

France: Normandy & Brittany

Tour-Only Itinerary

While most walking tours of Normandy and Brittany miss out on the magic of the Cotentin Peninsula, this Country Walkers tour brings you its spectacular coastal scenery during a two-night stay at a charming waterfront hotel. Along the way, you'll traverse the scenic wind-swept dunes of the Norman coast—pausing to pay an inspirational visit to the historic site of the D-day landings with a local guide. Explore the impressive cliffs of Étretat—the inspiration behind many of Monet's Impressionist paintings. Venture into Brittany for a scenic seaside stroll along unique tidal plains towards Mont St. Michel. Explore this splendid island monastery with a local guide—winding your way through charming medieval back streets to the door of its 8th-century Benedictine abbey. During a two-night stay in historic St. Malo, you'll experience the best of Brittany—including exquisitely fresh seafood, pristine sandy beaches, and ancient streets that showcase the rich history of this vibrant coastal region.



Highlights

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

seafood, and creamy handmade cheeses paired with delightful local wines.

- Stroll the ramparts of Saint-Malo, a fortified corsair city steeped in maritime history and rich with coastal charm.

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



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



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



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



Experts to handle all the details.



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



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



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

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 3 to 5 miles per day. Walks are along grassy trails, atop cliffs overlooking the sea, and over sand dunes. The terrain is smooth with few rocks or roots to negotiate, although there could be mud in some places after rain. There are daily ascents and descents, with gentle rolling hills and elevation change of up to 500 feet.

Please note that the mileage when visiting the D-day beaches and American Cemetery is minimal as the main focus is hearing about the history of that event. The itinerary presents a mixture of lovely seaside and rural landscapes, as well as birdlife, and focuses on the landing beaches of World War II and their accompanying history, the Viking and Norse invasions of the 9th century, medieval architecture and history, and the traditional customs and food of both Normandy and Brittany. This tour covers a large area of France and therefore involves a few long bus trips which are broken up with walks and cultural visits.

DAY 1

Your Country Walkers Vacation Begins. Travel to Normandy

4.5 miles, easy to moderate

Meet your Country Walkers representative in the lobby of our pre-tour hotel, the Hotel l'Echiquier Opéra Paris at 8:00 a.m.

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

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

Passing Honfleur's slate-shingled houses, you reach your enchanting hotel in the heart of town. This evening, reconvene for dinner in the hotel's restaurant, where the menu reflects the bounty of the surrounding countryside and nearby coast. Normandy's famed cheeses—developed by monks as early as the 11th century—may round out your meal, including rich Pont-l'Évêque, Livarot, or the best-known of

them all, Camembert.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2

Cliffs of Étretat

3 miles, easy to moderate

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

Follow the trail along the cliff tops toward the famous Manneporte rock arch, the Porte d'Aval, and the Aiguille, or "needle." The 19th-century French author Guy de Maupassant spent much of his childhood in the small fishing and resort town of Étretat.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3

Omaha Beach

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

Today's itinerary includes minimal walking, as the focus is on visiting the D-day beaches and the American Military Cemetery. Travel approximately two hours to the German battery at Longues-sur-Mer, where you meet a local historian who provides insight into the events of the D-day landings.

After lunch at a nearby restaurant, walk along the sands of Omaha Beach to the American Military Cemetery, the final resting place of 9,387 American soldiers. Each grave is marked with either a Star of David or a white cross—this was the first American World War II cemetery established on European soil. Your leader shares context about the battle, explaining why the casualties at Omaha Beach were significantly higher than at other landing sites, as Allied soldiers had to run inland toward well-positioned German defenses on the ridge.

