France: Normandy & Brittany

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Discover a region distinct from any other in France from the unique perspective of your bicycle. You'll see how the drama of World War II still resounds along the beaches of Normandy and experience the region's seafaring lifestyle. Enjoy shifting views of rural countryside, half-timbered villages, medieval ruins and the shimmering sea. Visit the spectacular island and abbey of Mont Saint-Michel. Learn about explorer Jacques Cartier at his manor home. And get a true taste of the region in its succulent oysters, tangy cheeses and fresh cider along the way.

Cultural Highlights

Cycle through rolling pasturelands and picturesque country villages past half-timbered country manors, into rural Normandy.
Delve into World War II history as you explore the D-Day Museum at your own pace.
Visualize the dramatic events of D-Day as you visit Omaha Beach with a local guide.
Ponder the effects of war during a sobering visit to the American Cemetery.
Take a dip in the Channel.
Learn how cider is made during a visit to a local orchard—and enjoy a taste.
Enjoy the beach-side location of your Brittany hotel.
Stroll a fairytale setting of ramparts, half-timbered houses and harbor views on a guided tour of Dinan.
View granite homes draped with fishing nets in the quaint village of Saint-Suliac.
Savor a specialty of Brittany during dinner at an authentic creperie.
Taste the delicious oysters that enchanted King Louis XIV.
Visit spectacular Mont Saint-Michel, best known for its well-preserved Benedictine abbey.

What to Expect

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

Tour Duration: 10 Days
Average Daily Mileage: 15 - 30
Average Cycling Time: 00:45 - 02:45

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Apr 57º/43º, May 63º/46º, Jun 68º/52º, Jul 72º/55º, Aug 70º/55º, Sep 68º/52º, Oct 61º/46º

Average Rainfall (in.)

Apr 1.8, May 2.4, Jun 1.9, Jul 1.9, Aug 2.1, Sep 2.8, Oct 2.7

DAY 1: Depart from home / Fly overnight to Paris

Depart from home for Paris, France. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

DAY 2: Arrive in Paris

Upon arrival at Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG) Airport, claim your luggage and clear customs. If your luggage is lost, fill in a PIR form before leaving the customs area; VBT representatives are not allowed into the customs area. Please make sure that your VBT luggage tags are attached to your bags. This helps the representative identify you.

After exiting customs, enter the arrival hall and look for your VBT representative or driver, who will be holding a VBT sign. Your representative will welcome you to France and arrange for your transfer via taxi or van to our Paris hotel (approximately 60 minutes, depending on traffic). At this time, please verify with your airport representative the time of your transfer tomorrow to Bayeux. If you are delayed in meeting your VBT representative at the CDG Airport, please call 06 72 07 59 24 or 06 15 15 15 25 from within France. Outside of France, call +33 672 07 59 24 or +33 615 15 15 25. Please note: Your hotel room may not be available until 3:00 p.m. If you arrive early, you may store your luggage with the reception desk. Please note for early morning arrivals in Paris, the hotel may charge an early check-in fee if your room is ready before their normal check-in time and this fee will be at your expense if you decide to check-in early.

VBT provides you with City Information that includes information and recommendations for what to see and do in Paris. Enjoy the rest of the day to relax or to begin exploring the City of Light on your own.

Hotel: Pullman Paris Bercy

DAY 3: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Transfer to Bayeux

VBT Air Package and Pre-Trip Extension guests: After breakfast, meet in the hotel lobby at 8:00 a.m. to join a private coach transfer to Bayeux, departing at 8:30 a.m. If you use your own pedals and saddle,

please put them in your carry-on luggage for easy access. Travel time is approximately 3.5 hours, depending on traffic. Meet your VBT Trip Leaders 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.

A warm-up ride takes you from your hotel out into the verdant Norman countryside to Longues-sur-Mer, where you view World War II coastal fortifications overlooking the English Channel.

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

Hotel: Le Lion d'Or
Meals: Breakfast (included for Air Package guests only), Lunch, Dinner
Daily Options: 12.3 miles (19.8 km)

DAY 4: Cycle to Arromanches

After breakfast this morning, you'll cycle through rolling farmlands and picturesque country villages. Along the way, you might visit a family-run umbrella workshop. 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, which you'll have time to explore on your own. 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. You may also choose to visit the museum housing the famous 11th-century Bayeux tapestry. One of the most famous tapestries in the Western world, it depicts the Battle of Hastings and the victory of William the Conqueror over King Harold and the English. The embroidery highlights many battle scenes and illustrates other fascinating details about medieval life. You might also wish to visit the Battle of Normandy Memorial Museum. Tonight, you have the night free to enjoy dinner on your own in town.

Hotel: Le Lion d'Or
Meals: Breakfast

Daily Options: 16, 23, or 28 miles (26.4, 37.3, or 45 km)

DAY 5: Visit Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery with our local guide

This morning, take an invigorating ride—through the verdant countryside and past fragrant orchard fields and old stone farmhouses—to Omaha Beach, perhaps the best-known D-Day landing site. There'll be free time for lunch here before you join Guillaume Marie, a World War II expert and your local guide. His passion is evident as he leads you along these now-tranquil shores and shares with you the dramatic events that unfolded here. Code-named "Operation Overlord," the D-Day landings remain the largest military operation in history, and the beaches of Normandy bore the brunt of the invasion. Omaha Beach witnessed the most intense fighting as nearly 7,000 boats hit this coastline, pouring tens of thousands of Allied soldiers onto French shores in the early morning hours of June 6, 1944.

You'll then cycle the short distance to the American Cemetery, a 170-acre, meticulously landscaped memorial overlooking Omaha Beach and the English Channel. The site contains 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. Guillaume will again provide insight and answer questions.

