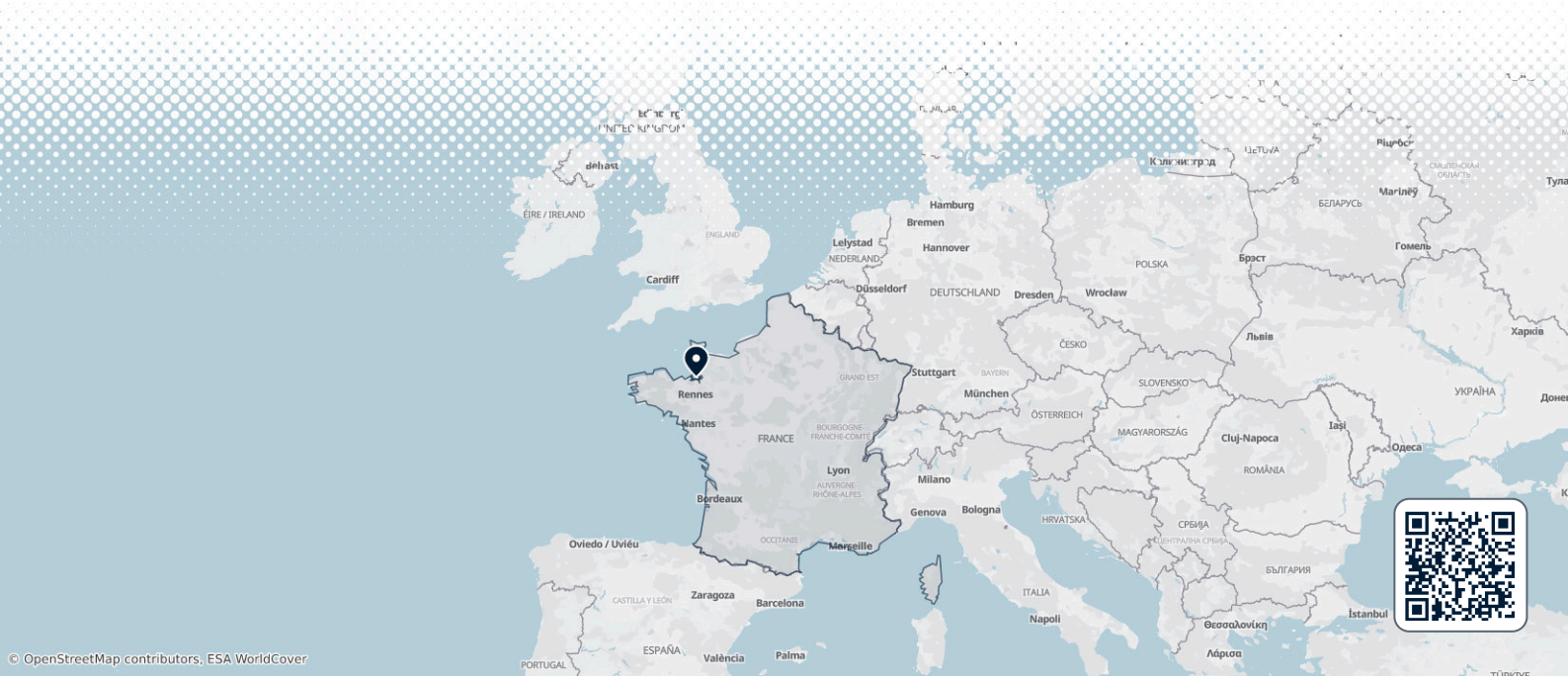


Mont-Saint-Michel Bay

Normandy · France

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Mont-Saint-Michel Bay lies where Normandy meets Brittany. Its centre is the tidal island of Mont-Saint-Michel, crowned by a medieval abbey. The bay has some of the highest tides in Europe, and the sea can cover or uncover huge sand flats within hours. UNESCO lists the Mont and its bay as a World Heritage Site.

The area suits one to three nights. Most visitors come for the Mont, then add a walk on the sands, the oyster town of Cancale or a day in Saint-Malo. Rooms on the island are few, so most people stay on the mainland nearby.

