

France: Normandy & Brittany

Bike Vacation Only

Can't decide if you'd rather cycle the historic coast of Normandy or Brittany's charming seaside villages? On this VBT cycling vacation, you get it all! With six full nights to explore the region, you'll enjoy a well-paced journey—unpacking for three nights in each authentic, French hotel. Explore scenic Bayeux—renowned for its tapestry depicting the Norman Conquest. Dive into history when a local historian walks you through the D-day invasion during a guided tour of Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery. Pedaling along the sea-swept coast of Brittany with your French VBT trip leaders, you'll discover the ancient walled city of Dinan and the seaside village of Cancale—where you can sample fresh local oysters. A guided tour of the glorious Benedictine abbey at Mont Saint-Michel is a highlight you'll remember for a lifetime.

Cultural Highlights

- The official 80th anniversary of the D-day Landings and the Battle of Normandy that led to the liberation of France and Europe will be celebrated on Omaha Beach on June 6th, 2024, in addition to cultural events in the region throughout May and June. This anniversary is likely the last commemoration with living WWII veterans. Visualize the dramatic events of D-day as you tour Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery with our expert local guide.
- Learn how cider is made during a visit to a family-run apple orchard—and enjoy a taste and picnic.
- Stroll a fairytale setting of ramparts, half-timbered houses, and harbor views on a guided tour of the Breton town of Dinan.
- Savor crepes, a paper-thin-style savory pancake and specialty of Brittany and Normandy during dinner at an authentic *creperie*.
- Visit spectacular Mont Saint-Michel, the medieval island-village crowned by its well-preserved Benedictine abbey.

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance. Ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 15-30 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-4.5 hours

Group size: 14-20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 57°/43°, May 63°/46°, June 68°/52°, July 72°/55°, August 70°/55°, September 68°/52°, October 61°/46°

Average Rainfall (in.)

April 1.8, May 2.4, June 1.9, July 1.9, August 2.1, September 2.8, October 2.7

DAY 1: VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Travel to Bayeux

Meet your fellow travelers in the lobby of the Hotel Pullman Paris – Bercy, 1 Rue De Libourne, 75012 Paris at 8:30 a.m. for an 9:00 a.m. departure by private coach to Bayeux. Your VBT trip leaders meet you in Bayeux. They immediately guide you on a short orientation walk through the medieval city to your hotel, where you have a light lunch before a safety and bike-fitting session.

Your bike adventure begins with a simple warm-up ride from your hotel out into the verdant Norman countryside to Longues-sur-Mer, where you view World War II coastal fortifications on a headland overlooking the English Channel.

This evening, gather with your fellow travelers for a welcome reception, followed by dinner at the hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up — 20 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

Your warm-up ride is a loop out of the center of Bayeux and into the countryside along a combination of roads and bike lanes to the German batteries of Longues-sur-Mer on a bluff overlooking the English Channel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 km (12 miles)

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Cycle to Arromanches

After breakfast this morning, you'll cycle through rolling farmlands and timeless country villages. This morning's destination is the coastal town of Arromanches, which played a vital role in the D-day landings. Here, Allies built one of their famous Mulberry harbors—a portable, temporary structure that helped transfer troops and supplies. The remains can still be seen at low tide. Learn more about the harbor and the landings at the D-day Museum, during an included audio-guide visit. Another possible independent discovery in this town is Arromanches 360, a circular theater showing a fascinating film about D-day and its aftermath using wartime footage and modern images. Enjoy lunch on your own in Arromanches—and perhaps even go for a swim in the Channel!

