

# Brittany



Thrust out into the Atlantic, France's westernmost promontory might be called Finistère, meaning 'land's end', but its Breton name, Penn ar Bed, translates as 'head of the world', highlighting how Bretons have long viewed it and, by extension, the rest of this spirited, independent region.

Historically cut off from the rest of the mainland by dense, impenetrable forest, in an era when sea travel was all, Brittany (Bretagne in French) was for all intents and purposes an island. Patchwork farming fields now take the forest's place, though pockets still remain. But Brittany still stands with its back to the rest of the country, looking oceanward.

The sea crashing against the granite coast and scattered islands provides numerous nautical pursuits as well as prized mussels, sea bass, oysters and lobster – ideally accompanied by cider, Breton beer, and Muscadet wine from its former capital, Nantes (covered in the Atlantic Coast chapter, p651). Within its deep, mysterious interior, Brittany's woodlands and winding rivers and canals are ideal for hiking, cycling, or punting lazily by boat.

Brittany's language is undergoing a revival that is seeing it forge beyond its former frontiers, buoyed by enduring customs and celebrations. Dancing needle-and-thread style, interlinked by little fingers, to music played with *biniou* (something like a bagpipe) and *bombarde* (a double-reeded oboe) at *festoù-noz* (night festivals) is a fantastic way to experience Breton culture – which is as interwoven with French culture today as the intricate lace of women's traditional headdresses and the churches' filigreed stone steeples.

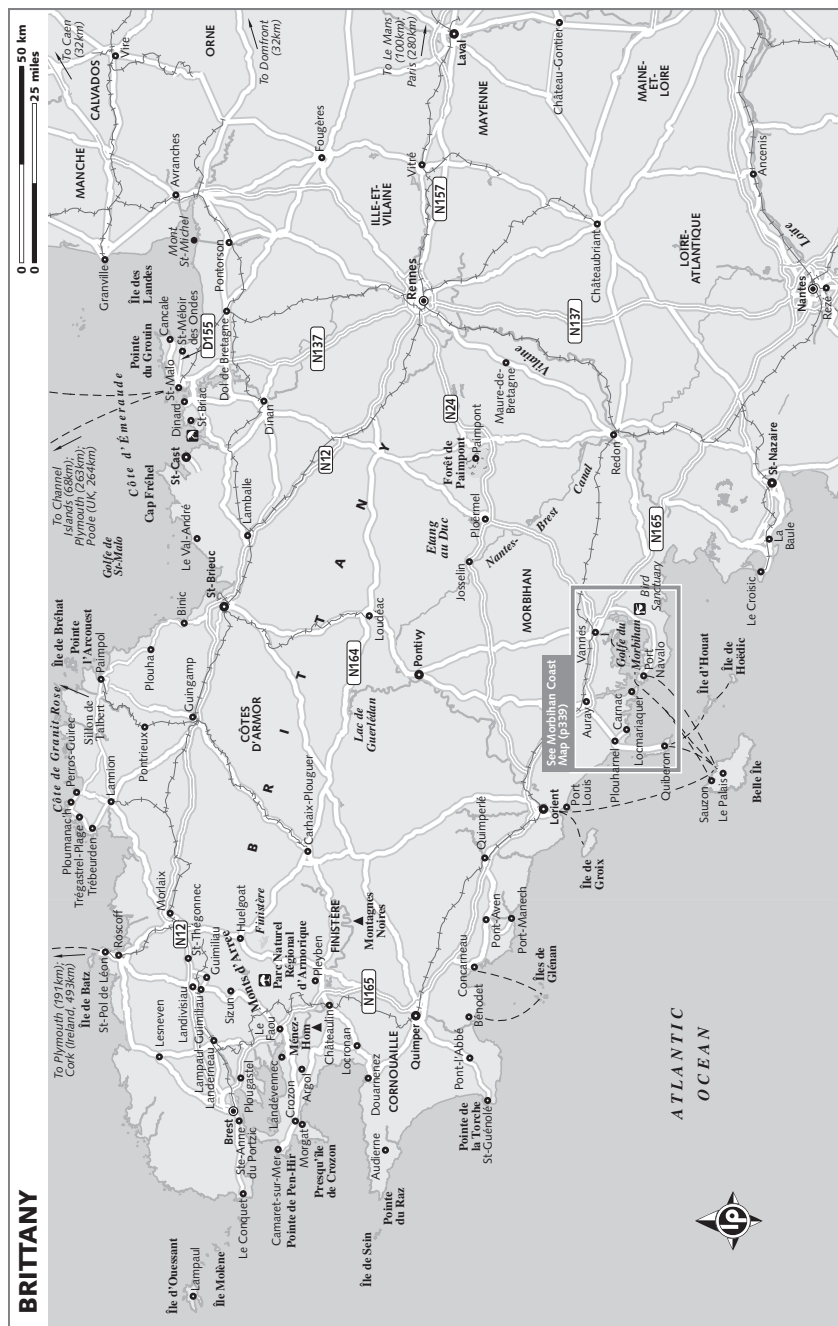
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Sip Breton cider and learn about its production at the **Musée du Cidre** (p329) on the Crozon Peninsula at Argol
- See where artists such as Gauguin set up their easels at **Pont-Aven** (p338), which has inspired some 60 galleries today
- Stroll along the walled city's **ramparts** (p309) at sunset for kaleidoscopic views over St-Malo
- Cycle past fields full of otherworldly **megaliths** (p341) around Carnac
- Tour the turreted medieval castle looming over the fairy-tale forest village of **Josselin** (p347)



■ POPULATION: 2.9 MILLION

■ AREA: 27,210 SQ KM



## History

Brittany's earliest known neolithic tribes left a legacy of menhirs and dolmens that continue to baffle historians. Celts arrived in the 6th century BC, naming their new homeland Armor (the land beside the sea). It was conquered by Julius Caesar in 56 BC; the Romans withdrew in the 5th century AD; and Celts driven from what is now Britain and Ireland by the Anglo-Saxon invasions settled in Brittany, bringing Christianity with them.

In the 9th century, Brittany's national hero Nominoë revolted against French rule. But, wedged between two more powerful kingdoms, the duchy of Brittany was continuously contested by France and England until a series of strategic royal weddings finally saw the region become part of France in 1532.

Brittany has retained a separate regional identity. Now there's a drive for cultural and linguistic renewal (see the boxed text, p322) – and a consciousness of Brittany's place within a wider Celtic culture embracing Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Cornwall and Galicia in Spain, with all of which ties have been established.

## Getting There & Around

Ferries link St-Malo with the Channel Islands and the English ports of Portsmouth, Poole and Weymouth. From Roscoff there are ferries to Plymouth (UK) and Cork (Ireland). Alternatively, airports in Brest, Dinard, Lorient and, to the south, Nantes (p657) serve the UK and Ireland as well as other European and domestic destinations.

Brittany's major towns and cities have rail connections but routes leave the interior poorly served.

The bus network is extensive, if generally infrequent.

Your own wheels are the best way to see the area, particularly out-of-the-way destinations.

With gently undulating, well-maintained roads, an absence of tolls, and relatively little traffic outside the major towns, driving in Brittany is a real pleasure. Cycling is also extremely popular, and bike-rental places are never hard to find.

If you're planning to tour the region by canal boat, contact the **Service de la Navigation** (☎ in Rennes 02 99 59 20 60, in Lorient 02 97 64 85 20) for information on boats, moorings and locks.

### GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNING AROUND BRITTANY'S COASTLINE *Catherine Le Nevez*

**Sillon de Talbert** Brittany's best coastal drives let you see long-standing traditions in action too. West of Paimpol on the north coast, you may spot the local seaweed harvesters tossing strands of kelp into their carts.

**Côte de Granit Rose** The otter-inhabited coastline known as the Pink Granite Coast glows with pink granite cliffs, outcrops and boulders sculpted over the millennia by wind and waves. Their fiery colours are even more impressive when you're scaling them while following the 5km walking path, *sentier des douaniers* (custom officers' trail) just near the area's main town, the seaside resort of Perros-Guirec. Local fishermen sell their catch each morning at Peros' Marché des Pêcheurs on place du Marché. Offshore, head out on a boat trip to the Sept-Îles (Seven Islands), home to more than 20,000 marine birds including puffins, razorbills and fulmars. Check out [www.armor-decouverte.fr](http://www.armor-decouverte.fr) for boat info.

**Pays Bigouden** If you're lucky enough to catch one of the cultural celebrations here in Finistère's southwestern corner (check [www.bigouden.com](http://www.bigouden.com)), you might see women wearing the *coiffe bigoudène*, the area's traditional lace headdress that's up to 30cm tall. And if you're brave enough, you might want to join the hard-core surfers riding 'the lift' – a death-defying break off Pointe de la Torche. Near the car park, surf shops rent gear and offer advice; otherwise you can experience it vicariously listening to surfers recounting their survival at one of the point's cafés.

**Côte Sauvage** On the western edge of the peninsula en route to Quiberon, the aptly named 'wild coast' swoops between barren headlands and sheer cliffs. Bonus: you'll avoid the choked main-road traffic here – partly because the coast road (the D186a) isn't well signed. Heading south, turn off just before you reach St-Pierre-Quiberon, in the direction of Kemiscob and Kervozès.

**Golfe du Morbihan** (Morbihan Coast) Most people visiting Morbihan's megaliths never make it to this part of the gulf. But swinging southwest from Vannes to Port Navalo rewards you with stupendous views over the gulf and its islands. Picnic benches perch at Port Navalo's tip – bring a hamper and a bottle of Breton cider.

What's your recommendation?  
[www.lonelyplanet.com/france](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/france)

## NORTH COAST

Enveloped by belle-époque beach resorts, fishing villages and curled headlands, Brittany's central north coast spans the *départements* of Ille-et-Vilaine and Côtes d'Armor. Green shallows give rise to the name Côte d'Émeraude (Emerald Coast) to the east; westwards, boulders blush along the Côte de Granit Rose (Pink Granite Coast; opposite).

### ST-MALO

pop 49,600

The mast-filled port of St-Malo has a cinematically changing landscape. With one of the world's highest tidal ranges, brewing storms under blackened skies see waves lash over the top of the ramparts ringing its walled city. Hours later, the blue sky merges with the deep marine-blue sea, exposing beaches as wide and flat as the clear skies above and creating land bridges to the granite outcrop islands.

Construction of the walled city's fortifications began in the 12th century. The town became a key port during the 17th and 18th centuries as a base for both merchant ships and government-sanctioned privateers (pirates, basically) against the constant threat of the English. These days English arrivals are tourists, for whom St-Malo, a short ferry hop from the Channel Islands, is a summer haven.

### Orientation

The St-Malo conurbation consists of the harbour towns of St-Malo and St-Servan plus the modern suburbs of Paramé and Rothéneuf to the east. The old walled city of St-Malo is known as Intra-Muros ('within the walls') or Ville Close. From the train station, it's a 15-minute walk westwards along av Louis Martin.

### Information

#### INTERNET ACCESS

**Cyberm@lo** (☎ 02 99 56 07 78; 68 chaussée du Sillon; per 15min/hr €1.50/4; ☎ 10am-1am Mon-Sat, 11am-11pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 11am-9pm Tue-Thu, 11am-11pm Fri & Sat, 3-8pm Sun mid-Sep-mid-Jun) Your best bet year-round; situated east along the seafloor.

**Mokamalo** (☎ 02 99 56 60 17; 5 rue de l'Orme;

☎ 9am-8pm daily in summer, reduced hours in winter)

Internet access inside the walls.

### LAUNDRY

**Laundrette** (rue de la Herse; ☎ 7.30am-9pm)

### POST

**Main Post Office** (1 bd de la République) Outside the walls.

**Post Office** (place des Frères Lamennais) Intra-Muros.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist Office** (☎ 08 25 13 52 00, 02 99 56 64 43;

www.saint-malo-tourisme.com; esplanade St-Vincent;

☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 1.30pm-6pm or 6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Sun Easter-Jun & Sep)

### Sights & Activities

#### WALLED CITY

St-Malo's first inhabitants originally lived in St-Servan but later moved to this former island, which became linked to the mainland by the sandy isthmus of Le Sillon in the 13th century.

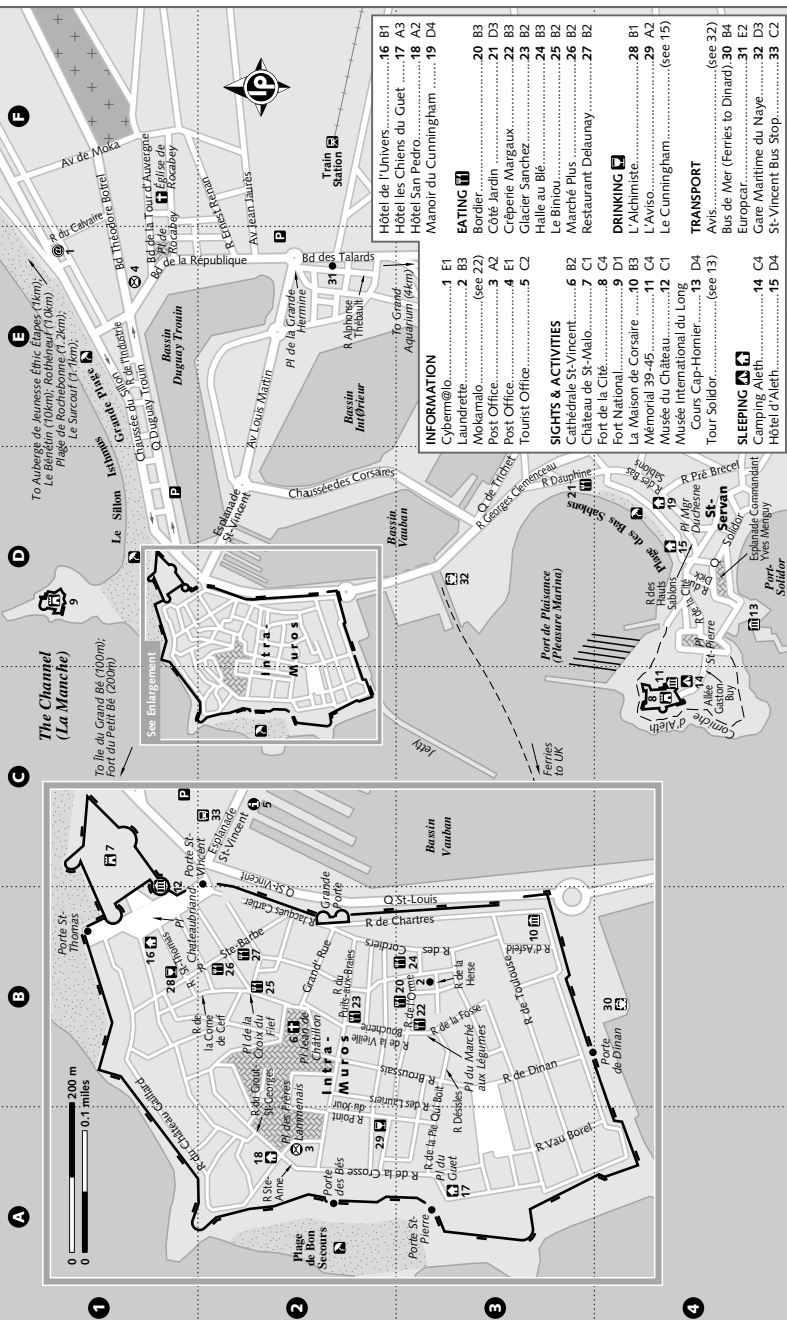
For the best views of the walled city, stroll along the top of the **ramparts**, constructed at the end of the 17th century under military architect Vauban, and measuring 1.8km. Free access includes all of the main city *portes* (gates).

Though you'd never guess it from the cobblestone streets and reconstructed monuments in 17th- and 18th-century style, during August 1944 the battle to drive German forces out of St-Malo destroyed around 80% of the old city. Damage to the town's centre-piece, **Cathédrale St-Vincent** (place Jean de Châtillon; ☎ 9.30am-6pm except during Mass), constructed between the 12th and 18th centuries, was severe. A mosaic **plaque** on the floor of the nave marks the spot where Jacques Cartier received the blessing of the bishop of St-Malo before his 'voyage of discovery' to Canada in 1535. Cartier's tomb – all that remains of it post-1944 is his entombed head – is in a chapel on the north side of the choir.

#### MONUMENT COMBO

A **combined ticket** (adult/child €12.30/6.15) gives you access to St-Malo's three major monuments: the Musée du Château de St-Malo, Musée International du Long Cours Cap-Hornier and Mémorial 39-45. It can be purchased at any of the three participating museums and is valid for the duration of your stay in St-Malo.

## ST-MALO &amp; ST-SERVAN



The ramparts' northern stretch looks out across to the remains of the former prison, **Fort National** (adult/child €4/2; ☎ Jun-Sep), accessible only at low tide. Within **Château de St-Malo**, built by the dukes of Brittany in the 15th and 16th centuries, is the **Musée du Château** (☎ 02 99 40 71 57; adult/child €5.20/2.60; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm daily Apr-Sep, Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), also known as the Musée d'Histoire de la Ville (city history museum). The museum's most interesting exhibits – the history of cod fishing on the Grand Banks and photos of St-Malo after WWII – are in the Tour Générale.

You can visit the 18th-century mansion and historic monument **La Maison de Corsaire** (☎ 02 99 56 09 40; www.demeure-de-corsaire.com, in French; 5 rue d'Asfeld; adult/child €5.50/4; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm daily in summer, Tue-Sun in winter), once owned by corsair (privateer) François Auguste Magon. Guided tours are in French; descriptions are available in English.

### ÎLE DU GRAND BÉ

At low tide, cross the beach to walk out via the Porte des Bés to the rocky islet of **Île du Grand Bé**, where the great St-Malo-born 18th-century writer Chateaubriand is buried. Once the tide rushes in, the causeway remains impassable for about six hours – check tide times with the tourist office. Depths can be deceptive; if you get caught out, stay on the islet until the tide subsides.

About 100m beyond the Île du Grand Bé is the Vauban-built 17th-century **Fort du Petit Bé** (☎ 06 08 27 51 20), also accessible at low tide.

### ST-SERVAN

The pretty fishing port of St-Servan sits south of the walled city. Constructed in the mid-18th century, **Fort de la Cité** was used as a German base during WWII. One of the bunkers now houses **Mémorial 39-45** (☎ 02 99 82 41 74; adult/child €5.20/2.60; ☎ guided visits 2pm, 3.15pm & 4.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep-Mar, 6 times daily Jul & Aug), which depicts St-Malo's violent WWII history and liberation and includes a 45-minute film in French. Some guided visits are conducted in English; call ahead to confirm times.

**Musée International du Long Cours Cap-Hornier** (Museum of the Cape Horn Route; ☎ 02 99 40 71 58; adult/child €5.20/2.60; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm daily Apr-Sep, Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) is in the 14th-century Tour Solidor. Presenting the life of the hardy sailors who followed the Cape Horn route, it offers superb views from the top of the tower.

### GRAND AQUARIUM

Allow around two hours to see the excellent **Grand Aquarium** (☎ 02 99 21 19 00; av Général Patton; adult/child €15.50/10.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Feb-Oct & Dec, to 8pm Jul & Aug, closed Nov). About 4km south of the city centre, it's a great wet-weather alternative for kids, with a minisubmarine descent and a *bassin tactile* (touch pool), where you can fondle rays, turbot – even a baby shark. Bus C1 from the train station passes by every half-hour.

### BEACHES

You can splash in the protected tidal pool west of the city walls at **Plage de Bon Secours** or climb its ladder to jump off into the sea.

St-Servan's **Plage des Bas Sablons** has a cement wall to keep the sea from receding completely at low tide.

The much larger **Grande Plage** stretches northeast along the isthmus of Le Sillon. Spectacular sunsets can be seen along the stretch from Grande Plage to Plage des Bas Sablons. Less crowded **Plage de Rochebonne** is another 1km to the northeast.

To learn how to windsurf (lessons from €35 for one hour) or sail a catamaran (lessons from €50 for one hour), contact **Surf School** (☎ 02 99 40 07 47; www.surfschool.org, in French).

### BOAT TRIPS

**Compagnie Corsaire** (☎ 08 25 13 80 35; www.compagnie-corsaire.com) runs ferries from just outside Porte de Dinan to Îles Chausey (adult/child return €28.50/17; daily July and August, Sunday April, May, June and September), Île Cézembre (adult/child return €13.50/8; daily July and August, Sunday April, May, June and September) and along the river to Dinan (adult/child one-way €22.50/13.50, return €28.50/13.50, April to September). Other boat trips (with commentary in French) from April to September include the Bay of St-Malo (adult/child €18.50/11, 1½ hours) and, during July and August, Cancale's bay and Pointe du Grouin (adult/child €27/16, 2½ hours).

The company can also take you *pêche en mer* (deep-sea fishing) for about four hours (€38, Monday, Wednesday and Friday July and August).

**Vedettes de St-Malo** (☎ 02 23 18 41 08; www.vedettes-saint-malo.com) also runs boat excursions.

For ferries to Dinard see p313.



## Sleeping

St-Malo has plenty of hotels, but accommodation books up quickly in summer – the tourist office website has continuous updates of availability. For *chambres d'hôtes* (B&Bs), try the nearby towns of Cancale, Dinan and their surrounds.

### BEYOND THE WALLS

**Camping Aleth** (☎ 02 99 81 60 91; camping@ville-saint-malo.fr; allée Gaston Buy, St-Servan; camping €12; ☺ May-Sep) Perched on top of a peninsula next to Fort de la Cité, Camping Aleth (also spelt Alet) has panoramic 360-degree views and is close to beaches, and close but not *too* close to some lively bars.

**Auberge de Jeunesse Éthic Étapes** (☎ 02 99 40 29 80; www.centrevarangot.com; 37 av du Père Umbricht; dm incl breakfast €15.50-18.70; ☑ ☒) This efficient place has a self-catering kitchen (and supermarket two minutes' walk away) as well as free sports facilities. Take bus C1 from the train station.

**Hôtel d'Aleth** (☎ 02 99 81 48 08; www.st-malo-hotel-cunningham.com; 2 rue des Hauts Sablons; r €38-60, q €100) Just a short stumble upstairs from the nautical pub, Le Cunningham (opposite), it's well worth a few extra euros for a sea view. Light sleepers beware: it's noisy to say the least. Frills are few: no lift, no in-room phones and no reception desk (check in at Manoir du Cunningham, below).

**Le Surcouf** (☎ 02 99 56 30 19; www.surcoufhotel.com; s €45-70, d €75; ☒) In a peaceful residential quarter 1km from the walled town and five minutes' walk from the beach, this welcoming hotel is ideal if you're driving, with free street parking out front. Rooms are spacious, immaculate and contemporary, if sparingly decorated (no pictures on the walls). Wi-fi's free.

**Manoir du Cunningham** (☎ 02 99 21 33 33; 9 place Mgr Duchesne; r €90-190) If you're averse to noise and/or have more cash to splash, the Hôtel d'Aleth's owners operate this 13-room, mahogany-rich guesthouse in a 17th-century half-timbered house a stroll from the ferry, with views out to sea.

### INTRA-MUROS

**Hôtel les Chiens du Guet** (☎ 02 99 40 87 29; www.leschiensduguet.com, in French; 4 place du Guet; r €41-57) A narrow stone staircase next to this welcoming no-star place pops you directly up on top of the ramparts; adjacent Porte St-Pierre opens directly to the beach. The 12 simple, sunlit rooms are homey if somewhat snug. There's

a convivial on-site restaurant; *menus* start at €9.50.

**Hôtel San Pedro** (☎ 02 99 40 88 57; www.sanpedro-hotel.com; 1 rue Ste-Anne; s €46-48, d €53-70; ☺ Feb-Nov; ☒) Tucked at the back of the old city, the San Pedro has cool, crisp, neutral-toned decor with subtle splashes of colour, friendly service and superb sea views, as well as free wi-fi. Breakfast is an €8 feast.

**Hôtel de l'Univers** (☎ 02 99 40 89 52; www.hotel-univers-saintmalo.com, in French; place Chateaubriand; s €48-78, d €63-95) Right by the most frequently used gateway to the old city (Porte St-Vincent), and handy for the tourist office, this cream-coloured two-star place with 63 rooms is perfectly poised for all of St-Malo's attractions – not the least of which is its own all-wood, in-house maritime bar.

## Eating

Browse the menus of the plethora of restaurants between Porte St-Vincent, the cathedral and the Grande Porte.

