sweetheart etched on the tunnel wall.

NORTHERN FRANCE WW1 FACTS

- The savage conflict that raged from July 1914 to November 1918 resulted in 1,119,264 Commonwealth war dead, including massive losses in Northern France's Somme, Flanders and Artois areas.
- Tragically too far from their loved ones, soldiers were buried where they fell and there are thousands of WW1 cemeteries and memorials in Hauts-de-France (Northern France) alone - Etaples, Cabaret Rouge, Vimy Ridge and Thiepval to name but a few.
- Grieving families were given just 66 characters for the epitaphs on their loved ones' headstones. The results may make for the most emotive reading of your lifetime.
- You can learn about the lives of WW1 soldiers on both sides by visiting Northern France's flagship WW1 museum - Musée de la Grande Guerre in Péronne.

Useful information

- **Notre Dame de Lorette: 1 hour and a half drive from Calais**

Tourist Board Information of Lens-Lievie

- 58 Rue de la Gare
- 62300 Lens
- Tel: +33 3 21 67 66 66
- <http://www.tourism-lenslievin.co.uk/>

PLACES TO VISIT

- **The ring of remembrance**
- D58E3
- Chemin du Mont de Lorette
- F-62153 Ablain-Saint-Nazaire
- <https://memorial1418.com/>
- Tel : + 33 3 21 74 83 15

- **Mémorial 14-18 museum Notre-Dame de Lorette**
- 102 Rue Pasteur, Parking par "Chemin de Lens"
- F-62153 Souchez
- Tel: +33 3 21 74 83 15

WHERE TO STAY?

- **Louvre Lens Hotel**
- 168, rue Paul Bert
- F-62300 Lens
- Tel : +33 3 66 98 10 40
- <https://www.hotel-louvre-lens.com/en>

Hôtel de l'Univers

3 Place de la Croix Rouge
F- 62000 Arras
Tel: +33 3 21 71 34 01
<https://www.univers.najeti.fr/en>

Le Château

9 Rue du Puits,
F-62580 Fresnoy-en-Gohelle
Tel: +33 6 22 19 87 25
<http://www.lechateau-fresnoy-en-gohelle.com/#>

WHERE TO EAT?

Atelier Marc Meurin

Musée du Louvre Lens
97 Rue Paul Bert
F-62300 Lens
Tel: +33 3 21 18 24 90

L'Estaminet de Lorette

Place de Notre-Dame de Lorette
F- 62153 Ablain-Saint-Nazaire
Tel: +33 3 21 45 29 07

SHOPPING GOURMAND

Brasserie Saint Germain

(brewery)
26 Route d'Arras
F- 62160 Aix-Noulette
Tel: +33 3 21 72 24 24

La Finarde

(maturing cheese cellar)
Boulevard du Général De Gaulle
F- 62000 Arras
Tel: +33 3 21 73 44 21

In the WW1 footsteps of Wilfred Owen in Northern France



From Etaples to Ors, discover the journey of the First World War soldier and poet and explore the hidden histories of its emotive war cemeteries and memorials

You've stared into the dead eyes in old photographs, you've stood in silent tribute at the war memorial, you've read Birdsong and you've heard the shocking statistics of the conflict: 1,119,264 Commonwealth war dead. Yet whatever you know about the life of a WW1 soldier, nothing can prepare you for the wave of emotion you experience visiting the Northern France battlefields themselves. It's an emotional impact like no other, shedding a light not only on the vast numbers of WW1 soldiers who died, but on the heart of the matter... the personal stories unearthed.

And it's thanks to WW1 icons like Wilfred Owen, transposing the horrors of war to poetry, that we know something of the life of a WW1 soldier, his *Dulce et Decorum Est* and other poems stirring reflection in classrooms, generation after generation.

On the coast of Northern France, discover the important role that Etaples played in WW1 history

In January 1917, Wilfred's first steps onto Northern France soil were in Etaples, near Le Touquet - now under an hour's drive from Calais. The fishing village formerly so picturesque it had spawned an art colony became somewhere quite different in wartime...

Sufficiently far from the Western Front but with access to the railway network, Etaples was the ideal strategic position for a vast allied infantry and hospital base, designed to render its

soldiers fit for battle. Wilfred's words encapsulate its brutality – "... a dreadful encampment... a kind of paddock where the beasts are kept a few days before the shambles". Indeed the horror of conditions came to a crescendo in September 1917 in the form of riots thought to be the British Army's biggest mutiny of the day.

Pay tribute to the soldiers of WW1 at Etaples Military Cemetery

Not that you would know it now. Right on the site is Etaples Military Cemetery, the epitome of peace and France's largest Commonwealth War Graves cemetery.

And it's a combined effect that reduces visitors to tears: the first sight of the far-reaching, perfectly-aligned, white headstones, the deafening silence, the emotive inscriptions: 'If my love could have saved you, you would not have died my beloved son'.

Wilfred Owen's Northern France journey continues

Following shell-shock and a period of convalescence in which he met fellow poets Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves, Wilfred wrote some of his most powerful poetry and returned to France in August 1918 - at the beginning of the period historians refer to as the Hundred Days Offensive, the tide at last turning in the allies' favour. Wilfred later won the Military Cross for his part in an attack on the Beaufort-Fonsomme line at Joncourt.



Etaples military cemetery



The Deborah Tank at Flesquieres

“
At Hôtel Le Béatus, owner
Philippe Gorczynski, a WW1
expert, will happily share his
passion for the subject. Having
spent childhood holidays in
the area, he devoted years of
painstaking research to locate
'Deborah'.
”



Faubourg d'Arras Military Cemetery



Le Touquet Paris-Plage

The tragic loss of soldiers' lives in the last days of WW1

For families to lose a son or brother during this final period – just before the Armistice - must have seemed like a particularly agonising irony. Families like Wilfred's.

The soldier - whose verse spoke for so many - tragically lost his life bravely crossing the Sambre-Oise canal just seven days before the end of WW1. Wilfred was only 25.

Those wishing to make a poignant pilgrimage can visit the soldier's grave in Ors Communal Cemetery, the Western Front Association's commemorative plaque, the canal and the Maison Forestière from where he wrote his last letter home.

Useful information

Etaples: 1 hour drive from Calais

Tourist Board Information of Etaples

Boulevard Bigot Desceliers
F-62630 Étaples
Tel: +33 3 21 09 56 94
<http://www.tourisme-etaples.com/en/welcome/>

Tourist Board Information of Arras

Hôtel de Ville
Place des Héros
F- 62000 Arras
Tel: +33 3 21 51 26 95
<http://www.explorearras.com/?lng=en>

Tourist Board Information of Le Cateau-Cambrésis

48 Rue de Noyon
F-59400 CAMBRAI
Tel: +33 3 27 78 36 15
<http://www.amazing-cambrai.com/>

WHERE TO STAY?

Hôtel Westminster
Avenue du Verger
F- 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
Tel : +33 3 21 05 48 48

Discover the Northern France remembrance sites at a slow pace

A good way to explore the commemorative sites is by bike. On the coastal remembrance trail, hire a bike from La Baleine Royale in smart Le Touquet to take in the town's highlights (café-life, the market, beaches...) then press on to Etaples war cemetery. You can take in more WW1 memorials across the region by bike or on foot by searching up Cycling the Western Front and the Remembrance Trails of Northern France.

And find out more about your own WW1 soldier

To research your own WW1 soldier, start your journey by searching CWGC online resources.

Hôtel de l'Univers & restaurant

3 Place de la Croix Rouge
F- 62000 Arras
Tel: +33 3 21 71 34 01
<https://www.univers.najeti.fr/en>

Beatus (hotel & restaurant)

Philippe Gorczynski
718 avenue de Paris
F-59400 Cambrai
Tel: +3 3 27 81 45 70

WHERE TO EAT?