Afterward, you either cycle or shuttle back to the hotel. This afternoon, you may choose to visit Bayeux's stunning cathedral, consecrated in 1077 in the presence of William the Conqueror. Or you may choose to visit the museum housing the intricate 11th-century Bayeux tapestry, a treasured fabric over 220 feet long depicting the Battle of Hastings and the victory of William the Conqueror over the English. In pedestrian-friendly Bayeux, you might also wish to walk to the Battle of Normandy Memorial Museum. Tonight, you have the night free to enjoy dinner on your own in town.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Bayeux to Arromanches — 22 km (14 miles)

Afternoon: Arromanches to Bayeux — 11 km (7 miles) | Arromanches to Bayeux PLUS — 19 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

This morning's route takes you through rural countryside with typical Norman farms and villages to the coast and beach in the town of Arromanches, with views of the artificial harbor. If you choose to continue cycling in the afternoon, choose from shorter and longer routes back to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 11 – 41 km (7 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: Visit Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery with our local guide

This morning, cycle through verdant countryside and fragrant orchards past old stone farmhouses. Arrive in Omaha Beach, perhaps the best-known D-day landing site. There'll be free time for lunch here before joining your passionate local guide, a World War II expert who leads you along the shore and sheds light on the D-day landings. Operation Overlord started in the early-morning hours of June 6, 1944, and remains the largest military operation in history.

You'll then cycle the short distance to the American Cemetery, a 170-acre (69-hectare), meticulously landscaped memorial overlooking Omaha Beach and the English Channel. Your local guide will again provide insight into this site, containing 9,387 perfectly aligned white crosses and Stars of David, marking the graves of the brave American servicemen and women who perished during World War II.

After time at these moving sites, you take a shuttle back to Bayeux. Later, join your trip leaders for dinner at an authentic *creperie* serving the specialty of the region.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Bayeux to Omaha Beach — 30 km (18 miles)

Afternoon: Omaha Beach to American Cemetery — 8 km (5 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride takes you out of Bayeux on city streets and bike lanes and soon into the Normandy countryside of meadows and apple orchards. Follow lightly traveled narrow roads to a short but steep descent to Omaha Beach. After lunch, you ride along the beach for about two miles then rise to the bluff above it to the American Cemetery.

Cumulative Distance Range: 8 – 39 km (5 – 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Explore rural Normandy / Travel to Saint-Malo

Pedal out of Bayeux into rural Normandy for a close-up look at its celebrated fertile pasturelands dotted with grazing cows and half-timbered country manors to an apple orchard and cider maker.

You may choose briefly to explore Bayeux's small Wednesday outdoor market, and shop for a few local specialties.

Since the 1600s, Normandy has been known for its exceptional apples and the beverages they produce, notably cider and Calvados, the famous apple brandy named for the region. Your hosts at the cider farm will demonstrate how their organic apples are harvested, pressed, and fermented to produce cider. Of course, samples are provided! Lunch at a nearby local restaurant caps off your visit.

After lunch, you may continue cycling toward the Abbey of Saint-Martin-de-Mondaye, settled by the Norbertine order. Dating to the 13th century, the present abbey and church were entirely rebuilt in the 18th century. The long option continues to the town of Balleroy, ending just in front of the 17th-century Château de Balleroy.

From here, travel by coach to Saint-Malo, a beautiful medieval fortified city along Brittany's coast, the legendary home of French corsairs or privateers. Your hotel is located directly on the broad sand beach and the wide seaside promenade leading into the walled Old Town of Saint-Malo. During your stay, you can indulge in several spa and therapy rooms, including an indoor, seawater swimming pool (Aquatonic). Stroll to a local restaurant for dinner tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Bayeux to Les Vergers de Ducy to Lingevres — 18 km (11 miles) | Lingevres to Balleroy — 19 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

Your morning ride follows country roads to the cider-producing farm of the Domaine de la Flagerie (Les Vergers de Ducy). The afternoon option continues along quiet narrow roads to Saint-Martin-de-Mondaye Abbey and then on to the town of Balleroy, ending in front of the Château de Balleroy. You will travel from here by coach to St-Malo.

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 – 37 km (11 – 23 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Visit Dinan / Saint-Suliac

After breakfast, shuttle approximately 40 minutes to Dinan, a fairytale walled city perched high atop a hill on the edge of Brittany. Here, you'll walk with a local guide along the narrow cobblestone streets of its medieval center, where a splendid Gothic church greets you.