**Le Biniou** (☎ 02 99 56 47 57; 3 place de la Croix du Fief; crêpes €2-8, menus around €10; ☺ 10am-1am in summer, closed Thu in winter) St-Malo has no shortage of crêperies but this one – with cute little illustrations of traditional Breton *biniou* (bagpipes) is a time-honoured favourite. Take a seat on the tiny terrace or the mezzanine with velour settees to choose from well over 100 different artisan galettes (savoury buckwheat crêpes), sweet crêpes (including the house speciality of caramelised apples flambéed in Calvados), or a heaping kettle of mussels.

**Crêperie Margaux** (☎ 02 99 20 26 02; 3 place du Marché aux Légumes; crêpes €7.50-13; ☒ closed Tue & Wed, daily during school holidays) Watch the owner of this wonderful little crêperie on violet-filled Marché aux Légumes making traditional crêpes by hand (her motto: 'if you're in a hurry, don't come here'). The aromas wafting through the timber-lined dining room, and the scads of happy diners, prove it's well worth the wait.

**Côté Jardin** (☎ 02 99 81 63 11; 36 rue Dauphine, St-Servan; menus €25; ☺ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue & Thu-Sun) The charming, friendly Côté Jardin presents regional and traditional French cuisine, with a scenic terrace overlooking the marina and St-Malo's walled city. Doodlers can draw on the table with coloured pencils provided.

**Restaurant Delaunay** (☎ 02 99 40 92 46; 6 rue Ste-Barbe; menus €33-49; ☒ closed Sun year-round & Mon in winter) Chef Didier Delaunay creates

## COUNTING THE BEAT

Celtic culture is synonymous with music, and Brittany is no exception. Its wealth of indoor and outdoor festivals and concerts feature traditional instruments through to electronica (and everything in between), including big-name international acts. Keep your finger on the pulse by picking up the free monthly zine **Ty Zicos** ([www.tyzicos.com](http://www.tyzicos.com), in French) in cafés and bars.

In addition to the festivals and events listed throughout this chapter, tune in to the region's top trio each year:

**Les Vieilles Charrues de Carhaix** ([www.vieillescharrues.asso.fr](http://www.vieillescharrues.asso.fr); Carhaix; ☎ mid-Jul) Old-school crooners, electronic beats and much more attract crowds of 300,000-plus.

**Astropolis** ([www.astropolis.org](http://www.astropolis.org); Brest; ☎ early Aug) Electronic music fest with the main event atmospherically set in a castle.

**Les Transmusicales de Rennes** ([www.lestrans.com](http://www.lestrans.com); Rennes; ☎ early Dec) Groundbreaking indie bands.

standout gastronomic cuisine at his aubergine-painted restaurant inside the walls. The menu features succulent dishes both from the surf (Breton lobster's a speciality) and turf (tender lamb).

## SELF-CATERING

Cheeses and butters handmade by Jean-Yves **Bordier** (9 rue de l'Orme; ☎ Tue-Sat) are shipped to famous restaurants all over the world. Just down the street is the covered market, **Halle au Blé** (rue de la Herse; ☎ 8am-noon Tue & Fri).

**Glacier Sanchez** (☎ 02 99 56 67 17; 9 rue de la Vieille Boucherie; ☎ Apr-Sep) serves up great ice cream.

Pick up beach-picnic supplies inside the walls at **Marché Plus** (cnr rue St-Vincent & rue St-Barbe; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Sat, to noon Sun).

## Drinking

**L'Alchimiste** (☎ 02 23 18 10 06; 7 rue St-Thomas; ☎ 5pm-1am Tue-Sun Oct-Apr, to 2am daily May-Sep) Ben Harper-type music creates a mellow backdrop at this magical place filled with old books and a toy flying fox. Take a seat at the bar draped with a red, tasselled theatre curtain, on the carved timber mezzanine (including a pulpit), or in the wood-heated basement.

**L'Aviso** (☎ 02 99 40 99 08; 12 rue Point du Jour; ☎ 5pm-2am) Regular live music features at this cosy place, which has more than 300 beers on offer (and over 10 – including Breton beer – on tap). If you can't decide, ask the friendly owner/connoisseur.

**Le Cunningham** (2 rue des Hauts Sablons; ☎ 6pm-2am Mon-Fri, 4pm-3am Sat & Sun) Sail away at this curved wood bar with a wall of timber-framed windows looking out over water. Year-round live entertainment includes jazz, soul and Brazilian beats.

## Entertainment

In summer, classical music concerts are held in Cathédrale St-Vincent and elsewhere in the city, and the pubs, bars and cafés have lots of live music – check the 'what's on' section of the tourist office's website ([www.saint-malo-tourisme.com](http://www.saint-malo-tourisme.com)).

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

See p316 for flight details.

### BOAT

**Brittany Ferries** (☎ reservations in France 08 25 82 88 28, in UK 0870 556 1600; [www.brittany-ferries.com](http://www.brittany-ferries.com)) sails between St-Malo and Portsmouth, and **Condor Ferries** (☎ in France 08 25 13 51 35, in UK 0870 243 5140; [www.condorferries.co.uk](http://www.condorferries.co.uk)) runs to/from Poole and Weymouth via Jersey or Guernsey. Car ferries leave from the Gare Maritime du Naye.

From April to September, **Compagnie Corsaire** (☎ 08 25 13 80 35) and **Vedettes de St-Malo** (☎ 02 23 18 41 08; [www.vedettes-saint-malo.com](http://www.vedettes-saint-malo.com)) run a **Bus de Mer** (Sea Bus; adult/child return €6/4; ☎ hourly) shuttle service (10 minutes) between St-Malo and Dinard.

### BUS

All intercity buses stop by the train station.

**Courriers Bretons** (☎ 02 99 19 70 80) has services including Cancale (€1, 30 minutes) and Mont St-Michel (€4.50, 1½ hours, three to four daily). It also offers all-day tours to Mont St-Michel (€9) – check for seasonal schedules.

**TIV** (☎ 02 99 82 26 26) has buses to Dinard (€1.50, 30 minutes, hourly) and Rennes (€3, one to 1½ hours, three to six daily).

**Tibus** (☎ 08 10 22 22 22) goes to Dinan (€2, 50 minutes, three to eight daily).



## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

**Avis** (☎ 02 99 40 18 54) and **ADA** (☎ 02 99 56 06 15) have offices at the train station. Avis also has a desk at the Gare Maritime du Naye. **Europcar** (☎ 02 99 56 75 17; 16 bd des Talards) is about 300m north towards the walled city.

## TRAIN

TGV trains run between St-Malo and Rennes (€12.10, one hour, frequent), Dinan (€8.30, one hour, requiring a change), and a direct service to Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€58, three hours, three daily).

## Getting Around

St-Malo city buses (single journey €1.05, 24-hour pass €3) operate until about 8pm, with some lines extending until around midnight in summer. Between esplanade St-Vincent and the train station, take buses C1 or C2.

Call ☎ 02 99 81 30 30 for a taxi.

## DINARD

pop 10,700

Visiting Dinard 'in season' is a little like stepping into one of the canvases Picasso painted here in the 1920s. Belle-époque mansions built into the cliffs form a timeless backdrop to the beach dotted with blue-and-white striped bathing tents and the beachside carnival. Out of season, when holidaymakers have packed up their buckets and spades, the town is decidedly dormant, but wintry walks along the coastal paths are spectacular.

## Orientation

Dinard's focal point is the gently curved beach Plage de l'Écluse (also called Grande Plage), flanked by Pointe du Moulinet and Pointe de la Malouine. To get to the beach from the Embarcadère (where boats from St-Malo dock), climb the stairs and walk 200m northwest along rue Georges Clemenceau.

## Information

**Cyberspot** (☎ 02 99 46 28 30; 6 rue Winston Churchill; per hr €6; ☎ 11am-midnight Wed-Mon in winter, daily in summer)

**Lavomatic de la Poste** (10 rue des Saules; ☎ 8am-7pm Jun-Sep, Mon-Sat Oct-May) Laundrette.

**Post Office** (place Rochaid)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 99 46 94 12; www.ot-dinard.com, in French; 2 bd Féart; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.15pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) Staff book accommodation for free.

## Sights & Activities

The romantically named **promenade du Clair de Lune** (moonlight promenade) has views across the Rance River estuary to St-Malo's walled city, and nightly sound-and-light spectacles in summer.

Two-hour **guided walks** (☎ 2.30pm, days vary) explaining the town's history, art and architecture in English and French depart from the tourist office.

Beautiful **seaside trails** extend along the coast in both directions. Walkers can follow the shoreline from Plage du Prieuré to Plage de St-Énogat via Pointe du Moulinet, while cyclists can shadow the coastline on the road. Pack the Institut National Géographique (IGN) 1:50,000 map *Ille-et-Vilaine: Randonnées en Haute Bretagne*, which highlights walking trails throughout the *département*.

## BARRAGE DE LA RANCE

This 750m bridge over the Rance estuary carries the D168 between St-Malo and Dinard, lopping a good 30km off the journey. A feat of hydroelectrics, the **Usine Marémotrice de la Rance** (below the bridge) generates electricity by harnessing the lower estuary's extraordinarily high tidal range – a difference of 13.5m between high and low tide.

If you're mechanically minded, visit **Espace Découverte** (admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep) on the Dinard bank, illustrating the power station's construction and environmental impact, with a film in English.

## BEACHES & SWIMMING

Framed by fashionable hotels, a casino and neo-Gothic villas, **Plage de l'Écluse** is the perfect place to shade yourself in style by renting one of Dinard's trademark blue-and-white striped **bathing tents** (☎ 02 99 46 18 12; per half-day €6.80-10.80, per day €7.45-14.15); you can also hire parasols and deckchairs. Reproductions of Picasso's paintings are often planted in the sand here in high summer.

Filled with heated seawater, the Olympic-sized indoor pool **Piscine Olympique** (☎ 02 99 46 22 77; promenade des Alliés; adult/student €4.10/3.25; ☎ hr vary) is beside the beach.

Less chic (and less crowded) than the Plage de l'Écluse is **Plage du Prieuré**, 1km to the south. **Plage de St-Énogat** is 1km west of Plage de l'Écluse, on the far side of Pointe de la Malouine.



## WATER SPORTS

At Plage de l'Écluse, **Wishbone Club** (☎ 02 99 88 15 20; info@wishbone-club-dinard.com; ☞ 9am-9pm Jun-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Oct-May) rents out windsurfing boards (from €15 per hour), and can arrange lessons. The company also organises catamarans and kayak rental.

Dive trips are run by **CSD** (Club Subaquatique Dinardais; ☎ 02 99 46 25 18; c.s.d@voila.fr), starting at €17.

## Sleeping

Dinard's prices match its cachet: budget travellers may want to consider staying in St-Malo and catching the ferry or strolling across.

**Camping Municipal du Port Blanc** (☎ 02 99 46 10 74; camping.municipal@ville-dinard.fr; rue Sergeant Boulanger; campsite for 2 adults from €18.70; ☞ Apr-Sep) You'll find this campsite close to the beach, about 2km west of Plage de l'Écluse.

**Hôtel Printania** (☎ 02 99 46 13 07; www.printania.hotel.com, in French; 5 av George V; s €55-60, d €54-88; ☞ mid-Mar-mid-Nov) This charming Breton-style two-star hotel, complete with mature wood-and-leather furniture, has a superb location overlooking the Baie du Prieuré. Guest rooms with a sea view cost more; otherwise get your fill of the grand views across the water to St-Servan at breakfast (€8.50).

**Hôtel de la Plage** (☎ 02 99 46 14 87; www.dinard-hotels-plus.com; 3 bd Féart; s €55-75, d €62-90; ☞ Dec-Oct; ☒) Refreshingly unpretentious, with warm staff and solid stone-walled rooms renovated with red-and-gold furnishings and heavy timber furniture, including sleigh beds. A handful of the 18 rooms here have huge timber decks looking out to the sea, a few footsteps away. Wi-fi available.

## Eating

Some of Dinard's best restaurants are attached to hotels, such as **Hôtel Printania** (above; menus €25-38; ☞ lunch & dinner), which serves top-notch fish and seafood.

**Chez Ma Pomme** (☎ 02 99 46 81 90; 6 rue Yves Verney; menus €12-24; ☞ lunch & dinner Jul & Aug, closed Mon, dinner Sun & dinner Thu Sep-Jun) Codfish roasted in bacon and parmesan is among the innovative twists on local ocean-caught fish, while rich Breton caramel features in the tempting array of desserts. The team in the kitchen is hip and young, and the colourful interior equally bright.

**Crêperie Côté Mer** (☎ 02 99 16 80 30; 29 bd Wilson; menus from €12.90; ☞ lunch & dinner Jul & Aug, closed Mon

Sep-Jun) A crisp little crêperie with pine tables on a pretty pedestrianised street, the Côté Mer serves grilled meat, salads, oysters and *moules-frites* (mussels and fries) as well as (naturally) crêpes, galettes and ice cream year-round.

**Le Cargo** (☎ 02 99 46 70 52; 3 bd Féart; lunch/dinner menus €14-17; ☞ lunch & dinner) This cavernous red-brick place with classic red-and-white checked tablecloths is a great place for steaming hot pizzas as well as rib-sticking mains like fondue with potatoes and ham.

## SELF-CATERING

Beach-picnic supplies abound at Dinard's large **covered market** (place Rochaid; ☞ 7am-1.30pm Tue, Thu & Sat).

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Ryanair** (☎ 02 99 16 00 66; www.ryanair.com) has daily flights to and from London Stansted. There's no public transport from the airport to town (or to neighbouring St-Malo); a daytime/evening taxi from Dinard to the airport costs around €15/22.

### BOAT

From April to September, **Compagnie Corsaire** (☎ 08 25 13 80 35; www.compagniecorsaire.com) and **Vedettes de St-Malo** (☎ 02 23 18 41 08; www.vedettes-saint-malo.com) run the **Bus de Mer** (Sea Bus; adult/child return €6/4; ☞ hourly) shuttle service (10 minutes) between St-Malo and Dinard.

### BUS

**Illenoo** (www.illenoo.fr, in French) buses connect Dinard and the train station in St-Malo (€2.50, 30 minutes, hourly). Le Gallic bus stop, outside the tourist office, is the most convenient. Several buses travel to Rennes (€3.50, two hours).

## Getting Around

To nip around you can hire bicycles (from €8 per day) and motor scooters (from €38 per day) from **Breiz Cycles** (☎ 02 99 46 27 25; 8 Rue St-Enogat).

For a taxi, telephone ☎ 02 99 46 88 80 or ☎ 02 99 88 15 15.

## CANCALE

### pop 6200

The idyllic little fishing port of Cancale, 14km east of St-Malo, is famed for its offshore *parcs à huîtres* (oyster beds). A small museum dedicated to oyster farming and shellfish, the

**Ferme Marine** (Marine Farm; ☎ 02 99 89 69 99; corniche de l'Aurore; adult/child €6.70/3.50; ☎ mid-Feb–Oct) runs guided tours in English at 2pm from mid-June to mid-September.

The **tourist office** (☎ 02 99 89 63 72; www.cancale-tourisme.fr; ☎ 9am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat Sep–Jun, 9am–12.30pm & 2–7pm Mon–Sat, 9am–12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug) is at the top of rue du Port. In July and August only, there's a tourist office **annexe** (quai Gambetta; ☎ hr vary) in the wooden house where the fish auction takes place.

## Sleeping

It's an easy day trip to Cancale from St-Malo or Dinard, but there are some appealing places if you want to spend the night.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 02 99 89 62 62; cancale@fuaj.org; Port Pican; dm €12.10–13.10; ☎ Feb–Nov; ☒) Right by the seaside, Cancale's HI-affiliated youth hostel at Port Pican is 3km northeast of the town – take the bus (July and August only) to the Cancale Église or Port Pican stop and walk 500m towards the seafront. Breakfast's an extra €3.60; campers can pitch up here for €6 per night.

**Camping Municipal Le Grouin** (☎ 02 99 89 63 79; marie@ville-cancale.fr; Pointe du Grouin; campsite €13.50; ☎ Mar–Oct) Overlooking a fine-sand beach 6km north of Cancale near Pointe du Grouin, this place has 200 well-spaced sites, and facilities for wheelchairs.

**La Pastourelle** (☎ 02 99 89 10 09; pastourelle@baie-saintmichel.com; Les Nielles, St-Méloir des Ondes; s incl breakfast €48–54, d €54–72; ☒) The countryside around Cancale shelters some really lovely *chambres d'hôtes* (ask the tourist office for a complete list). One of the most delightful is this vine-covered traditional Breton *longère* (long house) looking out to sea. Rooms are crisp and countrified, and convivial *tables d'hôtes* (€26 per person) are available by reservation. It's on the D155.

**Hôtel La Mère Champlain** (☎ 02 99 89 60 04; www.lamerechamplain.com; 1 quai Thomas; d €65–145) Reached by a newly installed lift (making it wheelchair accessible), the 15 delightfully renovated rooms at this quayside hotel have a relaxed port ambience and pretty-as-a-picture port views. The nautical-style restaurant (*menus* €16 to €40), complete with crisp linen, specialises in grilled lobster and has amazing desserts.

**Le Continental** (☎ 02 99 89 60 16; www.hotel-cancale.com, in French; 4 quai Thomas; d €88–148; ☎ mid-Feb–early Jan) Above its portside, red-awning-shaded

restaurant (*menus* €19 to €42), this *hôtel de charme* with good wheelchair access has beautiful timber-rich rooms. Sea-facing rooms are at a premium but the views, especially on the higher floors, are worth it.

**Les Maisons de Bricourt** (www.maisons-de-bricourt.com) Chef Olivier Roellinger (below) rents out several seasonally opening guest rooms (double from €170) and cottages including old seamen's cabins (double from €290) under the umbrella Les Maisons de Bricourt.

## Eating

Around 25 specialist seafood restaurants are strung along the seafront – strolling along the port where the catches unload is the best way to whet your appetite. See also listings under Sleeping.

**L'Huitière** (☎ 02 99 89 75 05; 5 quai Gambetta; mains from €7.50, seafood platters for 1/2 people €21.50/42; ☎ 10am–10pm Easter–Sep, 10am–7pm Oct–Easter) This low-key blue-and-yellow-painted joint on the waterfront has a chilly dining room but a warm welcome and absolutely delicious oysters, plus magnificent bowls of *moules* cooked with *crème fraîche* and *frites* crisped to perfection, as well as Breton *far* cake (like a solidified custard, filled with prunes) for dessert.

**our pick O Roellinger** (☎ 02 99 89 64 76; 1 rue Duguesclin; menu €100–172; ☎ closed mid-Dec–mid-Mar) Up the hill from the port, one of the region's (and indeed France's) most acclaimed chefs, Olivier Roellinger, has his triple-Michelin-starred restaurant. Olivier was born in this 1760-built former East India Company house, where he has been creating extraordinary cuisine for the past two-and-a-half decades. Signature dishes include the 'route of the south seas' – a knock-out combination of oysters, *iraches* (local baby squid caught only 'while the lilacs are in bloom'), and poached Easter cabbage laced with spiced curry. Opening hours and days vary, but booking ahead's essential in any case.

Clustered by the Pointe des Crolles lighthouse, stalls at the **marché aux huîtres** (oyster market; ☎ 9am–6pm) sell oysters from €3.50 per dozen for small *huîtres creuses* to upwards of €20 for saucer-sized *plates de Cancale*.

## Getting There & Around

Bus stop behind the church on place Lucidas and at Port de la Houle, next to the pungent fish market. **Courriers Bretons** (☎ 02 99 19 70 80) has year-round services to and from St-Malo (€2,

30 minutes). In summer, at least three daily Courriers Bretons buses continue to Port Pican and Port Mer, near Pointe du Grouin.

It's a stunning 35km walk along the coast from Cancale to St-Malo.

A variety of bikes can be hired at **Les 2 Roues de Cancale** (☎ 02 99 89 80 16; 7 rue de L'Industrie; per day from €13).

## POINTE DU GROUIN

At the northern tip of the wild coast between Cancale and St-Malo, this **nature reserve** juts out on a windblown headland. Just east offshore, **île des Landes** is home to a colony of giant black cormorants whose wingspans can reach 170cm.

Via the GR34 coastal hiking trail, Pointe du Grouin is a stunning 7km hike from Cancale and 28km from St-Malo. By the D201 road, it's 4km from Cancale. Cancale tourist office's free map covers the local coastline.

## DINAN

pop 11,200

Set high above the fast-flowing River Rance, the narrow cobblestone streets and squares lined with crooked half-timbered houses making up Dinan's old town is straight out of the Middle Ages – something that's not lost on the deluge of summer tourists. No less than 100,000 visitors turn up to join Dinannais townsfolk dressed in medieval garb for the two-day Fête des Remparts, held every even-numbered year in late July.

## Orientation

Situated 22km south of Dinard, Dinan's most interesting sights are tucked within the tight confines of the old city. Dinan's picturesque riverside port is about 400m downhill to the northeast.

## Information

**Post Office** (7 place Duclos)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 96 87 69 76; www.dinan-tourisme.com; 9 rue du Château; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun)

**Zonzon** (☎ 02 96 87 95 86; 9 rue des Rouairiaux; per hr €4; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, 3-10pm Sun) Internet access, west of the walled city.

## Sights

The half-timbered houses overhanging place des Cordeliers and place des Merciers mark the heart of the old town. A few paces south,

climb up to the little balcony of the **Tour de l'Horloge** (☎ 02 96 87 02 26; rue de l'Horloge; adult/under 18yr €2.90/1.85; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 2-6.30pm Easter-May), a 15th-century clock tower whose chimes ding every quarter-hour.

**Basilique St-Sauveur** (place St-Sauveur; ☎ 9am-6pm) and with a soaring Gothic chancel, has in the north transept a 14th-century grave slab reputed to contain the heart of Bertrand du Guesclin, a 14th-century knight noted for his hatred of the English and his fierce battles to expel them from France. (Ironically, Dinan today has one of the largest English expat communities in Brittany.)

Just east of the church, beyond the tiny **Jardin Anglais** (English Garden), a former cemetery and nowadays a pleasant little park, is the 13th-century **Tour Ste-Cathérine**, with great views down over the viaduct and port.

**Rue du Jerzual** and its continuation, the steep (and slippery when wet) stone **rue du Petit Fort**, both lined with art galleries, antiques shops and restaurants, lead down to the **Vieux Pont** (Old Bridge). From here the little **port** extends northwards, while the 19th-century **Viaduc de Dinan** soars high above to the south.

Atmospherically housed in the keep of the ruined 14th-century **Château de Dinan**, the town's **museum** (☎ 02 96 39 45 20; rue du Château; adult/child €5.35/1.70; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 1.30-5.30pm Oct-Dec & Feb-May) showcases the town's textile industry, with a fine collection of *coiffes* (traditional Breton lace headdresses).

## Activities

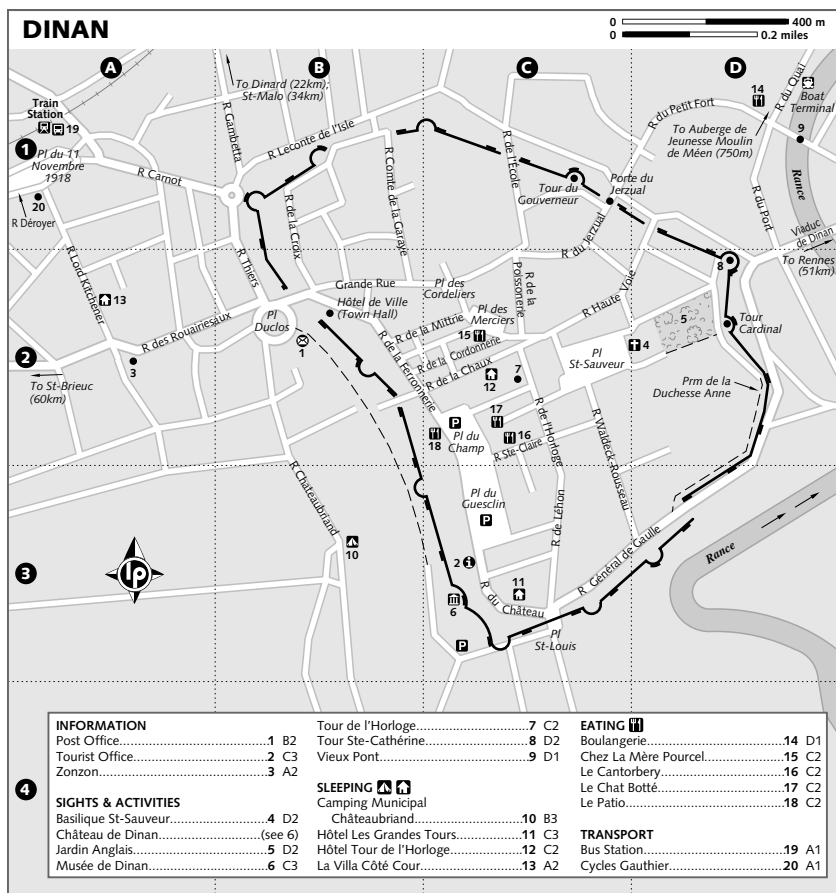
Between May and September, **Compagnie Corsaire** (☎ 08 25 13 81 00; www.compagniecorsaire.com) runs boats along the River Rance to Dinard and St-Malo (one-way/return €22.50/28.50, 2½ hours). Sailing schedules vary according to the tides. From Dinard or St-Malo you can easily return to Dinan by bus (and, from St-Malo, by train too).