When to visit

June to September is the warmest and brightest time, and also the busiest. Spring and autumn are quieter, with changeable weather. Winter is cool, wet and windy, and some businesses close.

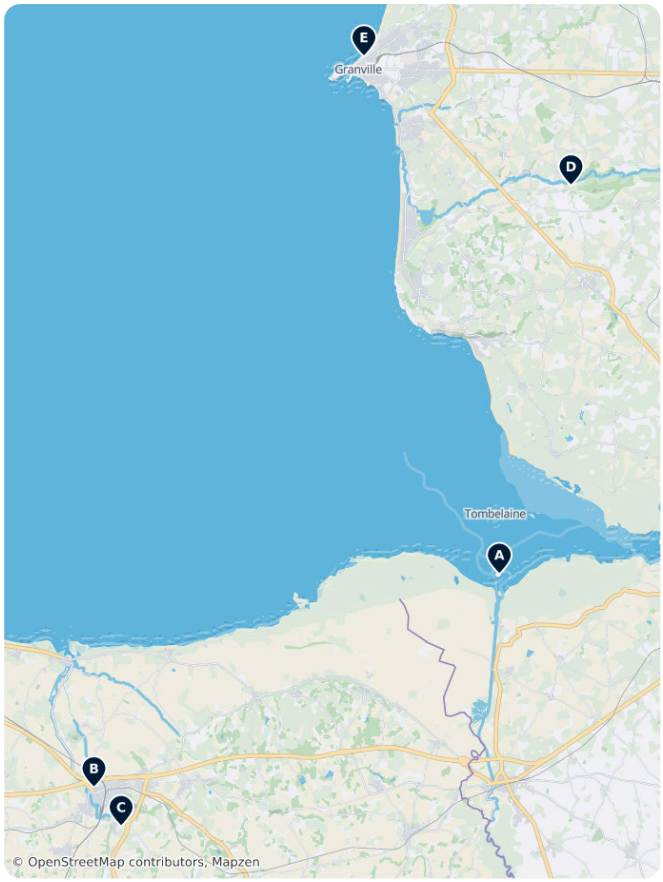
The tides matter more than the season. The highest tides, called *grandes marées*, come a few days each month around new and full moon. They are strongest near the spring and autumn equinoxes. On these days the sea can surround the Mont, and many visitors plan their trip around them. Check the tide times on the Mont-Saint-Michel tourist office tide page.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for hiking	9° / 13° Feels like 4°	4° / -2°	16 rainy days · Dry air
February	Poor Poor for hiking	9° / 14° Feels like 5°	5° / -1°	14 rainy days · Dry air
March	Fair Fair for hiking	12° / 17° Feels like 8°	6° / 1°	14 rainy days · Dry air
April	Good Good for hiking	14° / 20° Feels like 10°	7° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
May	Good Good for hiking	17° / 23°	10° / 7°	13 rainy days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 26°	13° / 10°	12 rainy days · Dry air
July	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27°	15° / 12°	14 rainy days
August	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 27°	15° / 12°	13 rainy days
September	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 26°	14° / 10°	12 rainy days · Dry air
October	Good Good for hiking	16° / 21°	11° / 7°	16 rainy days · Dry air
November	Fair Fair for hiking	12° / 16° Feels like 8°	8° / 3°	17 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for hiking	9° / 14° Feels like 5°	5° / -1°	16 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: June, July, August, September

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey crowns the island and is the main reason to come. Building began in the 11th century and went on for hundreds of years. The visit covers the church, the Gothic Merveille buildings and terraces with wide views over the bay. Arrive early or late in the day to avoid the crowds.
- The village below the abbey has one steep main street, the Grande Rue, with old houses, small museums and many shops. The ramparts give more views over the sands.
- B Cathédrale Saint-Samson in Dol-de-Bretagne is a large Gothic cathedral, once the seat of a Breton archbishop. It is about 30 km west of the Mont.
- C Menhir de Champ-Dolent is a standing stone more than 9 m high in a field at the edge of Dol-de-Bretagne. It is one of the tallest menhirs in Brittany.
- D Abbaye de la Lucerne is a quiet abbey founded in the 12th century, in a forest valley about 25 km north of the Mont. It is a calm stop away from the crowds.
- E Musée Christian Dior is in Granville, on the coast north of the bay. It fills the clifftop villa where the designer grew up, and each season has a new exhibition. The rose garden is part of the visit.