Aux Pêcheurs d'Etaples

Quai de la Canche
Boulevard de l'impératrice
F- 62630 Étaples
Tel: +33 3 21 94 06 90
<http://www.auxpecheursdetaples.fr>

La Bulle d'O

1 Boulevard de Strasbourg
F- 62000 Arras
Tel: +33 3 21 16 19 47

Pâtisserie Thibaut (Tea room)

50 Place des Héros
F- 62000 Arras
Tel: +33 3 21 71 53 20



*A lesson with a French chef,
delicious fish of the day and buckets of sea air*

Daily fish markets and expert cooking lessons make gastronomy a complete sea-to-plate experience on the Opal Coast. You can cook up a storm with new skills and recipes !



Boulogne-sur-Mer is a remarkably convenient destination for a gastronomic and relaxing weekend break. The city is closer to London than it is to Paris – and has strong culinary links with Britain, including long-cherished traditions for Christmas Pudding and Welsh Rarebit.

As you'd expect, the area also boasts highly skilled chefs and restaurants offering high-quality French cuisine (Northern France has UNESCO recognition for its gastronomy). Boulogne-sur-Mer is the no.1 port in Europe so it won't surprise you that the fresh fish is to die for! And to make the most of it, why not book an English cooking lesson?

L'Aquar'aile in Calais: a fish restaurant

There are many enticing cooking courses available in the area – e.g. a pastry course in Wimereaux and a fish cooking course in Boulogne's port area – but we highly recommend l'Aquar'aile just up the coast in Calais. Set in a restaurant on the top floor of an apartment block with panoramic views of the sea and a glimpse of the UK beyond, it's an unforgettable experience.

Under the watchful eye of the chef, Jean-Pierre Morichon, and Claude-Arnaud Caillet (Chef Pâtissier), and with the help of resident English speaker Filipine Leroy, you'll use regional produce to cook a main course and dessert during the

morning session before enjoying it for lunch. The emphasis is on fresh seafood and seasonal ingredients as well as regional specialities; don't forget to invite your partner to taste the fruits of your labour by joining you for lunch.

Plenty more fish in the sea

Back in Boulogne, if you're keen to make the most of your stay by the sea, try Le Chatillon, Boulogne commercial port's only restaurant with opening hours that reflect its clientele (open 3.30am-3pm for breakfast and lunch on weekdays only). It may not have a view of the sea, but fresher fish you'll not find. If you have the chance to try la gainée boulonnaise, a heavenly mix of mussels and white fish, cooked with white wine, vegetables and shallots, grab it.

Fresh fish & smoked salmon in Boulogne-sur-Mer

While we're on the topic of fish, there's much to see and do in Boulogne-sur-Mer. Why not visit La Criée, the fish auction house which, although computerised now, is named after noisier days gone by. It really is worth a visit if you can hop out of bed before dawn but if not, visit the impressive daily fish market on Quai Gambetta after a leisurely lie-in instead.



Another fascinating stop in the commercial port area is J C David, a fish smoker that uses traditional methods and 20-year-old ovens to achieve the lightly-smoked taste for which it is renowned. Herring, haddock, salmon and mackerel hang in the dark ovens, lined up like soldiers on ceremony, a fire in their bellies. The fire stoker - a Boulonnais born and bred, who started at the smokery when he was 14 years old and retires next year at 62 – jokes with the boss as he shovels the woodchips to keep the fires at just the right temperature.

Meandering up the streets back to the old town, a must-visit is the astonishing crypt of Notre Dame cathedral, which dwells in the underbelly of the huge church. It's the biggest crypt in France with room after fresco'd room to explore, some of which go back to Roman times.

Places to visit around Boulogne-sur-Mer: out on the cliff path

The coast paths to the north or south of Boulogne-sur-Mer offer rugged and beautiful views, with plenty of fresh air to help digest all that wonderful food.

Wimereux is close at hand – a small and elegant seaside resort, it's about an hour's walk north from Boulogne and you can either about-turn on foot or take a bus back to town on the return leg. Or travel a bit further towards Calais and try the Fartz walking path at Wissant. It's a 5km loop that's perfect for couples, picnickers or twitchers.

Chef Jean-Pierre Morichon

La Criée, the fish auction house

Bike ride out on the cliff path

Useful information

- **Boulogne: 1 hour drive from Calais**

- **Tourist Board Information of Boulogne-sur-Mer**
- Boulevard Sainte-Beuve
- F-62200 Boulogne-sur-Mer
- Tel: + 33 3 21 10 88 10

- **Tourist Board Information of Calais**
- 12 Boulevard Georges Clémenceau
- F-62100 Calais
- Tel: + 33 3 21 96 62 40

WHERE TO STAY?

- **La Matelote**
- (Hotel & Michelin-starred restaurant)
- 70 / 80 Boulevard Sainte Beuve
- F-62200 Boulogne-sur-Mer
- Tel: + 33 3 21 30 33 33
- <https://www.la-matelote.com/?lang=en>

WHERE TO EAT?

L'Aquar'aile
255 Rue Jean Moulin
F-62100 Calais
Tel: + 33 3 21 34 00 00

Le Chatillon
6 Rue Charles Tellier
F-62200 Boulogne-sur-Mer
Tel: + 33 3 21 31 43 95
<http://www.le-chatillon.com>

SHOPPING GOURMAND

Jean-Claude David
(fish smoker)
15-17 Rue Georges Honoré
F-62200 Boulogne-sur-Mer
Tel: + 33 3 21 87 38 31
<https://www.jcdavid.fr/en/>

Hop, hop & away ! Craft beer rides high in Northern France

Hop-fields are the backdrop to Northern France's artisan craft beer culture with passionate microbrewers pouring tradition, taste and terroir into local glasses



Beer has long been associated with Northern France but nowadays it's not the big beer brands making the splash, it's the microbreweries and their unique blend of conviviality, culture and community that everyone's shouting about. This craft ale revolution has come about thanks to a small number of passionate artisans nurturing the harvest of their home turf – or 'terroir' as we say in France - with one crop in particular dominating the local landscape... hops.

Beer culture is a sustainable art-de-vivre in Northern France

All over Northern France, from the Flanders coast to the banks of the Marne in the south, and from Parisian outposts to beercentric Lille, you'll find artisan breweries frothing away... using hops to give beer its bitterness and aroma and extending its shelf-life too.

Most outfits are family-run and adopt a quality-not-quantity ethos where being in the ale game is a passion, a pride and an art de vivre, not just a means of making a living. Sustainability is key to its culture too, with many breweries growing their own hops on-site, thereby doing their bit for low-to-no carbon footprint.

It's the mindset at the heart of La Ferme Beck in Bailleul where, at their convivial 'estaminet' (bar-cum-bistro), it's good to know that the family who brought the Hommelpap beer (and beer stew !) to your table also harvested the hops outside, made the beer and showed you the hop-fields and brewery... all on-site.

As if all that wasn't good enough for your weekend break in Northern France, here's the best news of all...

Beer may even have some surprising health benefits

France is rightfully recognised by UNESCO for the quality of its cuisine, and following a visit, you could be forgiven for considering a detox. But in fact, when savouring and moderation is adopted rather than indulgence, it is thought that beer could actually be good for you: it not only contains folic acid and vitamins B6 and B12, some studies suggest there may be multiple benefits, from greater life expectancy and improved bone density to lower risks of heart attack, stroke and Alzheimer's. No wonder we say 'Santé !' when we raise a glass of French beer !



A hop field



Beer is as great a part of the north's identity as World War One sites, the Opal Coast and UNESCO mining history, so why not add a beer tasting to your list of things to do in Northern France?

