



Gardens, Villages & Châteaux of Normandy and Brittany

3 SEP – 23 SEP 2016

Code: 21644

Tour Leaders **John Patrick**

Physical Ratings 

Led by John Patrick this tour celebrates the lovely gardens, agricultural landscapes, delicious local produce, great monuments & exquisite, unspoilt small villages of Normandy & Brittany.

Overview

Tour Highlights

- Led by [John Patrick](#) this tour explores the gardens, agricultural landscapes, villages, towns and great monuments of five of its most beautiful and historic regions: the Île de France; Upper Normandy (Haute-Normandie); Lower Normandy (Basse-Normandie); Pays de Loire and Brittany.
- An introduction to the wide range of gardens in French history, featuring visits to Medieval monastic gardens, grand Renaissance estates, and intimate modern creations.
- Private gardens (several listed as 'Jardin Remarquable'), many visits will be hosted by their owners.
- Work inspired by the great André Le Nôtre at the Château Champ de Bataille and Château de Sassy, and the influences of Edwin Luytens and Gertrude Jekyll at Le Bois des Moutiers.
- Château de Villaines to learn about the history of the kitchen garden. In 2005 this extraordinary *potager en carrés*, a highly formalised and decorative fruit and vegetable garden, was awarded the prize for best *potager* garden in France.
- Le Jardin du Vastérial, residence of the late Princess Sturdza, containing one of the finest plant collections in France.
- The beautiful unspoilt northern coast of Brittany with its deep-cut inlets and inland wooded valleys enjoys an exceptional climate due to the Gulf Stream. Here, we explore Les Jardins de Kerdalo with a rich collection of plants and shrubs and the private manor house garden, Le Jardin du Pellinec. Further inland, Le Grand Launay boasts a beautiful modern garden built around an old castle.
- A journey 'in the footsteps of the Impressionists', to Monet's garden at Giverny, the coast he painted, and the port town of Honfleur; the Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux (Le Havre) containing one of the most extensive collection of Impressionist paintings in France.
- Visits to major monuments such as the Abbeys of Mont St-Michel and St-Georges de Boscherville; Romanesque and Gothic Cathedrals such as Notre Dame (Rouen), St-Étienne (Caen) and St-Julien (Le Mans)
- The megalithic site on the south coast of Brittany including Carnac where we examine the largest Neolithic alignment in the world (3500-3000 BC), and the Cairn of Gavrinis (3500 BC) with magnificent Neolithic carvings.
- The Bayeux Tapestry Museum containing the eleventh-century embroidered cloth depicting the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England.
- Explore a rich variety of village architecture in a number of 'Les Plus Beaux Villages de France' including the pretty half-timbered houses of Lyons-La-Fôret and Dinan, the medieval stone houses of St-Céneri-le-Gérei and the walled towns of Saint-Malo and Vannes.
- Sampling of French regional produce, with visits to specialist local markets; tastings of Normandy's Livarot, Pont l'Évêque cheeses, apple juice and calvados; and fine dining in renowned urban and rustic restaurants including *Hôtel du Grand Cerf & Spa*, Lyons-La-Forêt, and historic *Restaurant La Couronne*, Rouen.

21 days in Normandy & Brittany

Overnight Rouen (7 nights) • Bayeux (3 nights) • Bagnoles-de-l'Orne (2 nights) • Le Mans (2 nights) • Auray (1 night) • Perros Guirec (3 nights) • Dinan (2 nights)

Leaders



John Patrick

Garden designer, prolific author, radio and TV presenter for ABC's 'Gardening Australia'. John founded the Australian Open Garden Scheme. He initiated ASA's garden tours and has led over 20 tours to Europe, Asia & the USA since 2003.

John Patrick will be familiar to many for his work on radio and television presenting programs relating to gardens, their plants and their history. He is currently a presenter on ABC's television series *Gardening Australia*. John has also written extensively on gardens throughout the world, including articles in *Vogue Living* and *The Australian Garden Journal*. He has written thirteen books as widely diverse as *Trees for Town and City Gardens* and *A Brief Biography of Robert Sweet*. John has lectured widely in Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand and has worked as a judge and consultant to garden shows and events. In 1985 he organised the opening of gardens for Victoria's Sesquicentenary which led to his involvement in the founding of what is now Australia's Open Garden Scheme. His knowledge of European History allows him to place Garden History in a special context, one that reflects the social milieu in which gardens were created. His encyclopaedic knowledge of plants will give garden visits a special appeal and permit a greater appreciation of the particular environment and conditions of the garden. John has travelled led ASA tours to New Zealand, the USA, South Africa, China, Japan, Bhutan, Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and Britain. He has independently visited gardens in Morocco. He is an enthusiastic traveller with a special interest in the food and culture of countries he visits.



Itinerary

The following itinerary describes a range of museums and gardens which we plan to visit. Many are accessible to the public, but others require special permission which may only be confirmed closer to the tour's departure in 2016. The daily activities described in this itinerary may change or be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate alterations in opening hours, flight schedules and confirmation of private visits. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents prior to departure. The tour includes breakfast daily, lunches & evening meals indicated in the detailed itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=evening meals.

Rouen - 5 nights

Day 1: Saturday 3 September, Paris CDG – Lyons-La-Forêt – Rouen

- Lyons-la-Forêt village & welcome lunch at Hôtel du Grand Cerf & Spa
- Introduction
- Short Evening Orientation walking tour of Rouen

This morning we set out from Paris CDG Airport to the magnificent regional city of Rouen on our journey through the gardens, great houses, villages and historic monuments of Northern France.