Ask at the tourist office for its free leaflet *Discovery Tours*, available in several languages including English, which plots three **walking itineraries** around town.

## Sleeping

In summer, advance reservations are recommended. Ask the tourist office for a list of *chambres d'hôtes* in the surrounding area.

**Camping Municipal Châteaubriand** (☎ in summer 02 96 39 11 96, rest of yr 02 96 39 22 43; 103 rue Châteaubriand; adult €2.40-2.60, tent € €2.70-2.90, car €2-2.10; ☎ late May-



late Sep) This two-star campsite at the foot of the ramparts is the closest to the old town.

**Auberge de Jeunesse Moulin de Méen** (☎ 02 96 39 10 83; [dinan@tuaj.org](mailto:dinan@tuaj.org); Vallée de la Fontaine des Eaux; camping €6, dm ind breakfast €15.70; 🕒 reception 9am-noon & 5-9pm, closed late Dec-early Feb; 📶) Dinan's HI-affiliated youth hostel is in a lovely vine-covered old water mill about 750m north of the port.

**Hôtel Tour de l'Horloge** (☎ 02 96 39 96 92; [hiliotel@wanadoo.fr](http://hiliotel@wanadoo.fr); 5 rue de la Chaux; s €42-57, d €47-62) In the centre of the old town, the 12-room Horloge occupies a charming 18th-century house on a cobbled, car-free lane, which contrasts with its brand-new renovations in colourful North African style. Head to the top floor, where rooms have exposed wooden beams and a lofty view of the hotel's namesake clock tower.

**Hôtel Les Grandes Tours** (☎ 02 96 85 16 20; [www.hotel-dinan-grandes-tours.com](http://www.hotel-dinan-grandes-tours.com); 6 rue du Château; s €48-52, d €51-55; 🕒 Feb-mid-Dec) In its former life as the Hôtel des Messageries, this hotel was fabled as the place Victor Hugo stayed with his very good friend Juliette Drouet in 1836. Blue-shaded rooms (especially those on the sloped-ceilinged top floor) are snug but conducive to snuggling up, and there's lock-up parking (€5 from mid-March to mid-November, free during winter).

**La Villa Côté Cour** (☎ 02 96 39 30 07; [www.villa-cote-cour-dinan.com](http://www.villa-cote-cour-dinan.com); 10 rue Lord Kitchener; s €77.50-87.50, d €85-160, q €190-210; 📶) Live the dream... opening onto a delightful garden, this exquisite *chambre d'hôte* has just four countrified rooms with checked fabrics, scrubbed floorboards and a decadent sauna (€9.50).



## Eating & Drinking

The old city has some really charming (and surprisingly good-value) eateries and bars; with more along the river at the old port.

**Le Cantorbéry** (☎ 02 96 39 02 52; 6 rue Ste-Claire; menus €12.50-38; ☺ lunch & dinner, closed Wed) Occupying a magnificent 17th-century house, this elegant, intimate restaurant is perfect for wining and dining your beloved over a romantic lunch or dinner. Its traditional menu – based on beef, grilled fish and seafood, including *coquilles St-Jacques* (scallops) from St-Brieuc – changes tempo in accordance with the seasons.

**Chez La Mère Pourcel** (☎ 02 96 39 03 80; 3 place des Merciers; menus €28-62.50, mains €18-33; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat & lunch Sun) The beamed dining room of this Dinan institution hasn't changed (much) since it was built in the 15th century. Stellar staples include regional salt-marsh lamb.

Also recommended:

**Le Chat Botté** (☎ 02 96 85 31 58; 18 passage de la Tour de l'Horloge; menus €9-15; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, daily during summer) 'Puss in Boots' is a local old-town favourite for fragrant grilled fish and crêpes.

**Le Patio** (☎ 02 96 39 84 87; 9 place du Champ Clos; menus €10.90-13; ☺ noon-late, closed Mon & lunch Sun) Set around a leafy garden, this contemporary spot is great for international cuisine, tapas or just a drink. The kitchen closes at midnight.

Portside picnickers can pick up warm, fresh-baked goods or even whole cakes, laid out on farmhouse-style wooden tables, from the portside **boulangerie** (rue du Petit Fort).

## Getting There & Around

Buses leave from place Duclos and the bus station. **Illeneo** (☎ 02 99 26 16 00) runs five daily services to Dinard (€2, 30 minutes) and Rennes (€3, 1¼ hours).

There are trains to St-Malo (€7.90, one hour, five daily) and Rennes (€12.20, one hour), both with a change.

**Cycles Gauthier** (☎ 02 96 85 07 60; 15 rue Déroyer; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat) rents out bikes for €15 per day.

For taxi services call ☎ 02 96 39 67 20.

## PAIMPOL

pop 7900

Set around a working fishing harbour and ringed by half-timbered buildings, Paimpol (Pempoull in Breton) is rich in history, as the one-time home port of the Icelandic

fishery, when the town's fishermen would set sail to the seas around Iceland for seven months and more at a stretch. And it's rich in legends – the fishermen lost at sea are recalled in folk tales and *chants de marins* (sea shanties). The town's **Festival de Chant de Marin** ([www.paimpol-festival.com](http://www.paimpol-festival.com)), with traditional Breton dancing, takes place on the quays in August every even-numbered year.

South of the two harbours, Paimpol's town centre clusters around the market square of place du Martray. The bus and train stations are 100m south of this square.

The **tourist office** (☎ 02 96 20 83 16; [www.paimpol-goelo.com](http://www.paimpol-goelo.com); ☺ 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat & 10am-1.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) is on place de la République, and sells local rambling guides (€3).

## Sights & Activities

### MUSEUMS

The splendid **Musée de la Mer** (Sea Museum; ☎ 02 96 22 02 19; rue Labenne; adult/child €4.60/2; ☺ 10.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm mid-Jun–Aug, 2.30-6pm mid-Apr–mid-Jun & early Sep), charting the region's maritime history, is set in a former cod-drying factory.

For land-bound history, visit the **Musée du Costume Breton** (☎ 02 96 22 02 19; rue Raymond Peller; adult/child €2.70/1.20; ☺ 10.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Jul & Aug), containing historic traditional clothing items.

A combined ticket for both museums costs €5.80/2.70 per adult/child.

### STEAM TRAIN

Between May and September, the 1922 steam train **La Vapeur du Trieux** (☎ 08 92 39 14 27; adult/child return €22/11) chuffs along the river bank from Paimpol's station to the artists' town of Pontrieux. Reserve ahead.

### ABBAYE DE BEAUPORT

If you have wheels (or you're up for a glorious 1½-hour walk along the seashore from the town harbour), head 3.5km east to the romantic maritime **Abbaye de Beauport** (☎ 02 96 55 18 58; [www.abbaye-beauport.com](http://www.abbaye-beauport.com), in French; adult/child €5/3; ☺ 10am-7pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm mid-Sep–mid-Jun). En route, stop at the Pointe de Guilben for beautiful bay views. The tourist office has a free map.

## ÎLE DE BRÉHAT

Paimpol is the closest port to **Île de Bréhat** (Enez Vriad in Breton), a tiny, car-free island 8km offshore to the north. With a population of 350, it stretches just 5km from north to south. The most idyllic time to visit is in spring, when Mediterranean wildflowers bloom in its gentle microclimate. In the citadel on the southwestern edge you can visit the **glass-making factory** (☎ 02 96 20 09 09; www.vereriesdebrehat.com; admission €1; ☹ hr vary). It's possible to rent bikes, but the best way to protect the fragile environment is to walk. There is a seasonal municipal campsite; contact Paimpol's tourist office for information.

**Vedettes de Bréhat** (☎ 02 96 55 79 50; www.vedettesdebrehat.com) operates ferries (adult/child return €8.50/7, 15 minutes, at least eight sailings daily) to Île de Bréhat from Pointe L'Arcouest, 6km north of Paimpol. Tickets are also available at Paimpol's tourist office. Bikes cost an extra €15 return to transport, which is only possible on certain in- and out-bound journeys. It's cheaper to rent a bike on the island; shops line the right-hand side of the road when you get off the boat.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Municipal de Cruckin** (☎ 02 96 20 78 47; rue de Cruckin; camping for 1/2 adults €7.50/12.90; ☹ Easter-Sep) Near the Abbaye de Beauport, this eco-campsite runs an environmentally conscious program of energy, water and waste management. It's beautifully sited on the Baie de Kéryty, 3.5km southeast of town off the road to Plouha.

**L'Artimon** (☎ 08 71 11 73 71, 06 24 17 73 12; La Madeleine, Plouezec; dm incl breakfast €15) Backpackers have the informal option of staying at L'Artimon, 8km southeast of town, with a pick-up service in Paimpol if required – call directly or check with Paimpol's tourist office for more info.

**Hôtel Le Terre-Neuvas** (☎ 02 96 55 14 14; fax 02 96 20 47 66; 16 quai Duguay Trouin; d from €32; ☹ mid-Jan–mid-Dec) Perched right beside the harbour and a few steps from the historic town centre as well as the seafront, the two-star Terre-Neuvas has comfortable, incredibly inexpensive rooms, some with views out to sea. Its restaurant (*menus* €19 to €31) is a popular port of call for guests and nonguests.

**K'Loys** (☎ 02 96 20 40 01; www.k-loys.com; 21 quai Morand; d €65-95) Each of the 15 rooms at the

cosy three-star 'Chez Louise', a former ship owner's mansion with good wheelchair access, is individually decorated with striped walls and paisley-pattern prints. There are lovely private lounges with richly upholstered booths to relax over a drink.

**Crêperie-Restaurant Morel** (☎ 02 96 20 86 34; 11 place du Martray; crêpes & galettes €2-9.20; ☹ lunch & dinner) Over two timber-balustraded levels *packed* with Paimpolaises (who wait outside for the doors to open), this cornerstone of the community on Paimpol's pretty main square prepares perfectly buttered Breton crêpes, as well as scrumptious fillings such as chocolate-laced chestnut cream. In summer more laden tables spill onto a pavement terrace. Order a pitcher of cider and settle back for an authentic slice of Breton life.

**L'Islandais** (☎ 02 96 20 93 00; 19 quai Morand; menus €18-35; ☹ lunch & dinner) You'll find a clutch of laid-back, quality seafood restaurants along the western side of the harbour, including this popular spot where the seafood platters are large enough to share between two.

Paimpol's Tuesday-morning **market** spreads over place Gambetta and place du Martray. On weekends, vendors sell freshly shucked oysters at quai Duguay Trouin.

## Getting There & Around

**TS Loisirs** (☎ 02 96 20 51 02; 23 av Chateaubriand), behind the train station, and **Intersport Paimpol** (☎ 02 96 20 59 46; zone de Kerpuns), near the massive Carrefour supermarket complex, both rent a wide variety of bikes and kayaks.

**Tibus** (☎ 08 10 22 22 22) runs buses to and from St-Brieuc (€2, 1½ hours). In summer most continue to Pointe L'Arcouest.

There are several trains or SNCF buses daily between Paimpol and Guingamp (€6.40, 45 minutes), where you can pick up connections to Brest, St-Brieuc and Rennes.

# FINISTÈRE

France's westernmost *département*, Finistère, has a wind-whipped coastline scattered with lighthouses and beacons lashed by waves. Finistère's southern prow, Cornouaille, takes its name from early Celts who sailed from Cornwall and other parts of Britain to settle here, and today it harbours the Breton language, customs and culture.

### BRETON LANGUAGE REDUX

Should you happen past a Brittany outlet of fast-food giant McDonald's, you'll receive a *trugarez* (thank you) for using the rubbish bins, and be wished *kenavo* (goodbye) in the car park.

Presumably, this bilingual French and Breton (Breizh) signage isn't included for now-elderly, first-language (non-French-speaking) Bretons. And it's not for bilingual French/Breton speakers, since, of course, they already speak and read French. Rather, it's a symbolic way of localising the multinational in the region.

This trend isn't confined to burger chains. Throughout Brittany you'll see bilingual Breton street and transport signs, and many other occurrences of the language popping up.

Historically speaking, Breton is a Celtic language related to Cornish and Welsh, and more distantly, to Irish and Scottish Gaelic. Following on from the French Revolution, the government banned the teaching of Breton in schools, punishing children who spoke their mother tongue. As happened with other marginalised Celtic cultures, speakers of all ages were stigmatised. For the next century and a half it remained a language spoken in the sanctum of private homes. Education, post-WWII economics, mass media, and, most of all, fluid transportation between Brittany and the rest of the country also saw French rapidly gain ground. Between 1950 and 1990 there was an 80% reduction in Breton usage.

But what constitutes 'Breton' these days is trickier to pin down. The seeds of the language's revival were planted in the 1960s, particularly after France's May 1968 protests, driven by the younger generation rebelling against their oppressed cultural heritage. Bringing about the rebirth of the language, no longer passed on generationally, wasn't straightforward. More often spoken than written (and both spoken and written with regional differences), settling on a standardised Breton for teaching in schools is still complex.

There's also a distinct difference between the Breton of first-generation speakers and 'neo-Breton', particularly as the new incarnation often replaces French words long intermingled with Breton with completely Breton ones. Case in point: *Aotrou* and *Itron* are now used for the French *Monsieur* and *Madame*. Traditionally, though, they denote someone of exceedingly high rank (*Itron* is the respectful term of address for the Virgin Mary) – creating another generational language gap. (Imagine some stranger you encounter in the street saying, without irony, 'Hello, Exalted One', or the like. Bizarre.) Some older Breton speakers also find it hard to shake the ostracism inflicted on them for their language, and aren't comfortable conversing in it openly.

Breton now also extends beyond its historic boundaries. Originally, Basse Bretagne (Lower Brittany, in the west) spoke variants of the Breton language, while Haute Bretagne (Upper Brittany, in the east, including areas such as St-Malo) spoke Gallo, a language similar to French. But today you'll find Breton signage in Rennes' metro stations and in many other parts of the east, emblemising Brittany's culture across the entire region.

When today's students integrate their school-taught Breton into society, Breton will evolve yet again, as France's mosaic of cultures also continues to evolve. For now as the language regenerates, so does the sense of Breton identity. Bolstered, ironically, by usage by such companies as McDonald's. (And just in case you were wondering, the term in Brittany for a Big Mac is, yep, a Big Mac.)

## ROSCOFF

pop 3700

Arriving across the Channel into Roscoff (Rosko in Breton) provides a captivating first glimpse of Brittany. Granite houses dating from the 16th century wreath this pretty port, which is surrounded by emerald-green fields producing cauliflower, onions, tomatoes, new potatoes and artichokes. Roscoff farmers in distinctive horizontally striped tops, known as 'Johnnies', loaded-up boats with plaited

strings of locally grown, small, pink onions, crossed the Channel to the UK, then peddled – and pedalled – with their onions hanging from their bikes' handlebars. Today, Johnnies have a near mythical status in the area, with a number still continuing the trade and a new wave of younger-generation Johnnies ensuring the survival of this iconic tradition.

Roscoff's waters conceal beds of *goémon* (algae), harvested for foodstuffs as well as *thalasso-thérapie* health and beauty treatments.

## Orientation

Roscoff ranges around a north-facing bay, with its fishing port and pleasure harbour on the western side. Quai d'Auxerre leads northwest – becoming quai Charles de Gaulle, then rue Amiral Réveillère – to the main place Lacaze-Duthiers.

The car-ferry terminal is at Port de Blosson, 2km east of the town centre.

## Information

The ferry terminal has an ATM, but change currency on board as there's no exchange service in town.

**Ferry Laverie** (23 rue Jules Ferry; ☎ 7.30am–9pm)

**Post Office** (19 rue Gambetta)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 98 61 12 13; www.roscoff-tourisme.com; quai d'Auxerre; ☎ 9am–12.30pm & 1.30–7pm Mon–Sat, 10am–12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat Sep–Jun) By the time you're reading this, the tourist office will have moved to its new home next to the light-house. There's a computer for visitors to check their email.

## Sights & Activities

With its Renaissance belfry rising above the flat landscape, the 16th-century Flamboyant Gothic **Église Notre Dame de Kroaz-Batz** (place Lacaze-Duthiers; ☎ 9am–noon & 2–6pm exd religious services) is one of Brittany's most impressive churches.

Wander through 3000 species of exotic plants, many from the southern hemisphere, at **Le Jardin Exotique de Roscoff** (☎ 02 98 61 29 19; www.jardinexotiqueroscoff.com; adult/child €5/2; ☎ 10am–7pm Jun–Sep, 10.30am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Apr, May & Oct, 2–5pm Nov & Mar).

Photographs trace Roscoff's roaming onion farmers from the early 19th century at the **Maison des Johnnies** (☎ 02 98 61 25 48; 48 rue Brizeux; adult/child €4/2.50; ☎ tours in English & French 10.30am Tue & 3pm Thu outside school holidays, 3pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri school holidays, additional tours 11am & 5pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri & 3pm & 5pm Sun mid-Jun–mid-Sep). Tours at 5pm on Tuesdays between mid-June and mid-September include a free hour-long meeting with Johnnies from 6pm to 7pm. Check ahead, as it's anticipated that the number of tours will increase.

You can learn about local seaweed harvesting at the **Centre de Découverte des Algues** (☎ 02 98 69 77 05; 5 rue Victor Hugo; admission free, walks per adult/child €5/3.50; ☎ 9am–noon & 2–7pm Mon–Sat), which also organises guided walks, and gives regular free lectures (often in English and German). Then immerse yourself in the stuff at **Thalasso Roscoff** (☎ 08 25 00 20 99; www.thalasso

.com, in French; rue Victor Hugo; ☎ closed Dec), which offers health-inducing activities including a heated seawater pool, a *hammam* (Turkish baths) and a jacuzzi (€11 for all three).

## ÎLE DE BATZ

Bordering what is basically a 4-sq-km vegetable garden fertilised by seaweed, the beaches on the **Île de Batz** (pronounced ba; Enez Vaz in Breton) are a peaceful place to bask. The mild island climate tends the luxuriant **Jardins Georges Delaselle** (☎ 02 98 61 75 65; adult/child €4.50/2; ☎ 1–6.30pm daily Jul & Aug, 2–6pm Wed–Mon Apr–Jun & Sep–Oct), founded in the 19th century, with over 1500 plants from all five continents.

Ferries (adult/child €7.50/4 return, bike €7 return, 20 minutes each way) between Roscoff and Île de Batz run every 30 minutes between 8am and 8pm from late June to mid-September; there are about eight sailings daily during the rest of the year.

On the island, **Le Saout** (☎ 02 98 61 77 65) and **Roulez Jeunesse** (☎ 02 98 61 76 91) rent bicycles for around €10 per day.

## Sleeping & Eating

Roscoff's hotels are home to some first-rate restaurants.

**Camping de Perharidy** (☎ 02 98 69 70 86; www.camping-aux4saisons.fr, in French; Le Ruguel; campsites €8.70–11; ☎ Easter–Sep) Close to a sandy beach in the grounds of a lovely 19th-century mansion, this campsite is approximately 3km southwest of Roscoff.

**Hôtel Les Arcades** (☎ 02 98 69 70 45; www.hotel-les-arcades-roscoff.com, in French; 15 rue Amiral Réveillère; d €46–70; ☎ Easter–early Nov; ☎ ) Perched right above the rocks on the waterfront in the town's heart, this cosy two-star hotel, run by the same family for nearly a century, has 24 light-filled, light-coloured rooms and a glass-paned restaurant (mains around €15) serving up seafood and spectacular views.

**Hôtel Les Chardons Bleus** (☎ 02 98 69 72 03; www.chardonsbleus.fr.st, in French; 4 rue Amiral Réveillère; d €55–80; ☎ mid-Mar–Jan) Set back just 100m from the port, in the town centre, the 'Thistles', a Logis de France, has 10 comfortable rooms, and an old-fashioned formal restaurant (*menus* €10 to €40) specialising in seafood.

**Hôtel du Centre** (☎ 02 98 61 24 25; www.chezjanie.com; €59–108; ☎ mid-Feb–mid-Nov) Contemporary, artistic rooms at this boutique hotel look like they've been lifted out of a magazine, and indeed they've featured in many. Sea-view

rooms looking out over the postcard-pretty old port cost around 20% more. But it's perhaps best known for its restaurant, *Chez Janie* (menu €24), serving Breton classics like *kig ha farz* – a farmers' family meal based around the Breton cake *far*, cooked in a linen bag within a boiling bacon and vegetable stew.

Also recommended:

**La P'tite Fabrik** (☎ 02 98 69 92 69; 18 rue Jules Ferry) Watch artisan crêpes being handmade in the open kitchen of this crêpe shop in the old town, and perhaps pick some up for a beach picnic.

**Le Surcouf** (☎ 02 98 69 71 89; 14 rue Amiral Réveillère; menus €10-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) A reliable year-round opener, this brasserie-restaurant is unsurprisingly popular with locals. Specific opening hours and days can vary slightly.

**Brasserie Restaurant Les Alizés** (☎ 02 98 69 75 90; quai d'Auxerre; menus €12.50-31; ☎ lunch & dinner Jun–mid-Sep, closed 1 day per week mid-Sep–May) This sophisticated 1st-floor restaurant has a lift for wheelchair access, a nautical area in its sea-view dining room, and top-quality seafood.

## Getting There & Away

**Brittany Ferries** (☎ reservations 08 25 82 88 28; www.brittany-ferries.com) links Roscoff to Plymouth in England (five to nine hours, one to three daily year-round) and Cork in Ireland (14 hours, once-weekly June to September). Boats leave from Port de Blosson, about 2km east of the town centre.

The combined bus and train station is on rue Ropartz Morvan.

**Cars Bihan** (☎ 02 98 83 45 80) operates buses from Roscoff to Brest (€2, 1½ to two hours, up to four daily), departing from the ferry terminal (Port de Blosson) and passing by the town centre.

There are regular trains and SNCF buses to Morlaix (€5.20, 45 minutes), where you can make connections to Brest, Quimper and St-Brieuc.

## MORLAIX

pop 17,000

At the bottom of a deep valley sluicing through northeastern Finistère, Morlaix is an engaging and easily accessed city that's also a good gateway to the coast and the *enclos paroissiaux* (enclosed parishes), the rich sculptures surrounding many of the parish churches fanning out to the south (such as the 16th-century masterpiece in the village of Pleyben).

Towering above the town, the arched 58m-high railway viaduct was built in 1863. Below, a few steps southwest, is the **tourist office** (☎ 02 98 62 14 94; officetourisme.morlaix@wanadoo.fr; place des Otages; ☎ 10am-2.30pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jun). From the train station, take rue de Léon south, then turn left and descend the stairs of rue Courte.

**Café de l'Aurore** (☎ 02 98 88 03 05; 17 rue Traverse; ☎ Mon-Sat) has a free internet terminal for bar customers, and regular live music. Or log on at **Cyberarena** (☎ 02 38 88 15 83; 16 rue Basse; per hr €4.50, ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Sat, 1pm-1am Sun).

## Sights & Activities

The late-15th-century Flamboyant Gothic **Église St-Melaine** (☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm) bears a star-studded barrel-vault roof and polychrome wooden statues, including St Peter and the eponymous St Melaine.

The area's history, archeology and art are showcased at **Le Musée de Morlaix** (☎ 02 98 88 68 88; place des Jacobins; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 2-6pm Sat Easter-May & Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 2-5pm Sat Oct-Easter & Jun). The museum also incorporates the beautifully preserved half-timbered house nearby, **La Maison à Pondalez** (☎ 02 98 62 14 94; 9 Grand' Rue; ☎ 10.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat Jul & Aug, 10.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sat Sep-Jun). Tickets per adult/child cost €4.10/2.20 for both the museum and the house.