Three ways to taste the nifty northern nectar:

1. Visit a Northern France microbrewery

Visiting a craft beer microbrewery is by far the best way to see and sample *savoir-faire* close up. Often in a characterful heritage setting (Brasserie au Baron, Brasserie 2-Caps and Brasserie LIL for example), your host - no doubt throwing in some alchemy anecdotes - will explain the fascinating brewing process, from the harvesting right through to fermenting and conditioning. And of course visits aren't complete without the tasting or 'dégustation': shorthand for how to look, swirl, smell and savour. Brasserie Quentovic has a particularly photogenic wall of beers in its tasting taproom.

2. Try the best beers on Northern France's reputable restaurant scene

Local beer dominates restaurant menus (the choice takes up a whole page of the menu at über-popular AlFosse7 near Lens) with restauranters ready to recommend the right pairing for your dish - whether that's the ubiquitous moules-frites, the on-trend sharing platters of cheese and charcuterie or the cuisine at the sought after and Michelin-starred restaurant the Vert Mont in Boeschepe.

3. Meet the locals on a beer-themed weekend break

Beer-themed events populate the local calendar and create good beer buzz. There's the Festival Internationale de la Bière Artisanale (FIBA), Amiens Met la Pression and the one on everyone's lips... BAL (Bière à Lille). Alternatively, you can go on a guided tour with a bierologue (beer expert), join a beer scavenger hunt, or even try your hand at making your own brew.



Useful information

• **Bailleul: 1 hour drive from Calais** Tel: + 33 3 21 43 06 98

• **Tourist board information of Bailleul**
• 3 Place Charles de Gaulle
• F- 59270 Bailleul
• Tel: + 33 3 28 49 23 79

Brasserie LIL
35 Rue Frédéric Mottez
F-59800 Lille
Tel: +33 7 68 62 62 21

WHERE TO EAT?

La Ferme Beck (bar-cum-bistro "estaminet" in French)
Eeckelstraete
F- 59270 Bailleul
Tel: + 33 3 28 49 03 90

Find more estaminets on:
<http://www.effetflandre.com/locale-cuisine/the-estaminets/>

PLACES TO VISIT/ SHOPPING GOURMAND

• **La Ferme Beck**
• Eeckelstraete
• F- 59270 Bailleul
• Tel: + 33 3 28 49 03 90

• **Brasserie des 2 caps**
• 1413 Route d'Ausques
• F-62179 Tardinghen
• Tel: +33 3 21 10 56 53
• <http://www.2caps.fr/en.html>

• **Brasserie Au Baron**
• 2 Rue du Piémont
• F-59570 Gussignies
• Tel: +33 3 27 66 88 61

• **Al Fosse 7** (beer and restaurant)
• 94 Boulevard Henri Martel
• F- 62210 Avion





How to live like a local in Northern France's Champagne Region

Champagne isn't all from Reims. Head to the prestigious vineyards close to Paris and taste the French way of life at off the beaten track restaurants and visits.

Ask anyone anywhere to name a famous French drink and despite stiff competition from a cognac or a claret (maybe an Orangina), the overwhelming majority will opt for champagne, the most prestigious apéritif the world over. You know that it's only the real deal if it's from the designated Champagne area but did you know that part of this area falls within our very own Hauts de France region (Northern France)? No? Well, this is particularly good news for fizz fans seeking both lesser-known vineyards and proximity to Paris; you don't have to go as far as Reims or Epernay to reach those world-famous, UNESCO-listed, nectar-yielding vines.

Locally recommended places to visit near Northern France's Champagne Route

Believe it or not, there's more to local life than clinking fizz flutes! We asked the natives to share their favourite off-the-beaten-track weekend visits:

Mont de Bonneil - Head for these picture-postcard hills overlooking extensive vineyards and pretty French villages.

Bois de Belleau - A beautiful woodland walk with added poignancy on account of the visible traces of a key World War One battle.





Hottée du Diable - Inspiration for famous French sculptress Camille Claudel, this is a walk with a difference on account of the unusual facial forms appearing in the rocks. For the able-bodied only!

Shop like a local in Château Thierry and enjoy its typical French market and local events

The biggest town around here is Château Thierry (only 70 km from Paris and a good base for discovering the local vineyards). Walk the length of Grande Rue for its choice of independents including pâtissier par excellence Au Gourmet. Gawp at the gateaux and try a 'Fabuleux' chocolate – featuring the face of legendary local fabler Jean de la Fontaine. You'll see references to him all over town.

Then, if you'd agree that there's nothing more French than bread and cheese, go to the Friday market where stalls spill over Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. In the covered section, join the French cheese punters at Fromagerie du Dolloir, ask for a generous slice of local Maroilles (an orange-rinded square with a smooth and strong interior) then go back outside to follow wafts of warm bread to the queue at Maison Moreau boulangerie.

To meet several champagne producers all at once, time your trip to coincide with the 'Champagne et Vous' festival taking place in Château Thierry every autumn. Think workshops, entertainment, tastings, demonstrations and of course... opportunities to buy directly from the prestigious petits producteurs.

Seeking savoir-faire? You'll find French finesse at the locals' picks of restaurants on the champagne trail

If Foie Gras with gingerbread and blueberries or Scallops in parsley and garlic tickles your tastebuds, eat at restaurant l'Adresse Rive Droite in Château Thierry for the savoir-faire of top French cuisine.

Or, for French finesse and artistic gastronomic creations, Auberge Le Relais in Reuilly Sauvigny (between Château Thierry and Epernay) is one of those rare restaurants managing to combine the inventive, the traditional and the modern. On the cheese course, gawp at the treasures beneath the biggest cheese dome you're ever likely to see!

In France, a 'Logis' is a sure sign of a restaurant serving up quality dishes and the French touch, and the Auberge de l'Omois in Vallées en Champagne is no exception. Everything is locally-sourced and homemade, and there's a great choice of French favourites and house specialities like Ficelle Maroilles: a cheesy twist on the regional crêpe speciality Ficelle Picarde. Or you might be tempted by Château de la Marjolaine in Essômes-sur-Marne for long luxury lunching and a stylish champagne bar. With no less than 13 local fizz suppliers, they'll talk you through their subtle differences. They've rooms too if you wish to benefit from the pool, summer terrace and Marne river views: romantic weekend break guaranteed!

More special places to stay on the champagne trail. Our picks of hotels and B&Bs

For a quirky place to stay – Try the Jardin des Fables B&B, a sumptuously fairytale chambre d'hôte in Château Thierry. Eating with the owners ('table d'hôte') is also available on reservation. For something a little different - What could be more memorable than a night in a treehouse? Search up Le Nid dans les Bruyères in Fère-en-Tardenois.

For a luxury weekend break - It can only be the sumptuous Château de Fère in Fère-en-Tardenois: in the shadow of 12th century castle ruins, this 5 star hotel, spa and restaurant has an unrivalled reputation for French savoir-faire.

Snapshots through the Champagne route



MEET THE LOCALS ON A VINEYARD VISIT

IF YOU DON'T SPEAK FRENCH, 'CHIN-CHIN' (CHEERS) IS ENOUGH!

- **Taste UNESCO award winning Champagne Météyer Père et Fils in Trélou-sur-Marne**

It's no surprise to hear that a vineyard in the hands of the same family for generations has recently won UNESCO's prestigious Pierre Cheval de l'Embellissement prize for authenticity and tradition. One ancestor lived until he was 107 (and if that's not good advertising for champagne, we don't know what is!).



Franck and Anna Météyer

- **Meet the passionate producers at Champagne Lévêque-Dehan in Barzy-sur-Marne**

Meeting and greeting yet also working the vines themselves, Eric and Nadine impart the true passion of champagne production. You'll discover that making champagne is an art de vivre, a tradition and a French way of life, not just a means of making a living.