En route we visit Lyons-la-Forêt, one of France's most picturesque villages. Most of its houses, many of which have façades featuring intricate wooden frames, are from the seventeenth century, but Lyons was once a Roman settlement and afterwards site of a castle built by Henry I of England, son of William the Conqueror. Kings were attracted to the region by its magnificent hunting grounds in the nearby beech forest. Lyons also has an excellent covered market from the eighteenth century which was used in both Jean Renoir's and Claude Chabrol's films of *Madame Bovary*. We shall also pass the house of one of France's greatest musicians, Ravel. Ravel, Debussy and Erik Satie all derived inspiration from Normandy's beautiful landscapes.

After lunching in Lyons-la-Forêt we continue our journey to Rouen, arriving at approximately 2.30pm. After checking into hotel, and some time at leisure, we shall have a brief introductory meeting followed by an orientation walk of Rouen within the vicinity of our hotel. (Overnight Rouen) L

Day 2: Sunday 4 September, Rouen – St-Georges de Boscherville – St-Pierre de Manneville – Montmain – Rouen

- Romanesque Abbey of St-Georges de Boscherville
- Manoir et Parc de Villers, St-Pierre de Manneville
- Le Jardin d'Angélique, Montmain (Jardin Remarquable)

Our excursion from Rouen takes us first to the Abbey St-Georges de Boscherville. A Celtic shrine existed here for several centuries until in the seventh century a chapel dedicated to St George was built over it. In the eleventh century the great chamberlain Raoul de Tancarville founded here a college for cannons which was transformed into a magnificent Bénédictine abbey. We shall visit the abbey with its fine Romanesque carvings and explore its garden, dedicated to plants believed by the monks to cure souls.

The remainder of the day is devoted to visiting some magnificent country manor houses in Normandy. Our first visit is to the nearby Manoir de Villers, a beautiful half-timbered manor house begun in the time of Charles VII (1403 – 1461) and added to for three centuries. A special delight will be a guided tour of the manor's interior in which the owners M. and Mme Robert Mery de Bellegarde will show you the magnificent family furniture collection. It is surrounded by themed gardens where we shall enjoy a light lunch prepared by our hosts.

Next, we travel to Montmain to visit the Jardins d'Angélique which comprise two wonderful gardens. Originally created by Gloria and Yves Le Bellegard in memory of their daughter Angelica, the two separate gardens are very distinct in character. South of the manor house is a formal garden with walkways and clipped hedges, Italianate in style with box-edged beds of perennials and ornamental grasses, punctuated by yew topiary and a central fountain. It is designed to compliment not only the rear elevations of the house, but to provide marvellous panoramas of the surrounding countryside. To the north is a flowing "English-style" garden, dreamy, romantic, with grassy paths winding between hundreds of shrubs, plants and trees. In the late afternoon we return to Rouen where the evening is at leisure. (Overnight Rouen) BL

Day 3: Monday 5 June, Rouen – Buchy – Bosc-Roger-sur-Buchy – Beaumont-le-Hareng – Rouen

- Buchy village market
- Le Jardin de Valérianes, Bosc-Roger-sur-Buchy
- Le Jardin de Bellevue, Beaumont-le-Hareng
- Evening meal at Restaurant La Couronne

A second day trip from Rouen takes us first to the small village of Buchy where we shall shop for our lunch in the Monday market. Like so many local markets in Normandy, Buchy's Monday market features exclusively local producers. Many of these farmers specialise in organic products. The medieval covered market hall has fixed wooden tables that were originally butchers' blocks.

Three kilometres outside Buchy, Le Jardin de Valérianes, tucked away in a corner of the countryside, was created by a couple of passionate gardeners, Michel and Maryline Tissait, who named the garden after their two daughters. This English style garden of over 4000 square metres offers much visual pleasure with its combination of perennials, roses, trees and bushes.

We then drive on to Beaumont-le-Hareng where we shall visit Le Jardin de Bellevue. Le Jardin de Bellevue was created by the purist Martine Lemonnier in the 1980s and is famous for its collection of *Hellebores* (winter and Lenten roses). The gardens have been laid out in a very natural style with a walk through various styles of garden including a golden garden, a summer garden, a hydrangea garden and an alley of yews. A lot of thought has been given to making the gardens interesting throughout the year and there is something to see no matter when you choose to visit. Some of the highlights are the hellebores in winter, the magnolias and rhododendrons in spring, the hydrangeas in summer and the wonderful berries and leaf colour in the autumn.

Tonight we dine together at Restaurant La Couronne. Housed in a superbly preserved half-timbered home, it is considered the "oldest inn in France," dating from 1345. (Overnight Rouen) BD

Day 4: Tuesday 6 September, Rouen – Giverny – Auzouville-sur-Ry – Rouen

- Monet's House and Gardens, Giverny
- Le Jardin Plume, Auzouville-sur-Ry

This morning we depart Rouen for Giverny, in the heart of Normandy where the great Impressionist, Claude Monet, lived for forty-three years. We shall visit the artist's beautiful home and garden, a dominant theme of his later paintings, when as an old man he was unable to travel. The water-lily pond and wisteria-covered Japanese bridge were of his own design and his favourite motifs. Monet's house, *Le Pressoir*, and its gardens, have been faithfully restored and opened to the public. Your visit to his house will include a stroll through the garden with its thousands of flowers, including the Nymphaeas. You cross the Japanese bridge hung with wisteria to a dreamy setting of weeping willows and rhododendrons. Monet's studio barge floated on the pond. In September the lawns are typically full of pink colchicums. The dahlias are eye-catching, and there are usually roses and nasturtiums in bloom at the house garden. No wisteria flowers, but the vine covers the bridge, and the pond is surrounded by greenery and impatiens.