A great way to see the area by land and sea combines a boat trip through the islands of the Baie de Morlaix and a picturesque train trip between Roscoff and Morlaix with **Le Léon à Ferret à Flots** (☎ 02 98 62 07 52; www.aferaflots.org, in French; adult/child €23/12; ☎ Apr-Sep, hours depend on tides).

## Sleeping & Eating

Rue Ange de Guernisac has several enticing restaurants.

**Ty Pierre** (☎ 02 98 63 25 75, pierreyvesjacquet@hotmail.com; This place de Viarmes; s/d/tr with shared bathroom incl breakfast €31/47/62) Artworks and artefacts Pierre-Yves Jacquet's picked up on his Asian travels now decorate his *chambre d'hôte's* 10 spacious rooms. No, at this price there's no lift (count on climbing three or four floors). And most rooms don't have their own bathroom (they're just along the wide corridors). But bikes are available for rent from €15 per day. Bonus: the B&B's just across from the cosy Breton bar, La Chope (closed Monday),

with French football on the telly and cider on tap.

**Hôtel de l'Europe** (☎ 02 98 62 11 99; www.hotel-europe-com.fr; 1 rue d'Aiguillon; r €85-150) Regal, refined, yet still relaxed, the Hôtel de l'Europe occupies an elegant 19th-century building. Moulded ceilings, carved panelling and sculpted woodwork fill the sweeping public areas (with wi-fi); the romantic guest rooms have rich apricot and rose tones and mod cons including free broadband.

**Grand Café de la Terrasse** (☎ 02 98 88 20 25; 31 place des Otages; mains €12.50-19.80; ☎ 7am-midnight Mon-Sat) In the heart of town, Morlaix's showpiece is this stunning 1872-established brasserie with an original central spiral staircase. Sip tea, coffee or something stronger, or sup on classical brasserie fare like rabbit and leek crumble.

## Getting There & Away

Morlaix has frequent train services including to Brest (€9.40, 45 minutes), Roscoff (€5.20, 30 minutes) and Paris (Gare Montparnasse; from €65.40, four hours).

## HUELGOAT

pop 1709

Visitors to Brittany often stick to the coast, but the mystical wooded interior, steeped in Breton mythology and legend, reveals a completely different side to the region. One of the most enchanting inland villages is Huelgoat (An Uhelgoat in Breton), 30km south of Morlaix. The village borders the unspoiled Forêt d'Huelgoat, a forest with otherworldly rock formations, caves, menhirs and abandoned silver and lead mines. To the east and northeast are the Forêt de St-Ambroise and the Forêt de Fréau.

## Orientation & Information

Huelgoat hugs a small Y-shaped lake. Its **tourist office** (☎/fax 02 98 99 72 32; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun) is in the Moulin du Chaos, an old mill beside the bridge at the eastern end of the lake.

## Activities

The forest's **walking tracks** are a haven of calm in spring and autumn, but get busy in summer and muddy in the wet winter months. An undemanding walking trail (45 minutes round trip) leads walkers downstream from the bridge, on the opposite bank to the tourist

office. From here, the trickling River Argent disappears into a picturesque, wooded valley that is punctuated by giant, moss-covered granite boulders.

Longer hikes (1½ to two hours) lead along the Promenade du Canal to some old silver mines and to the unremarkable Grotte d'Artus (Arthur's Cave).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Municipal du Lac** (☎ 02 98 99 78 80; rue Général de Gaulle; per person/site from €3/3.50; ☎ mid-Jun-mid-Sep) This 80-place lakeside campsite sits 1km west of the town centre.

**Hôtel-Restaurant du Lac** (☎ 02 98 99 71 14; fax 02 98 99 70 91; 9 rue Général de Gaulle; r €49-85; ☎ closed Jan) Huelgoat's only hotel, a lime-green Logis de France with forest-green trimmings, fronts the lake in the centre of town. Below its 15 soundproofed rooms it has a good on-site restaurant (*menus* €28 to €34) serving French fare from around the country, such as chicken breast with walnut and cheese sauce, as well as pizzas (€6.80 to €10.80) and warming Irish coffees. Wi-fi's free.

**Crêperie des Myrtilles** (☎ 02 98 99 72 66; 26 place Aristide-Briand; crêpes €1.90-6.20, menus €9.20-14.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Jan-Oct, closed Mon except Jul & Aug) Inside this slate-floored place with low wooden ceilings, located on the town's main square, you can tuck into the signature *crêpe aux myrtilles* (crêpes with locally picked blueberries) or an egg-and-cheese-concocted *crêpe forestière*. There's a lovely outdoor summer terrace. Afterwards, peek in at the art gallery **Les Stéles** (☎ 02 98 99 79 20; www.les.steles.fr, in French; 24 place Aristide Briand) next door.

Huelgoat has a trio of charming *chambres d'hôtes* right in the village:

**Finistère B&B** (☎ 02 98 99 83 72; 18 rue des Cieux; s/d incl breakfast €41/57) Two of these four light, airy rooms are self-catering; the rate drops by €6 if you forgo breakfast. No credit cards.

**O'Brien's** (☎ 02 98 99 82 73; www.chateaubrien.com; 4 rte de Berrien; r incl breakfast from €50) Kids are warmly welcomed at this countrified spot, which has a convivial guest lounge with club sofas and a beamed ceiling.

**Laura's** (☎ 02 98 99 91 62; 2 impasse de Cendres; r incl breakfast from €55) This pretty blue-shuttered place opens to a sunny garden. Wi-fi's free.

## Getting There & Away

At least two services daily travel to/from Morlaix (€2, one hour). Buses stop in front of the church in place Aristide-Briand.



## BREST

pop 145,100

Today much of Brest's mid-20th-century architecture is maturing as the city settles into its new skin after it – as one of France's most important naval and commercial ports – was virtually reduced to rubble by Allied air attacks during WWII. The city was rapidly rebuilt after the war to provide housing for its residents, many of whom lived in temporary accommodation for an entire generation.

The town is still a major port and military base; you'll see French sailors' blue uniforms with gold epaulettes throughout the town, as well as plenty of students from Brest's university.

Brest's built-up city centre provides a dramatic contrast to the seaswept Île d'Ouessant (opposite), accessible by boat or plane from Brest.

### Orientation

Brest sprawls along the northern shore of the deep natural harbour known as the Rade de Brest. Its 13th-century castle (one of the few buildings to survive the bombing), the naval base (Arsenal Maritime) and Port de Commerce are on the waterfront. From the castle, rue de Siam runs northeast to place de la Liberté, the city's main square, then it intersects with av Georges Clemenceau, the main northwest–southeast traffic artery.

### Information

**Point Bleu** (7 rue de Siam; ☎ 7am–8.30pm) Launderette.

**Post Office** (place Général Leclerc)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 98 44 24 96; www.brest-metropole-tourisme.fr; place de la Liberté; ☎ 9.30am–7pm Mon–Sat & 10am–noon Sun late Jun–Aug, 9.30am–6pm Mon–Sat Sep–Jun)

### Sights & Activities

With 50 tanks in three thematic pavilions – polar, tropical and temperate – the gleaming modern aquarium **Océanopolis** (☎ 02 98 34 40 40; www.oceanopolis.com; port de Plaisance; adult/child €15.80/11; ☎ 9am–6pm daily May–Jun & early–mid-Sep, to 7pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am–5pm Tue–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat & Sun Oct–Mar) is great, especially on (not uncommon) rainy days. Tip: buying your ticket from the tourist office for the same price allows you to skip the queues and head straight in to view the kelp forests, seals, crabs, anemones, penguins, sharks and more. It's about 3km east of the city centre; take bus 15 from place de la Liberté.

Learn about Brest's maritime military history at the **Musée de la Marine** (Naval Museum; ☎ 02 98 22 12 39; adult/child €5/free; ☎ 10am–6.30pm Apr–mid-Sep, 10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Mon mid-Sep–Mar). The museum is housed within the fortified 13th-century **Château de Brest**, built to defend the harbour on the River Penfeld. Following the 1532 union of Brittany and France, both the castle and its harbour became a royal fortress. From its ramparts there are striking views of the harbour and the naval base. Museum tickets cost €3 from Brest's tourist office.

A sobering reminder of how Brest was on the eve of WWII can be seen at the 14th-century tower, **Tour Tanguy** (☎ 02 98 00 88 60; place Pierre Péron; admission free; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–7pm daily Jun–Sep, 2–5pm Wed–Thu & 2–6pm Sat & Sun Oct–May). Other exhibits on the town's history include the documented visit of three Siamese ambassadors in 1686 who presented gifts to the court of Louis XIV; rue de Siam was renamed in their honour.

**La Société Maritime Azenor** (☎ 02 98 41 46 23; adult/child €15/10; ☎ Apr–Sep) offers 1½-hour cruises around the harbour and the naval base two or three times daily from both the Port de Commerce (which is near the castle) and the Port de Plaisance (which is opposite Océanopolis).

### Festivals & Events

**Les Juedis du Port** (Harbour Thursdays; admission free; ☎ 7.30pm–midnight Thu mid-Jul–late Aug) Try to plan to be in Brest on a Thursday night during summer when Les Juedis du Port fill the port with live rock, reggae and world music, as well as street performances and children's events.

### Sleeping

**Camping du Goulet** (☎ 02 98 45 86 84; www.campingdugoulet.com, in French; Ste-Anne du Portzic; campsite €13–23; ☎) This huge, hilly, three-star campsite is in Ste-Anne du Portzic, 6km southwest of Brest and 400m from the sea. Take bus 28 from rue Georges Clemenceau (near the tourist office) to the Le Cosquer stop.

**Auberge de Jeunesse Éthic Étapes** (☎ 02 98 41 90 41; brest.aj.cis@wanadoo.fr; rue de Kerbriant; dm incl sheets & breakfast €16; ☎) Near Océanopolis and a stone's throw from the artificial beach at Moulin Blanc, this bright, modern, 118-bed hostel has bike storage and good wheelchair access. Take bus 15 from the train station to the terminus (Port de Plaisance).

**Hôtel Bellevue** (☎ 02 98 80 51 78; www.hotelbellevue.fr, in French; 53 rue Victor Hugo; d €42–82) With

shades of blue and yellow throughout the 26 rooms and the welcoming bar area (open 2pm to 11pm), this cheerful, clean, two-star hotel has the convenience of on-site parking (€5) and a lift, as well as Brest's shopping streets, train station and port a short stroll away.

**Hôtel Continental** (☎ 02 98 80 50 40; continental-brest@hotel-sofibra.com; rue Émile Zola; s €101-133, d €165-170; 🍷) With sleek, streamlined rooms and crisp white bathrooms finished off with tiled friezes, the classy three-star Continental has a much more lavish, art-deco-styled interior than its plain exterior lets on. All 73 sound-proofed rooms are equipped with mod cons including satellite TV. Considerable reductions on room rates on weekends.

## Eating

**Amour de Pomme de Terre** (☎ 02 98 43 48 51; 23 rue Halles St-Louis; menus €15-30; 🍷 lunch & dinner, closed Sun & lunch Sat) 'Potato Love' serves up all manner of potato-oriented dishes such as gratins, along with fresh fruit and vegetable salads from the covered market opposite, and a dip into a basket of rich dried sausages, from which you hack off a hunk.

**Ma Petite Folie** (☎ 02 98 42 44 42; Port de Plaisance; menus €20-40; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Aboard an old green-and-white lobster-fishing boat strung with buoys and forever beached at Moulin Blanc, this character-filled restaurant has exceptional crab, prawns and fresh fish in butter sauce, ideally finished off with pear tart for dessert and washed down with crisp white wine.

**Fleur de Sel** (☎ 02 98 44 38 65; 15bis rue de Lyon; mains €22-41; 🍷 lunch & dinner, closed Sun, lunch Sat & Mon) Its style is minimalist art deco but the atmosphere is warm and welcoming at this creative place, run by the same owners as Amour de Pomme de Terre, but serving up a wider variety of creative French cuisine such as veal kidneys sizzled in truffle vinegar.

Head to **Les Halles St-Louis** (🕒 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun), Brest's covered market, for self-catering supplies. An **open-air market** takes place out front on Sunday mornings.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Brest's newly expanded **airport** ([www.brest.aeroport.fr](http://www.brest.aeroport.fr)) has regular Ryanair flights to/from London (Luton), and Flybe flights to/from Birmingham, Exeter, Southampton and

Edinburgh, with services to additional destinations on the cards.

### BOAT

Ferries to Île d'Ouessant (see p328) leave from the Port de Commerce. In summer, **Azénor** (☎ 02 98 41 46 23; [www.azenor.com](http://www.azenor.com), in French) connects Brest with Camaret-sur-Mer on the Crozon Peninsula (one-way adult/child €9/7, one hour, twice daily except Saturday during July and August).

### BUS

Brest's **bus station** (☎ 02 98 44 46 73) is beside the train station. Routes include Le Conquet (€2, 45 minutes, six daily) and Roscoff (€2, 1½ hours, four daily).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Hire companies include **ADA** (☎ 02 98 44 44 88; 9 av Georges Clemenceau), which also rents bikes, and **Europcar** (☎ 02 98 44 66 88; rue Voltaire).

### TRAIN

There are frequent trains or SNCF buses to Quimper (€14.60, 1¼ hours) and Morlaix (€9.40, 45 minutes), which has connections to Roscoff. There are also around 15 TGV trains daily to Rennes (€30, two hours) and Paris (Gare Montparnasse; from €86.80, 4½ hours).

## Getting Around

Shuttle buses (one-way €4.60) connect the bus station and the airport approximately hourly; a taxi for the 10km trip costs around €15.

The local bus network **Bibus** (☎ 02 98 80 30 30) sells tickets good for two hours for €1.20 and day passes for €3. There's an information kiosk on place de la Liberté.

From June to September, the tourist office rents bikes for €8 per day (€4 with a bus day pass).

To order a taxi call ☎ 02 98 80 18 01 or ☎ 02 98 80 68 06.

## ÎLE D'OUessant

pop 950

Although it's frequented by summer visitors from the ferryload, free-roaming little black sheep and traditional houses give the wind-swept Île d'Ouessant (Enez Eusa in Breton, meaning 'Island of Terror'; Ushant in English) an ends-of-the-earth feel – best experienced by hiking its 45km craggy coastal path.

## Orientation & Information

Ferries land at Port du Stiff on the east coast. The island's only village is Lampaul, 4km west on the sheltered Baie de Lampaul. A handful of hotels, restaurants and shops are sprinkled along the west coast.

Île d'Ouessant's **tourist office** (☎ 02 98 48 85 83; www.ot-ouessant.fr, in French; place de l'Église, Lampaul; ☹ 10am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun Jun-Sep, closed Oct-May) sells walking brochures and can hook you up with operators offering horse riding, sailing and other activities.

## Sights & Activities

### MUSEUMS

The black-and-white-striped **Phare de Créac'h** is the world's most powerful lighthouse. Beaming two white flashes every 10 seconds, visible for over 50km, it serves as a beacon for over 50,000 ships entering the Channel each year. Beneath is the island's main museum, the **Musée des Phares et des Balises** (Lighthouse & Beacon Museum; ☎ 02 98 48 80 70; adult/child €4.10/2.60; ☹ 10.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 1.30-5pm Oct-Mar), which tells the story of these vital navigation aids; more interesting is the section on shipwrecks and underwater archeology.

Two typical local houses make up the small **Écomusée d'Ouessant** (☎ 02 98 48 86 37; Maison du Niou; adult/child €3.30/2.10; ☹ 10.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 1.30-5pm Oct-Mar). One recreates a traditional homestead, furnished like a ship's cabin, with furniture fashioned from driftwood and painted in bright colours to mask its imperfections; the other explores the island's history and customs.

A combined ticket giving entry to both museums costs €6.50/4.10 for an adult/child. Check ahead as schedules are liable to change.

### BEACHES

**Plage de Corz**, 600m south of Lampaul, is the island's best beach. Other good spots to stretch out are **Plage du Prat**, **Plage de Yuzin** and **Plage Ar Lan**. All are easily accessible by bike from Lampaul or Port du Stiff.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Municipal** (☎ 02 98 48 84 65; fax 02 98 48 83 99; Stang Ar Glan, Lampaul; per person from €2.80; ☹ Apr-Sep) About 500m east of Lampaul, this sprawling 100-pitch place looks more like a football field than a campsite.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 02 98 48 84 53; fax 02 98 48 87 42; La Croix-Rouge, Lampaul; dm incl breakfast €15;

☹ closed last 3 weeks Jan) This friendly hostel, on the hill above Lampaul, has two- to six-person rooms. It's popular with school and walking groups; reservations are essential.

**Hôtel Roc'h Ar Mor** (☎ 02 98 48 80 19; roch.armor@wanadoo.fr; Lampaul; d €55-87, tr €66.50-87; ☹ mid-Feb-Dec) It's worth paying a tad extra for a panoramic sea view and a balcony at this appealing 15-room hotel with sunlit blue-and-white rooms and good wheelchair access. In a superb location next to the Baie de Lampaul, there's also a good restaurant (mains from €7), with a terrace overlooking the ocean.

**Crêperie Ti A Dreuz** (☎ 02 98 48 83 01; Lampaul; crêpes around €3-8; ☹ Easter-mid-Sep) You could be forgiven for thinking you'd been at sea too long, or knocked back too much Breton cider, but 'the slanting house' is so-named for its wonky walls. This quaint island crêperie serves delicious galettes: try the *ouessantine*, with creamy potato, cheese and sausage.

**Ty Korn** (☎ 02 98 48 87 33; Lampaul; lunch/dinner menus €15/30) The ground floor of this hyperfriendly place is a bar, serving Breton black-wheat beers (made from the same *blé noire* as Breton galettes); upstairs there's an agreeable restaurant. Opening hours can vary.

If you forgot the sandwich filling, you'll find minimarkets in Lampaul.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Finist'air** (☎ 02 98 84 64 87; www.finistair.fr) flies from Brest's airport to Ouessant in a mere 15 minutes. There are two flights daily (one-way adult/child €63/36); transporting a bicycle costs €15 one-way.

### BOAT

Ferries depart from Brest and the tiny town (and Brittany's most westerly point) of Le Conquet (Konk Leon in Breton). Buses operated by **Les Cars St-Mathieu** (☎ 02 98 89 12 02) link Brest with Le Conquet (€2, 45 minutes, six daily).

In high summer it's a good idea to reserve at least one day in advance and to check in 30 minutes before departure. Transporting a bicycle costs €11.40. Ferry fares quoted are all return.

**Penn Ar Bed** (☎ 02 98 80 80 80; www.pennarbed.fr) sails from the Port de Commerce in Brest (adult/child €33.40/19.10, 2½ hours) and from Le Conquet (€29.20/16.60, 1½ hours). Boats run between each port and the island two to

five times daily from May to September and once daily between October and April.

## Getting Around

### BICYCLE

Bike-hire operators have kiosks at the Port du Stiff ferry terminal and compounds just up the hill as well as outlets in Lampaul. The going rate for town/mountain bikes is €10/14. You can save by booking and prepaying for a mountain bike (€10) at the Brest tourist office.

Cycling on the coastal footpath is forbidden – the fragile turf is strictly reserved for walkers.

### MINIBUS

Islander-run minibus services such as **Ouessant Voyage** (☎ 06 07 90 07 43) meet the ferry at Port du Stiff and will shuttle you to Lampaul or your accommodation for a flat fare of €2 (to guarantee a seat in July and August, book ahead at the island tourist office, or at the tourist office in Brest). For the return journey, the pick-up point is the car park beside Lampaul's church.

Minibus owners also offer two-hour guided tours (€15 per person) of the island, in French.

## PRESQU'ÎLE DE CROZON

The anchor-shaped Crozon Peninsula is part of the Parc Naturel Régional d'Armorique, and one of the most scenic spots in Brittany. The partly forested peninsula is criss-crossed by some 145km of signed walking trails, with crêperies in traditional stone buildings tucked in and around the hinterland.

### Ménez-Hom

To feel Brittany's wind beneath your wings, the **Club Celtic de Vol Libre** (☎ 02 98 81 50 27; www.vol-libre-menez-hom.com, in French; hang-gliding & paragliding from €75) offers three-hour hang-gliding and paragliding sessions off the rounded, 330m-high, heather- and grass-clad hump of Ménez-Hom. Situated at the peninsula's eastern end, a surfaced road leads to the top of the summit, which has sublime views over the Baie de Douarnenez.

### Landévennec

pop 371

To the north of Ménez-Hom, the River Aulne flows into the Rade de Brest beside

the pretty village of Landévennec, home to the ruined Benedictine **Abbaye St-Guenolé**. The abbey **museum** (☎ 02 98 27 35 90; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 10am-7pm daily Jul-mid-Sep, 2-6pm Sun-Fri May-Jun & late Sep) records the history of the settlement, founded by St Guenolé in AD 485 and the oldest Christian site in Brittany. Nearby, a new abbey is home to a contemporary community of monks, which runs a little shop selling homemade fruit jellies.

### Argol

pop 746

Argol is a quaint village in its own right, but its main draw is the **Musée du Cidre du Bretagne** (Breton Cider Museum; ☎ 02 98 27 35 85; adult/child €5/free; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-7pm Apr-Sep & school holidays, 10am-1pm & 2-7pm Jul & Aug). This former dairy's old stone buildings have been transformed into a working *cidrerie* producing over 300,000 bottles annually. A visit (allow around an hour, including a French-language but very visual film) takes you through the history of cider in Brittany and present-day production. And, of course, you get to taste it too. In July and August only, one of the barns is used as a crêperie (crêpes €4.50 to €7.50; open noon to 10pm nonstop).

## Crozon & Morgat

pop 8000

The area's largest town, Crozon, is the engine room for the peninsula. On the water 2km south, Morgat was built in the 1930s by the Peugeot brothers (of motor-vehicle fame) as a summer resort.

Every Tuesday during July and August free concerts take place on place d'Ys, and each year in mid-August the area hosts the **Festival du Bout du Monde** (Festival of the End of the World; www.festivalduboutdumonde.com, in French), featuring world music.

### INFORMATION

Housed in the former railway station, the **Crozon tourist office** (☎ 02 98 27 07 92; www.crozon.com, in French; bd Pralognan; ☎ 9.15am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun Jul & Aug, 9.15am-noon & 2pm-5.30pm or 6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) is on the main road to Camaret.

The **Morgat tourist office** (☎ 02 98 27 29 49; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri) overlooks the promenade at the corner of bd de la Plage and doubles as the town's **post office**.

## ECOBUZZ

Tucked away on the road to Crozon 8km west of Le Faou, **Ferme Apicole de Terenez** (☎ 02 98 81 06 90; Rosnoën; www.ferme-apicole-de-terenez.com; s incl breakfast €30-33, d €37-43; ☒) is abuzz with live bees that you can view in its **honey museum** (admission free; ☎ 9am–at least 7pm daily). Depending on the season, you might also see *apiculteurs* (beekeepers) Irène and Stéphane Brindeau using environmentally friendly cold-extraction methods to extract all-natural honey, produced with the pollen of flowers and trees, from giant combs in the workshop here. You can buy honey, nougat and other homemade honey products like *hydromel* (*chouchen* in Breton; a fermented, alcoholic drink made from honey and water).

But this little haven is more than just a hive of honey-making. The grounds extend to a private forest and even a private island (accessible by foot at low tide; you can walk around it in about 30 minutes), which guests can explore while staying in one of the farm's six timber-lined *chambre d'hôte* rooms. Rates include the sweetest of breakfasts, with the farm's honey baked into cakes, biscuits and more. The Brindeau family (who describe their work here as 'not a job, a passion') can also help organise kayak rental to paddle around the property and beyond. You can cook up a feast on the barbecue, or head just 200m down the road to the postcard-perfect waterfront restaurant, **L'Ermitage** (☎ 02 98 81 93 61; menus €16.50-33.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun, daily Aug, closed Mar), serving fish caught right outside the door.

## ACTIVITIES

Beyond the marina at the southern end of Morgat's fine sandy **beach**, the coastal path offers an excellent 13km hike (part of the GR34) along the sea cliffs to **Cap de la Chèvre**.

Morgat-based companies **Vedettes Rosmeur** (☎ 02 98 27 10 71) and **Vedettes Sirènes** (☎ 02 98 26 20 10) operate 45-minute boat trips to the colourful **sea caves** along the coast. Tours (adult/child €10/7) depart from Morgat harbour several times daily from April to September.

## SLEEPING & EATING

Morgat's seafront and place d'Ys are good spots to trawl for seafood restaurants.