- **Enjoy champagne in a French garden setting at Joël Michel in Brasles**

If you're a fan of horticulture, this setting – of Japanese and Impressionistic inspiration – provides a stunning backdrop for your champagne tasting.

Useful information

Château-Thierry: 3 hours drive from Calais

Tourist Board Information of Château-Thierry

2 Place des États Unis
F- 02400 Château-Thierry
Tel: + 33 3 23 83 51 14
<https://www.lesportesdelachampagne.com/>

PLACES TO VISIT & SHOPPING GOURMAND

Champagne Météyer Père et Fils

39 Rue de l'Europe
F- 02850 Trélou-sur-Marne
Tel: +33 3 23 70 26 20

Champagne Lévêque Dehan

2 Rue des Lilas
F- 02850 Barzy-sur-Marne
Tel: + 33 3 23 70 32 41

Champagne Joël Michel

1 Place Gaston et Georges Brigot
F-02400 Brasles
Tel: + 33 3 23 69 01 10

WHERE TO STAY?

Château de la Marjolaine (hotel & restaurant)

27 Aulnois
F- 02400 Essômes-sur-Marne
Tel: +33 3 23 69 77 80
<http://www.chateaumarjolaine.com/>

Jardin des Fables B&B

10 Rue du Château
F-02400 Château-Thierry
Tel: + 33 3 23 83 17 63
<https://www.chambres-htes-chateau-thierry.com/>

Le Nid dans les Bruyères

37 Rue du Château
F- 02130 Fère-en-Tardenois
Tel: + 33 3 23 82 71 22

Château de Fère (hotel & restaurant)

Route de Fismes
F- 02130 Fère-en-Tardenois
Tel: + 33 3 23 82 21 13
<http://www.chateaufere.com/en/>

WHERE TO EAT?

L'Adresse Rive Droite

7 Rue Drugeon Lecart
F-02400 Château-Thierry
Tel: + 33 3 60 38 12 96

Auberge Le Relais

2 Rue de Paris
F-02850 Reuilly-Sauvigny
Tel : +33 3 23 70 35 36

Auberge de l'Omois

1 rue des Saules Baulne en Brie
F-02330 Vallées en Champagne
Tel: + 33 3 23 82 08 13



A walk in the Retz Forest near Paris leaves the world behind

*Nowhere says wraparound calm quite like the Forêt de Retz.
From rustling leaves to ancient oaks overhead,
let its stories reconnect you with nature, and yourself*



There are many words for walking in French (se promener, balader, flâner, marcher...) each in its own subtle way suggesting different pace and purpose. We think a walk in Northern France's beautiful Forêt de Retz demands the 'balader' variety, the level pitched just right to soak up the restorative powers of nature, the self-satisfaction of new knowledge and the revitalising health benefits of walking.

Forest fact, folklore, flora and fauna

Between Paris and Reims - and close to Soissons and Compiègne - this is France's sixth largest forest, and if these trees could talk - the beech, oak, ash, maple, birch, the chestnut - well, they'd certainly have a tale or two to tell. Not only was this Francois I's hunting ground (still rich with deer, boar, hare and fox for the record), it also whispers legends of wolves, devils, witches and fairies. So summon your inner-nature expert and grab those walking boots.

Enjoy pure escapism on a weekend walking break in Northern France

Lose all sense of time and place on the 'Salamandre' walk, a

9km circular route starting in Villers-Cotterêts. There are many highlights... Dendrophiles (that's someone who loves trees) will pause at the remarkable oaks and chestnuts, whilst history lovers will be captivated by the Château de Villers-Cotterêts, the Pavillon Henri II underground aqueducts and the mystical Ermitage Saint-Hubert...

Discover one of France's most hidden, historic (and high!) places to visit

Enjoying the serene sound of silence comes with the irony that it hasn't always been so, the forest's strategic position central to a key World War I battle. Walking the 'Tour d'Observation du Général Mangin' route (4.7km) takes in the site of the tower from where General Mangin directed a victorious counter-offensive against German forces. On the original site, you can now climb a new tower - all eight floors to the platform above - to far-reaching views and heights usually reserved for forest birdlife alone.

There's another poignant monument on the route, the 'Passant Arrête-Toi' memorial ('Passer-by, stop for a moment') erected by a grieving mother. It's close to the Guards' Grave military cemetery, the soldier in question's final resting place.



Longpont Abbey



Longpont



Château de Villers-Cotterêts

NEXT STEPS:

ADD ANOTHER DIMENSION TO COMPLETE OUR WALKING WEEKEND. THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE...

Visit the pretty French village of Longpont

At the edge of the Forêt de Retz, this pretty village is characterised by honey-stone and ivy-clad facades, cobbled streets and a turreted gateway. Its beating heart is a 12th century Cistercian abbey, where you can admire the gaping windows, cloisters, huge central chimney and - most atmospheric of all – the vaulted gothic cellar.

Local products to taste and take home

Buy the neutral-toned artisan ceramics (or throw your own) at Poterie la Pissotte, head to a quintessential market (Villers-Cotterêts every Thursday morning or in la Ferté Milon on the second Sunday of every month) or meet local producers on their own turf: 'Verger de Louâtre' sells all the good stuff - fruits, jams and juices in artisan and organic style.

Delve deeper into World War I history

Whilst the British called their soldiers 'Tommies', the French called theirs 'Poilus', a

reference to their overgrown hair. Find out the sorrowful fate of six of them in Vingré, a little to the north of here.

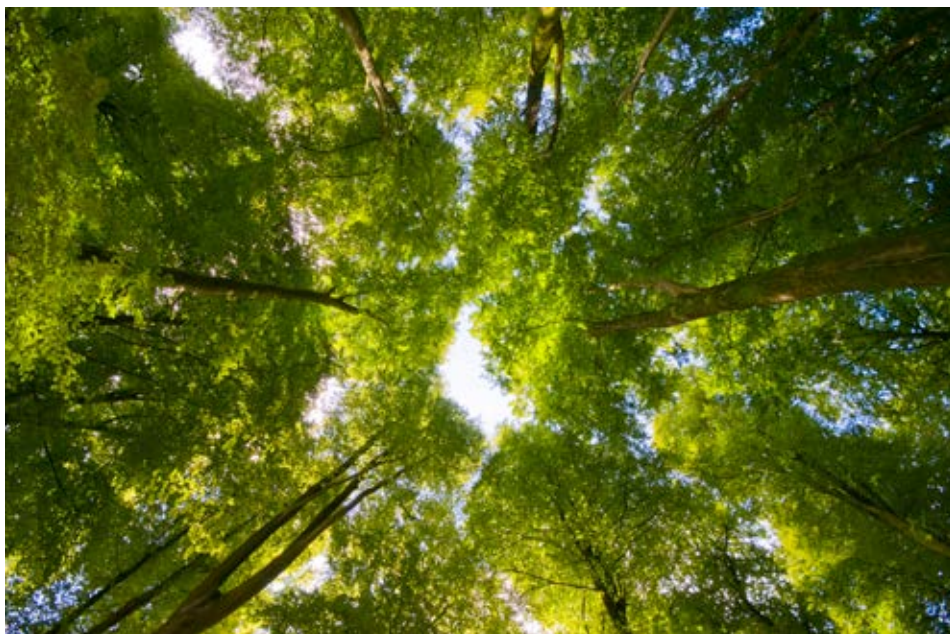
... and keep on walking

Evocatively named, the Automne river meanders through this serene valley where a blissful 7km walking route crosses marshland, meadows and popular groves, all leading to the Donjon de Vez medieval fortress and to the Abbey of Notre-Dame de Lieu Restauré.