After lunch at leisure in Giverny, we drive to Auzouville-sur-Ry to visit Le Jardin Plume where owners Sylvie and Patrick Quibel have converted their orchard into a parterre. There is also a spring garden, summer garden and autumn garden. The summer garden is a kind of modern knot garden with a very formal layout of clipped box in a square edged pattern. Each 'box' is then filled with a very natural planting of grasses and perennials but the colours are superb. Lots of golden yellow, deep red, burning oranges... The overall mix of formal and informal, the somber green of the box and the jewel colours of the flowers is really superb. In September the box hedges are typically filled with vibrantly coloured flowers, interspersed with grasses. Favourite plants here are dahlias, cosmos, heleniums, kniphofias and of course grasses – giving the plumes the garden is named for. (Overnight Rouen) B

Day 5: Wednesday 7 September, Rouen – Ste Marguerite-sur-Mer – Varengeville-sur-Mer – Rouen

- Le Jardin du Vastérial, Ste Marguerite-sur-Mer
- Le Bois des Moutiers, Varengeville-sur-Mer
- Varengeville-sur-Mer Church & Sailor's cemetery

This morning, we drive to Marguerite-sur-Mer to visit the gardens of Vastérial, residence of the late Princess Sturdza. Vastérial is acclaimed to contain one of the finest plant collections in all of France. The gardens are strictly informal, consisting of some twenty acres surrounded by a natural woodland. Cleverly designed paths wander throughout the garden, through the rich under plantings of the woodlands, and issue into glades with countless surprises. The garden is world famous for its collections of rhododendrons, hydrangeas, maples, birches, viburnums and camellias.

Following lunch at a restaurant located in the grounds of the Château de Varengeville, we visit the house, park and gardens of Le Bois des Moutiers. The residence and garden have been in the possession of the Mallet family since 1898. At that time, a young English architect, Edwin Luytens, who was to become famous for his houses and for the layout and architecture of imperial New Dehli, was asked to modify both the residence and the garden. Luytens designed Munstead Wood for Gertrude Jekyll, and the influence of both of these great English designers is evident in the gardens of Le Bois des Moutiers. The influence of Gertrude Jekyll is seen everywhere, including the design and plantings of the front garden which slopes toward the sea.

From the Bois des Moutiers, we drive a short distance to the Varengeville-sur-Mer Church and sailor's cemetery. Varengeville is an astonishing commune perched atop white limestone cliffs which has attracted many artists such as Claude Monet and is famous for its church, with its stained-glass windows by Georges Braque. From the sailor's cemetery, where Georges Braque, Albert Roussel and Porto-Riche are buried, there is a superb view of Dieppe and the cliffs towards Le Tréport. (Overnight Rouen) BL

Day 6: Thursday 8 September, Rouen – Le Neubourg – Rouen

- Château Champ de Bataille, Le Neubourg
- Guided walking tour of Rouen

This morning we depart Rouen and travel south to Le Neubourg to visit Château Champ de Bataille, belonging to interior decorator Jacques Garcia. Garcia has completely renovated the 18th century castle and gardens over the past 20 years. The château boasts a magnificent garden based in part on the classic French style and heavily influenced by drawings by the French designer Le Nôtre – hence it's inclusion in Monty Don's first programme of his new BBC2 series, "French Gardens", which aired on 1st February 2013. Monty was exploring "Gardens of Power and Passion" in and around Paris, with emphasis on those designed by André Le Nôtre, the son of Louis XVIII's gardener at les Tuileries. The original gardens at Champ de Bataille fell into disrepair and had virtually disappeared when the present owner, Jacques Garcia, took it upon himself to recreate a garden in the grounds of the château. An outline plan of the former gardens had survived, which revealed the basic outline and terraces of the missing garden. This was used only as a general guideline, rather than copied slavishly. The resulting garden (which was begun in 1993 and took 12 years to complete) is a masterful blend of classical French and Italian design and inspiration, with modern influences. Parterres, follies, classical temples, fountains, lakes – 43 hectares of park and garden in all, crowned by a stunning view that stretches over a mile down the garden from the main terrace of the château du Champ de Bataille.

In the late morning we return to Rouen. Following some time at leisure for lunch we meet our guide for a walking tour of this beautiful and very historic city. The city grew up as an important centre of Roman Gaul, called Rotomagus, a derivation of the Celtic name Ratuma. It became an important ecclesiastical centre from the third century and part of the Duchy of Normandy and then Norman kingdom (1066), until lost to the French by King John in 1204. Rouen surrendered to Henry V of England in 1419 after a protracted siege, but was reclaimed by France in 1449. By the end of the fifteenth century it had become a centre of the French Renaissance.

Rouen has some of the finest Gothic architecture in France. The façade of its cathedral fascinated Monet, who painted it at different times of the day. Other churches include the fifteenth-century church of St Ouen and the church of St Maclou (1437), both notable examples of French flamboyant architecture. The Gros-Horloge is a Renaissance pavilion containing a fifteenth-century clock, and the Tour de Jeanne d'Arc is where the Saint was imprisoned before her execution. The Hôtel de Bourgheroulde (1501-37) is the best example of the city's medieval domestic architecture. The remainder of the afternoon is free for you to

further explore Rouen at leisure. (Overnight Rouen) B

Day 7: Friday 9 September, Rouen – Tourville-sur-Arques – Varengeville – Rouen

- Château de Miromesnil, Tourville-sur-Arques
- L'Étang du Launay, Varengeville

This morning we drive north to the Château de Miromesnil at Tourville-sur-Arques, a splendid seventeenth-century (Louis XIII) château, where Guy de Maupassant was born. It is located within a large plantation dominated by a two hundred-year-old cedar of Lebanon, and contains a very fine kitchen garden. Its vegetable plots are surrounded by a bewildering variety of flowers. The park is enclosed by old brick walls and features fruit trees, rose trees, magnolias, arborescent peonies and a magnificent variety of clematis.