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What to experience

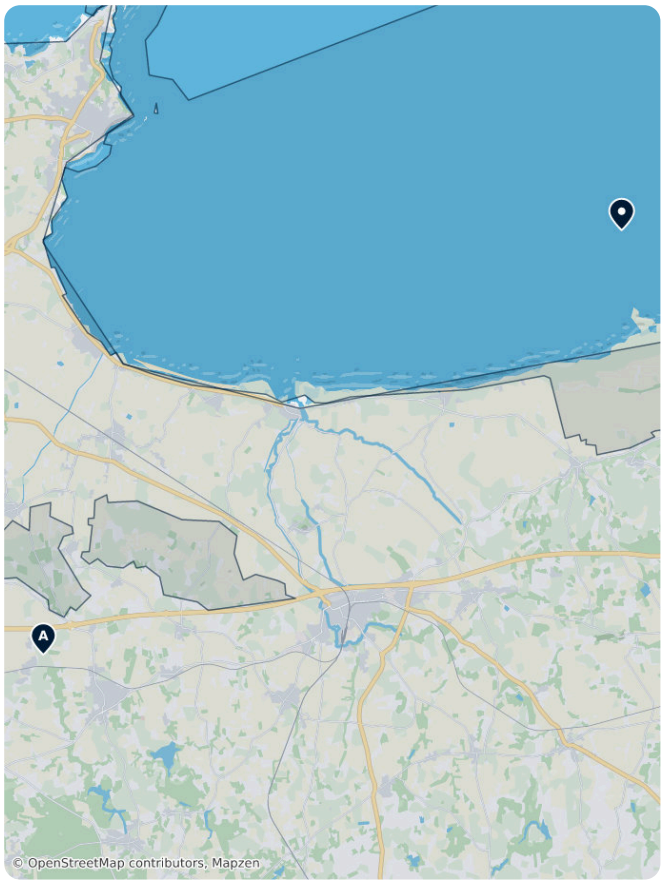
Things to do in the bay, apart from visiting the sights:

- **Cross the sands with a guide**: Guided walks cross the flat bay, often barefoot, with a licensed guide. Book ahead with a guide listed by the tourist office.
- **Watch a high tide arrive**: On big tide days the water rises fast around the Mont. In some places it comes as a fast wave called a tidal bore. Watch from the shore or the bridge.
- **See the Mont at dusk**: Stay late to see the Mont after the day visitors leave. The island is lit after dark.
- **Cycle the green way**: The level path from the west gives views of the Mont as you approach.

Day trips

Most trips start by car. Distances are one way from the Mont.

- **Avranches**: about 25 minutes by car. The Scriptorial museum shows manuscripts from the Mont's abbey library, and the town has a hilltop garden with views toward the Mont.
- **Fougères**: about 45 minutes by car. Its large medieval castle stands below the old town.
- **Cancale**: about 50 minutes by car. This is the oyster port of the bay, with stalls and restaurants on the quay.
- A **Saint-Malo**: about 1 hour by car. The walled port town has ramparts, beaches and good seafood.
- **Dinan**: about 1 hour by car. It is a well-kept medieval town with half-timbered houses and a harbour on the Rance river.



Getting there

- **By air**: Rennes–Bretagne (RNS) is the most practical airport, about 1 hour from the Mont by car. Public transport goes through Rennes station. Dinard–Bretagne (DNR) has limited seasonal flights.
- **By train**: Pontorson is the nearest station, 9 km from the Mont. Rennes is the main rail hub and has fast trains from Paris Montparnasse. Take a bus from the station to the Mont.
- **By bus**: A daily Keolis bus runs from Rennes station to the Mont. Normandy's NOMAD line 308 serves the Mont from Avranches and Granville. Buses from Pontorson also stop at the Mont.
- **By car**: There is a large paid car park on the mainland. See the driving section.