**Camping Les Pieds Dans l'Eau** (☎ 02 98 27 62 43; http://lespiedsdansleau.free.fr, in French; St-Fiacre; per person/tent/car from €4/4/2.30; ☎ mid-Jun–mid-Sep) 'Camping feet in the water' (almost literally, at high tide) is one of 16 campsites along the peninsula.

**Mana Mana Backpacker** (☎ 02 98 26 20 97; www.mana-mana.net; rte de Penfrat, Le Pouldu; dm €15-16, sheets €3; ☎ closed mid-Jan–Mar) In the best free-spirited travellers' tradition, this 30-bed independent hostel has a cosy lounge/party room, a self-catering kitchen, good wheelchair access and a garden, as well as free wi-fi. You can rent surfboards and bikes for €5 each per day; breakfast costs €5.50. There are discounts for longer stays. From the bus stop, head north along the beach and turn left on rue de Trelez for 900m.

**Hôtel de la Baie** (☎ 02 98 27 07 51; hotel.delabaie@presquile-crozon.com; 46 bd de la Plage, Morgat; d €40-65) One of the *very* few places to remain open year-

round, this simple, friendly, family-run spot on Morgat's promenade has views over the ocean and is one of the best deals around – even better if you take a room with shower only (from €33). Parking's free; breakfast costs €6.50.

**Saveurs et Marées** (☎ 02 98 26 23 18; 52 bd Plage, Morgat; menus €17-45; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Feb) Our pick of Morgat's clutch of restaurants is this lemon-yellow cottage overlooking the sea for its breezy dining room, sunny terrace and consistently good, locally caught seafood (including succulent lobster).

## Camaret-sur-Mer pop 2600

At the western extremity of the Crozon Peninsula, Camaret is a classic little fishing village – or at least, it was until early last century, as France's then biggest crayfish port. Abandoned fishing-boat carcasses now decay in its harbour, but it remains an enchanting place that lures artists, with an ever-increasing number of **art galleries** (15 to date) dotted around town, particularly along rue de la Marne and around place St-Thomas, one block north of the waterfront.

Camaret's **tourist office** (☎ 02 98 27 93 60; www.camaret-sur-mer.com, in French; 15 quai Kléber; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat & 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) is on the waterfront.

The **Chapelle Notre-Dame-de-Rocamadour** (☎ school holidays only), its timber roof like an inverted ship's hull, is dedicated to the sailors of Camaret, who have adorned it with votive offerings of oars, life buoys and model ships.



**Pointe de Pen-Hir**, 3km south of Camaret, is a spectacular headland bounded by steep, sheer sea cliffs, with two WWII memorials.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Hôtel Vauban** (☎ 02 98 27 91 36; fax 02 98 27 96 34; 4 quai du Styvel; d €37-45; ☹ Feb-Nov) Its airy rooms are contemporary, but the Vauban's old-fashioned hospitality extends to its large rear garden with a barbecue to grill your own fish; and a piano to play. Its bar remains a favourite with Camaret's old-timers too.

**Crêperie Rocamadour** (☎ 02 98 27 93 17; quai Kléber; mains €10-14; ☹ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun Sep-Jun, daily Jul & Aug) Close to the tourist office, this beamed-ceilinged place turns out carefully prepared galettes as well as mains like citrus-infused salmon. Finish off with a flaming flambéed crêpe or one smothered in melted chocolate.

**Del Mare** (☎ 02 98 27 97 22; 16 quai Gustave Toudouze; menus €13.50-26.50; ☹ lunch & dinner daily Jul & Aug, closed Tue & Wed early Apr-Jun & Sep-mid-Nov) Seafood is the order of the day at this marine-styled place on the main stretch of waterfront, with a clutch of tables on its little timber terrace. Service is prompt and friendly.

There are supermarkets on quai du Styvel and rue de Loc'h.

### Getting There & Around

**Azénor** (p327) runs seasonal ferries between Brest and the Presqu'Île de Crozon.

From mid-April to mid-September, **Penn Ar Bed** (☎ 02 98 80 80 80; www.pennarbed.fr) sails between Camaret and Île d'Ouessant (adult/child return from €30.10/17.10, slightly higher in peak season)

Five buses daily run from Quimper to Crozon (€2, 1¼ hours), continuing to Camaret (€2), and up to four from Camaret and Crozon to Brest (€2, 1¼ hours, daily). Buses also run between Morgat, Crozon and Camaret several times daily (€2, 10 minutes).

To rent a bike, contact **Point Bleu** (☎ 02 98 27 09 04; quai Kador, Morgat) or, in summer, the open-air stall in front of Morgat's tourist office. The going rate is about €10 per day.

## QUIMPER

pop 64,900

Small enough to feel like a village with its slanted half-timbered houses and narrow cobbled streets, and large enough to buzz as the troubadour of Breton culture and arts, Quimper (pronounced kam-pair) is Finistère's

thriving capital. Derived from the Breton word *kemper*, meaning 'confluence', Quimper sits at the juncture of the small Rivers Odet and Steir, criss-crossed by footbridges with cascading flowers.

### Orientation

The magnolia-shaded, mainly pedestrianised old city clusters around the cathedral on the north bank of the Odet, overlooked by Mont Frugy on the south bank. Most of Quimper's historic architecture concentrates in the tight triangle formed by place Médard, rue Kéréon, rue des Gentilhommes and its continuation, rue du Sallé, to place au Beurru.

### Information

**Eixxos** (☎ 02 98 64 40 56; 12 bd Dupleix; per hr €3.50; ☹ 11am-10pm Mon-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Internet access.

**Laverie de la Gare** (4 av de la Gare; ☹ 8am-8pm) Launderette.

**Main Post Office** (bd Amiral de Kerguelen)

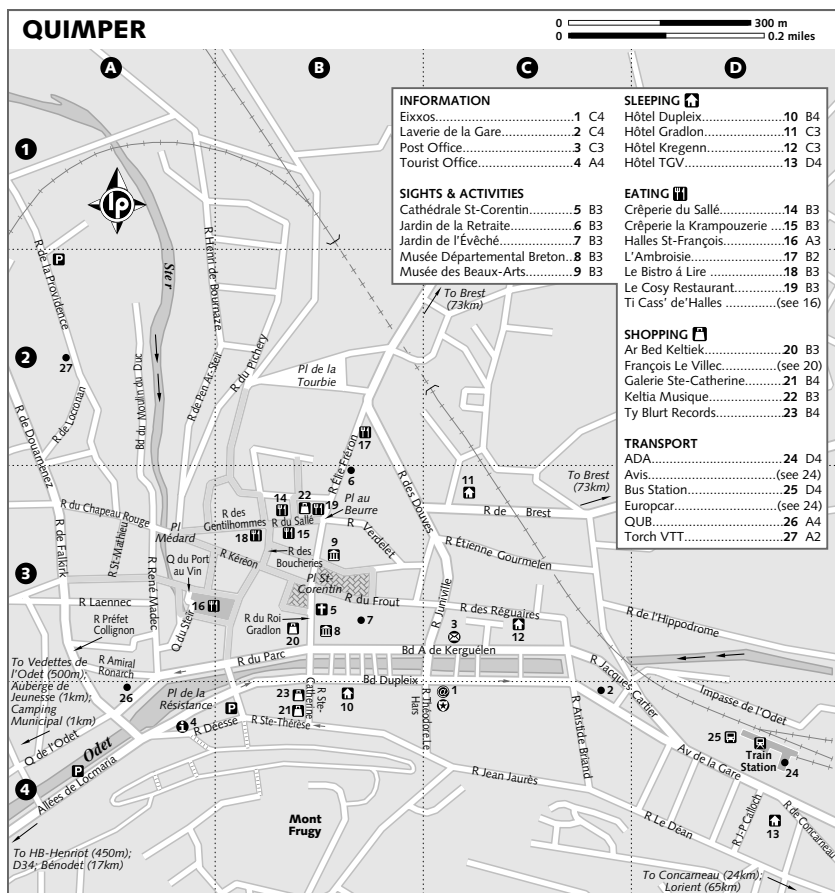
**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 98 53 04 05; www.quimper-tourisme.com, in French; place de la Résistance; ☹ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.45pm & 3-5.45pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm or 6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun, 10am-12.45pm Sun Jun & 1-15 Sep) Runs weekly 1½-hour guided city tours in English (€5.20) in July and August, and sells the Pass' Quimper (€13) whereby two people can access four attractions/tours of your choice (from a list of participating organisations).

### Sights & Activities

Quimper's **cathedral** (☹ 9.30am-noon & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-6.30pm Sun May-Oct, 9am-noon & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-6.30pm Sun Nov-Apr) has a distinctive kink built into its soaring light-filled interior – said by some to symbolise Christ's head inclined on one shoulder as he was dying on the cross. Begun in 1239, the cathedral wasn't completed until the 1850s, with the seamless addition of its dramatic twin spires. Between them, high on the west facade, is an equestrian statue of King Gradlon, the city's mythical 5th-century founder.

The ground-floor halls are home to some fairly morbid 16th- to 20th-century European paintings, but things lighten up on the upper levels of the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (☎ 02 98 95 45 20; 40 place St-Corentin; adult/child €4.50/2.50; ☹ 10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Jun, Sep-Oct, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 2-6pm Sun Nov-Mar). A room dedicated to Quimper-born poet Max Jacob includes sketches by Picasso.





Recessed behind a magnificent stone courtyard beside the cathedral, the **Musée Départemental Breton** (☎ 02 98 95 21 60; 1 rue du Roi Gradlon; adult/child €4/2.50; 🕒 9am–6pm daily Jun–Sep, 9am–noon & 2–5pm Tue–Sat, 2–5pm Sun Oct–May) is housed in the former bishop's palace. Superb exhibits showcase Breton history, furniture, costumes, crafts and archeology. Adjoining the museum is the **Jardin de l'Évêché** (Bishop's Palace Garden; admission free; 🕒 9am–5pm or 6pm).

For even more serenity, pop into the hidden, flower-filled **Jardin de la Retraite** (🕒 9am–7.15pm daily mid-Apr–mid-Oct), secluded behind high walls.

You will be able to watch Quimper's traditional *faïence* pottery being made during

40-minute workshop tours (in French or English) of *faïencier* **HB-Henriot** (☎ 08 00 62 65 10; adult/child €4/2.50; 🕒 Mon–Fri). There are at least two tours daily year-round (up to eight daily in summer). Ask about creative workshops to try your hand at this delicate art too.

Following the switchback path just east of the tourist office up the 72m-high **Mont Frugy** rewards with captivating city views.

## Tours

From May to September, **Vedettes de l'Odet** (☎ 08 25 80 08 01, 02 98 57 00 58) runs boat trips (adult/child €24/15, 1¼ hours) from Quimper along the serene Odet estuary to Bénodet, departing from quai Neuf.

## Festivals & Events

The **Festival de Cornouaille** ([www.festival-cornouaille.com](http://www.festival-cornouaille.com), in French), a celebration of traditional Celtic music, costumes and culture, takes place between the third Saturday and the fourth Sunday of July. After the traditional festival, classical-music concerts are held at different venues around town.

## Sleeping

Quimper unfortunately has a chronic shortage of inexpensive accommodation, and none in the old city.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 02 98 64 97 97; [quimper@fuaj.org](http://quimper@fuaj.org); 6 av des Oiseaux; camping €6, dm incl breakfast €15.20, sheets €2.80; ☹ Apr-Sep) Quimper's seasonal youth hostel has self-catering facilities.

**Camping Municipal** (☎ /fax 02 98 55 61 09; av des Oiseaux; campsites from €9; ☹ tents Apr-Sep, campervans year-round) This wooded park is 1km west of the old city (3km from the train station). From quai de l'Odet follow rue Pont l'Abbé north-westwards and continue straight ahead where it veers left. Alternatively, take bus 1 from the train station to the Chaptal stop.

**Hôtel TGV** (☎ 02 98 90 54 00; [www.hotel-tgv.com](http://www.hotel-tgv.com); 4 rue de Concarneau; s/d €36/38) The cheapest and best value of several hotels around the train station, 800m from the old city, the TGV has 22 small but bright en-suite rooms. Light sleepers will find the top-floor rooms quieter. Wi-fi's free.

**Hôtel Duplex** (☎ 02 98 90 53 35; [www.hotel-duplex.com](http://www.hotel-duplex.com), in French; 34 bd Duplex; s €65-68, d €79-83; ☹ closed Christmas period) Part of a business complex overlooking the River Odet (with good winter weekend deals), this efficient, modern hotel is fronted by a concrete forecourt with a fountain. Some rooms have a balcony overlooking the cathedral, and it's a handy option if you're driving, with a lock-up garage on site.

**Hôtel Gradlon** (☎ 02 98 95 04 39; [www.hotel-gradlon.com](http://www.hotel-gradlon.com); 30 rue de Brest; r €82-160; ☹ closed mid-Dec-mid-Jan) Quimper's most charming hotel is this former 19th-century coach house. Recently renovated with floral and checked fabrics (and wheelchair access), its 22 rooms include three elegant junior suites set around a rose-garden courtyard. There's a cosy bar with a toasty open fire, as well as free wi-fi. Parking costs €8.

**Hôtel Kregenn** (☎ 02 98 95 08 70; [www.hotel-kregenn.fr](http://www.hotel-kregenn.fr); 11-15 rue des Réguaire; r €100-180, ste €210; ♿) A Zen timber-decked courtyard and a guest lounge with outsized mirrors and white leather sofas give you the initial impression that Quimper's newest hotel is contemporary in style, but the plush rooms (in pistachio green, ocean blue or chocolate) evoke a traditional feel, as does the warm-hearted welcome. Higher-priced rooms have air-con; two rooms are equipped for wheelchairs. Broadband internet's free; parking costs €6.

## Eating & Drinking

As a bastion of Breton culture, Quimper has some exceptional crêperies. Rue du Frount near the cathedral has a couple of small pubs that attract a Breton-speaking clientele.

**our pick Crêperie la Krampouzerie** (☎ 02 98 95 13 08; 9 rue du Sallé; galettes €3.50-7.70; ☹ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) In an atmospheric space with blue-and-white tiled wooden tables, crêpes and galettes are made from organic flours and regional ingredients like *algues d'Ouessant* (seaweed from the Île d'Ouessant), Roscoff onions and homemade ginger caramel. Tables fill the square out front in fine weather, giving it a street-party atmosphere.

**Crêperie du Sallé** (☎ 02 98 95 95 80; 6 rue du Sallé; galettes €3.90-8.80; ☹ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) For a quarter of a century, locals have crowded into this crêperie decorated with lace curtains,

### WORTH THE TRIP – DOUARNENEZ

Explore Brittany's maritime heritage in depth at Douarnenez' **Port-Musée** and **Musée du Bateau** (☎ 02 98 92 65 20; quai du Port Rhu; combined ticket adult/child €6.20/3.80; ☹ 10am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun early Apr-mid-Jun & mid-Sep-early Nov, closed early Nov-early Apr). Moored at the open-air Port-Musée, traditional vessels range from a Breton *langoustier* (cray-fishing boat) to a Norwegian masted sailing ship. Within the vast Musée du Bateau, occupying a former sardine cannery (Douarnenez locals are affectionately nicknamed *penn sardin* – sardine head), are smaller traditional boats such as an Inuit kayak and a Welsh coracle, as well as local craft.

Buses run between Douarnenez and Quimper (€2, 35 minutes, six to 10 daily). You'll find appealing cafés scattered around Douarnenez's port.

wooden dressers and painted plates on the walls. Breton specialties include *saucisse fumée* (smoked sausage) and the house specialty, *forestière* made with mushrooms, smoked lard (fatty bacon) and cheese.

**Le Bistro à Lire** (☎ 02 98 95 30 86; 18 rue des Boucheries; snacks around €4.50, mains €7.80; ☎ lunch Tue-Sat, salon de thé 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, plus Mon afternoon Jul & Aug) Amid the shelves at this bookshop-salon de thé, hungry bookworms can enjoy lunch mains like lasagne or a hot drink and a slice of the *gâteau du jour* (cake of the day) for €5.50. The sunny rear courtyard is reserved for diners during lunch hours.

**Le Cosy Restaurant** (☎ 02 98 95 23 65; 2 rue du Sallé; mains €11.50-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat Jul & Aug, lunch Tue-Sat, dinner Fri & Sat Sep-Jun) *Pas de crêpes!* (No crêpes!) the blackboard menu on the street proclaims. Inside, make your way through the *épicerie* (specialist grocer) crammed with locally canned sardines, ciders and other Breton specialties and up the narrow staircase to the eclectic, artistic dining room, where you can tuck in to specialties like gratins and *tartines* (open sandwiches), made from market ingredients.

**L'Ambroisie** (☎ 02 98 95 00 02; www.ambroisie-quimper.com; 49 rue Elie Fréron; menus €23-48, mains €29; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sat, closed mid-Jun-mid-Jul) Quimper's most celebrated gastronomic restaurant is sumptuously decorated with contemporary art and elegant china on snow-white tablecloths. Regional produce provided by chef Gilbert Guyon's friends is used in the creation of house specials like sole with new potatoes and caramelised onions. Cooking classes are available by request.

### SELF-CATERING

The covered market **Halles St-François** in the old town has a slew of salad and sandwich options. One of the best, with a clutch of outdoor terrace tables, is **Ti Cass' de'Halles** (☎ 09 98 95 87 56; 3 Halles St-François; dishes from €3.30; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Thu, 10am-7pm Fri & Sat).

### Entertainment

From mid-June to mid-September traditional Breton music and dance takes place every Thursday evening at 9pm in the Jardin de l'Évêché (admission €5).

Check posters and leaflets pasted up around town or ask the tourist office for times and venues of a local **fest-noz** (night festival). On

average there's one in or near Quimper every couple of weeks.

### Shopping

Several shops located in the old town sell Quimper's traditional *faïence* pottery, including **Ar Bed Keltiek** (Celtic World; ☎ 02 98 95 42 82; 2 rue du Roi Gradlon) and **François Le Villec** (☎ 02 98 95 31 54; 4 rue du Roi Gradlon). Breton and Celtic music and art are available at **Keltia Musique** (☎ 02 98 95 45 82; 1 place au Beurre), which carries an excellent range of books and CDs.

For a total change of tune, flip through '70s pop, French punk and rock vinyl at **Ty Blur Records** (☎ 06 63 52 80 02; 7 rue Ste-Catherine; ☎ 2-7pm Mon-Sat). A few doors up you can check out traditional and contemporary art on sale at **Galerie Ste-Catherine** (☎ 02 98 90 18 22; 13 rue Ste-Catherine; ☎ 11am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Tue-Sat).

### Getting There & Away

#### BUS

**CAT/Connex Tourisme** (☎ 02 98 90 68 40) bus destinations include Brest (€6, 1¼ hours) and Douarnenez (€2, 35 minutes, six to 10 daily).

**Le Coeur** (☎ 02 98 54 40 15) runs buses to Concarneau (€2, 45 minutes, seven to 10 daily); three daily continue to Quimperlé (€2, 1½ hours).

#### CAR

**ADA** (☎ 02 98 52 25 25), **Europcar** (☎ 02 98 65 10 05) and **Avis** (☎ 02 98 90 31 34) all have offices right outside the train station.

#### TRAIN

There are frequent trains to Brest (€14, 1¼ hours, up to 10 daily), Lorient (€10, 40 minutes, six to eight daily), Vannes (€16.30, 1½ hours, seven daily), Rennes (€30.10, 2½ hours, five daily) and Paris (Gare Montparnasse; €68.20, 4¼ hours, eight daily).

### Getting Around

**Torch VTT** (☎ 02 98 53 84 41; 58 rue de la Providence; ☎ Tue-Sat) rents out mountain bikes for €18 per day. The friendly owner is a fount of information about local cycle routes.

**QUB** (☎ 02 98 95 26 27; 2 quai de l'Odét), the Quimper bus network, has an information office opposite the tourist office; a single/day ticket costs €1/3.

For a taxi, call ☎ 02 98 90 21 21.

## NAME GAME

Brittany's toponymy (the study of place names) gives an insight into words you'll often see on road signs and maps (sometimes with local spelling variations). And you will see them often – over 40,000 Breton place names alone incorporate the word 'ker', combined with a family name, place name or a description.

**aven, avon** – river

**bihan** – little

**braz** – big

**conk** – shelter

**ker** – town, village, home

**loc (6th century), lan (8th and 9th century)** – religious settlement

**men, mein** – stone(s)

**menez** – mount

**mor** – sea

**nevet** – forest

**nevez** – new

**plou** – parish (usually followed directly by a saint's name)

**trev, tre, treo** – parish division

**ti, ty** – house

## CONCARNEAU

pop 20,000

The sheltered harbour of Concarneau (Konk-Kerne in Breton), 24km southeast of Quimper, radiates out from its trawler port, which brings in close to 200,000 tonnes of *thon* (tuna) from the Indian Ocean and off the African coast (the adjacent Atlantic's too cold). Jutting out into the port, the old town, Ville Close, is circled by medieval walls.

### Orientation

Concarneau concentrates around the western side of the harbour at the mouth of the River Moros. Ville Close and its fortifications separate the Port de Plaisance, to the south, from the busy fisheries area of the Port de Pêche. Quai d'Aiguillon, becoming quai Peneroff, runs from north to south beside the harbour.

### Information

**Espace Informatique** (☎ 02 98 60 76 37; 23 rue des Écoles; per 15min €1.20; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Sat) Internet access.

**Post Office** (14 quai Carnot)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 98 97 01 44; www.tourisme-concarneau.fr; quai d'Aiguillon; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Apr-Jun & 1-15 Sep, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat mid-Sep-March)

## Sights & Activities

### MUSEUMS & TOURS

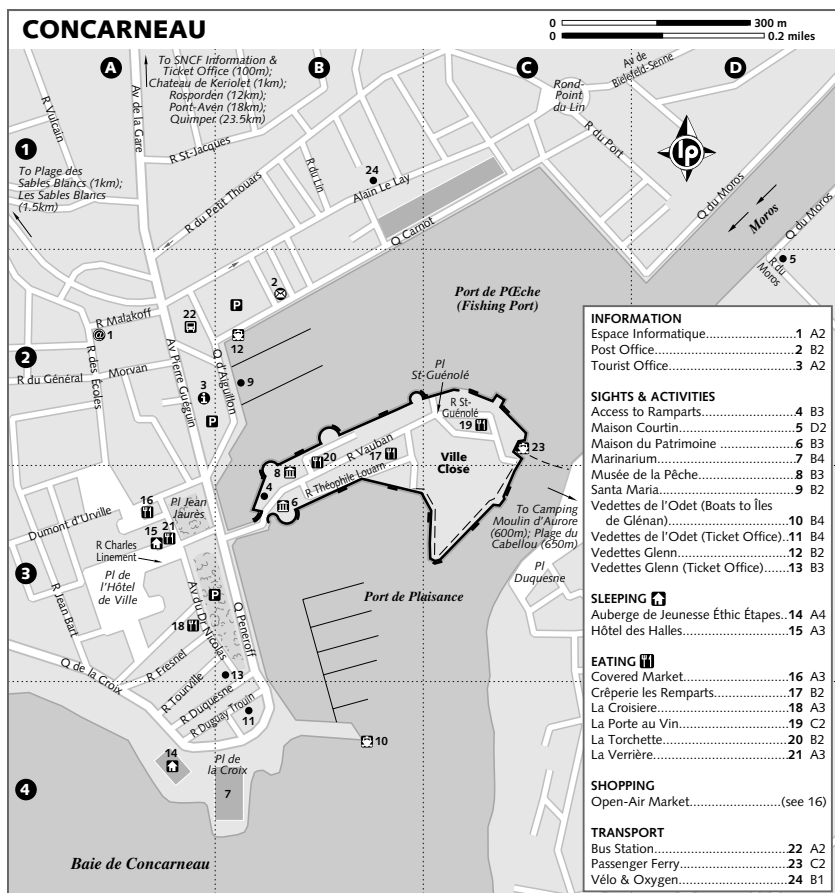
The **walled town**, fortified in the 14th century and modified by Vauban two centuries later, huddles on a small island linked to place Jean Jaurès by a footbridge.

Between 15 June and 15 September the walled town can also be accessed through the **Maison du Patrimoine** (☎ 02 98 60 76 06; admission €0.80 mid-Jun-mid-Sep, free mid-Sep-mid-Jun), which has exhibits on the town's history – ask for an English-language brochure. Within the walls, rue Vauban and place St-Guérolé are enchanting for their old stone houses converted into shops, restaurants and galleries.

Return to the mainland via the **fortifications** on the southern side of the island for magical views over the town, the port and the bay.