After time to ponder 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.

Hotel: Le Lion d'Or
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Daily Options: 18 or 24 miles (29.7 or 38.8 km)

DAY 6: Explore rural Normandy / Transfer to Saint Malo

Pedal out of Bayeux into rural Normandy today for a close-up look at its celebrated fertile pasturelands, dotted with grazing cows, and half-timbered country manors.

You may choose to briefly explore Bayeux's small Wednesday market where a variety of local producers bring their fruits, vegetables and wares to sell. Your Trip Leaders will purchase a few delicacies for a picnic lunch later today.

Your ride continues along country roads banked by neatly trimmed hedgerows to an apple orchard and cider maker. Since the 1600s, Normandy has been known for its exceptional pommes (apples) and the

distinctive beverages they produce, including cider and Calvados, the famous apple brandy named for the region. During your visit, your hosts will demonstrate how their organic apples are harvested, pressed and fermented to produce cider. Of course, you can sample some for yourself! A picnic lunch prepared by your Trip Leaders caps off your visit.

After lunch, you may continue cycling toward the Abbey of Saint-Martin-de-Mondaye. Settled by the Norbertine order from the 13th century, the present abbey and church were entirely rebuilt in the 18th century after the original buildings sustained damage from wars during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The long option continues to the town of Balleroy just in front of the 17th-century Chateau de Balleroy, with gardens by Le Nôtre and owned by the Forbes family.

From here, transfer by coach to Saint-Malo, a beautiful medieval fortified city along Brittany's coast, the legendary home of French corsairs, or privateers—and your home for the next three nights. 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. Join your Trip Leaders for dinner at a local restaurant.

Hotel: Grand Hotel des Thermes
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Daily Options: 6 or 21 miles (10.8 or 23 km)

DAY 7: 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 reel 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. Later, your Trip Leaders will provide suggestions for dinner on your own in town.

Hotel: Grand Hotel des Thermes
Meals: Breakfast
Daily Options: 16 or 27 miles (25.7 or 44.4 km)

DAY 8: 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 today's St. Lawrence River as far as modern-day Montreal. After being decorated as the discoverer of Canada, he settled in this house between Saint-Malo and Cancale. Enjoy a visit and short film about this French hero.

Later, you'll cycle along the coast, admiring sweeping views from Pointe du Grouin before continuing to the tiny fishing port of Cancale, known for its superior huîtres, or oysters. King Louis XIV was reportedly so enamored of these briny 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, return to Saint-Malo on another scenic and splendid ride.

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

Hotel: Grand Hotel des Thermes
Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Daily Options: 14 or 21 miles (22.4 or 35 km)

DAY 9: Transfer to Charles de Gaulle Airport via Mont Saint-Michel / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

VBT Air Package guests: After breakfast, say goodbye to your VBT Trip Leaders and depart for Paris via one of the most visited monuments in France: Mont Saint-Michel. Upon arrival, meet your local guide at the Tourist Information center. Then, accompany him or her across the causeway to the cone-shaped village in the Gulf of Saint-Malo, resting on an islet like a medieval crown.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the island of Saint-Michel is best known for the spectacular and well-preserved Benedictine abbey that sits at its peak. The abbey is surrounded by the winding streets and architecture characteristic of a medieval town. You'll walk past small houses, shops and street stalls along its outermost perimeter close to shore. Above these stand the 13th-century monastic buildings, outstanding examples of Gothic architecture. The entire islet is crowned by the abbey church, which soars roughly 240 feet (73 meters) above sea level.

After free time for lunch on your own, rejoin the shuttle and transfer to your hotel, located near Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris (approximately 4.5 hours, depending on traffic). This evening is free for you to dine in the hotel's restaurant and enjoy its amenities.

Hotel: Hotel Pullman Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport
Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10: Depart for home

After breakfast*, transfer by shuttle train to your departure terminal within Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris. The CDGVal Shuttle Train is a complimentary train connecting all terminals and train and bus stations at Charles de Gaulle Airport, running every 4 minutes (daily between 4:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m.). The hotel reception can provide exact instructions to your terminal, but please plan to leave the hotel about 3 hours before your flight time for the short walk to the Terminal 3-Roissypole train shuttle station and the short shuttle ride to your correct terminal.

*Please note: For guests with early-morning departures, breakfast at the hotel may not be available. Please check with the front desk to verify the times when breakfast is served.

Meals: B

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Pullman Paris Centre – Bercy (Day: 2)

The four-star Hotel Pullman Paris Centre – Bercy lies at the heart of the Bercy Village pedestrian complex of Paris, near the Grande Bibliothèque and Palais Omnisport stadium and the Bastille and Marais districts. Air-conditioned guest rooms feature plush contemporary décor. Indulge in contemporary French cuisine made with regional produce in the hotel's restaurant L'Esprit du 12ième, as well as an extensive wine cellar at the Vinoteca. Enjoy a drink in Le Point Bar or on the bar's patio. And relax in the sauna and fitness center.

Le Lion d'Or (Days: 3,4,5)

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: 6,7,8)

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.

Hotel Pullman Paris Roissy CDG Airport (Day: 9)

The 4-star hotel Pullman Paris Roissy CDG Airport is in the heart of Charles de Gaulle Airport. It features a heated indoor pool, sauna and steam room. Savor gourmet French and international cuisine at the hotel restaurant, featuring local products and excellent wines. Spacious guest rooms are non-smoking and have a 47-inch LCD TV with satellite channels and free, high-speed WiFi access. Each soundproof room features air conditioning, tea- and coffee-making facilities, and a minibar.