Plan access and timetables with the Mont-Saint-Michel tourist office.

Getting around

- **To the island**: A free shuttle called Le Passeur runs from the car park to the Mont. It takes about 12 minutes and runs from early morning until midnight.
- **On foot**: The walk from the car park takes about 40 to 50 minutes on the footbridge or one of three footpaths. A paid horse-drawn carriage also goes to the entrance.
- **By bike**: A level green way of about 12 km leads to the Mont from the west. Leave your bike at the racks on the mainland, because bikes cannot go onto the island.
- **Around the bay**: Public transport between the towns is limited. A car is the easiest way to see more than the Mont.

The island has steep, uneven streets and many steps.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The Mont is car-free but steep, with cobbles and many steps. The wider bay is spread out and needs a car or bike.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

A level green way of about 12 km leads to the Mont, but bikes must stay on the mainland.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Yes, if you want to see more than the Mont. Public transport around the bay is limited.
- **Parking**: There is one large paid car park on the mainland, with about 4,000 spaces. A free shuttle takes you to the island. In low season parking is free from 6:30 pm.
- **Restrictions**: Cars cannot drive onto the island. Coaches use a separate car park.

Food & drink

The bay has its own local products. Look for lamb raised on the salt marshes (*agneau de pré-salé*), mussels grown on poles in the bay, and oysters from Cancale. Brittany's side offers buttery sablé biscuits and savoury galettes with cider. Normandy's side is known for apples, cider and Calvados.

Eating on the island is busy and costly. For better value, eat in the mainland villages or in Cancale. At Cancale, go to the port area called La Houle, where oyster stalls stand along the quay.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Croissant
Buttery, flaky laminated pastry and a classic French breakfast staple.

LUNCH

Ratatouille
A Provençal stewed vegetable dish of eggplant, zucchini, peppers, and tomatoes.

DINNER

Coq au Vin
Chicken braised slowly in red wine with mushrooms, onions, and lardons.

Beef Bourguignon · Bœuf Bourguignon
Beef stewed in red Burgundy wine with carrots, onions, and mushrooms.

Escargot · Escargots de Bourgogne
Snails cooked in garlic and parsley butter, a classic starter.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Baguette
Long, crusty white bread loaf bought fresh daily from the local boulangerie.

Cheese · Fromage
France produces hundreds of cheese varieties, often served as a course before dessert.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Crepes · Crêpes
Thin pancakes served sweet with sugar or jam, or savory as galettes.

Macarons
Delicate almond meringue sandwich cookies in a range of flavors and colors.

DRINKS

Wine · Vin
France's wine regions, including Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne, are among the world's most renowned.

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Safety & health

The area is safe for visitors, and crime is low. Watch your bag in the summer crowds on the island.

The main danger is the bay itself. The tide comes in fast over flat sand, and there is quicksand and sometimes fog. **Never walk on the sands without a licensed guide.** Check tide times before any shore walk.

Wear shoes with good grip. The island streets and abbey stairs are steep and uneven.

History

A legend says the archangel Michael appeared in 708 to Aubert, bishop of Avranches, and asked him to build a church on the rock. Benedictine monks settled on the Mont in 966, and Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey grew over the following centuries. Medieval pilgrims called the Mont "Saint Michael in peril of the sea" because of its tides and quicksand.

English forces besieged the island in 1423 and again in 1433. The small garrison held out both times. After the French Revolution the abbey closed, and from 1793 to 1863 it served as a prison.