À table ! Rest-up at a Forêt de Retz recommended restaurant

Once a hunting lodge, Longpont's Hôtel de l'Abbaye restaurant is now a cosy French auberge. Enjoy St Rieul local beer by the fire or on the terrace, then indulge in the homemade, local and seasonal menu. Look out for local specialities like Haricots de Soissons, Ficelle Picarde baked crêpes and forest mushrooms.

Bon appétit (et bonne balade) !



Great spotted woodpecker



Delicious ficelles picardes



*Hôtel de l'Abbaye,
Longpont*

Useful information

Villers-Cotterêts: 3 hours drive from Calais

Tourist Board Information of Villers-Cotterêts

Place Aristide Briand
F- 02600 Villers-Cotterêts
Tel: +33 3 23 96 55 10

PLACES TO VISIT

Donjon de Vez (fortified keep)
3 Rue de la Croix Rebours
F- 60117 Vez
Tel: +33 3 44 88 55 18

Abbey of Notre-Dame de Lieu Restauré

D32 (between Le Berval and Vez)
F- 60123 Bonneuil-en-Valois
Tel: + 33 6 10 05 10 48

WHERE TO STAY?

Château de Fère
Route de Fismes
F- 02130 Fère-en-Tardenois
Tel: +33 3 23 82 21 13
<http://www.chateaufere.com/en/>

WHERE TO EAT?

Hôtel de l'Abbaye (restaurant)
8 Rue des Tourelles
F- 02600 Longpont
Tel: +33 3 23 96 02 44
<http://www.hotel-abbaye-longpont.fr/gb/welcome.htm>



Cycle with an expert near the Opal Coast and through the idyllic villages of Northern France

The 7 Vallées in Northern France has benefits for cyclists; you feel a lot safer on the French roads, it's an un-manicured environment and it's full of wildlife long gone from the UK.

You may hear a cuckoo call, or see a red squirrel darting by. There are surprises galore as you cycle the undulating lanes of the 7 Valleys such as La Vallée de la Course: rural heritage, local cooking and abundant wildlife. And that's not to mention the outdoor pursuits on offer: from fishing by day to nocturnal canoe trips, and from hilly hiking to mooching at bric-a-brac markets, there's a richness to the area that feels very special.

Let's meet Jean-Pierre, an expert cyclist who knows the area like the back of his hand

Jean-Pierre now lives in Kent but has been leading his friends on group cycling holidays in the 7 Valleys for years. We caught up with him to find out more about short breaks for cyclists in the region.

Jean-Pierre, where are you from?

"I grew up in a French village in this area called Courset, near Desvres. I remember helping on the farm and realising only later that I had had a wonderful childhood looking after animals bigger than I, running free in the fields, driving tractors and eating fresh produce most of the time"

Places to visit in the Vallée de la Canche

"It's made up of La Vallée de la Canche, La Vallée de l'Authie and five smaller valleys that create a wonderful series of hills and villages. The two main towns are Hesdin whose history goes back to Charles Quint (a Spanish Emperor 1500-1558), and Montreuil-sur-Mer, with its fabulous medieval walls. Every time I cycle with friends in the region we claim we're going there to test the cobbles, but it's really the restaurants that we like! The geography here – all rivers and valleys – means lots of small ups and downs but cyclists love that as it means the scenery changes at every corner. We love cafés and brasseries where we can stop for lunch or simply for a drink."

What else do your British friends love?

"The relatively un-manicured environment which is full of wildlife: red squirrels if you are lucky, and cuckoos in Springtime. At night the stars are all there in a bright and beautiful sky that isn't polluted by city lights."

"Restaurants are run by local people and you can have a three-course meal made from local produce for €15-20. It's a lesser-known area – a bit of a secret – and unspoilt, so people are genuine and possibly not very sophisticated; the beaches are sandy, vast, clean and peaceful; and there is lots of English history too."





Useful information

- **7 vallées: 1 hour drive from Calais**
- **Tourist board Information of Les 7 Vallées**
- (everything you need including cycling guides and routes)
- Place d'Armes
- F-62140 Hesdin
- Tel: +33 6 70 21 52 23
- **WHERE TO EAT?**
- **L'Encas et l'Echoppe**
- (café and bric-a-brac shop)
- 30 bis Rue de Maresquel
- F-62870 Gouy-Saint-André
- Tel: +33 3 21 81 56 41
- **Auberge d'Inxent**
- 318 Rue de la Vallée,
- F-62170 Inxent
- Tel: +33 3 21 90 71 19
- **WHERE TO STAY?**
- **Les Maronniers**
- Jean-Pierre's holiday cottage
- 24 Rue des Trois Hameaux
- F-62240 Courset
- Tel +44 1732 453929
- <http://www.lesmarronniers-courset.com/>
- **La Grenouillère (hotel & restaurant)**
- 19 Rue de la Grenouillère,
- F-62170 La Madelaine-sous-Montreuil
- Tel: + 33 3 21 06 07 22
- <https://www.lagrenouillere.fr/en/>
- **Au Bois Dormant (B&B)**
- 8 Rue du 8 Mai 1945
- F-62140 Huby-Saint-Leu
- Tel: +33 6 85 82 18 38



How safe is it for cyclists?

"You feel a lot safer on French roads. In the UK you have the fear of potholes and hurried delivery-van drivers and I also think that motorists in Northern France are more patient in general. French drivers are taught to leave at least one metre between their car and cyclists when learning to drive, and it's a serious business: they fail their tests if they don't. Motorists here even tolerate my friends cycling two abreast!"

Give us some tips on cycling breaks in the region

"I think 50-100km per day is optimal – above that you tend to find the serious Lycra cyclists. You can either use mountain bikes or road bikes, and electric bikes are becoming popular too. I advise varying routes: one day do the valleys and picturesque villages, the next the coastal road and another day the hills. And be mindful of the hunting season in Autumn.

I love La Vallée de la Course route which includes Doudeauville, Parenty, Beussent, Inxent and Recques sur Course, and I recommend the coastal villages of Audinghem and Audresselles near Wisant".



On the road with Jean-Pierre

Walk on air on the Opal Coast, the ultimate Great Outdoors

With its rugged cliffs, sweeping beaches, endless sand-dunes and pretty fishing villages, get fitness and fulfilment walking Northern France's Deux Caps Coast



Imagine for a moment that you're perched on the cliff edge between Calais and Boulogne on the coast of Northern France, with the unique ability to watch both nature and history evolve through time-gone-by. You'll see Louis Blériot making his pioneering flight, an unknown World War I warrior ceremoniously carried by ship back home and Monsieur Yves Bougant - the last lighthouse keeper - leaving his station. You'll even bear

witness to the time these white cliffs were joined to their English counterparts. It's quite the story.

But don't sit too long... add your own chapter: the best and easiest way to capture this continuum of coastline - known as the 'Site des Deux Caps' on account of the two landmark capes Cap Blanc Nez and Cap Gris Nez - is by coastal walking.



Walking the Deux Caps coast. It's an official 'Grand Site', a place to visit in France for iconic national status

Whether you want to nordic walk with poles, take a more moderate pace, or simply stretch your legs, there's a Northern France walking route for everyone. From Sangatte and due south to Wimereux, you can walk all 34km of the Deux Caps coastal path (the 'GR120').

There are shorter, circular routes too, known as 'circuits balisés'. Try the walking route from the pretty church in Tardinghen, with much to camera-capture from the coastpath - dazzling sands, dunes, the wreck of the Lord Grey and the locals' secret spot to rest-up... the Berniques bench with its fabulous coastal view in the shade of a curious shell-shaped art installation.