Concarneau's seafaring traditions, offshore fishing trawlers, model ships and fishing exhibits feature at the **Musée de la Pêche** (Fisheries Museum; ☎ 02 98 97 10 20; 3 rue Vauban; adult/child €6/4; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sep-Jun, closed 3 weeks in Jan).

Founded in 1859, the **Marinarium** (☎ 02 98 50 81 64; place de la Croix; adult/child €5/3; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 2-6pm Oct-Dec, Feb & Mar) is the world's oldest institute of marine biology. Alongside its 10 aquariums are exhibits on oceanography and marine flora and fauna.



One of Concarneau's last functioning canneries, **Maison Courtin** (Conserverie Courtin; ☎ 02 98 97 01 80; 3 quai du Moros; admission free), conducts tours including a film of the cannery in peak production, and free sampling. Contact the cannery or the tourist office for tour times. If fish are your thing, you can also tour the **fishing port** (☎ 02 98 50 55 18; www.alassautdesremparts.fr, in French; tours €2-6 depending on program; 🕒 9.30-10am & 5-9pm by reservation), 100m from the tourist office, to discover all facets of this age-old Breton industry.

**Château de Kerolet** (☎ 02 98 97 36 50; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 10.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat Jun-Sat, by reservation Easter-May) is an exquisite example of 19th-century architecture. Its intriguing Russian connections are revealed dur-

ing a guided tour. The castle is a well-signed five-minute drive from town (turn right just before the large Leclerc supermarket).

## BEACHES

Plage des Sables Blancs is on Baie de la Forêt, 1.5km northwest of the town centre; take bus 2, northbound, from the tourist office. For Plage du Cabellou, 5km south of town, take bus 2, southbound.

## WALKING & CYCLING

The tourist office sells two excellent guides: *Balades au Pays des Portes de Cornouaille* (€2.50; in French), describing 18 walks around Concarneau, and *VTT de Cornouaille* (€3.50), outlining 39 cycling circuits.

## SEA ANGLING

To reel in some fish of your own, the **Santa Maria** (☎ 06 62 88 00 87; adult/child incl equipment hire €36/21; ⚓ sailing 8am & 1.30pm or 2pm Mon-Fri Jul & Aug) sets out on four-hour sea-angling trips from quai d'Aiguillon near the tourist office. All-day deep-sea fishing expeditions (8am to 6pm on Saturdays in July and August) cost €80.

## BOAT TRIPS

In July and August **Vedettes Glenn** (☎ 02 98 97 10 31; 17 av du Dr Nicolas) does four-hour river trips (adult/child €27/15, sailing 2.15pm Tuesday to Friday and Sunday) from Concarneau along the gorgeously scenic estuary of the River Odet. Boat trips also operate to the Îles de Glénan – a cluster of nine little islands about 20km south of Concarneau – starting at €26/14.

**Vedettes de l'Odet** (☎ 08 25 80 08 01; www.vedettes-odet.com, in French; 1 rue Duguay Trouin) also runs boat trips to both destinations – check with the tourist office or the company directly for seasonal sailing schedules and departure points.

## Sleeping

**Camping Moulin d'Aurore** (☎ 02 98 50 53 08; www.moulinaurore.com, in French; 49 rue de Trégunc; per person/site/car €5.50/5/1.50; ⚓ Apr-Sep) Facilities at this campsite 600m southeast of the harbour and a mere 50m from the sea include a bar/TV room and a laundry. Take bus 1 or 2 to Le Rouz stop from the tourist office or the ferry from Ville Close, then walk southeast along rue Mauduit Duplessis.

**Auberge de Jeunesse Éthic Étapes** (☎ 02 98 97 03 47; www.ajconcarneau.com; quai de la Croix; dm incl breakfast €14.50; ⚓) Fall asleep listening to the waves at this welcoming waterfront hostel next to the Marinarium. Extras include a wraparound barbecue terrace, a self-catering kitchen and pastries for breakfast.

**Hôtel des Halles** (☎ 02 98 97 11 41; www.hotel-deshalles.com; place de l'Hôtel de Ville; d €52-80; ⚓) A few steps from Ville Close, this 22-room hotel looks plain on the outside, but its renovated rooms come in a rainbow of colour combinations like pistachio green and hot pink, with lavender trimmings throughout the public areas (even the lift doors). Breakfast (€8) includes homemade marmalade and bread straight from the oven. Broadband internet's free and the family owners are ultrahelpful.

**Les Sables Blancs** (☎ 02 98 50 10 12; www.hotel-les-sables-blancs.com; d €105-370; ⚓) Right on the

'white sands' of the beach from which it takes its name, this ultrachic new pad has spacious rooms (with wi-fi) and an excellent restaurant, with good deals on half-board (from €115 per person).

## Eating

Cafés, pizzerias and crêperies line the waterfront, and there are more inside the walls of Ville Close.

**La Verrière** (☎ 02 98 60 55 78; 3 rue des Halles; menus €8.50-27; ⚓ daily in summer, closed Mon) Barbecued fish is the speciality of Concarneau's hippest new hang-out, set around a covered courtyard garden. You can also drop by for tapas or just a drink and take advantage of the free wi-fi.

**Crêperie les Remparts** (☎ 02 98 50 65 66; 31 rue Théophile Louarn; menu €12; ⚓ Easter-Oct) Enjoy a very Breton lunchtime *menu* of fish soup, *moules-frites* (mussels and fries) and *far* (Breton cake). There's also has an inventive range of savoury crêpes with fillings such as mushrooms in cream sauce.

**La Croisière** (☎ 02 98 97 01 87; 11 av du Dr Nicolas; menus €16.50-27; ⚓ lunch Tue-Fri & Sun, dinner Tue-Sat, daily in summer) Just back from the boat-filled marina, the lively La Croisière is a local fave for its seafood straight off the boat.

**La Porte au Vin** (☎ 02 98 97 38 11; 9 place St-Guénéolé; menus €18-25; ⚓ lunch & dinner Apr-Oct) Highly recommended, this place in the centre of the walled city is a lovely spot in fine weather, with a pretty patio terrace shaded by a red awning. It's consistently strong on traditional cooking (which in Concarneau means fish).

## SELF-CATERING

There's a **covered market** (⚓ 9am-noon Tue-Sun) on place Jean Jaurès and a busy **open-air market** in the same square on Monday and Friday mornings.

Enticing *biscuiteries* within Ville Close include **La Torchette** (☎ 02 98 60 46 87; 9 rue Vauban; ⚓ 10.30am-6.30pm, to 11pm Jul & Aug), with chocolate sculptures and Breton biscuits by the bucketful.

## Getting There & Away

**L'Été Évasion** (☎ 02 98 56 82 82) runs up to 10 buses daily between Quimper and Quimperlé, calling by Concarneau (€2 to or from Quimper).

**Vélo & Oxygen** (☎ 02 98 97 09 77; 65 av Alain Le Lay; ⚓ Tue-Sat) rents out bikes for €10 per day.



### WORTH THE TRIP – PONT-AVEN

Once the railway was pushed through in the 19th century, the tiny Breton village of Pont-Aven (population 3000), nestled in the ‘valley of willows’, was discovered by artists. American painters were among the first to uncover it, but things really took off when France’s Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard set up a colony here in the 1850s. Their work, and that of their disciples, morphed into a movement known today as the Pont-Aven School.

There is some debate in artistic and sociological circles as to whether these works folklorised the local Breton people, but they certainly capture the beauty of the little village and the surrounding countryside. For an insight into the town’s place in art history, stop by the **Musée des Beaux-Arts de Pont-Aven** (☎ 02 98 06 14 43; place de l’Hôtel de Ville; adult/child €4.50/2.50; 🕒 10am–7pm Jul & Aug, 10.30am–12.30pm & 2pm–6pm or 6.30pm Sep–Dec & Feb–Jun, closed Jan). And to see the spots where the masters set up their easels, pick up a free walking-trail map from the **tourist office** (☎ 02 98 06 04 70; place de l’Hôtel de Ville; 🕒 9.30am–7.30pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–6.30pm Apr, May & Sep, 10am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Oct–Mar, closed Sun Nov–Easter), which can also help with accommodation if you want to spend the night.

Charming spots for a drink or a meal include the bar-restaurant **Auberge de la Fleur d’Ajonc** (☎ 02 98 06 10 65; place de l’Hôtel de Ville; menus €16–23, mains €8.50–12; 🕒 lunch Tue–Sun, dinner Tue–Sat), in an atmospheric medieval building of sloping stone floors and low ceilings held up by hefty beams; and **Le Moulin de Rosmadec** (☎ 02 98 06 00 22; www.moulinderosmadec.com; menus €35–50, mains €21–28; 🕒 lunch Tue–Wed & Fri–Sun, dinner Mon–Wed, Fri & Sat, closed Feb & Oct), serving gastronomic fare overlooking the town’s namesake *pont* (bridge) and *aven* (river in Breton). Le Moulin de Rosmadec also has four delightful guest rooms upstairs (doubles €85 to €90).

Since the 1960s, Pont-Aven has again become a magnet for artists, with no fewer than 60 galleries here in summer. Even in winter, you’ll still find around 20 galleries open on weekends.

Pont-Aven is an easy 18km drive southeast of Concarneau. **Buses** (☎ 02 98 44 46 73; €2) – five Monday to Saturday and two on Sunday – connect Pont-Aven with Quimperlé in the east (30 minutes), Concarneau (30 minutes) and Quimper (one hour).

A stubby **passenger ferry** (fare €0.80; 🕒 8am–11pm daily Jul–Aug, 8am–6.30pm or 8.30pm Mon–Sat, 9am–12.30pm & 2–6.30pm Sun Sep–Jun) links Ville Close with place Duquesne on the eastern side of the harbour.

Call ☎ 02 98 97 10 93 or ☎ 02 98 50 70 50 for a taxi.

natural harbour at the mouth of the River Scorff. Lorient’s name is an abbreviation of Port de l’Orient, dating from the 17th century, when Compagnie des Indes (the French East India Company) ships docked here. It doesn’t have a concentrated dining and entertainment hub, but the boat-filled port has its charms.

## MORBIHAN COAST

In the crook of Brittany’s southern coastline, the Golfe du Morbihan (Morbihan Coast) is a haven of islands, oyster beds and birdlife. But the area is perhaps best known for its proliferation of mystifying Celtic megaliths, which are strewn throughout most of the *département*.

### LORIENT

pop 61,844

Like Brest, the port city of Lorient (An Oriant in Breton) was largely wiped out during WWII. Rapidly reconstructed in the following decades, today it sprawls along the western side of the Rade de Lorient, a

### Orientation

The centre of town is near the canal-like Port de Plaisance, about 1km south of the train and bus stations – take cars de Chazelles and its continuation, rue Maréchal Foch, or catch bus D (direction Carnel).

### Information

There are two laundrettes on bd Cosmao Dumanoir beside the bus station.

**No Work Tech** (☎ 02 97 84 72 09; 5 place de la Libération; per hr €4; 🕒 2pm–1am Mon, 10am–1am Tue–Sat, 3–11pm Sun) Internet access.

**Post Office** (9 quai des Indes)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 97 21 07 84; www.lorient-tourisme.fr, in French; quai de Rohan; 🕒 9am–7pm daily Jul

& Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-5pm Sat Sep & Apr-Jun, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat Oct-Mar) Lorient's tourist office has some seven different sets of opening hours, all of which change annually, but those listed here are a general rule of thumb.

## Sights

Permanently moored at the Port de Plaisance, the research vessel **Thalassa** (☎ 02 97 35 13 00; quai de Rohan; adult/child €6.90/5.30; ☎ 10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun May, Jun, Sep & other school holidays, closed rest of yr) makes a fascinating setting for this hands-on, wheelchair-accessible oceanography museum.

In **Port Louis**, 5km south of Lorient, the magnificent 16th-century **citadel** (adult/concession/child €5.50/4/free; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Wed-Mon Apr-mid-Sep, 2-6pm Wed-Mon mid-Sep-mid-Dec & Feb-Mar) has two museums (again, it's worth checking ahead to confirm annual opening hours). **Musée de la Compagnie des Indes** (☎ 02 97 82 19 13) traces the history of the French East India Company and its lucrative trade with India, China, Africa and the New World from 1660 to the end of the 18th century through its fascinating display of documents, maps and artefacts. Safety at sea and underwater archeology are addressed at the **Musée National de la Marine** (☎ 02 97 82 56 72), with a treasure trove from the world's oceans.

To reach Port Louis and the museum, take the **Batobus** (☎ 02 97 21 28 29; one-way €1.25) ferry, which runs between Lorient and Port Louis, leaving every half-hour between 6.30am and 8pm. It departs Lorient's Port de Pêche from

Monday to Saturday and the Embarcadère de la Rade on Sunday.

**Île de Groix**, 8km long by 3km wide and about 14km offshore, was once a major tuna-fishing port. With its excellent beaches and a 25km coastal footpath, it makes a great day trip (for ferries, see p340).

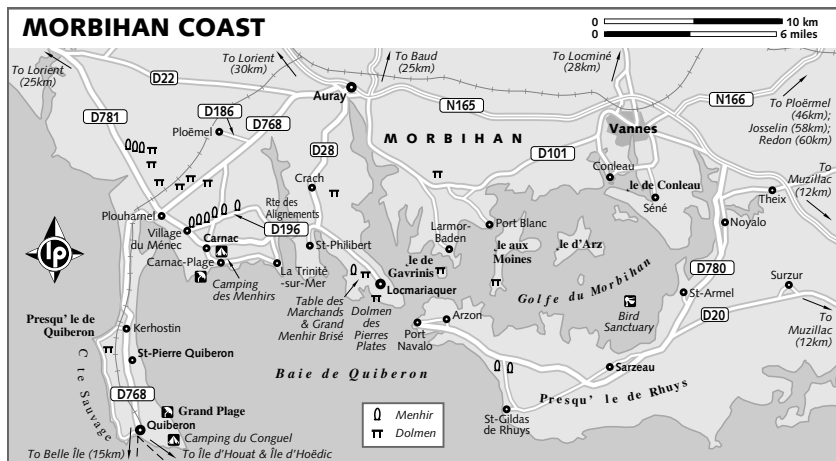
## Festivals & Events

Celtic communities from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, the Isle of Man and Galicia in northwest Spain congregate with Bretons at the **Festival Interceltique** (☎ 02 97 21 24 29; [www.festival-interceltique.com](http://www.festival-interceltique.com)) over 10 days in early August. Book way ahead if you're planning to stay here at this time, when upwards of 600,000 people descend on the city.

## Sleeping

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 02 97 37 11 65; [lorient@fujaj.org](mailto:lorient@fujaj.org); 41 rue Victor Schoelcher; dm incl sheets & breakfast €15.70; ☎ closed mid-Dec-Jan; ☒) On the banks of the River Ter, 4km from town, Lorient's hostel has a lively bar and table tennis. From the bus stop on cours de Chazelles, outside the bus station, take bus B2.

**Hôtel Victor Hugo** (☎ 02 97 21 16 24; [www.hotelvictorhugo-lorient.com](http://www.hotelvictorhugo-lorient.com); 36 rue Lazare Carnot; d €47-72) A handy 200m from the Gare Maritime's ferries to Île de Groix, this brightly lit, soundproofed hotel has 28 warm, welcoming rooms with cheerful striped fabrics, satellite TVs and telephones, and free wi-fi in many rooms. If you don't mind taking a shower outside the room, rates drop as low as €35. Parking costs €7.



**Rex Hôtel** (☎ 02 97 64 25 60; www.rex-hotel-orient.com; 28 cours de Chazelles; s/d €56/58; ☹ closed Christmas period) Rooms positively gleam at this tautly run ship – which it is almost literally: the reception desk has the shape of a boat's prow, polished woodwork lines the public areas and a tape of waves breaking and seagulls mewing plays in the small lounge. Each of the 23 rooms has a shining bathroom and broadband internet. Secure parking costs €4 (or €8 for garaged). The hotel is gay-friendly.

## Eating

**Tout Sucre Tout Miel** (☎ 02 97 21 47 67; bd Franchet d'Esperey; crêpes €1.70-6.80; ☹ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Tue-Sat) Everything at this cosy, convivial crêperie is homemade from fresh produce. If you're heading off for a picnic, you can order your meal to take away.

**Tavern Ar Roue Morvan** (☎ 02 97 21 61 57; 1 place Polig-Montjarré; mains €7-11.90; ☹ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Attracting an artistic, cultural crowd, and *the* place to hang out during the Festival Interceltique (at which time, like most places in Lorient, it's open daily), this traditional Breton tavern turns out hearty Breton cuisine, and often has live music throughout the year.

**Le Jardin Gourmand** (☎ 02 97 64 17 24; 46 rue Jules-Simon; menus €26-38; ☹ lunch Wed-Sun, dinner Wed-Sat) Chef Natalie Beauvais has recently garnered a string of awards at this garden-set spot a couple of blocks north of the train station. The minimalist decor contrasts with Natalie's hearty regional cuisine, which is inspired by what's best in the market each morning.

## SELF-CATERING

Stock up at the daily covered markets **Halles de Merville** (☹ 7.30am-1pm) and **Halles St-Louis** (☹ 7.30am-12.30pm). The latter extends to a colourful open-air market on Saturday mornings.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Lorient's **airport** (www.lorient.aeroport.fr) is about 10km west of the city centre. There are regular flights to the UK and Ireland, as well as Paris and Lyon, but there aren't any no-frills carriers to date.

### BOAT

The **Société Morbihannaise de Navigation** (SMN; ☎ 08 20 05 60 00; www.smn-navigation.fr, in French) operates car ferries between the Gare Maritime

and Île de Groix (adult/child return €25/20, 45 minutes, seven to eight daily). From mid-July to the end of August, SMN runs a passenger-only ferry to Sauzon on Belle Île (adult/child return €25/20 one hour, once daily).

### BUS

The **bus station** (☎ 02 97 21 28 29) is linked to the train station by a footbridge. Destinations include Josselin (€12.50, one to 1½ hours).

### TRAIN

Several trains a day connect Lorient with Quimper (€10.40, 40 minutes), Vannes (€8.60, 40 minutes), Rennes (€23.50) and Paris (Gare Montparnasse; from €78.90, 3¼ hours).

## Getting Around

**City buses** (☎ 02 97 21 28 29; single/day ticket €1.20/3.50) run until around 8pm.

For a taxi, call ☎ 02 97 21 29 29.

## CARNAC

### pop 4600

Pre-dating Stonehenge by around 100 years, Carnac (Garnac in Breton) tops it too with sheer numbers, making this the world's greatest concentration of megalithic sites. There are no fewer than 3000 of these upright stones, most around thigh-high, erected between 5000 and 3500 BC.

Carnac, some 32km west of Vannes, comprises the old stone village Carnac-Ville and the seaside resort of Carnac-Plage, 1.5km south, bordered by the 2km-long sandy beach. Its megaliths stretch 13km north from Carnac-Ville and east as far as the village of Locmariaquer.

## Information

**Main Tourist Office** (☎ 02 97 52 13 52; www.ot-carnac.fr; 74 av des Druides, Carnac-Plage; ☹ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat & 3-7pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon or 12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) Hours can vary.

**Post Office** (av de la Poste, Carnac-Ville)

**Tourist Office Annexe** (☎ 02 97 52 13 52; place de l'Église, Carnac-Ville; ☹ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Apr-Sep & school holidays)

## Sleeping & Eating

To sleep among the tree tops, see p343.

**Camping des Menhirs** (☎ 02 97 52 94 67; www.lesmenhirs.com; 7 allée St-Michel, Carnac-Plage; adult/pitch/electricity €8/29/3.65; ☹ May-late Sep; 📶) Carnac and its surrounds have over 15 camping grounds, in-

## MORBIHAN'S MIGHTY MEGALITHS

Two perplexing questions arise from the Morbihan region's neolithic menhirs, dolmens, cromlechs, tumuli and cairns.

Just *how* did the original constructors hew, then haul, these blocks (the heaviest weighs 300 tonnes), millennia before the wheel and the mechanical engine reached Brittany?

And why? Theories and hypotheses abound. A phallic fertility cult? Sun worship? Representation of a long-forgotten divinity? For the moment, the vague yet common consensus is that they served some kind of sacred, religious purpose – the same spiritual impulse behind so many monuments built by humankind.

The best way to appreciate the stones' sheer numbers is to walk or bike between the Le Méneac and Kerlescan groups, with menhirs almost continuously in view. Between June and September seven buses a day run between the two sites and both Carnac-Ville and Carnac-Plage.

Because of severe erosion the sites are fenced off to allow the vegetation to regenerate. However, between 10am and 5pm from October to May you can wander freely through parts (check site billboards or ask at the Maison des Mégalithes for updates). You can see them on a one-hour **guided visit** (€4), regularly in French year-round and usually in English at 3pm Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from early July to late August. Sign up for guided visits at the **Maison des Mégalithes** (☎ 02 97 52 89 99; rte des Alignements; admission free; ☎ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug, to 5.15pm Sep-Apr, to 7pm May & Jun), which also has a rolling video, topographic models and views of the menhirs from its rooftop terrace. Opposite the Maison des Mégalithes, the largest menhir field – with no less than 1099 stones – is the **Alignements du Méneac**, 1km north of Carnac-Ville; the eastern section is accessible in winter. From here, the D196 heads northeast for about 1.5km to the equally impressive **Alignements de Kermario**. Climb the stone observation tower midway along the site to see the alignment from above. Another 500m further on are the **Alignements de Kerlescan**, a smaller grouping also accessible in winter.

**Tumulus St-Michel**, at the end of rue du Tumulus and 400m northeast of the Carnac-Ville tourist office, dates back to at least 5000 BC and offers sweeping views.

Between Kermario and Kerlescan, 500m to the south of the D196, deposit your fee in an honour box at **Tumulus de Kercado** (admission €1; ☎ year-round). Dating from 3800 BC and the burial site of a neolithic chieftain, during the French Revolution it was used as a hiding place for Breton royalists. From the parking area 300m further along the D196, a 15-minute walk brings you to the **Géant du Manio**, the highest menhir in the complex, and the **Quadrilatère**, a group of minimenhirs, close-set in a rectangle.

Near Locmariaquer, 13km southeast of Carnac-Ville, the major monuments are the **Table des Marchands**, a 30m-long dolmen, and the **Grand Menhir Brisé** (adult/student/child €5/3.50/free; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Apr-Jun, to 5pm Sep-Mar), the region's largest menhir, which once stood 20m high but now lies broken on its side. Both are off the D781, just before the village.

Just south of Locmariaquer by the sea is the **Dolmen des Pierres Plates**, a 24m-long chamber with still-visible engravings.

For some background, the **Musée de Préhistoire** (☎ 02 97 52 22 04; 10 place de la Chapelle, Carnac-Ville; adult/child €5/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr, May, Jun & Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Wed-Mon Oct-Mar) chronicles life in and around Carnac from the Palaeolithic and neolithic eras to the Middle Ages.

cluding this luxury complex of 100-sq-metre pitches. It's just 300m north of the beach; amenities range from a sauna to a cocktail bar and wi-fi. You'll score a better deal outside peak summer.

**Auberge Le Ratelier** (☎ 02 97 52 05 04; www.le-ratelier.com; 4 Chemin du Douet, Carnac-Ville; d €46-60; ☎ Feb-Dec) This vine-clambered former farmhouse, now an eight-room inn with low ceil-

ings and traditional timber furnishings – is in a quiet street one block southwest of place de l'Église. Rooms with showers only start from €38. **Menus** (from €19) at its whitewashed, wood-beamed restaurant (lunch and dinner May to September, closed Wednesday October to December and from February to April) revolve around fresh seafood, particularly lobster.

**Crêperie au Pressoir** (☎ 02 97 52 01 86; village du Méneç; galettes €3-8; ☺ lunch & dinner Easter-Aug) Opening hours fluctuate, so we recommend checking ahead, but this artisan crêperie in a traditional long Breton house is a rare opportunity to dine right in the middle of a 70-strong cromlech (circle of menhirs). From Carnac-Ville, take rue St-Cornély northwest and turn right on rue du Méneç and follow it north for about 1km.

**Crêperie St-George** (☎ 02 97 52 18 34; 8 allée du Parc, Carnac-Plage; menus from €9; ☺ lunch & dinner Apr-Sep) For consistently great-value crêpes close to the beach, try the contemporary Crêperie St-George in the Galeries St-George centre.

## Getting There & Away

The main bus stops are in Carnac-Ville, outside the police station on rue St-Cornély, and in Carnac-Plage, beside the tourist office. **Cariane Atlantique** (☎ 02 97 47 29 64) buses go to Auray (€4), Vannes (€7) and Quiberon (€3).