Following a light lunch at the Château de Miromesnil we visit L'Étang du Launay, the recently created gardens of Jean-Louis Dantec, with its high-pruned specimen trees leading to a lake and ponds, with extensive woodland planting beyond. Only 20 years in the making, this very private garden created by owner Jean Louis Dantec has already gained a reputation as one of the finest woodland gardens in Europe. (Overnight Rouen) BL

Bayeaux - 3 nights

Day 8: Saturday 10 September, Rouen – Le Havre – Honfleur – Bayeux

- Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux, Le Havre
- Time at leisure: Old Port of Honfleur

If you plot the landscapes painted by the Impressionists on a map of France, their locations correspond to the railway lines that led out from Paris along such corridors as the Valley of the Seine, for the Impressionists were creatures of the bourgeoisie's discovery of rural and coastal France, made available to it for the first time by steam trains. The landscapes of middle class recreation were also reached by the new railways. One aspect of the bourgeois discovery of France was the development of seaside resorts and one of the greatest painters of the beach was Eugène Boudin.

This morning we depart Rouen for Le Havre, situated on the right bank of the estuary of the river Seine on the English Channel. Here we visit the André Malraux Modern Art Museum which contains the second most extensive collection of Impressionist paintings in France. There are paintings by Claude Monet and other artists who lived and worked in Normandy including Camille Corot, Eugène Boudin (with the largest collection of his works in the world), Eugène Delacroix, Gustave Courbet, Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Paul Gauguin, Alfred Sisley, Camille Pissarro, Paul Sérusier and Édouard Vuillard. Modern art is also well represented with works by artists such as Henri Matisse, Albert Marquet, Raoul Dufy, Kees van Dongen, Fernand Léger, Alexej von Jawlensky and Nicolas de Staël.

At approximately 1.00pm we continue to Honfleur where many Parisians spent their holidays. There will be time at leisure for lunch and to explore the old, picturesque port, characterized by its houses with slate-covered frontages, painted by many artists including Gustave Courbet, Eugène Boudin and Claude Monet. The Sainte Catherine church, which has a bell tower separate from the principal building, is the largest church made out of timber in France. Honfleur also has less cerebral attractions, for there are markets here on Saturday and the town is also famous for its chocolates.

In the late afternoon we continue our drive to Bayeux, our next base in Normandy, which is famous above

all for its tapestry. (Overnight Bayeux) B

Day 9: Sunday 11 September, Bayeux – Castillon – Bayeux

- Cathedral Notre-Dame & historic centre of Bayeux
- Bayeux Tapestry Museum
- Time at leisure in Bayeux
- Jardins de Plantbessin, Castillon

Our program begins today with a walking tour of Bayeux's historic centre and fine Cathedral of Notre-Dame. This gem of Normand architecture was consecrated on July 14th 1077 by Bishop Odo of Conteville, in the presence of his illustrious brother, William the Conqueror, duke of Normandy and king of England.

Mid-morning, we visit the special museum dedicated to the Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde (Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror), which chronicles the Norman invasion of England. This Anglo-Saxon work, presented by the Queen to Bishop Odo in c.1080, was inspired by manuscript scrolls and the continuous narratives of the antique columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius in Rome. It chronicles events from the promise of Harold Godwin to bequeath his kingdom to William to the death of the Saxon king on the field at Hastings; it is fascinating for its detailed depictions of arms and the eleventh-century methods and machinery of warfare.

Following some time at leisure, our day ends with a drive to Castillon to visit the Jardins de Plantbessin, created by Colette Sainte Beuve as a water garden to complement her plant nursery. Here you will find a marvellous treasure trove of plants that includes beautiful samples of Japanese plants as well as herbs and heather, situated on a site which measures less than a quarter of an acre. (Overnight Bayeux) BL

Day 10: Monday 12 September, Bayeux – Caen – St-Gabriel-Brécý – Bayeux

- Abbaye-aux-Hommes & its abbatial church St Étienne, Caen
- Le Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen
- Château de Brécý, St-Gabriel-Brécý

This morning we drive to Caen to visit the excellent small art museum (with works by Van der Weyden, Perugino, Poussin and Veronese) which is built within the ruined walls of William the Conqueror's castle, and the Abbaye-aux-Hommes, and its church St Étienne. This masterpiece of Romanesque church architecture, which survived the 1944 Allied bombardment, was begun by William the Conqueror as his mausoleum. One reason for the finesse of this building, which influenced many later Romanesque churches, was the abundance of good building stone in the region.

After some time at leisure in Caen for lunch, we return to Bayeux via the gardens of Château de Brécý, residence of M. and Mme Didier Wirth. This will be a perfect introduction to the formal French garden; intimate in scale and exquisite in detail. Set in a wooded hamlet, the château would resemble a Norman farmhouse were it not for the pedimented entrance. The house dates from the seventeenth century when it belonged to the LeBas family, friends and associates of the great French architect after whom the distinctive pitched roof is named, François Mansart. The house bears many hallmarks of Mansart's architecture. The garden, which is immediately behind the house, consists of five terraces, fine stone work, elegant parterres, pools, topiary and wrought-iron gates that provide views into Normandy's countryside. (Overnight Bayeux) B

Bagnoles-de-L'Orne - 2 nights

Day 11: Tuesday 13 September, Bayeux – Cambremer – Mézidon-Canon – Bagnoles-de-L'Orne

- Les Jardins de Pays d'Auge
- Parc & Jardins du Château de Canon, Mézidon-Canon

Today we travel east of Caen to discover the heart of the Pays d'Auge, with its stunning half-timbered farms, manors and châteaux and lovely agricultural landscape dominated by such elements as orchards and hedgerows, and famous cheese and cider productions. The Pays d'Auge is best known as the heart of production for some of Normandy's best food products including the rich and aromatic cheeses of Camembert, Pont l'Évêque, and Livarot. It is also famous for its alcoholic cider and for its calvados, an apple brandy created from cider in the same manner that cognac is made from wine; through double distillation in copper stills. The brandy, which is 70 percent alcohol, is aged from 3 to 25 years in oak casks and then bottled.