After this moving visit, travel a short distance to your home for the next two nights: Les Villas d'Arromanches, an authentic 19th-century Norman villa nestled in the picturesque town of Arromanches-les-Bains. This elegant 4-star hotel is set within a tranquil, wooded park just 200 meters from the sea and the historic D-day beaches. Guests can unwind by the heated outdoor swimming pool, relax on the south-facing terrace, or stroll through the property's charming orchard. This evening, enjoy a warm welcome and a delicious dinner at your historic château.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4

Arromanches

4 miles, easy. Bayeux; 1 mile, easy

Today's journey begins with a short walk from your hotel to the nearby village of Longues-sur-Mer, where you'll enjoy a private, guided visit of the Abbaye Saint-Marie de Longues, a beautifully preserved 12th-century Benedictine abbey. The current caretakers will share the story of this remarkable site and their ongoing efforts to preserve it. Country Walkers is proud to support the Association of Friends of Longues Abbey and its Gardens with a donation on behalf of each guest on this tour. This dedicated association maintains the abbey's environment, restoration work, and surrounding landscapes. As an emblematic monument of Normandy, the abbey is kept vibrant through the association's preservation work and community events.

Next, shuttle to Bayeux and enjoy a walking orientation along the scenic Aure River, followed by free time for lunch and independent exploration. You may wish to visit Bayeux's stunning cathedral, consecrated in 1077 in the presence of William the Conqueror. Other options include the Battle of Normandy Memorial Museum, the Baron Gérard Art and History Museum, or simply browsing the town's many shops and

cafés.

Later this afternoon, rejoin your group and return to the hotel. You'll have time to relax or stroll into the picturesque town of Arromanches-les-Bains. You may wish to visit the D-day Museum, which offers insight into the construction and operation of the Mulberry harbor that made the Allied landings at Arromanches possible. Remnants of these harbors are still visible at low tide. For panoramic views and a deeper historical perspective, consider a short hike (one mile roundtrip) up to Churchill Cliff, home of Arromanches 360, a circular theater that presents a powerful film blending archival footage and modern images of the Normandy landings.

Dinner is on your own in town this evening. Arromanches offers a variety of local restaurants and casual eateries to choose from.

Note: The Bayeux Tapestry Museum will be closed for renovation in 2026 and is scheduled to reopen in 2027.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5

Coastal Walk and Guided Visit of Mont St. Michel

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

Today's itinerary takes you from Normandy into Brittany, beginning with a drive toward the Baie du Mont-St-Michel, famous for its dramatic tides. The journey offers panoramic views of the bay and the iconic, pyramid-shaped island monastery of Mont-St-Michel. Opposite this fantastical landmark lies Tombelaine Island, a protected sanctuary for nesting shell ducks, marine and brown seagulls, and white egrets.

After a scenic walk along the coast, continue to the monastery—one of the most impressive constructions of the Middle Ages, a quintessential symbol of northern France, and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Cross the causeway to the island, located just a half-mile offshore, and wind your way through cobbled streets to the top of the mount at the door of the Benedictine Abbey, which dates back to the 8th century. While the abbey's origins are early, most of its current structures were built in the 11th century, with the main church façade added in the 12th century. Learn about the lives of the medieval monks and villagers,

with special attention paid to the island's remarkably preserved architecture.

Please note: The guided tour of the abbey includes many steps. If you prefer to skip it, you are welcome to explore the village's narrow back streets and charming shops on your own.

Afterward, travel to your home for the next two nights: the medieval, fortified city of Saint-Malo in Brittany. Once home to French "corsair" privateers and Jacques Cartier—considered the first European explorer of Canada—Saint-Malo is now a popular seaside resort. Its long sandy beach and promenade lead to historic granite city walls. Your oceanfront hotel is ideally located for strolling to the promenade or Saint-Malo's Old Town. After check-in, your leaders will provide recommendations for dinner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6

Pointe du Grouin. Independent Exploration of Saint-Malo

3.5 miles, easy to moderate

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

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

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7

Your Country Walkers Vacation Ends

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

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Air Package

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓	✓
13 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 3 dinners	✓	✓
Local leaders with you throughout tour	✓	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓	✓
Roundtrip airfare	✓	
Two extra nights in Paris	✓	
Airport car service for arrival and departure	✓	
Pre- and post-tour breakfasts	✓	
Business-class upgrades available	✓	