The nearest year-round train station is in Auray, 12km to the northeast. SNCF has an office in the Carnac-Plage tourist office.

Hire bikes for around €9/17 per half-/full day from **Lorcy** (☎ 02 97 52 09 73; 6 rue de Courdiac, Carnac-Ville) and **Le Randonneur** (☎ 02 97 52 02 55; 20 av des Druides, Carnac-Plage).

For a taxi, call ☎ 02 97 52 75 75.

## QUIBERON

pop 5200

Quiberon (Kiberen in Breton) sits at the southern tip of a sliver-thin, 14km-long peninsula flanked on the western side by the rocky, wave-lashed Côte Sauvage (Wild Coast). The town fans out around the port where ferries depart for Belle Île, and is wildly popular in summer.

## Orientation & Information

The D768 leads along the peninsula and into Quiberon, ending at the seasonally operating train station. From here rue de Verdun winds down to the sheltered bay of Port-Maria, pinned by the town's main beach, La Grande Plage, to its east and the ferry harbour to the west.

The **tourist office** (☎ 08 25 13 56 00; www.quiberon.com; 14 rue de Verdun; ☺ 9am-1.30pm & 2-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) is between the train station and La Grande Plage.

## Sights & Activities

**Conserverie La Belle-Loise** (☎ 02 97 50 08 77; rue de Kerné; ☺ visits 10am, 11am, 3pm & 4pm daily Jul & Aug, 10-11am & 3-4pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun), north of the train station, offers guided visits around its former sardine cannery, with bargain-priced sardines available from the adjacent shop.

**La Grande Plage** attracts families; bathing spots towards the peninsula's tip are larger and less crowded. The **Côte Sauvage** is great for a windy walk, but you'll need a permit for any nautically based activity (such as a diving certificate) to swim in the rough seas, or risk a fine – and your safety. Alternatively you can splash in the brand-new indoor aquatic centre **Neptilude** (☎ 02 97 50 39 07; 1 rue Neptune; adult/child €5.50/4.50; ☺ at least 2-6.30pm school holidays & weekends year-round).

## Sleeping

**Camping du Conguel** (☎ 02 97 50 19 11; www.campingduconguel.com; bd de la Teignouse; campsites €12.40-43.25, electricity €3.65; ☺ Apr-Oct; 📶) This splashy four-star option, with an aqua park including water slides, is one of the peninsula's 15 campsites. Just 2km east of the town centre, it's beside Plage du Conguel, with four- to six-berth cabins also available, starting at €94 for two nights.

**Auberge de Jeunesse – Les Filets Bleus** (☎ 02 97 50 15 54; 45 rue du Roch Priol; dm €10; ☺ Apr-Sep) Quiberon's HI-affiliated hostel is in a peaceful part of town 800m east of the train station and 500m from the beach. There's limited camping (€5.90) in the grounds; breakfast costs €3.50.

**Hôtel L'Océan** (☎ 02 97 50 07 58; http://hotel-de-locean.com, in French; 7 quai de l'Océan; d €53.50-71; ☺ Easter-Sep) Overlooking the harbour, you can't miss this huge white house with multicoloured shutters. The cheapest of its 37 rooms don't have TVs, but rooms at the other end of the price scale get you a fabulous harbour view. Parking (very welcome in summer) costs €5.50.

## Eating & Drinking

**La Closerie de St-Clément** (☎ 02 97 50 40 00; 36 rue de St-Clément; crêpes €4-9; ☺ lunch & dinner daily Jul & Aug, closed Mon & dinner Sun Sep-Jun) This rustic place with gnarled timber beams and chunky wooden furniture has a peaceful, tree-shaded garden terrace to keep diners cool in summer, and a cosy fireplace to warm your cockles in winter.

## TREETOP SLEEPING

For the ultimate eco-escape, the only way you can go past **Dihan** (☎ 02 97 56 88 27; [www.dihan-eva-sion.org](http://www.dihan-eva-sion.org), in French; Kerganiet, Ploëmel; d guestroom/yurt incl breakfast €50/70, d tree house €110-120, table d'hôte from €20; 📍 ☒) is in the literal sense, as secluded as it is in a leafy dell just outside Ploëmel (follow the black signs from the village).

Run by a fun-loving young couple, Myriam and Arno Le Masle, in its former life the property was Myriam's grandparents' working farm. The farmhouse and barns now house guest rooms, while the grounds shelter two yurts imported from Mongolia, and five tree houses, reached by climbing ladders (the highest – at 12m – requires you to strap on a harness to reach it). Should nature call, there are biodegradable dry toilets up here as well as conserved water (you'll find brightly tiled bathrooms and a sauna in the reception building). Rates include breakfast, which is a combination of organic, fair-trade and local artisan produce, such as a finger-licking *caramel au beurre salé* (Breton caramel spread). Eco-initiatives also include rare-for-France recycling. Fabulous *tables d'hôtes* (a combination of Myriam's Breton, Mauritian and Indian heritage; by reservation) take place in the converted *ciderie*, where pianist Arno hits the keys and bands sometimes drop by. Otherwise, guests can fire up the barbecue and dine beneath a bamboo-sheltered pergola.

All of which would be enough to recommend it heartily, but you can also rent bikes (€8 per day), book a massage (from €60) or even an on-site beauty treatment with biological cosmetics.

And both guests and nonguests can saddle up, with **horse riding** starting at €18 per hour (there are also ponies for kids).

**L'Embarcadère** (☎ 02 97 50 17 84; 2 quai de l'Océan; mussels from €8, mains €14.90-18.90; 🕒 7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) Of the bar-restaurants lined up along the quayfront, L'Embarcadère offers value that's hard to beat. It also serves whopping bowls of *moules-frites*, and mixes a great kir.

**our pick Villa Margot** (☎ 02 97 50 33 89; 7 rue de Port Maria; lunch menus €17.50-21.50, dinner menus €21.50-36, mains €19.50-27; 🕒 lunch & dinner Thu-Mon) The interior of this stunning stone restaurant looks like it'd be at home in a chic Parisian *quartier*, with original art on the walls (painted on adjacent Belle Île), flower-shaped opaque glass light fittings, hot-pink and brown colour schemes and lobsters clawing in the live tank (caught the night before, along with the fish). That is until you head out onto the timber deck, which has direct access to the beach for a post-repast stroll.

**La Criée** (☎ 02 97 30 53 09; 11 quai de l'Océan; mains €25-45; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun Feb-Dec) Within the former fish auction house (hence the name), and an easy walk from the ferry terminal, this long-established seaside restaurant keeps with its traditions by laying out its seafood on a table for you to take your pick.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

For ferries between Quiberon and Belle-Île, see p344.

### BUS

Quiberon is connected by **Cariante Atlantique** (☎ 02 97 47 29 64) buses with Carnac (€3, 45 minutes), Auray (€7, 1½ hours) and Vannes (€9.10, 1¾ hours). Buses stop at the train station and at place Hoche near the tourist office and the beach.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

High-summer traffic is hellish – consider leaving your vehicle at the 1200-place Sémaphore car park (€3.60 for up to four hours, €12.50 for 24 hours), 1.5km north of the beach, and walking or taking the free shuttle bus into town.

### TRAIN

In July and August only, a shuttle train called the *Tire-Bouchon* (corkscrew) runs several times a day between Auray and Quiberon (€3, 40 minutes). Tickets cost €2.80 if purchased at the tourist office. From September to June an SNCF bus service links Quiberon and Auray train stations (€6.30, 50 minutes) at least seven times a day.

## Getting Around

**Cycles Loisirs** (☎ 02 97 50 31 73; 3 rue Victor Golvan), 200m north of the tourist office, rents touring/mountain bikes from €8/14 a day. **Cyclomar** (☎ 02 97 50 26 00; 47 place Hoche), around 200m south of the tourist office, rents out bikes for similar prices as well as scooters



including helmet from €38 per day plus insurance. It also runs an operation from the train station during July and August.

To order a **taxi** ring ☎ 02 97 50 19 09.

## BELLE ÎLE

pop 5200

Accessed by ferries from Quiberon, the population of Belle Île (in full, Belle-Île-en-Mer) swells tenfold in summer thanks to its name-sake beauty. But as it's Brittany's largest island (at 20km by 9km), there's room to escape the crowds.

### Information

Turn left as you leave the ferry in Le Palais to reach the main **tourist office** (☎ 02 97 31 81 93; www.belle-ile.com; quai Bonnelle; ☎ 8.45am-7.30pm Mon-Sat & to 1pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun Sep-Jun).

There's a summer-only **information kiosk** (☎ 02 97 31 69 49; ☎ Easter-Sep) on the quay in Sauzon.

### Sights & Activities

The dramatic **citadel**, strengthened by Vauban in 1682, dominates the little Le Palais port. Inside, the **Musée Historique** (☎ 02 97 31 84 17; adult/child €6.10/3.05; ☎ 9.30am-6pm May-Oct, 9.30am-noon & 2-5pm Nov-Apr) interprets the history of both the defensive system and the island.

Belle Île's fretted southwestern coast has spectacular rock formations and caves including **Grotte de l'Apothicaierie** (Cave of the Apothecary's Shop), where waves roll in from two sides.

**Plage de Donnant** has awesome surf, though swimming here is dangerous. Sheltered **Port Kérel**, to the southwest, is better for children, as is the 2km-long **Plage des Grands Sables**, the biggest and busiest strand, spanning the calm waters of the island's eastern side.

The tourist office sells walking and cycling guides. The ultimate hike is the 95km **coastal footpath** that follows the island's coastline.

### Sleeping & Eating

About 10 campsites are pitched around Belle Île; most open from April or May to September or October.

**Auberge de Jeunesse Haute Boulogne** (☎ 02 97 31 81 33; www.fuaj.org; Le Palais; dm incl sheets & breakfast €15.30; ☎ closed Oct & Christmas; ☎) This modern 96-bed HI-affiliated hostel with a self-catering kitchen is to the north of the citadel.

**Hôtel Vauban** (☎ 02 97 31 45 42; www.hotelvauban.com, in French; 1 rue des Ramparts, Le Palais; d €61-74; ☎ Mar-early Nov) This comfy place is perched high on the coastal path, with views of the ferry landing below from many of its 16 spacious rooms.

The hotel rents out mountain bikes, and there's good wheelchair access and a guest-only restaurant (*menus* €20) serving seafood from April to September.

Crêperies and pizzerias are scattered across the island; many of the higher-end hotels have good restaurants.

For all-out luxury, the **citadel** (www.citadellevauban.com) also incorporates a lavish hotel with doubles for €151 to €271 (plus suites from €451) and a gastronomic restaurant, La Table du Gouverneur (*menus* from €30 to €65).

### Getting There & Away

Travelling to Belle Île can involve a bit of planning, as taking a car on the ferry is prohibitively expensive for a short trip, and needs to be booked well ahead even outside peak season. On the upside, bikes can be carried free on board ferries.

#### FROM QUIBERON

The shortest crossing to Belle Île is from Quiberon. **Compagnie Océane** (☎ 02 97 35 02 00; www.compagnie-oceane.fr) operates car/passenger ferries (45 minutes, year-round) and fast passenger ferries to Le Palais and to Sauzon in July and August. An adult return passenger fare is €26.50; transporting a small car costs a hefty €149 return *plus* passenger fares. There are five crossings a day (up to 13 in July and August).

#### FROM VANNES

**Navix** (☎ 02 97 46 60 29; www.navix.fr, in French with English sections) operates ferries (return €31 to €44) between May and mid-September.

#### FROM LORIENT

From mid-July to the end of August, Compagnie Océane runs a fast passenger-only ferry (one-way from €16.46, one hour, once daily) to Sauzon.

### Getting Around

Lots of places in Le Palais rent out bicycles/motor scooters for around €12/35 a day.

Seasonal buses run by **Taol Mor** (☎ 02 97 31 32 32) criss-cross the island.

Car-rental rates on the island start at about €65 for 24 hours; you'll find outlets at the harbour as you disembark.

## VANNES

pop 58,000

Street art, sculptures and intriguing galleries pop up unexpectedly through the half-timbered, cobbled city of Vannes (Gwened in Breton), which has a quirky, creative bent.

The city's integral role in Brittany's history stretches back to pre-Roman times, when it was the capital of the Veneti, a Gaulish tribe of sailors who fortified the town. Conquered by Julius Caesar in the 1st century BC, it became the centre of Breton unity in the 9th century under Breton hero Nominoë, and in

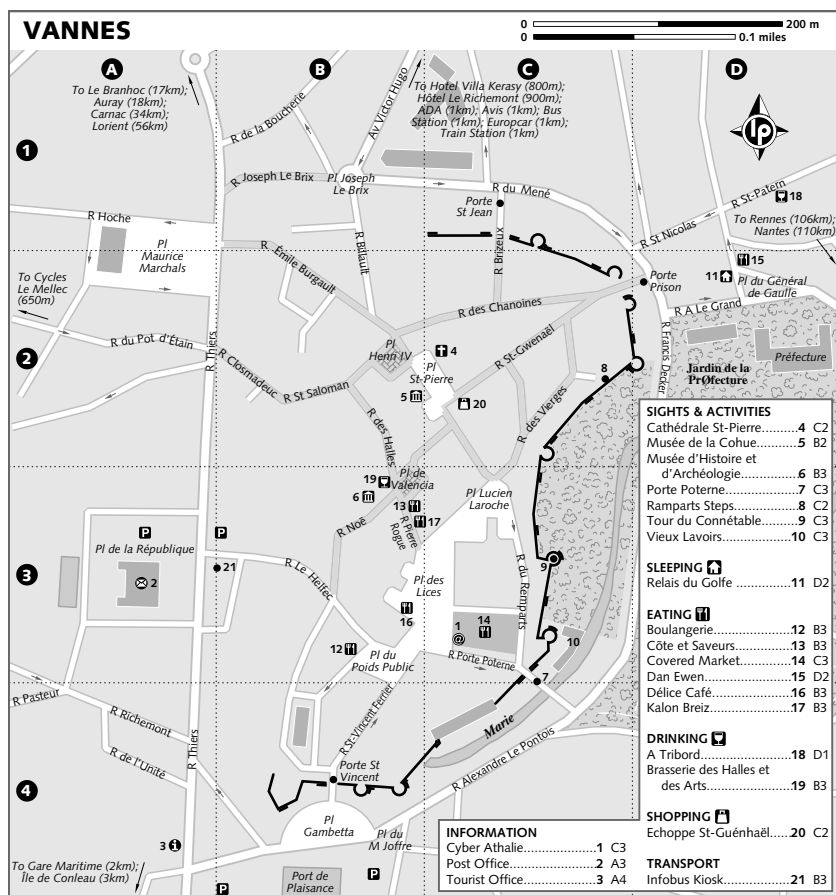
1532 the union of the duchy of Brittany with France was proclaimed here. These days it's a vibrant hub for students attending the city's Université de Bretagne-Sud.

## Orientation

Vannes' lively little marina sits at the end of a canal-like waterway about 1.5km from the gulf's entrance. Roughly 3.5km south of town, Île de Conleau, also known as Presqu'île de Conleau (Conleau Peninsula) is linked to the mainland by a causeway.

## Information

**Cyber Athalie** ☎ 02 97 47 59 02; 4 rue Porte Poterne; per hr €3.50; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-8pm Mon-Sat  
Internet access.



**Post Office** (2 place de la République)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 97 47 24 34; www.tourisme-vannes.com, in French; 1 rue Thiers; ☹ 9am–7pm daily Jul & Aug, 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat Sep–Jun) Occupies a distinctive 17th-century half-timbered house.

## Sights

Surrounding Vannes' walled **old town** is a flower-filled moat. Inside, you can weave through the web of narrow alleys ranged around the 13th-century Gothic **Cathédrale St-Pierre**. Tucked away behind rue des Vierges, stairs lead to the accessible section of the **ramparts**. From here, you can see the black-roofed **Vieux Lavoirs** (Old Laundry Houses), though you'll get a better view from the **Tour du Connétable** or from the **Porte Poterne** to the south.

Since the 14th century, the building now housing the **Musée de la Cohue** (☎ 02 97 01 63 00; 9–15 place St-Pierre; adult/child €4.20/2.60; ☹ 9am–7pm Mon–Sat, 10am–6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am–12.30pm & 1.30–6pm Sep–Jun) has variously been a produce market, a law court and the seat of the Breton parliament. Today it's a museum of fine arts, displaying mostly 19th-century paintings, sculptures and engravings.

In the summer months you can survey Roman and Greek artefacts and study up on megaliths at the **Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie** (☎ 02 97 01 63 00; 2 rue Noë; adult/child €4.20/2.60; ☹ 10am–6pm mid-Jun–Sep, 1.30–6pm mid-May–mid-Jun), in the 15th-century Château Gaillard.

A combined ticket for the two museums costs €6/4 per adult/child.

## Tours

**Compagnie des Îles** (☎ 08 25 13 41 00; www.compagniedesiles.com, in French) Offers seasonal gulf cruises.

**Navix** (☎ 02 97 46 60 29; www.navix.fr, in French with English sections) From April to September, Navix runs a range of cruises on the Golfe du Morbihan (Morbihan Coast), departing from the Gare Maritime, 2km south of the tourist office. Adult fares start at €15/29 per two hours/half-day, with the possibility to visit the two largest of the gulf's 40 inhabited islands, Île aux Moines and Île d'Arz.

## Festivals & Events

**Festival de Jazz** Vannes swings for four days in late July or early August.

**Les Musicales du Golfe** Classical music concerts take place in early August.

**Fêtes d'Arvor** This three-day celebration of Breton culture from 13 to 15 August includes parades, concerts and *festoù-noz*.

## Sleeping

The tourist office can book accommodation for a €1 fee.

**Relais du Golfe** (☎ 02 97 47 14 74; fax 02 97 42 52 48; 10 place du Général de Gaulle; d with bathroom €52–60, d with shared bathroom €37–47; ☹) Its name suggests something more flash than these rooms (wedged above a café-bar) actually are. But it's the most central budget option, and staff are welcoming.

**Le Branhoc** (☎ 02 97 56 41 55; www.auditel-hotel.fr; 5 rte du Bono, Auray; s €47–57, d €49–59) Situated 17km west of Vannes just outside the pretty riverside town of Auray (itself well worth a wander), this peacefully situated, family-run hotel is a handy base for exploring both Vannes and Morbihan's megalithic sites. Rooms are bright, spacious and spotlessly clean, and wi-fi and parking are both free.

**Hôtel Le Richemont** (☎ 02 97 47 17 24; www.hotel-richemont-vannes.com; 26 place de la Gare; d €58–65) If the heavy wood beams and arched stonework of the mock-medieval breakfast room aren't your cup of tea, you can have a laden tray brought to your very comfortable, soundproofed and much more contemporary room. Breakfast costs €7; private parking's €6.

**Hôtel Villa Kerasy** (☎ 02 97 68 36 83; www.villa-kerasy.com; 20 av Favrel-et-Lincy; d €125–190; ☹ closed mid-Nov–Dec) Each of the 12 elegant rooms in this grand villa is themed on historic ports of the East India trading route. In summer enjoy the tranquil garden, designed by a Japanese landscape artist. In winter relax in the cosy tearoom, where you can sip Earl Grey from fine Limoges china by the log fire.

## Eating & Drinking

Rue des Halles and its offshoots are lined with tempting eateries; classical and contemporary brasseries arc around the port.

**Dan Ewen** (☎ 02 97 42 44 34; 3 place du Général de Gaulle; crêpes €3–8; ☹ lunch & dinner Mon–Sat) A near-life-size statue of a sweet, smiling, wrinkled Breton lady bearing a tray greets you at the entrance of this stone and dark-wood crêperie serving fillings such as frangipane, and flambéed options topped with *crème Chantilly*.

**Délíce Café** (☎ 02 97 54 23 31; 7 place des Lices; dishes €6–11; ☹ 8am–8pm Mon–Sat) Fronted by a timber-decked terrace (warmed by heat lamps in winter), and flowing to a contemporary dining room of gilded mirrors and red velveten banquettes, this smart place in the centre

of the old town has healthy salads and hot dishes like *croques-monsieur* (grilled ham-and-cheese sandwiches). Terrace dining costs roughly 10% more.

**Kalon Breiz** (☎ 02 97 54 27 20; 6 rue Pierre-René Rogues; menus €11-13.50; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Tasty sweet and savoury crêpes keep this cosy place packed to the rafters day and night. Even at its busiest, staff remain friendly and efficient.

**Côte et Saveurs** (☎ 02 97 47 21 94; 8 rue Pierre-René Rogues; menus €19-29, mains €13-18.50; 🍷 lunch & dinner) A spiral staircase winds through the centre of the ground-floor dining room to the upper level of this airy, contemporary restaurant serving fresh fish such as red tuna with lemon and thyme.

**A Tribord** (☎ 02 97 42 76 94; www.atribord-vannes.com; 28 rue St-Patern; 🍷 6pm-2am daily) Everything from folk music to club nights with DJs hitting the decks takes place at this eclectic venue. You'll find a couple of other bars in the same street.

**Brasserie des Halles et des Arts** (☎ 02 97 54 08 34; 9 rue des Halles; 🍷 noon-midnight) You can eat at this buzzing brasserie (mains €9.50 to €18), but it's an equally good spot for a drink while browsing the art – such as the Breton images made from tiles that adorn its colourful walls.

## SELF-CATERING

On Wednesday and Saturday mornings, a produce market takes over place du Poids Public and the surrounding area. Vannes' **covered market** (Les Halles; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm) is adjacent.

Three-tiered displays of cakes, tarts and Breton pastries spin at the place du Poids Public's **boulangerie** (☎ 02 97 47 33 55; 11 place du Poids Public; 🕒 7am-8pm Mon-Sat).

## Shopping

In keeping with Vannes' artistic spirit, galleries such as **Echoppe St-Guénhaël** (☎ 02 97 47 92 37; 29 rue St-Guénhaël) sell innovative (and often amusing) contemporary Breton art. Look out for rainbow-hued shell-and-watercolour collages by Vannes artist 'Fred'.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

The small bus station is opposite the train station. Services include **Cariane Atlantique** (☎ 02 97 47 29 64), which runs to Carnac (€7, 1¼ hours) and on to Quiberon (€9.10, 45 minutes).

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

**Europcar** (☎ 02 97 42 43 43), **Avis** (☎ 02 97 01 29 13), and **ADA** (☎ 02 97 42 59 10) are at the train station.

## TRAIN

There are frequent trains westwards to Auray (€3.60, 11 minutes), Lorient (€8.60, 40 minutes) and Quimper (€17, 1½ hours). Eastbound trains serve Rennes (€17.80, 1½ hours) and Nantes (€18.60, 1½ hours).

## Getting Around

**TPV** (☎ 02 97 01 22 23; tickets €1.20) runs eight city bus lines until 8.15pm. Its Infobus kiosk is on place de la République. Buses 3 and 4 link the train station with place de la République.

You can hire bikes from **Cycles Le Mellec** (☎ 02 97 63 00 24; 51ter rue Jean Gougaud) from €12 a day. Contact **Vélo & Co** (☎ 02 97 54 24 59; www.veloandco.fr) to rent bikes (from €8.50/11 per half-/full day) and scooters (from €8/30 per hour/half-day) at various points around town.

To order a taxi, ring ☎ 02 97 54 34 34.

# EASTERN & CENTRAL BRITTANY

The one-time frontier between Brittany and France, fertile eastern Brittany fans out around the region's lively capital, Rennes. Central Brittany conceals the enchanting Forêt de Paimpont, sprinkled with villages and ancient Breton legends.

## JOSSELIN

pop 2400

In the shadow of an enormous, witch's-hat-turreted 14th-century castle that was the long-time seat of the counts of Rohan, the storybook village of Josselin lies on the banks of the River Oust 43km northeast of Vannes. Today, visitors in their thousands continue to fall under its spell.

## Orientation & Information

A beautiful square of 16th-century half-timbered houses, place Notre Dame, is the little village's heart. The castle and the tourist office are south, below rue des Trente, the main through street.

The small but friendly **tourist office** (☎ 02 97 22 36 43; www.paysdejosselin-tourisme.com; place de la Congrégation; ☎ 10am-6pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat Sep-Jun) is beside the castle entrance. You can check your emails (up to 15 minutes) for free. Directly opposite, the **English Bookshop** (☎ 02 97 75 62 55; rue des Trente; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat May-Sep, 11am-4pm Tue-Thu & Sat Oct-Apr) stocks second-hand novels and nonfiction titles.