We follow the designated 'Route du Cidre', to Les Jardins de Pays d'Auge located outside the village of Cambremer. This series of themed gardens is situated around a seventeenth-century farmhouse and other half-timbered buildings, typical of Normandy architecture. Listed as one of the 'Jardin Remarquable' in the Calvados region, this verdant 3-hectare estate lies adjacent to the Calvados Huet distillery.

Our final visit for the day is to the gardens of the Château de Canon, residence of M. Alain de Mezerac. Here, an eighteenth-century house is surrounded by contemporary gardens and a park, created by Jean-Baptiste-Jacques Elie de Beaumont and his wife Anne-Louise. The family has owned this property since the Middle Ages. Their alterations of the house to the Neoclassical style, which brought on a lawsuit, resulted in a splendid two-storied structure, while pavilions and statuary in the garden landscape are English in style.

We stay for the next two nights in a lovely small heritage hotel, Le Manoir du Lys, at Bagnoles-de-L'Orne owned by a family noted for their fine cuisine, which we shall sample at our evening meals. The hotel is set in a pretty garden on the edge of the Andaine Forest. (Overnight Bagnoles-de-L'Orne) BLD

Day 12: Wednesday 14 September, Bagnoles-de-L'Orne – St-Christophe-Le-Jajolet – St-Céneri-le-Gérei – Bagnoles-de-L'Orne

- Jardins et Terrasses du Château de Sassy, St-Christophe-Le-Jajolet
- St-Céneri-le-Gérei village & lunch at the Auberge des Peintres
- Free time in Bagnoles-de-L'Orne

A day trip today takes us to yet more lovely Norman villages and gardens. We begin with the gardens and terraces of the Château de Sassy at St-Christophe-Le-Jajolet. This is a spectacular formal garden, a benchmark of the French formal style, featuring clipped yews. It was designed in the first decades of the 20th century by the famous Achille Duchêne for Etienne d'Audriffet. The designer took his inspiration from the great Le Nôtre, who was responsible for the gardens of Versailles and Vaux-le-Vicomte. The garden, which rolls out like a great carpet below an 18th-century château, is located in the Pays d'Argentan between hedged farmlands and the vast plains of the north. Its strict formality counterpoints beautifully a pastoral landscape of hedges and clumps of fruit trees where thoroughbred horses graze. A deep perspective of terraces with intricate broderies ('boxwood embroideries') planted in the shapes of Arabesques passes tiers of moats and features a round pool. A lovely small pavilion flanked by two monumental fastigiate yews and rows of shaped lindens forms the perspective's centrepiece.

We next drive through the majestic Forêt d'Écouves to the village of St-Céneri-le-Gérei. In the sixth century an Italian anchorite, Céneri, established a hermitage here and this grew into the village of St-Céneri which is

now considered one of the most beautiful villages of France. In the nineteenth century, its stone houses, Romanesque church with beautiful frescoes of the twelfth and fourteenth centuries and its small stone bridge attracted many artists, including Camille Corot, Gustave Courbet and Eugene Boudin.

We shall have lunch at the charming Auberge des Peintres and take a guided tour of the village before making our way to the spa town of Bagnoles-de-L'Orne for some time at leisure. (Overnight Bagnoles-de-L'Orne) BLD

Le Mans - 2 nights

Day 13: Thursday 15 September, Bagnoles-de-L'Orne – Ballon – Le Mans

- Jardins du Donjon de Ballon
- Le Mans: Guided tour of Old Plantagenet City incl. Cathedral St-Julien

Today we drive out of Normandy toward the Loire Valley. Our first visit is to the gardens of the Donjon de Ballon, an important frontier fortress built by Guillaume Ier de Bellême in 1005, the first to be encountered by the Normans in their attempts to expand their territory. It was seized by William the Conqueror in 1064, two years before he invaded England; and in the eleventh century changed hands twenty-five times! In the twelfth century the family of Chources, allies of the Kings of England, established control of the fortress which was to endure three centuries. During the Hundred Years War the castle was controlled by armed bands and contested by the English and French until the companions of Joan of Arc, Olivier de Prez, châtelain of Ballon, and his nephew Ambroise de Loré finally subdued it and its territory. The development of artillery rendered this type of fortress, composed of a high keep and prominent towers, outmoded.

The gardens of Ballon have been created since 1960 by the a'Weng-Guérout family. They are made up of a number of parts. The Alley of the Linden Trees, with large rectangular beds, leads to the Court of the Lions named for the lions which guard the donjon's draws bridge. The Jardin Clos sits within the ramparts and is in the transitional Medieval/Renaissance style. It is made up of three sections: the geometrical Jardin du Puits which surrounds the forty-five metre well which supplied the castle with water; Le Jardin du Milieu, inspired by Renaissance gardens, with ancient standard roses, aromatic plants such as hyssop, kitchen and medicinal herbs, and plants for dyes such as rose madder; La Motte Féodale (the feudal moat) which leads to the location of the very first wooden fortress, precursor to the stone donjon. There are beech groves here and the moats themselves are planted with fruit trees from around the world. This garden section, high on the castle crag, commands stunning panoramas of the forests of Normandy and Maine. Below this is the rose garden and surrounding the whole complex is a beautiful wood.