Since 2001 monks and nuns of the Monastic Fraternities of Jerusalem have lived on the Mont, and services still take place in Église abbatiale. UNESCO listed the Mont and its bay in 1979. In 2014 a new bridge replaced the old causeway so that water can flow around the island again.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for France at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

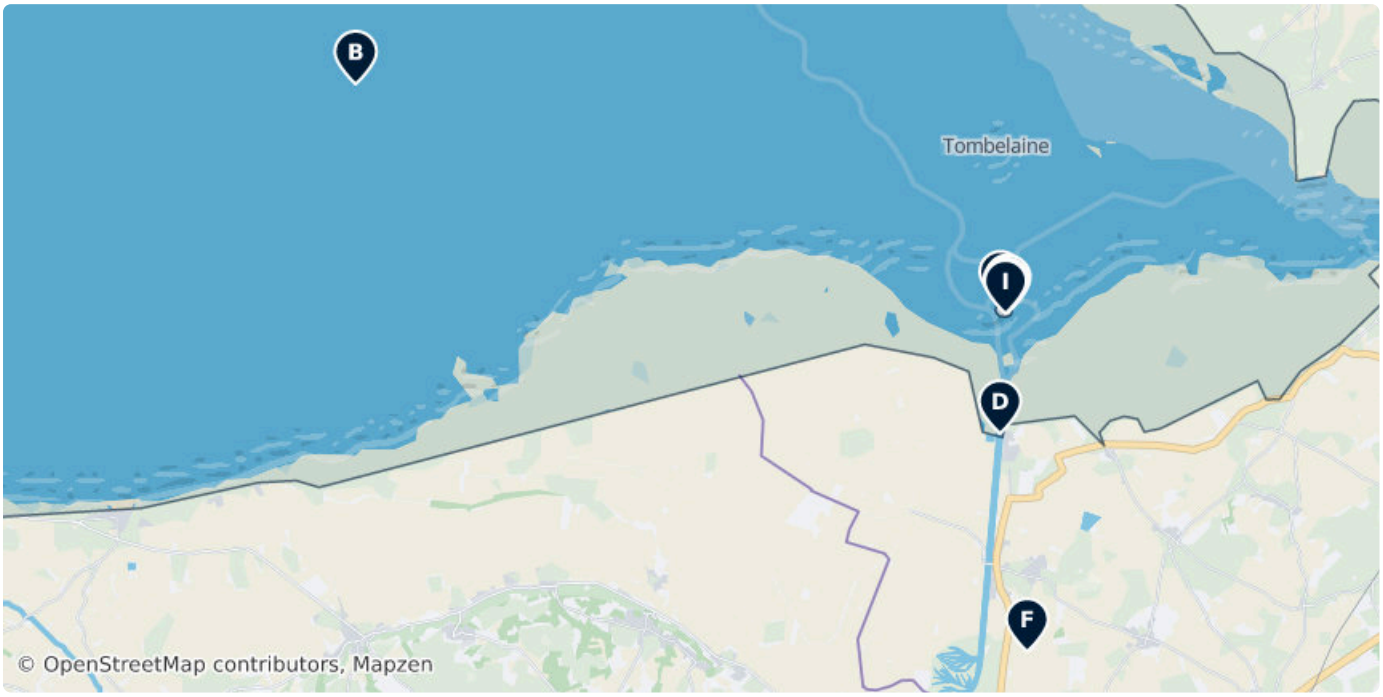
Type C / Type E
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Baie du Mont Saint Michel Essentials

This collection centers on the UNESCO World Heritage site of Mont-Saint-Michel and its surrounding bay. The list features the iconic 8th-century Benedictine abbey, a masterpiece of medieval architecture, alongside the village's narrow streets. Key sites include the 15th-century Église Saint-Pierre, the historic Maison de la Truie qui File, and the Fontaine Saint-Aubert. Beyond the island, the 19th-century Moulin de Moidrey offers views of the bay's dramatic tidal landscape and salt marshes.





A Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey

The Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey is an abbey located within the city and island of Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy, in the department of Manche.

Terrasse de l'Abside, 50170 Le Mont-Saint-Michel, France
(48.63632, -1.51063)

mont-saint-michel.monuments-nationaux.fr



B The Mont Saint-Michel and its Bay

UNESCO World Heritage site recognized for its unique combination of a natural maritime environment and medieval architecture. The bay experiences some of Europe's highest tides, which historically served as a natural defense for the island.