You could tighten your laces for a pretty 10km inland walking route, your reward the magnificent farmland-meets-sea view from Mont de Couple or, for those who'd rather wander in a town and see sources of painterly inspiration, there's the 'Sentier des Peintres de l'École de Wissant' walk, in the footsteps of a 19th century colony of artists.

Coastal walking in Northern France - One of the most uplifting and restorative outdoor activities there is

Have you ever found yourself wondering why walking makes you feel so good? Well, not only does it have physical health benefits (regular walking can help reduce the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke for example), there's also a strong connection between walking and mental wellbeing, so you can expect to feel positive, calm and even inventive after a walk. And, here on the Opal Coast, there's added dimension... a heavy dose of dramatic effect with changing light, squalling gulls, iridescent seawater and salty air all playing their part.



Refreshed, revitalised and enlightened at Northern France's Deux Caps coastline

1

Where to eat on the Opal Coast

With specialities like grilled lobster, crab rillettes and pan-fried scallops, you must indulge in Northern France's seaside savoir-faire. The Marie Galante in the pretty fishing village of Audresselles, restaurant-with-view Art des Mets in beach-hutty Wimereux and Tardinghen's Presbytère are all amongst the locals' favourite restaurants.



2

Where to greet a local

Do you pronounce the W in Wissant and Wimereux? What does 'to do a digue' mean? If you're the type to wonder, immerse yourself in the social scene by booking a 'Greeter' tour guide or chat to locals at a 'Fête' (festival). There's the Crab, the Mussel, the Beach and more.



Where to get an in-depth look at Mother Nature

Pack your binoculars as 80 species of migratory bird pass through the straits at Cap Gris Nez. Countless information panels clue you up on nature en route and you can also forage for facts at the brilliant information-station that is the 'Maison du Site des Deux Caps' in Audinghen.

3





And let go ! Run for fun in the dunes

4

The coast of Northern France is a richly romantic playground. Recapture the spirit of youth stacking pebbles at Plage du Cran d'Escalles or run down the sand dunes at Ambleteuse's Dunes de Slack.

WHERE TO EAT ?

Marie Galante

173 Rue Edouard Quenu
F- 62164 Audresselles
Tel: +33 3 21 83 02 32

L'Art Des Mets

2 Boulevard Alfred Thiriez
F- 62930 Wimereux
Tel: +33 3 61 87 73 24

La Sole Meunière

1 Boulevard de la Résistance
F-62100 Calais
Tel:+33 3 21 34 43 01

Les Grandes Tables du Channel

173 Boulevard Gambetta
F-62100 Calais
Tel:+33 3 21 35 30 11

Useful information

- Tourist Board Information of Calais
- Côte d'Opale
- 12 Boulevard Georges Clémenceau
- F-62100 Calais
- Tel: +33 3 21 96 62 40

PLACE TO VISIT

- Maison du Site des Deux Caps
- La Sence
- F- 62179 Audinghen
- Tel: +33 3 21 21 62 22

WHERE TO STAY ?

- Ferme du Vert
- 555 Rue du Vert
- F- 62720 Wierre-Effroy
- Tel: +33 3 21 87 67 00
- Hôtel de la Baie
- Rue Alphonse Daudet
- F- 62179 Wissant
- Tel: +33 3 21 00 00 64
- Atlantic Hotel & restaurant
- 6 Rue Notre Dame
- F- 62930 Wimereux
- Tel: +33 3 21 32 41 01
- Villa Opale
- Boulevard de la Liberté
- F- 62164 Ambleteuse
- Tel: +33 6 77 69 28 38
- Hôtel Saint Jean
- 1 Rue Georges Romain
- F- 62930 Wimereux
- Tel: +33 3 21 83 57 40

Histoire Ancienne

20 Rue Royale
F- 62100 Calais
Tel:+33 3 21 34 11 20

Au Gré du Vent

17 Rue du Calvaire
F- 62600 Berck Sur Mer
Tel:+33 3 21 09 03 42

La Matelote

70 / 80 Boulevard Sainte Beuve
F- 62200 Boulogne-sur-Mer
Tel:+33 3 21 30 33 33

La Sirène (seafood restaurant)

376 rue de la Plage
Cap Gris-Nez
F- 62179 Audinghen
Tel:+33 3 21 32 95 97

Le Grand Bleu

(seafood restaurant)
8 Rue Jean Pierre Avron
F-62100 Calais
Tel:+33 3 21 97 97 98

SHOPPING GOURMAND

Fromagerie Philippe Olivier

(cheese shop)
43 rue Thiers
F- 62200 Boulogne-sur-Mer
Tel:+33 3 21 83 58 77

Belle Dune and the Somme Bay combine learning & fun family activities

Some of the best French tourist attractions for families are in Northern France, where a seaside break combines fun indoors and out with immersion in nature.



Escape from the pressures of everyday life and reclaim your family time with a short hop across the Channel to Northern France. Here you'll find some of the very best France tourist attractions to experience with kids, whether you want aquatic fun in a big swimming pool or in the sea or the chance to learn new skills such as sculpting local bird species together.

Aquaclub Belle Dune: fun and good value for money

Among the best places for family weekend breaks in France is the glorious Somme Bay, where fun, relaxation and education come together in one perfect holiday. It's here, at the Belle Dune Holiday Village at Fort-Mahon-Plage, that you'll find the Aquaclub Belle Dune, complete with indoor and outdoor swimming pools (including a wave pool) and water slides. Ideal for both fine weather and rainy days, it also offers up the chance for parents to chill out, with a sauna, a hammam and a Jacuzzi, as well as a bar!

Oases of Nature around the Somme Bay: horse-riding & birdwatching

Away from the water, another highlight of this part of the coast of France is the chance to ride local miniature **Henson horses** – a modern, friendly and docile breed created in the Somme Bay.

Perfect for horse-riding with kids, these horses are the perfect way to explore the landscapes of the Parc du Marquenterre bird reserve with its pastures, dunes, woods and inland marshes. Several venues offer rides, including the Espace Equestre L'Etrier in Fort-Mahon-Plage, the Espace Equestre Henson-Marquenterre in Saint-Quentin-en-Tourmont, the Haras Henson Marquenterre in Rue and the Ferme Relais de la Baie de Somme in Ponthoile.

The **Marquenterre** is the perfect place for kids to discover the joys of bird-watching whatever the season in which you choose to visit. Situated in the heart of the Somme Bay nature reserve, this peaceful, almost otherworldly spot is the place to see thousands of birds belonging to more than 300 species, including waders, shorebirds, water birds, perching birds and birds of prey. Wonderful species you might spot and learn here include oystercatchers with their distinctive long orange beaks.

A wonderful place for an escape into nature as a family, the Marquenterre has three walking circuits lasting from 45 minutes to two hours and 12 observation posts with English-speaking nature guides who share their expert insights into how the various birds live in the wild. Come in the main summer school holidays and you can enjoy special family workshops that include the likes of bird-themed sculpture and sketching. Meanwhile, the Somme Bay is also home to the largest seal colony in all of France – members of which can be spotted resting on the sandbanks that emerge as the tide recedes.

Belle Dune





Henson horse-riding



Bird watching at Parc du Marquenterre



Aquaclub Belle Dune



Sandy beaches and dunes of the Somme bay

Child-friendly beaches on the coast of France

Of course, one of the biggest French tourist attractions is its stunning coastline – and few places have better beaches than the Somme Bay. The **Plage de Fort-Mahon** itself has a gorgeous sandy beach with huge sand dunes and calm waters that make it ideal for a family day out during which parents can be calm in the knowledge that the kids are safe. Popular water and land activities here include wind-surfing, land-yachting and kiting, while the very long promenade of the Avenue de la Plage is a delightful for a relaxing family stroll.