Following a light lunch in the Donjon du Ballon, we next drive a short distance to the city of Le Mans which lies on the banks of the River Sarthe. We are now in the region of Maine of which Le Mans is the old capital. Surrounded by the modern city, the historic centre is dominated by the magnificent cathedral of St-Julien. This building has a Romanesque nave and west end and a marvelously light Gothic east end with some of the most magnificent flying buttresses in France. The cathedral also has excellent stained glass from the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is surrounded by a lovely precinct of timbered houses whose façades boast intricate patterns and some excellent carving. At points along the Sarthe are to be seen remnants of the city's Gallo-Roman walls, Le Mans having been an important Celtic town before Julius Caesar invaded, and Augustus pacified Gaul. A local speciality is the famous "Rillettes" du Mans", made with pork meat cooked in its fat and best served simply with a farmhouse loaf. (Overnight Le Mans) BL

Day 14: Friday 16 September, Le Mans – Louplande – Saint-Biez-en-Berlin – Le Mans

- Gardens of the Château de Villaines, Louplande
- Le Jardin d'Atmosphere du Petit Boreaux, Saint-Biez-en-Berlin

This morning we drive to the Château de Villaines, built on the ruins of a twelfth-century feudal castle, of which all that remains is part of the defensive moat on the southern side. The present buildings date from the mid seventeenth century and the Château de Villaines is typical of châteaux from that period, oriented with the main facades facing precisely north and south, and being long and slim to allow light to penetrate from windows on both sides, making it very light and airy. The main buildings comprise the Château itself, the orangery in the northwest corner of the garden, and a large dovecote to the southwest.

Marc and Marie-José Forissier have been the owners since 1997 and are responsible for developing the garden as it appears today. Before they began work there was an English landscape garden in front of the house; this has been replaced by a formal French garden with clipped box topiary and lawns. To the right of the house is a recently planted orchard, to the south the remains a large moat and many newly planted trees. However, its main feature is an extraordinary potager en carrés, a highly formalised and decorative fruit and vegetable garden divided into dozens of raised square beds and surrounded by a high wall. This garden covering 2.5 acres was restored by the present owners and includes a fine array of peonies, espaliered pear trees and apple trees trained in cordons. An attractive collection of Old Climbing Roses trail across arches giving the garden height. In 2005 it was awarded the prize for best potager garden in France by the French Horticultural Society (Société Nationale d'Horticulture de France).

Following a light lunch at the Château de Villaines hosted by the owners, we continue to the town of Saint-Biez-en-Berlin to visit the Jardin d'Atmosphere du Petit Bordeaux. This delightful garden was voted the "Preferred garden of the French" in the Pays-de-Loire region in 2014 by viewers of the France2 television channel. It was also awarded the 'Jardin Remarquable' label in 2007 by the French Minister of Culture. This private garden which covers 1.5 hectares has been created since 1987 by its owners. A wonderfully mature garden, it is full of trees under planted with hydrangeas, day lillies, hostas, ancient roses, acers and dogwood. Every season has its own interest and two large ponds provide focal points in the garden. There are more than 4000 different plants including collections of Acers, Hydrangeas, Cornus (including the beautiful *Cornus kousa* 'Salomi'), roses and grasses. (Overnight Le Mans) BL

Carnac - 1 night

Day 15: Saturday 17 September, Le Mans – Vannes – Larmor Baden – Carnac

- Guided tour of the walled town of Vannes incl. Saint-Pierre Cathedral
- Walk along the Ramparts of Vannes
- Boat tour from Larmor Baden for a visit to the Cairn de Gavrinis (weather permitting)

We depart early this morning and travel west to the south coast of Brittany. Nestled in the Gulf of Morbihan, in one of the world's most beautiful bays, Vannes boasts all the discreet charm of a fortified town with two thousand years of history. Following some time at leisure for lunch we take a guided tour of its remarkable old quarter, home to the impressive Saint-Pierre cathedral. We also take a walk along the town's ramparts. These thirteenth century fortifications which were remodelled until the seventeenth century provide wonderful views of the city's formal gardens and the cathedral.

Mid-afternoon (and weather permitting) we continue our journey around the coast to the port of Larmor Baden for a short and pleasant crossing to the island of Gavrinis. Here we take a guided tour of the Cairn de Gavrinis, one of the most interesting megalithic monuments in Brittany. Built around 3500 BC, it is made of stones piled on a hillock and is 6m high and 50m in diameter. A fourteen metre-long covered gallery,

made of nine cap stones resting on twenty-three carved supports, leads to a small funeral chamber (2.5m x 2.5m) which is roofed in by a single granite slab resting on supports covered with carvings. The magnificent carvings, while difficult to interpret, are typical of Neolithic art: axes, sticks, dieties etc. (Overnight Carnac) BD

Perros-Guirec - 3 nights

Day 16: Sunday 18 September, Carnac – Mûr-de-Bretagne – Perros-Guirec

- Carnac: stone alignments and circles
- Les Jardins du Botrain, Manoir de Botrain, Mûr-de-Bretagne

We spend the morning in Carnac examining the largest Neolithic alignment in the world (3500-3000 BC), with almost three thousand upright stones arranged in eleven almost parallel lines over several kilometres, and consider the various explanations which have been offered for their purpose and function.

After lunch we depart for Les Jardins du Botrain located outside the small town of Mûr-de-Bretagne. Inspired by English garden design, this romantic garden in the centre of Brittany, is a place of relaxation and contemplation. Surrounding an eighteenth-century manor house with its unique apiary, the gardens consist of many rooms including a Japanese garden, a rose garden, an iris garden, an area of hostas, acers, a pond and even a small lake.

In the late afternoon we continue to our hotel located outside the town of Perros-Guirec, on the northern coast of Brittany at the centre of the 'Coast of Pink Granite'. The combination of pink rocks, blue sea and a few islands on the horizon make this area very picturesque. While based in Perros-Guirec we shall visit a number of private gardens as we journey through the areas' rocky coastline, deep-cut inlets and inland wooded valleys. (Overnight Perros-Guirec) BD

Day 17: Monday 19 September, Perros-Guirec – Trédarzec – Penvénan – Perros-Guirec

- Les Jardins de Kerdalo, Trédarzec
- Jardins de Pelinec, Penvénan

We begin this morning with a visit to the gardens of Kerdalo. The garden, in a valley near the Brittany coast, was the subject of a book by its owner-designer: Prince Peter Wolkonsky, *Kerdalo: Un Jardin d'Exception* (Paris, 1995). He began to create the garden in 1965. Originally a manor farm in its enclosed valley with natural springs, the formal garden develops into the wooded valley with a lake, pools and grotto with a rich collection of trees and shrubs. Since his death in 1997, his daughter Isabelle and her husband Timothy have restored the garden. They both trained as horticulturalists at RHS Garden Wisley.

