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## **NORMANDY, BRITTANY, June 2011**

The year of the EURO, how low can it get? Take advantage and travel in Euroland. But that was not the real reason why we had chosen to follow the coastline of Normandy and Brittany; it looks like we followed the food or better the Restaurants !! We have been numerous times to Normandy for over 10 years as our holiday home is close to Honfleur, now that became our starting point for a 2 weeks journey towards home. The weather was hot and very sunny for the 3 weeks we stayed in our place and once we left, what do you expect, it turned cloudy, windy and some rain. Urs always appreciates that kind of weather as he finds clear blue sky very boring! Means we had the perfect mix for him and his photo takings. The starting point was the highway A13 to Caen turning on the N13 to Bayeux. If you have never been there , Caen has a university and the famous WWII Memorial, Bayeux offers a famous wall tapestry, we ignored all this and took the exit for Sainte-Mère-Église, where you will find John Steele hanging on the church tower. The parachute soldier who during D-day got "caught by the church " and did pretend he was dead until he was saved. The famous story. We are now on the back roads to UTAH beach, the US landing beach, as it was a few days after June 6th, there were still flowers in honour of the invasion Anniversary looking small Hotel, Chateau de Quineville with Restaurant ), Further down the coast the fishing village St. Vaarst-la-Hougue with its Museum Island, because of the tide differences, you could go by boat or same vessel becomes a boatcar with tires at low tide. To get to our Hotel , des Ormes, we drove 145km from Pont-Audemer, which did allow us to Stop and enjoy sites on the way. See above Crossing the Manche peninsula to the other side to arrive in Barneville-Carteret where we had booked the Hotel des Ormes for 2 nights. Location directly on the sailing harbour, newly decorated, we had a ground floor room in beige/brown colours and a large shower. Disadvantage at low tide we could not open the windows, to say it diplomatically, it stinks !! [www.hoteldesormes.fr](http://www.hoteldesormes.fr) Surprise, the village has only 1000 hab. but lots of tourist and plenty of cars with a Swiss license plate, did we miss something? Why are they here? Maybe the reason is the car ferry to the channel islands, it takes only 45min from here. The next day we visited La Hague, nuclear power plant peninsula, interesting landscape, great views but who wants to live here? On the way back to our Hotel we passed the Dune Park of Biville, very impressive landscape, for miles only beach, dunes and NO people ! Back to the village, dinner at the Restaurant La Marine also a Hotel, [www.hotelmachine.com](http://www.hotelmachine.com) Very recommendable Restaurant, true Norman Cuisine and fair price.

Continue our journey driving along the coast stopping in Granville for a cup of coffee, bigger town than expected. It was too hot to explore more of the city to find something interesting. We planned to have lunch just in front of the Mont Saint Michel and we did. Strangely our memories of the food and Restaurant were better than the reality on our plate, so not worth to mention it.

Mont St Michel as always one big queue of tourist wanting to go on the rock ! We skipped that as we have been there before and maybe one day we manage to stay over night in the little Hotel on the rock, meaning when the tourists are gone for the day we would be still there and have it to us, I imagine (wishful thinking perhaps)

Still driving along the coast approaching Cancale and the oyster cultures. Did you ever had a horseshoe oyster ? As the name say's that what you get. On the way we had colour on the beach, the sandsailers !!

Arriving at the Maison Bricourt , [www.maisons-de-bricourt.com](http://www.maisons-de-bricourt.com) , already for the second time as we like the house, the location and of course the food, I think , I did write it in the wrong order of our priorities but I am sure you know what comes first ! The chef is Olivier Roellinger,



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former 3 Michelin star cook, now running 1 restaurant, Le Coquillage at the Hotel Chateau Richeux. Our menu was the 'Grignotage' for 68€, lots of small hot and cold seafood dishes. For example, Oyster with lemongrass or warm with bacon wrap etc. Our room, CARVI, was in blue and beige colours facing the sea. We loved it !

Ooops, forget to say that the Mont-St-Michel is the border between Normandy and Brittany, means we are now in Brittany. What has changed ? Normandy has more timber houses, here they are made from stone but with lovely garden and due to the gulfstream with some exotic flowers or palm trees. Next morning the next part of our journey is waiting, following the fast way to St.Brieuc and from there back to the coastline and the small streets. Rose granite coast, lots of huge rock all in light pink, beautiful houses and gardens, sun and a breeze. We stopped a bit too often especially when there is an artichoke field, they seem to be all harvested leaving the odd ones, which are turning into flowers, would love to see that a few weeks earlier. We tried the artichoke in several places and different variations including for dessert, the later we didn't like but in the spicy, salty or plain form any time.

Hotel for one night was Manoir de Lan-Kerellec in Trèbreuden, <http://www.lankerellec.com>. Unfortunately that was the one rainy day, heavy duty, what choice did we have ? Drink and food, started with a glass of champagne and studied the menu. I decided for a lobster from Brittany, one from just outside the Hotel. It was a great choice. Very delicious.