## Sights & Activities

Guarded by its three round towers, the **Château de Josselin** (☎ 02 97 22 36 45; adult/child €7.50/5; ☎ 10am-6pm daily mid-Jul-Aug, 2-6pm Jun-mid-Jul & Sep, 2-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-May & Oct, closed Nov-Mar) can only be visited by guided tour. One English-language tour departs daily from June to September; the rest of the year you can ask for a leaflet in English. Within the château is the **Musée de Poupées** (Doll Museum; adult/child €6.40/4.60). A combination ticket for both costs €11.90/8.20 per adult/child.

The hulking château makes an evocative backdrop for the village's two-day **Medieval Festival**, featuring feasting and fireworks, held in mid-July in even-numbered years.

Older still, parts of the **Basilique Notre Dame du Roncier** in place Notre Dame date from the 12th century; superb 15th- and 16th-century stained glass illuminates the south aisle.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping du Bas de la Lande** (☎ 02 97 22 22 20; camping basdelalande@wanadoo.fr; Guégon; campsite €8.70-11; ☎ Apr-Oct) This peaceful spot is 2km west of Josselin, on the south bank of the Oust.

**Chez Janny** (☎ 02 97 73 94 72; 61 rue Glatinier; broce liande.chambres@orange.fr; d€55; ☎) There's a casual, homey feel to this *chambre d'hôte* located 50m from the château, particularly in its brightly coloured toy- and book-strewn lounge/breakfast room in an old shopfront.

**Hôtel-Restaurant du Château** (☎ 02 97 22 20 11; www.hotel-chateau.com, in French; 1 rue Général de Gaulle; d €61-70; ☎ closed 3 weeks Feb, 1 week Nov, 1 week Dec) It's worth the few extra euros for a magnificent view of the château looming above this cosy hotel. Cheaper rooms, which don't have in-room showers or toilets, start at €35.50. Its restaurant *menus* range from €15 to €55 and regional specialities include a moist caramel cake.

**Restaurant Café France** (☎ 02 97 70 61 93; 6 place Notre Dame; menus €8.90-18.90; ☎ lunch & dinner Apr-Sep)

does good omelettes, while just down the hill **Crêperie-Grill Sarrazine** (☎ 02 97 22 37 80; 51 rue Glatinier; menus €8.80-13.90, galettes & salads from €6; ☎ lunch & dinner) packs in the locals.

## Getting There & Away

**CTM** (☎ 02 97 01 22 01) bus destinations include Rennes (€12.50, 1¼ hours).

## FORÊT DE PAIMPONT

Also known as Brocéliande, the Paimpont Forest is about 40km southwest of Rennes, and legendary as the place where King Arthur received the Excalibur sword (forget that these stories are thought to have been brought to Brittany by Celtic settlers and hence probably took place offshore – it's a magical setting all the same).

The best base for exploring the forest is the lakeside village of **Paimpont**. Some 95% of the forest is private land, but the **tourist office** (Syndicat d'Initiative; ☎ 02 99 07 84 23; syndicat-dinitiative paimpont@wanadoo.fr; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm daily Apr-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), beside the 12th-century **Église Abbatiale** (Abbey Church), has a free brochure outlining a 62km-long driving circuit with numerous short walks along the way that are accessible to the public. It also sells more-detailed walking and cycling guides.

In July and August the tourist office leads **guided tours** (morning/afternoon/full day €6/10/12) of the forest (the availability of English-speaking guides varies).

Campers can set up their tents at the lakeside **Camping Municipal de Paimpont** (☎ 02 99 07 89 16; rue du Chevalier Lancelot du Lac; camping €11.90; ☎ May-Sep), while backpackers will want to head to the **Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 02 97 22 76 75; www.fuaj.org; dm €10.50; ☎ Jun-Sep; ☎), in a lovely old stone farmhouse at Choucan-en-Brocéliande, 5km north of Paimpont.

For more creature comforts, try the **Hôtel Le Relais de Brocéliande** (☎ 02 99 07 84 94; www.le-relais-de-broceliande.fr; 5 rue du Forges, Paimpont; r with/without bathroom €55/34), with rustic rooms and canopied beds. Its on-site restaurant (*menus* €17 to €36) specialises in local river-caught fish. **Illenoo** (www.illenoo.fr, in French) runs buses to/from Rennes (€2.50, one hour) from Monday to Saturday (none on Sunday).

You can rent mountain bikes (per half-/full day €9/12) from **Pays de Merlin** (☎ 02 99 07 80 23; rue Général de Gaulle).

## RENNES

pop 210,500

A crossroads since Roman times, Brittany's vibrant capital sits at the junction of highways linking northwestern France's major cities. Its contemporary and medieval quarters are woven with waterways, which are best explored by renting a boat. At night, this student city has no end of lively places to pop in for a pint.

### Orientation

The centre is divided by La Vilaine, a river channelled into a cement-lined canal that disappears underground just before the central square, place de la République. The northern area includes the pedestrianised old city; the south is garishly modern. The metro runs north through the city from the main train station.

### Information

**Comédie des Langues** (☎ 02 99 36 72 95; 25 rue St-Malo; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) Stocks English-language books.

**Laundrette** (23 rue de Penhoët; ☎ 7am-8pm)

**NeuroGame** (☎ 02 99 65 53 85; www.neurogame.com; 2 rue Dinan; per 20min €1; ☎ 10am-1am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri, noon-3am Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Internet access.

**Post Office** (place de la République)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 99 67 11 11; www.tourisme-rennes.com; 11 rue St-Yves; ☎ 1-6pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 11am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 1-6pm Mon, 9am-6pm Tue-Sat, 11am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun Sep-Jun) Staff can book accommodation for free.

### Sights & Activities

#### OLD CITY

Much of Rennes was gutted by the great fire of 1720, started by a drunken carpenter who accidentally set alight a pile of shavings. Half-timbered houses that survived line the old city's cobbled streets such as **rue St-Michel** and **rue St-Georges**. The latter runs alongside the place de la Mairie and the site of the 17th-century **Palais du Parlement de Bretagne**, the former seat of the rebellious Breton parliament and, more recently, the Palais de Justice. In 1994 this building too was destroyed by fire, started by demonstrating fishermen. Now restored, it houses the Court of Appeal. In July and August, guided tours in English (adult/child €6.80/4; book at the tourist office) take you through the ostentatiously gilded rooms.

Crowning the old city is the 17th-century **Cathédrale St-Pierre** (☎ 9.30am-noon & 3-6pm), which has a stunning neoclassical interior.

### MUSEUMS

Rooms devoted to the Pont-Aven school (p338) are the highlight of the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (☎ 02 99 28 55 85; 20 quai Émile Zola; adult/student/child €4.30/2.20/free; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun), which also has a 'curiosity gallery' of antiques and illustrations amassed in the 18th century. It also hosts temporary exhibitions, which attract an additional charge.

Rennes' futuristic cultural centre, **Champs Libres** (☎ 02 23 40 66 00; 10 cours des Alliés), is home to the **Musée de Bretagne** (☎ 02 23 40 66 70; www.musee-bretagne.fr), with displays on Breton history and culture. Under the same roof is **Espace des Sciences** (☎ 02 23 40 66 40; www.espace-sciences.org), an interactive science museum, along with a planetarium, a temporary exhibition space and a library. A combined ticket for all sections costs €10/7 per adult/child.

### Tours

**urbaVag** (☎ 02 99 33 16 88, 06 82 37 67 72; www.urbavag.fr, in French; rue Canal St-Martin; per hr €26-31) Cruise Rennes' waterways on a whisper-quiet electric boat rented from urbaVag. Boats take up to seven passengers; the price drops significantly with each extra hour of rental.

### Festivals & Events

**Les Mercredis du Thabor** Traditional Breton dancing and music take place in Rennes' beautiful Parc du Thabor on Wednesdays during June and July (usually from 4pm).

**Tombées de la Nuit** Rennes' old city comes alive during this music and theatre festival in the first week of July.

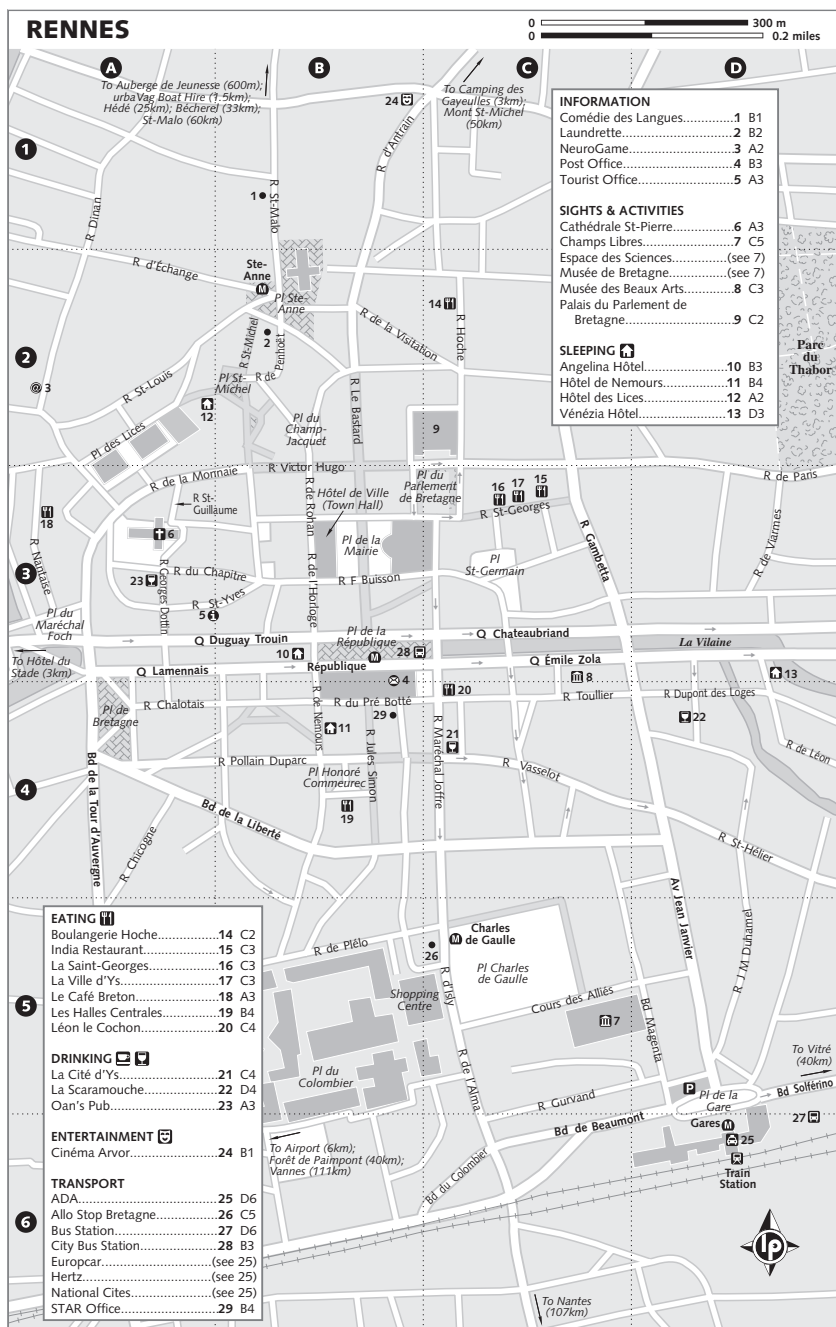
**Yaouank** (☎ 02 99 30 06 87) A huge *fest-noz*, held on the third Saturday in November.

### Sleeping

**Camping des Gayeulles** (☎ 02 99 36 91 22; www.camping-rennes.com; rue Professeur Audin; per adult/campervan/tent €3.50/7.60/5.70; ☎ Apr-Oct) Rennes' only campsite is in Parc des Bois, 4.5km north-east of the train station. It's open for campervans year-round. Take bus 3 from place de la République to the Gayeulles stop.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 02 99 33 22 33; rennes@fuaj.org; 10-12 Canal St-Martin; dm incl breakfast €16.90, sheets €2.80; ☎ 7am-1am) Rennes' well-equipped youth hostel has a self-catering kitchen and a canalside setting 2km north from the centre. Take bus 18 from place de la Mairie.





**Vénézia Hôtel** (☎ 02 99 30 36 56; hotel.venezia@wanadoo.fr; 27 rue Dupont des Loges; s €28-38, d €38-48) Named for the Venice-like canals surrounding this small 'island' in the city centre; half of this charming hotel's 16 rose-toned rooms have pretty views over the canalside garden. The cheapest have a toilet, but share showers. The kind owner can recommend any number of crêperies nearby.

**Angelina Hôtel** (☎ 02 99 79 29 66; angelina-hotel@voila.fr; 1 quai Lamennais; d €45-62) It doesn't get more central than this cavernous hotel right next to République, with the old city and shopping district on the doorstep. Reception's on the 3rd floor of this creaking old building (there's a lift), but the wicker-furnished rooms are surprisingly well kept and come with bright modern bathrooms, as well as free wi-fi.

**Hôtel des Lices** (☎ 02 99 79 14 81; www.hotel-des-lices.com; 7 place des Lices; r €48-78; ☎ ☒) You can peer down from the steel balconies or through the floor-to-ceiling glass doors to see the Saturday-morning market, which snakes right past the front door of this modern six-storey hotel. Inside, rooms are small but sleek with pared-down contemporary furnishings and textured walls. Breakfast (€8) is served in a sunlit ground-floor salon with limed floorboards, white tables and fresh flowers. Wi-fi's free.

**Hôtel du Stade** (☎ 02 99 59 19 19; www.hoteldus-tade.fr; 167 rte de Lorient; r €45-68; ☎ ☒) Parking is limited in Rennes' city centre, so what this shiny new hotel lacks in centrality, it more than makes up for with its free secured parking and spacious and uncluttered rooms (three of which are wheelchair-accessible). Wi-fi's free.

**Hôtel de Nemours** (☎ 02 99 78 26 26; www.hotel-nemours.com, in French; 5 rue de Nemours; r €54-90; ☎ ☒) Lined with historic black-and-white photographs of Rennes, boutique Hôtel de Nemours is an understatement in elegance, with cream, chocolate- and caramel-coloured furnishings, high-thread-count white linens, flat-screen TVs and free wi-fi. Slide into a corduroy-upholstered banquette for a breakfast buffet feast (€7.50).

## Eating

Rennes has a wide choice of restaurants. Rues St-Malo and St-Georges are the city's two main 'eat streets'; the latter particularly specialises in crêperies. See also p352.

**La Saint-Georges** (☎ 02 99 38 87 04; 31 rue St-Georges; crêpes €2.50-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Innovative crêpes at this smart spot are named after famous people called George: Georges Pompidou, George Michael and so on, through to the most lavish concoction, the Giorgio Armani, with warm foie gras.

**Léon le Cochon** (☎ 02 99 79 37 54; 1 rue Maréchal Joffre; menu €25, mains €11-24; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Sun Jul & Aug) Basking in the plaudits of almost every French gastronomic guidebook, but still fun and informal, 'Leon the Pig' specialises not just in pork but porcine products in all their many and varied manifestations.

**Le Café Breton** (☎ 02 99 30 74 95; 14 rue Nantaise; menus €13-30; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Diminutive rue Nantaise has a handful of top restaurants, including this local fave for its tarts, salads and gratins. Definitely book ahead.

**India Restaurant** (☎ 02 99 87 09 01; 41 rue St-Georges; veg/nonveg menus €14/18; ☎ lunch & dinner) For a change from crêpes, head to this richly decorated red-and-gold eatery serving up impeccably presented, high-quality Indian cuisine with an extensive choice of vegetarian dishes.

## SELF-CATERING

Fresh produce and Breton specialities are available daily at Rennes' covered markets, **Les Halles Centrales** (place Honoré Commeurec; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun); on Saturdays, a fabulous **open-air market** fills the surrounding streets and squares.

Pick up exquisite pastries and still-warm bread at **Boulangerie Hoche** (☎ 02 99 63 61 01; 17 rue Hoche, ☎ 7am-7.30pm Mon-Sat).

## Drinking & Entertainment

Rue St-Michel – nicknamed rue de la Soif (Street of Thirst) for its bars, pubs and cafés – is the best-known drinking strip, but it can get rowdy (and sometimes aggressive) late at night.

**our pick Oan's Pub** (☎ 02 99 31 07 51; 1 rue Georges Dottin; ☎ 2pm-1am Mon-Sat) Locals habitually turn up with instruments for impromptu Celtic jam sessions at this cosy, cavelike, stone-walled pub with Brittany-brewed Coreff beer on tap.

**La Cité d'Ys** (☎ 02 99 78 24 84; 31 rue Vasselot; ☎ noon-1am Mon-Sat) If you want to practise your Breton with Breton-speaking locals and bar staff (lubricated by Breton beer), this wooden mezzanine pub is prime. *Yec'hed mat* (Cheers!)

## BRETON CRÊPES

Crêpes are Brittany's traditional staple, and ubiquitous throughout the region. Unlike the rolled-up crêpes sold at stalls on Paris' street corners, Breton crêpes are folded envelope-style at the edges, served flat on a plate and eaten using cutlery.

Rennes, as Brittany's capital, has dozens of enticing crêperies, including **La Ville d'Ys** (☎ 02 99 36 70 28; 5 rue St-Georges; crêpes €2.20-5.50; 🍴 lunch & dinner), named for the fabled Atlantis-style submerged city of Breton legend, and tucked inside a two-storey, 15th-century house with a slanted wooden staircase and colourful crockery displayed on the walls. We spoke to the crêperie's owner-chef, 60-year-old Claudine Thomas as she cooked in her open kitchen, to find out the secrets behind making Breton crêpes:

### What are the essential ingredients in a basic galette?

*Blé noir* – *sarrasin* in Breton (buckwheat flour); and salted Breton butter. It's important to keep the Breton tradition; locals take crêpes very seriously. Well, crêpes are crêpes!

### Favourite traditional toppings?

*Andouille* (local sausage), and for sweet crêpes, *caramel au beurre salé* – *salidou* in Breton (salty caramel sauce), which I make here with ingredients from the market.

### What's the ideal cooking temperature?

A *galetier* – *bilig* in Breton (the hotplate) – has no temperature dial, only numbers from one to eight. It can't be too hot – the crêpe needs to be brown at the edges; crispy but not burnt.

### Do you use a particular recipe?

I use a recipe from Finistère – the crêpes are a finer texture and crispier than other recipes. People always come in because of this recipe; they don't want any other kind.

If you want to learn how to create your own crêpes, the **Écoles de Treblec** (☎ 02 99 34 86 76; www.ecole-maitre-crepier.com, in French with English sections; 66 rue de Guer, Maure-de-Bretagne), 38km southwest of Rennes, runs a variety of courses; a day-long course costs €79.80.

**Le Scaramouche** (☎ 02 99 31 55 53; 3bis rue Duhamel; 🍴 8am-1am Mon-Sat) This huge space with art and film projected onto the walls attracts lots of local actors, artists and philosophic types.

Non dubbed films screen at **Cinéma Arvor** (☎ 02 99 38 72 40; 29 rue d'Antrain).

To find out about upcoming football matches and obtain tickets, check www.stade.rennais.com (in French).

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Among Rennes' many bus services, **Illeño** (www.illeño.fr, in French) runs five times daily to Dinard (€3.50, two hours) via Dinan (€3, 1½ hours), as well Paimpont (€2.50, one hour, none on Sunday).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

**ADA** (☎ 02 99 67 43 79), **Europcar** (☎ 02 23 44 02 72), **National Citer** (☎ 02 23 44 02 78) and **Hertz** (☎ 02 23 42 17 01) all have offices at the train station.

### HITCHING

**Allo Stop Bretagne** (☎ 02 99 35 04 40; www.allostop.rennes.com, in French; 20 rue d'Isly; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm &

2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm & 1.30-3pm Sat), in the Trois Soleils shopping centre, matches up hitchers with drivers for a fee (from €6 for a one-off, one-way journey).

### TRAIN

Destinations with frequent services include St-Malo (€12.10, one hour), Dinan (€12.70, one hour including a change), Vannes (€17.80, 1½ hours), Nantes (€20.10, 1¼ hours), Brest (€30, two hours), Quimper (€30.10, 2½ hours) and Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€52.20, 2¼ hours).

## Getting Around

Rennes has an efficient local bus network and (incredibly, for a city its size) its own single-line metro, both run by **STAR** (☎ 08 11 55 55 35; www.star.fr, in French; 12 rue Pré Botté). Bus and metro tickets (single journey €1, 10-trip carnet €9.70, 24-hour pass €3) are interchangeable.

The metro line runs northwest to southeast. Main stations include République (place de la République) in the centre, and Ste-Anne (old town).

Ring ☎ 02 99 30 79 79 for a taxi.

## VITRÉ

pop 17,000

With its narrow cobbled streets, half-timbered houses and colossal castle topped by witch's-hat turrets, Vitré rivals Dinan as one of Brittany's best-preserved medieval towns – with far fewer tourists and a more laissez-faire village air.

### Orientation & Information

Situated 40km east of Rennes, Vitré's compact old town sits immediately north of the train station, between place de la République and the castle.

The **tourist office** (☎ 02 99 75 04 46; www.ot-vitre.fr; place Général de Gaulle; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 2.30-6pm Mon, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Sat Sep-Jun) is right outside the train station.

Check your email at **Gamer's** (☎ 02 23 55 10 37; 1bis bd Pierre Landais; per 15min/hr €1/4; ☎ 2-7pm Mon, 10am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Tue-Sat).

### Sights & Activities

You can visit Vitré's **museums** over any number of days for a single entry fee of €4/2.50 per adult/child. The highlight is the **Musée du Château** at the southern corner of the majestic **medieval castle** (☎ 02 99 75 04 54; place du Château; ☎ 10am-6pm Jul-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Apr-Jun, 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Wed-Fri, 2-5.30pm Sat-Mon Oct-Mar). Rising on a rocky outcrop overlooking the River Vilaine, it was built in 1060, and was expanded in the 14th and 15th centuries. A twin-turreted gateway leads you from the cobbled square of place du Château into the triangular inner courtyard.

### Sleeping

Vitré has a shortage of accommodation, so it's worth booking ahead any time of year.

**Hôtel du Château** (☎ 02 99 74 58 59; hotel-du-chateau2@wanadoo.fr; 5 rue Rallon; s €37-53, d €47-59) Wake up to the aroma of freshly baked bread and, on upper floors, fantastic vistas of the castle, at this family-run hotel at the base of the ramparts. The friendly owners are a fount of local information. Free wi-fi, good wheelchair access, a brimming €6.50

breakfast and €3 garaged parking make this one of Brittany's gems.

**Mme Faucher** (☎ 02 99 75 08 69; http://bnb.faucher.info; 2 chemin des Tertres Noirs; s/d incl breakfast €40/46; ☎) In a rambling 18th-century stone house looking out over a large leafy garden, this *chambre d'hôte* run by Mme and M Faucher is the kind of familial, down-to-earth place you hoped still existed in France. Their home is filled with family memorabilia, bathrooms are shared, and travellers are welcomed with open arms. Breakfast is a hearty basketful of brioches and baguettes, along with strong coffee. It's just a short downhill stroll to the town centre, but driving is a bit complicated due to the one-way road system. Check directions online or ask the tourist office for a route map.

### Eating & Drinking

Quaint crêperies and gastronomic restaurants are tucked throughout the old town.

**Le Green'Otoire** (☎ 02 23 55 08 41; Les Rochers-Sévigé; menus from €8; ☎ lunch Thu-Tue, dinner Fri-Sun) Well worth the 4km drive southeast of town along the D88, this 'semi-gastronomic' with exposed stone walls faces an ancient castle and is a favourite with locals for its daily-changing chef's suggestions as well as its feather-light pastries for dessert.

**Le Pichet** (☎ 02 99 75 24 09; 17 bd de Laval; menus €18-50, mains €12-27; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Mon-Tue, Fri & Sat) Classical French cuisine incorporating local fish and regional produce fresh from the market is served on a charming terrace overlooking the garden when the sun's shining, and in front of the crackling open fire in winter.

**Bressan** (☎ 02 99 75 23 64; 3 rue de la Trémouille; ☎ 3pm-3am Mon-Sat) Vitré's funky, laid-back microbrewery creates artisan beers in its gleaming copper boilers, which it serves on tap. In summer try the *blanche*, brewed with citrus zest; in winter, go for the robust *noire* (stout).

### Getting There & Away

Frequent trains travel between Vitré and Rennes (€6.60, 35 minutes).

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