We end our day with a visit to the private manor house garden, Le Jardin du Pelinec. Inspired by the gardens at Kerdalo, the seven-acre garden on the Pelinec estuary with good soil was started in 1997. The microclimate has encouraged Monsieur Jean to grow a huge diversity of plants laid out in visual harmony. This superb garden was awarded 1st prize "Bonpland" in 2008. In the late afternoon we return to the hotel and enjoy dinner together. (Overnight Perros-Guirec) BD

Day 18: Tuesday 20 September, Perros-Guirec – Ploëzal – Lanrivain – Perros-Guirec

- Château de la Roche-Jagu, Ploëzal
- Guingamp

- Le Grand Launay, Lanrivain

This morning we travel to Ploëzal to visit Le Chateau La Roche Jagu which is surrounded by a contemporary garden in a magnificent setting overlooking the River Trieux. Inspired by medieval gardens, it features a kitchen garden, a medicinal garden and a flower garden. There are wonderful walks in the woodlands where you can find areas of palms and camellias and water features. Time-permitting we shall also visit the château which dates from 1405.

Following some time at leisure for lunch in the market town Guingamp we continue our journey inland to the Grand Launay, a remarkable garden located in Lanrivain featuring a unique design, perfectly shaped topiary and beautiful hedging. The garden was designed by it's owners – Jean and Jacqueline Shalit in collaboration with the landscape designer Gael Boedec. Their work resulted in a beautiful, modern garden with mostly green plants and some white climbing hydrangea here and there. The garden itself is build around an old castle which gives it a specific charm. One of the most fascinating parts of the garden is the so-called "garden of temptation" where snakes boxwood climb the apple as the garden of Eden. (Overnight Perros-Guirec) B

Dina - 2 nights

Day 19: Wednesday 21 September, Perros-Guirec – Saint-Malo – Bazouges-la-Pérouse – Dinan

- Time at leisure in Saint-Malo
- Château de la Ballue, Bazouges-la-Pérouse

We depart Perros-Guirec early this morning and travel along the north coast of Brittany to the port city of Saint-Malo. Encircled by its strong granite ramparts, this corsair city was destroyed in August 1944, but has been so well restored that its centre exudes an austere yet characterful harmony. Here we shall have some time at leisure for lunch and to explore the city's ramparts.

In the afternoon we continue to the Château de la Ballue, located between Brittany and Normandy, in a unique rural setting with mild hills and woods. This seventeenth-century château which once welcomed guests such as Balzac and Victor Hugo, is surrounded by dramatic theatrical gardens. When the castle was built in 1620, it was surrounded by Italian-style gardens. They were abandoned in 1942 and could have remained fields of potatoes if the editor Claude Arthaud had not bought the property in the 1970s. Thanks to his inspiration the architects Paul Maymont and François-Hébert-Stevens created a classic garden and a mannerist garden before the gardens were discovered again by Marie-France Barrière and Alain Schrotter. The new owners have redesigned and reinterpreted the gardens with a modern twist. There are neat traditional geometric terraces, a lush fernery and scented groves.

In the late afternoon we continue to Dinan. Once a fortified stronghold of the Dukes of Brittany, Dinan is one of the prettiest and best-preserved towns in the region. It's noted for its *maisons à piliers*, medieval half-timbered houses built on stilts over the sidewalks. For centuries the town has served as a hub of cultural and commercial activity, from the original merchants and traders to today's artists and craftspeople. (Overnight Dinan) B

Day 20: Thursday 22 September, Dinan – Mont St Michel – Dinan

- Mont St-Michel
- Time at leisure to explore the medieval town of Dinan
- Farewell Evening Meal

One of the highlights of the tour is a visit to the Abbey of Mont St-Michel, which perches upon a great, isolated granite cone rising from the Bay of Mont St-Michel, the sands of which are bared at low tide. There are quick sands here from which, according to a depiction in the Bayeux Tapestry, Harold Godwin saved some Norman soldiers. Believed by the Celts to be a resting place to which the departed were ferried on an invisible boat, it became the site of a hermitage after an apparition of St Michael to St Aubert, Bishop of Avranches (708). A Carolingian church was built in the tenth century, followed by a Romanesque basilica in the eleventh. Count Richard I of Normandy established a Benedictine Abbey here in 966 and it became a major seat of learning in the eleventh century. It was progressively fortified in the Middle Ages. We shall visit the small village below the Mount and then participate in a tour of the Abbey, visiting its church, refectory, ancient scriptorium, and cloister.

We return to Dinan in the early afternoon, for some time at leisure. The centre of town, with its medieval half-timbered houses, is dominated by an impressive castle and surrounded by ramparts. The 2700m of ramparts, once protected the medieval citadel which spread over thirty hectares. The ramparts were built in the thirteenth century when Dinan became a duchy and were continually improved until the Wars of Religion of the sixteenth century after which they lost their defensive role. You may wish to take a lovely circular walk along the ramparts, which starts from the castle. Tonight we enjoy an evening farewell meal in a local restaurant. (Overnight Dinan) BD

Day 21: Friday 23 September, Dinan – Rennes (tour ends)

This morning we drive from Dinan to Rennes' TGV station, where you will be able to take a train to the Paris Charles de Gaulle airport or other French destination. B

Accommodation

21 days in North Western France

ASA has selected 3, 4 and 5-star hotels that are themselves historical buildings and/or are located in historical centres. All hotels provide rooms with private facilities. Single rooms may be requested – and are subject to availability and payment of the single supplement. A hotel list will be given to all participants prior to departure, in the meantime a summary is given below:

- Rouen (7 nights): 4-star Mercure Rouen Centre Cathedral Hotel - a modern hotel close to the stunning Rouen Cathedral in the town's medieval centre. www.mercure.com
- Bayeux (3 nights): 4-star Hôtel Villa Lara - opened in March 2012, located on a pedestrian street in the heart of old Bayeux, just a few steps from the famous Tapestry Museum and the Cathedral. www.hotel-villalara.com
- Bagnoles-de-l'Orne (2 nights): 4-star Hôtel Le Manoir Du Lys - a charming manor house located on the edge of the Andaine Forest, close to the spa town of Bagnoles-de-l'Orne. www.manoir-du-lys.com
- Le Mans (2 nights): 4-star Hôtel Concordia - housed in a classic building dating back to 1906 and located in the city centre. www.hotel-concordia-lemans.com
- Carnac (1 night): - hotel details to be confirmed
- Perros-Guirec (3 nights): 5-star L'Agapa Hôtel-Spa - set in a 1930's art deco-style building overlooking the Rose Coast of Brittany, offering panoramic sea views. www.lagapa.com
- Dinan (2 nights): 3-star Hôtel Avor - a charming hotel built from 18th century stonework, located in the heart of the medieval hilltop town of Dinan, opposite the town theatre. www.hotelarvordinan.com

Note: *Hotels are subject to change, in which case a hotel of similar standard will be provided.*

Tour Price & Inclusions

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3-5 star hotels
- Meals as indicated in the tour itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=evening meal
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may not have drinks included.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Airport-hotel transfers if travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Entrance fees
- Tour Notes
- Use of audio headsets during site visits
- Tips for the coach driver, local guides and restaurants for included meals.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Paris, Paris-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers if not travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Luggage in excess of 20 kg (44 lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)



Physical Endurance & Practical Information

Physical Ratings 

The number of flags is a guide to the degree of difficulty of ASA tours relative to each other (not to those of other tour companies). It is neither absolute nor literal. One flag is given to the least taxing tours, six to the most. Flags are allocated, above all, according to the amount of walking and standing each tour involves. Nevertheless all ASA tours require that participants have a good degree of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking or 1-1.5 hours standing still on any given site visit or excursion. Many sites are accessed by climbing slopes or steps and have uneven terrain.

This 21-day tour involves:

- A moderate amount of walking mainly during outdoor site visits, often up and down hills (eg steep inclines at Mont St-Michel) and/or flights of stairs, along cobbled streets and uneven terrain. You therefore need to be a good walker and be prepared to stand for some time in front of buildings and art works.
- Extensive coach travel - often on minor roads
- The daily schedule generally involves an early-morning departure (between 8.00-8.30am), concluding in the late afternoon (between 5.30-6.30pm).
- 3 to 5-star hotels with 6 hotel changes
- You must be able to carry your own hand-luggage. Hotel portage only includes 1 piece of luggage per person

It is important to remember that ASA programs are group tours, and slow walkers affect everyone in the group. As the group must move at the speed of the slowest member, the amount of time spent at a site may be reduced if group members cannot maintain a moderate walking pace. ASA tours should not present any problem for active people who can manage day-to-day walking and stair-climbing. However, if you have any doubts about your ability to manage on a program, please ask your ASA travel consultant whether this is a suitable tour for you.

Please note: it is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. For further information please refer to the ASA Reservation Application Form.

Practical Information

Prior to departure, tour members will receive practical notes which include information on visa requirements, health, photography, weather, clothing and what to pack, custom regulations, bank hours, currency regulations, electrical appliances and food. The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade website has advice for travellers see: www.smartraveller.gov.au

Booking Conditions

Making a Tentative Reservation before the tour price has been published.

ASA INTENTION TO TRAVEL APPLICATION FORM

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD\$100.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD\$400.00 per person. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your deposit of \$500.00 AUD is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

Or

- CANCEL your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD\$100.00 per person deposit, less a \$33.00 service fee (including GST).

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. ASA's ability to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs, your health and safety and the health and safety of other tour members, is of paramount importance to us. For this reason the ASA Reservation Application includes a Medical Information section. As a general guideline, you must be able to accomplish each of these activities without assistance or support:-

- walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions
- walk confidently on and over uneven surfaces
- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1 km every 15 - 20minutes

- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication.

Double (as single) Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double room for single use throughout the tour. The number of rooms available for single use is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.



Intention to Travel Application

TOUR NAME
TOUR DATES

Booking before the tour price is available

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OR

- Cancel your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD\$100.00 per person deposit, less a \$33.00 service fee (including GST).

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr Mrs Ms Miss Dr Other

FIRST NAME Preferred FIRST NAME
MIDDLE NAME SURNAME

POSTAL ADDRESS

CITY STATE COUNTRY POSTCODE

TEL. (AH) () TEL. (BH) () Mobile Tel:

EMAIL address

Date of birth / / GENDER Male Female

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: a twin-bedded room a double-bedded room a room for sole occupancy
I am travelling: on my own with a friend/family member Travel Companion

Meals

I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

fish poultry red meat dairy products

eggs pork nuts

Other

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence Postal Mail Email Address

Participation Criteria

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- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1 km every 15 - 20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication.

Applicant's Signature

Dated

Tour / Course Name

I have enclosed an Intention to Travel Fee of \$ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

Payment by (please indicate): Cheque Direct Debit (see below) Credit Card (see below)

By Cheque

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No.

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended

Date Money Transferred

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, American Express & Visa 1.95%

Please debit my: Mastercard American Express Visa

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number

Expiry Date Security Code (CVC)

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ)

Cardholders Name

Cardholders Billing Address

State Postcode

Country

Phone

Email

Cardholders Signature