Other fantastic, family-friendly beaches on this diverse and dramatic coastline are those at the charming seaside resorts of Quend-Plage, Le Crotoy, Saint-Valery-sur-Somme, Cayeux-sur-Mer, Ault-Onival and Mers-les-Bains. All of them are ideal for experiencing some of that famous French *art de vivre* - a state of mind when time slows down and the finer things in life, from local produce (don't miss a taste of the lamb from the nearby salt marshes, or of foraged coastal ingredients such as samphire) to culture, can be enjoyed in a leisurely and mindful fashion.

Beach huts in Cayeux-sur-Mer



Useful information

Quend: 1 hour drive from Calais

- **Tourist Board Information of Quend**
- 1 Place 8 Mai 1945
- F-80120 Quend-Plage-les-Pins
- Tel: + 33 3 22 23 32 04
- <http://www.office-tourisme-quend-plage.com/index.php?language=gb>
- **Tourist Board Information of Fort-Mahon**
- 555 Avenue de la Plage
- F-80120 Fort-Mahon-Plage
- Tel: +33 3 22 23 36 00
- <http://www.fort-mahon-plage-tourisme.com/>
- **Tourist Board Information of Mers-les-Bains**
- 3 Avenue du 18 Juin 1940
- F-80350 Mers-les-Bains
- Tel: +33 2 35 86 05 69
- <http://www.destination-letreport-mers.fr/en/>
- **PLACES TO VISIT & STAY**
- **Belle Dune & its Aquaclub**
- Promenade du Marquenterre
- F-80120 Fort-Mahon-Plage
- Tel : +33 3 22 23 73 00
- **Parc du Marquenterre**
- 25 bis Chemin des Garennes
- F-80120 Saint-Quentin-en-Tourmont
- Tel: +33 3 22 25 68 99

Le Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme (vintage steam train)
Gare - Avenue du Général Leclerc
F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
Tel : +33 3 22 26 96 96

WHERE TO STAY?

The Domaine du Val
(wooden houses)
Route du Val
F- 80132 Grand-Laviers
Tel : +33 3 22 20 02 69

Camping Domaine du Château de Drancourt

Lieu dit Estreboeuf
F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
Tel : +33 3 22 26 93 45

WHERE TO EAT?

Au coin des Gôûteux (picnic basket)
67 Rue de la Ferté
F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
Tel : + 33 3 22 60 81 33

La Fournée de la Baie (bakery & pastry - taste the "gâteau battu": a sort of brioche)
28 Avenue de la République
F-80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
Tel : +33 3 22 26 71 65



France tourist attractions: Theme parks to forest bike rides

Combine fun, history and nature in Northern France, where an amusement park and a fairytale castle are among the top French tourist attractions for families.

Only a short hop across the Channel, Northern France is among the best places around for family weekend breaks, offering the perfect chance for fun and relaxation as well as the opportunity to learn about French culture and to immerse yourselves in nature, soak up some fresh air and just breathe...

Spend precious family time together during a day out at a fantastic amusement park where attractions include historical shows, explore a truly breathtaking castle familiar from a popular TV fantasy-drama, and escape from daily routine with an energising bike ride and a rustic picnic in the heart of one of France's largest and most scenic forests.

Theme-park fun near Paris: A Cowboys and Indians style adventure

Only an hour or so north of Paris, the **Mer de Sable** sits in the midst of glorious natural surroundings on the threshold of the Forêt Domaniale d'Ermenonville. With attractions and immersive experiences across three worlds – Aux Temps des Pionniers re-creating the Wild West, the colourful La Jungle and a Mexican land – it's perfect for all ages.

As well as fun and thrills, you can learn about world history as you undertake adventures such as flying through time aboard El Condor to the time of the Aztecs. Tots love the gentle rides such as the merry-go-round and Péroké, which takes you flying like a parakeet through the Jungle of the Chipakas. Meanwhile, older children enjoy riding the waters of the the Cheyenne River and the Rivière Sauvage, hopping aboard a wild Jeep safari and

riding the Tiger Express rollercoaster. Other must-dos include watching the fabulous spectacles, which include beautifully choreographed Wild West horseback stunts and acrobatics, Apache dressage techniques, a dune train-attack and unique street performances.



Merlin's Castle at Pierrefonds: free entry for children

After a day at an amusement park, head to Pierrefonds, in this wonderfully quiet part of France. A visit to the **Château de Pierrefonds** – one of the most marvellous of France tourist attractions – provides the perfect contrast but is no less fun for all the family. Familiar to many from the BBC blockbuster Merlin, the castle is a true fairytale structure straight out of every child's fantasy. Rebuilt by Viollet-le-Duc for Napoléon III, it boasts a moat and drawbridge, arrow-slits and eight soaring towers, each of which is dedicated to a different knight.

Kids are free to run around and explore, spotting the sculptures of medieval monsters and grimacing gargoyles (make sure to come prepared with paper, pens and modelling materials to reproduce them) and fighting imaginary dragons in the grounds, which are dotted with life-size models of catapults. Fans of Merlin also love identifying rooms where scenes were filmed. With older kids, don't miss the spooky display of old statues in the former dungeons. Afterwards, head for the great-value ice-cream shop at Sundae right opposite the castle.



A family cycle route in the forest of Compiègne

As well as offering fun in the form of swan-shaped pedaloes on its lake, mini-golf and an array of child-friendly places to eat, Pierrefonds is the ideal jumping-off point for family bike-rides in the adjoining **Forêt de Compiègne** – a vast swathe of gorgeous green space that was once a royal hunting ground and later played a pivotal role in World War I (the Armistice was signed here). Among France tourist attractions, it's second to none.

Picardie Forêts Vertes provides bike hire for all the family (including trailers for those with very young children and electric bikes), while the forest's safe way-marked routes – one of which starts out from Pierrefonds itself – take you past fishing lakes and to treetop adventure courses designed for different ages. Pack a picnic using ingredients you've picked up in one of Pierrefonds' excellent bakeries to eat on the banks of the tranquil little lake of the Etang de Sainte-Périne.

Useful information

- **Pierrefonds: 2 hours and a half drive from Calais**
-

- **Tourist Board Information of Ermenonville**
- 1 Rue René de Girardin
- F-60950 Ermenonville
- Tel: + 33 3 44 54 01 58
-

- **Tourist Board Information of Pierrefonds**
- 1 Place de l'Hôtel de Ville
- F-60350 Pierrefonds
- Tel: + 33 3 44 42 81 44
-

PLACES TO VISIT

- **La Mer de Sable**
- Route Nationale 330
- F-60950 Ermenonville
- Tel: +33 3 44 54 00 96
-

- **The Château de Pierrefonds**
- Rue Viollet le Duc
- F-60350 Pierrefonds
- Tel: +33 3 44 42 72 72
-

- **Picardie Forêts Vertes** (Bike rental - Ask Vincent Penot)
- 69 Rue Saint-Eloi
- F-60350 Cuise-la-Motte
- Tel: +33 6 07 54 99 26

WHERE TO STAY?

Les Hauts de Pierrefonds (B&B - shared dining)
25 Rue du Parc
F-60350 Pierrefonds
+33 6 74 19 79 03

SHOPPING GOURMAND

Boulangerie Bigot (Bakery - speciality: machicoulis)
13 Place de l'Hôtel de Ville
F- 60350 Pierrefonds
Tel : +33 3 44 20 84 61



Outdoor Family Activities near Arras plus art and... frites!



Head for the Lens area of Northern France for a weekend break blending fun, fresh air and culture at some of the best French tourist attractions for families.

