

Normandy is a hidden French treasure, but with enough sights and activities to keep even the pickiest tourist happy for weeks, how do you choose what to see? Whether you're a historian or a foodie, this list of 10 things to do in Normandy is sure to have something that appeals to every traveler.

1) See Mont St Michel

An island, when the tides come in, Mont Saint Michel was originally built in 709 AD after Saint Michael the Archangel appeared to a Bishop and commanded a church to be built. It was added to continuously from the 11th to the 15th centuries and has everything you could wish for in an abbey or a castle. The entire "island" is completely covered by small shops, cobbled streets, and breathtaking views; all winding up to the impressive Gothic monastery at its heart. The soaring spires and beautiful stonework make you feel as if you've stepped back to medieval times.

2) Walk Through Monet's Garden

Claude Monet is one of the world's most influential painters. Known for championing impressionism, he is perhaps most well known for his massive and mesmerizing paintings of waterlilies. Luckily for us, the very water lilies he painted can be seen in person at Monet's garden at Giverny. Attached to his home, which is now a museum, the gardens themselves are calm and beautiful, and the destination is sure to inspire.

3) Visit the Cathedral of Rouen

The Rouen Cathedral is one of the best things to do in Normandy for anyone who loves Gothic architecture. Built in the late 12th through early 16th centuries, the cathedral boasts the tallest church tower in France and some truly stunning stained glass. The intricate stonework and soaring ceilings are sure to inspire a sense of awe and send you home with some great pictures.

4) See the Bayeux Tapestry

Have you ever watched a tv show or movie set in the Middle Ages and seen a huge tapestry hanging in the background? That tapestry was likely inspired by the breathtaking Bayeux tapestry. This remarkable testament to medieval weaving technique is 230 feet (70 M) long and over 940 years old. There are 50 scenes hand-embroidered on it, and it is widely renowned as both an impressive piece of art and an important piece of history.

5) Remember Those Lost at the American Cemetery of D-Day Beach

The American storming of the beaches on D-Day toward the end of WWII played a major role in the outcome of the war. Over 9,000 servicemen and women, many of whom died in the D-Day landings, are buried in the cemetery. An additional 1,557 names of missing service members are carved into a memorial. The cemetery is both beautiful and harrowing, with row after row of white crosses showing the cost of war. Taking time to visit the cemetery is a profound way to honor those who died defending the cause of freedom.

6) Go to a Calvados Tasting

While most of France is known for its wine, they also have a special fondness for Calvados. An apple brandy with a hint of pear, Calvados distillation dates back to the 1500's and is a cultural staple of Normandy. Arranging a tour with a family distillery will ensure you taste not only the fruity flavor of Calvados but also its rich history.

7) Walk Along the Beach in Deauville

If you're looking for a day in the sun or a romantic evening Deauville beach is sure to impress. With its colorful umbrellas and sparkling casino, the beach hosts everything from horse races to film festivals. Take a stroll along the iconic boardwalk or just sit and watch the waves. Either way, Deauville will make you feel like a million bucks.

8) Visit the Beaux Arts Museum of Rouen

Housing an impressive Renaissance collection and a beautiful sculpture garden, the Beaux Arts Museum holds some truly stunning pieces. Boasting works from every school of art from the 15th to the 21st

centuries, the collection is stunning and is frequently loaned to other museums. The vast range of styles means that whether your taste is medieval or modern, something will speak to you. Whether you're looking to spend an afternoon or a full day, the Beaux Arts Museum will satisfy your inner artist.

9) Taste Some Camembert

Anyone who loves cheese has surely heard of Camembert and then immediately began craving its creamy, smooth texture and unique taste. Visit the birthplace of this amazing cheese and attend a cheese tasting. Is Camembert not your favorite? While attending the cheese tasting, you'll get to try not only Camembert but also a large variety of other famous French cheeses, the perfect cultural culinary treat.

10) Wander Around the Honfleur Port and Historic Downtown

Honfleur is a historic city with a breathtaking port. The facades of the homes stacked along the harbor have inspired many famous painters, including Monet. In fact, the play of light and color on the water is so beautiful that the Honfleur School helped launch the Impressionist movement. The city itself has several museums and a beautiful historic feel. Completing your trip to Honfleur with a dinner in a local cafe is the perfect conclusion to a relaxing day.