After free time for lunch, reunite with your bike at the town's riverside port and enjoy a scenic ride along the River Rance. You'll pause to explore Saint-Suliac, a charming village known for its quintessential granite homes draped with fishing nets. Later this afternoon, you have time to enjoy your hotel's amenities, swim in the ocean (weather permitting), or stroll along the promenade. Your trip leaders will provide suggestions for dinner on your own tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Dinan to Saint-Suliac — 26 km (16 miles) | Saint-Suliac to Saint-Malo — 19 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

After a tour and exploration of Dinan's market, ride from this beautifully preserved Breton town along an easy designated bike route along the Rance River with a few miles of hard-packed gravel and on to the charming fishing port of Saint-Suliac. On the longer option, you continue cycling from Saint-Suliac through country roads, then onto the slightly busier streets of Saint-Malo.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 45 km (12 – 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6: Cancale / Saint-Malo / Farewell dinner

Today's ride traces the beautifully rugged Brittany coast. Your first stop is the Jacques Cartier Manor House. In 1534, Cartier crossed the Atlantic and sailed up the St. Lawrence River as far as modern-day Montreal. After these explorations and naming the land Canada, he settled in this manor house situated between Saint-Malo and Cancale. Enjoy a visit and short film about this native Breton.

Later, you'll cycle along the coast, admiring sweeping views from Pointe du Grouin before continuing to the picturesque fishing port of Cancale, known for its superior *huîtres*, or oysters. King Louis XIV was reportedly so enamored of these particular bivalves that he had fresh oysters brought daily from Cancale

to Versailles. You'll have the opportunity to taste them for yourself, elbow to elbow with locals, during a visit to an oyster market.

After free time for lunch, loop back to Saint-Malo on another scenic route.

Tonight, gather at your hotel for a special farewell dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Saint-Malo to Cancale — 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Cancale to Saint-Malo — 13 km (8 miles)

What to Expect:

Admire sweeping views as you ride along the rugged Brittany coastline to Cancale this morning. Add an afternoon ride, turning inland through an agricultural area growing many vegetable varieties.

Cumulative Distance Range: 13 – 37 km (8 – 23 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7: Travel to Charles de Gaulle Airport via Mont Saint-Michel / VBT Bicycling Vacation ends

You are welcome to join us on an all-day drive to the Air Package hotel at Roissy, Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris. This excursion includes a visit to Mont Saint-Michel, the spectacular abbey-crowned island that is one of the most coveted destinations in France. You will arrive at the hotel at around 5:30 p.m. Or you may make your arrangements to leave the Grand Hotel des Thermes on your own; checkout time is 11:00 a.m. Trains depart from Saint-Malo to Paris Montparnasse or Paris CDG Airport via Rennes. You are responsible for all transportation arrangements. We recommend you ask your VBT trip leaders or the hotel for assistance in making any travel reservations at least one day in advance.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Le Lion d'Or (Days 1-3)

This 4-star boutique hotel has a long tradition of hospitality, as it is a renovated 18th-century coaching inn. Located in the historic heart of Bayeux, it is tucked into an inner private courtyard just steps away from the famed Tapestry Museum. Individually decorated rooms are light-filled, with modern tones and fabrics paired with classic furnishings. A welcoming bar and lounge at the entrance are near the fine-dining restaurant.

Grand Hotel des Thermes (Days 4-6)

Overlooking the Gulf of Saint-Malo, the 5-star Grand Hotel des Thermes offers a luxurious end to a day of biking. Since 1881, as a vacation retreat for European royalty, it continues that tradition of excellence today. As a guest, you'll enjoy free access to the swimming pool, sauna, hammam (Turkish-style bath), and fitness area. The hotel also boasts a popular spa with a selection of treatments, a bar, and three restaurants. All rooms have a private balcony.