

## 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. Transfer to Normandy

*4.5 miles, easy to moderate*

Meet your Country Walkers representative in the lobby of 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. 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; 3 miles, easy*

Today's walk takes you to the coastal town of Arromanches, which played a vital role in the D-day landings. A short shuttle from the hotel returns you to the village of Longues-sur-Mer. From here, trace a scenic walking and biking path through green fields and along the coast before descending into Arromanches-les-Bains. It was here that Allied forces constructed one of their famous Mulberry harbors—portable, temporary structures that enabled the rapid transfer of troops and supplies. Remnants of these harbors are still visible at low tide.

Enjoy free time and lunch on your own. You may wish to visit the D-day Museum to learn more about the harbor and landings, or take a short hike (1 mile round trip) up to Churchill Cliff to view Arromanches 360, a circular theater featuring a powerful film about D-day and its aftermath, using a mix of wartime footage and modern images.

Rejoin your group and return to your countryside château with time to unwind. Later this afternoon, join your tour leaders for an optional walk from the hotel into the medieval center of Bayeux, or opt for the available shuttle. Once in town, you might explore Bayeux's stunning cathedral, consecrated in 1077 in the presence of William the Conqueror, or visit the museum housing the famed 11th-century Bayeux Tapestry—a 220-foot-long embroidered account of the Battle of Hastings and William's conquest of England. You may also choose to visit the Battle of Normandy Memorial Museum.

Enjoy dinner on your own in town, or shuttle back to the hotel for a meal at the fine dining restaurant.

**Note:** The Bayeux Tapestry Museum will close on September 1, 2025, for renovations 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	✓	✓
15 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 3 dinners	✓	✓
Local leaders with you throughout tour	✓	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓	✓
Roundtrip airfare	✓	
Two extra nights in Paris	✓	
Airport car service for arrival and departure	✓	
Pre- and post-tour breakfasts	✓	
Business-class upgrades available	✓	