(48.66955, -1.65719)



C Église Saint-Pierre

A 15th and 16th-century Roman Catholic parish church located on the village's main street. It contains a silver-plated statue of Saint Michael and serves as the primary place of worship for the island's residents.

(Unnamed Road), Le Mont-Saint-Michel 50170, France (48.63613, -1.51015)

D Mont-Saint-Michel, village

Strategic viewpoint offering a panoramic perspective of the medieval village's clustered houses and the surrounding tidal flats of the bay.

(Unnamed Road), La Caserne 50170, France (48.61765, -1.51229)

E Maison de la Truie qui File

A historic timber-framed house dating from the 15th century, notable for its well-preserved medieval architecture and its location along the narrow climbing streets leading to the abbey.

Chemin de Ronde de la Barbacane, Le Mont-Saint-Michel 50170, France (48.63619, -1.51058)

F Moulin de Moidrey

A fully restored 19th-century stone windmill located 5 kilometers from the island. It still produces flour using traditional methods and provides unobstructed views across the salt marshes toward the mount.

Rue des Moulins, 50170, France (48.58524, -1.50615)

G Mont Saint-Michel

The rocky granite outcrop rising 80 meters above sea level, which serves as the foundation for the medieval sanctuary and village within the bay.

Chemin de Ronde Abbatial, Le Mont-Saint-Michel 50170, France (48.63572, -1.51121)

ot-montsaintmichel.com



H Fontaine Saint-Aubert

A 13th-century stone structure located at the foot of the ramparts. It was once the island's primary source of fresh water, essential for the survival of the abbey's inhabitants.

Grande Terrasse de l'Ouest, 50170 Le Mont-Saint-Michel, France (48.63687, -1.51215)

I Jardins Sainte-Catherine

Terraced gardens located on the eastern side of the island, offering rare green space among the stone fortifications and views of the surrounding bay.

(48.63550, -1.51106)

J Maisons Ponceau et Eudes

Two adjacent historic timber-framed houses that represent the traditional 14th and 15th-century domestic architecture of the village.

(48.63573, -1.51035)

K Réservoirs d'eau

Historic infrastructure used for rainwater collection and storage, essential for sustaining the abbey and village during sieges or periods of drought.

(48.63567, -1.51079)

L Réservoirs d'eau

Stone water reservoirs designed to manage the island's limited freshwater resources in a maritime environment.

(48.63563, -1.51076)

Mont Saint-Michel Heritage Trail

This heritage trail explores the cultural landscape of the Baie du Mont-Saint-Michel, a UNESCO World Heritage site spanning Normandy and Brittany. Beyond the Benedictine abbey and the medieval island village, the route encompasses the 19th-century Moulin de Moidrey, the Neolithic menhir of La Roche Longue, and the ruins on Tombelaine island. Key sites include historic timber-framed houses like the Maison de l'Artichaut and the sacred Fontaine Saint-Aubert, which once provided the island's primary fresh water source.





A Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey

The Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey is an abbey located within the city and island of Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy, in the department of Manche.

Terrasse de l'Abside, 50170 Le Mont-Saint-Michel, France
(48.63632, -1.51063)

mont-saint-michel.monuments-nationaux.fr



B The Mont Saint-Michel and its Bay

A UNESCO World Heritage site encompassing the tidal island, its historic village, and the surrounding maritime landscape known for some of Europe's highest tides.

(48.66955, -1.65719)



C Église Saint-Pierre

A 15th and 16th-century parish church located on the island's main street, featuring a silver-plated statue of Saint Michael and a small cemetery.

(Unnamed Road), Le Mont-Saint-Michel 50170, France (48.63613, -1.51015)

D Moulin de Moidrey

A restored windmill built in 1806, located on a hill overlooking the bay. It remains operational and produces traditional stone-ground flour.

Rue des Moulins, 50170, France (48.58524, -1.50615)



E Château de Vaulerault

An 18th-century manor house located in Saint-Méloir-des-Ondes, representing the regional architectural heritage of the Ille-et-Vilaine department.