Within easy reach of the UK just a short hop across the Channel, Northern France is perfect for family weekend breaks among parents looking to combine fun activities in the open air with relaxation, culture and French *art de vivre* including great food based on seasonal regional produce. Just an hour from the Channel ferry port, the city of Lens and its surrounding area is perfect for active families keen to spend more quality time together away from the stresses and pressures of daily life.

Picnic areas & fun activities at Parc Olhain : a 1,000m² heated pool, a treetop adventure course

First up is the **Parc d'Olhain**, extended over the villages of Fresnicourt-le-Dolmen, Maisnil-les-Ruitz and Rebreuve-Ranchicourt within a 450-hectare forest and offering outdoor activities including mountain-biking, orienteering and Nordic walking courses for all levels, along with an open-air swimming pool open in July and August, a treetop adventure course and the largest network of suspended nets in the world. But perhaps most popular is the year-round luge track, taking you downhill at speeds of up to 35/h.

Other enticements at this wonderful leisure park include walking paths, mini-golf, disc-golf, tennis courts, the Enchanted Village playground, and sports and picnic areas. Meanwhile, among organised activities both outdoors and in are nature challenges featuring the likes of archery, boot-camps, fencing and sessions on the climbing wall. Come along, take in the fresh air and greenery, and allow yourselves to relax, really breathe and escape into nature as well as experiencing excitement and thrills as you exert yourselves.

Where a Rich Heritage Meets Contemporary Culture

In 2012 the mining basin of Northern France was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in recognition of its cultural importance and ranks highly in the list of the best tourist attractions in France. A landscape of plains, hills and farming villages marked by World War I history, it's notable for its *terrils* or man-made hills created from mining residue. The twin *terrils* at Loos-en-Gohelle are good spots for family walks: it takes 45 minutes to climb one of these 'black mountains', giving you the opportunity to get some healthy exercise and be rewarded by 360° views over the mining basin.



The terrils at Loos-en-Gohelle



It's also in the mining basin that you'll find the **Louvre-Lens**, an art museum created in 2012 to display objects on loan from Paris' mighty Musée du Louvre on a medium- or long-term basis. Occupying a former mining site, the stunning contemporary building by Japanese architects SANAA working with with New York's Imrey Culbert, French landscape architect Catherine Mosbach and museographer Studio Adrien Gardère, was partly inspired by the layout of the Louvre itself.

Families who come to the Louvre-Lens combine fun with learning, whether it's touring the airy galleries or signing up for special activities purpose-designed for all age groups. They include sensory sessions for babies and toddlers aged nine months to two years, thematic tours for ages 2-3 years, workshops and talks for ages 4-7, and experimental sessions for ages 8-12, as well as a teen program.

Where Refuelling French Style: taste the celebre Frites & fricadelle of Northern France

Food is as important part of family holidays as the best France tourist attractions, and the Lens region is full of opportunities to enjoy wonderful local cuisine in various guises. At some local landmarks or special events you may be lucky enough to spot **Friterie 'MOMO'**, a mobile chip stand in a retro-styled old caravan, iconic in the region for having appeared in the 2008 film *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis!*. As well as feasting on its excellent chips, you can sample the speciality *Fricadelle*, a kind of deep-fried hot dog, along with the likes of burgers, steak tartare and *pan bagnat* (Niçoise tuna sandwich).

Useful information

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- **Lens: 1 hour drive from Calais**
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- **Tourist Board Information of Lens**
- 58 Rue de la Gare
- F-62300 Lens
- Tel: + 33 3 21 67 66 66
- <http://www.tourism-lenslievin.co.uk/>
-
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- **PLACES TO VISIT**
-
- **Louvre-Lens museum**
- 99, rue Paul Bert
- F-62300 Lens
- Tel: + 33 3 21 18 62 62
-
-
- **Carrière Wellington**
- Rue Arthur Deletoille
- F-62000 Arras
- Tel: + 33 3 21 51 26 95
- [http://www.explorearas.com/en/
visit/wellington-tunnels.html](http://www.explorearas.com/en/visit/wellington-tunnels.html)
-
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Parc Olhain
Rue de Rebreuve
F- 62620 Maisnil-lès-Ruitz
Tel: +33 3 21 27 91 79
[https://www.parcoldhain.fr/activities/
free-activities/?lang=en](https://www.parcoldhain.fr/activities/free-activities/?lang=en)

WHERE TO STAY?

Hôtel de l'Univers & restaurant
3 Place de la Croix Rouge
F- 62000, Arras
Tel: + 33 3 21 71 34 01

WHERE TO EAT?

Louvre Lens Caf t ria
220 Rue Paul Bert
F- 62300 Lens
Tel: + 33 3 9 61 63 95 57

Chez Cathy
220 Rue Paul Bert
F- 62300 Lens
Tel: + 33 3 61 63 95 57

Spring & Summer events agenda

The International Kite Festival in Berck-sur-Mer

6th to 14th April 2019

Over the years it has become an event not to be missed on the Côte d'Opale. For 10 days in Spring, wind and sea enthusiasts, athletes or thrill-seekers can admire many giant kites, each with its own originality.



Thiepval Memorial to the Missing Commemorations

1st July 2019

Look back at one of the deadliest battles of WW1 during this moving service at a memorial inscribed with the names of the 72,000 men who were never found.

The Paris-Roubaix

14th April

The Paris-Roubaix is one of the best cycle races in the world. It is also a hugely popular festival that attracts spectators each year from across the globe who come and line the route. 'La Trouée d'Arenberg', 'Le Carrefour de l'Arbre', Roubaix Velodrome - so many iconic sites play a part in the race's legend.



Montreuil-sur-Mer Flea Market

14th July 2019

Combine shopping for bargains with Bastille Day celebrations and fireworks in this atmospheric medieval town that inspired one of Victor Hugo's best-known works.

Amiens flea market

14th April and 16th October 2019

Taking over 50 streets, Amiens flea market attracts 80,000 bargain-hunters from around the world to browse and haggle for antiques, quirky homewares and more.



The Fêtes Guillaume in Saint-Valery-sur-Somme

20th and 21st July 2019

The William the Conqueror Festival is one of the top things to do in France for those who want to combine spending time as a family with culture and learning.

The son-et-lumière spectacle

"Chroma" at Amiens Cathedral

15th June – 22th September 2019

Watching Amiens' UNESCO-listed cathedral lit up in the colours it bore during the Middle Ages is among the most memorable things to do in France.



The open-air son-et-lumière show "Les Misérables" in Montreuil-sur-Mer

26–29 July, 2–5 and 7 August 2019

Visit France in July or August and catch one of the country's most remarkable outdoor performances – a son-et-lumière show depicting Hugo's most famous tale.

The Festival des Forêts in Compiègne

21st June – 17th July 2019

Submit to melody, rhythm and chant in delightful forest settings where you can recharge your batteries while taking in French culture and artistic expression.



The Fête de la Mer in Saint-Valery-sur-Somme

3rd and 4th August 2019

Spending time as a family while learning about the rich fishing history of the splendid Baie de Somme is one of the loveliest things to do in France with kids.

Chantilly Arts et élégance

Richard Mille 2019

30th June 2019

This prestigious, award-winning classic- and modern-car event set up by Peter Auto is held in the uniquely setting of the Château de Chantilly. Only once every two years !



Lille flea market

31st August - 1st September 2019

The largest flea market in all Europe lasts from early Saturday morning to late Sunday evening, giving you plenty of time to browse for that one-off bargain.





*This magazine is issued by the official Hauts-de-France region Tourism Board.
44 pages of inspirations and zero advertising. The content is 100% sourced from British journalists who were invited to experience our destination and deliver their own ways of making the most of it.*

Useful addresses

www.french-weekendbreaks.co.uk/



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[www.instagram.com/
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Northern France Experiences Mission Attractivité Hauts-de-France Comité régional du Tourisme et des Congrès

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