Only 60km further is our next Hotel, Hotel Brittany in Roscoff. Still a drizzle but gosh is this town different, lots of tourists, very picturesque center and plenty of bars and restaurants. We discovered the coast and its rocks.

Urs is rolling his eyes as I found the next village to stay in a book for excellent Restaurants, let's see if that is true. Hotel de la Plage in Sainte-Anne-la-Palud. [www.plage.com](http://www.plage.com). It was hard to find, our GPS did not recognise the address, and finally here we are, location just on a deserted beach with a smelling creek. Lovely garden and now the shock, the room very tiny, very old and the bath with a window but a bathtub without a shower head. Disappointment pure. The Restaurant and the service did live up to the expectation and when I talked to the owner he admitted that the renovation is overdue and they plan for, at least a start.

Continental Europe's largest Megalith field is waiting for us ! Hotel Churchill in Carnac just 5 min away, location at the beach street and a B&B but with swimming pool and modern, including Wifi. [www.lechurchill.com](http://www.lechurchill.com)

Dolmen - cairn, megalithic chambered tombs and huge fields of Megalithic stones, everywhere, as are the tourists. Carnac is also a great location to visit the Quiberon peninsula and the Belle Ile by ferry. The small street is following the cote sauvage and yes, it is a wild coast, very impressive and popular with the surfers. The villages Quiberon is at the end, we had lunch and watched the tourist waiting for the ferry. Our plan was also to visit the Belle Ile but we didn't, instead we enjoyed the sunshine and a cup of coffee, doing nothing. A bit spooky the house standing alone at the end of the beach.... May be Chester is living here ?

Driving on to La Baule, a seaside resort with 12km of sandy beach and a long tradition. A glamorous place called the Atlantic riviera. At low tide it becomes a paradise for shell collectors, as so many places in Brittany. La Baule is close to the peninsula Guerande, well known for its seasalt and the fleur de sel production. Also just a few km away, the National Park La Grande Briere, the largest peatland area in France. We rented a boat with 'driver' to get around in the channels and lakes. How should one envisage this ? A small wooden boat and a guy using a long strong woodenstick ( punt ) to move the boat, very interesting and special.

We stayed 1 night at Castel Marie-Louise, [www.castel-marie-louise.com](http://www.castel-marie-louise.com), La Baule, 50m off the



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beach, lovely room with terrace facing the sea but no time to use it. Compared with the previous Hotels it was the most expensive one but La Baule is more expensive and yes, it was worth it, great service and unique place for one night. On our way from the coastline of Brittany back to Switzerland we planned a few stops in the countryside. Leaving La Baule and driving close to Poitiers we stopped at the Hotel/Restaurant Chateau de Curzay [www.chateau-curzay.com](http://www.chateau-curzay.com) . For a one night romantic package. My husband rolled his eyes but at the end he was more than content.

A big park with old trees, meadows, horses and a lovely terrasse overlooking it. Hortensias were along the Chateau and delivered the color to the setting. High ceiling rooms with stuck and antique furniture, being send back to the past.

Our room, a suite, with a salon in blue and the bedroom with 2 big windows facing the park, not to forget the Champagne, strawberries and nibbles at arrival delivered to our room. A very attentative and personalized service. The Restaurant, we had a set menu which came with our package and as start we had our personalized menu list with our names, what a charming idea. The sommelier advised on the wine and we commenced to enjoy a superb dinner which was focussed on the fresh seasonal ingrediences as oysters, artischoke, asparages etc a great experience and very good value, our romantic package. and yes, it did inspire my husband.

Going south in the direction to Limoges and continue into the real countryside, off the beaten track but we shouldn't get lucky this time. The Hotel is in a great location in regards of view, on top of a little hill overlooking fields and vineyards. The disappointment was the service, we had a romantic package as well, but we missed the romance. The Hotel was not sold out but they forgot to deliver the apero drink in the garden, we did choose our wine for the set menu in advance, when we got to the Restaurant we got a tiny table in the sun and it was hot !! they had forgotten that we are guest of the hotel, they forgot the pre-ordered wine , I had a dirty glas, etc... all in itself small but it added up. Would not go back. [www.castelnovel.com](http://www.castelnovel.com)

Crossing France towards the Rhone valley and Lyon for the last stop. Roanne, the town is not very interesting but the Hotel and Restaurant are! Hopefully this make up for the last one before we drive home via Geneva

I always wanted to have dinner at the Restaurant Troisgros and it was worth it. Across from the train station and not much to see in the town, it is still worth the stop just for the Hotel, [www.troisgros.fr](http://www.troisgros.fr) and Restaurant.

We did not have a set menu and had chosen a starter, main course and dessert, thinking the protion will be rather smaller. The food was excellent, for me: warm oysters, duck and hazelnut souffle, it had its price and for us more to the up-side but as a real kick it was -worth it ! One whole duck for 2 persons gives you a feel for the portion size. I struggled a bit. Wine selection was impressive, with good vintages and fair prices. Go and taste. This was a food journey, I can feel it and possible see it. But it was fun !

Regina Fink Blumer

RFB

Travel Treasures