(Unnamed Road), 35350, France (48.65460, -1.86860)

F Manoir

Historic manor house located in the vicinity of the bay, showcasing regional architectural styles.

(Unnamed Road), 50300, France (48.68119, -1.40132)

G Maison de la Truie qui File

A notable medieval house on the island, also known as the House of the Spinning Sow, featuring historic timber-framing.

Chemin de Ronde de la Barbacane, Le Mont-Saint-Michel 50170, France (48.63619, -1.51058)

H Jardins Sainte-Catherine

Terraced gardens situated on the eastern side of the rock, offering panoramic views of the bay and the surrounding tidal flats.

(48.63550, -1.51106)

I Maisons Ponceau et Eudes

A pair of historic timber-framed buildings on the island's Grande Rue, listed as protected architectural monuments.

(48.63573, -1.51035)



J Fontaine Saint-Aubert

An 8th-century freshwater spring located at the base of the northern cliff, historically used by the monks before cisterns were built.

Grande Terrasse de l'Ouest, 50170 Le Mont-Saint-Michel, France (48.63687, -1.51215)

K La Roche Longue

A Neolithic menhir standing over four meters tall, located in the marshes of Saint-Broladre south of the bay.

1 La Croix Seigneur, 35120, France (48.58699, -1.62905)

L Maison de l'Artichaut

A 15th-century building that spans the main street of the village, serving as a historic gatehouse and landmark.

Grande Rue, 50170 Le Mont-Saint-Michel, France (48.63516, -1.51030)

M Tour

Remains of defensive fortifications located on the nearby tidal island of Tombelaine.

(48.65984, -1.51348)

N Ancien Château

Ruins of the former castle and fortifications on the island of Tombelaine, which once served as a strategic military outpost.

(48.66019, -1.51246)

Notable Religious Sites

This collection features 21 significant Catholic sites surrounding the Baie du Mont Saint-Michel, spanning the border of Normandy and Brittany. The list includes the granite Gothic Dol Cathedral and the Romanesque Église Saint-Michel in Pontorson, built by the Dukes of Normandy. These structures showcase architectural evolution from the 10th to the 19th centuries and historically served as essential waypoints for pilgrims traveling across the bay toward the Mont Saint-Michel abbey.





A Dol Cathedral

Dol-de-Bretagne Cathedral is a Roman Catholic church located in Dol-de-Bretagne.

5 Rue du Chanoine Boursier, Dol-de-Bretagne 35120, France (48.55085, -1.75574)

May-Sep Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Oct-Apr Mo–Su	09:00–18:00



B Église Notre-Dame des Champs

A 19th-century Neo-Gothic building constructed on the site of a former religious structure destroyed during the French Revolution.

2 Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, Avranches 50300, France (48.68448, -1.36315)

C Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste

Features a Romanesque nave dating back to the 10th and 11th centuries. It is a historic stop for pilgrims on the Way of Saint James.

8 Rue Yves Dubosq, Saint-Jean-le-Thomas 50530, France (48.73034, -1.51358)

D Église Saint-Pair

Historical church built over the tomb of Saint Pair, featuring a 12th-century bell tower and 14th-century choir.

64 Rue de Granville, Saint-Pair-sur-Mer 50380, France (48.81580, -1.57088)

E Église Saint-Georges

A 15th-century church notable for its 12th-century Romanesque portal and its position overlooking the polders of the bay.

(Unnamed Road), Saint-Georges-de-Gréhaigne 35610, France (48.56928, -1.54863)

F Église Saint-Méen

Neo-Gothic parish church in Cancale, constructed in the mid-19th century to replace an older structure.

16 Rue Jean-Marie Savatte, Cancale 35260, France (48.67547, -1.85069)

paroisse-cancale.fr

G Église Notre-Dame

19th-century church located in Roz-sur-Couesnon, serving as a prominent landmark in the local landscape.

2 Rue Théophile Blin, Cherrueix 35120, France (48.60519, -1.71061)

H Église Saint-Guinou

Parish church in Saint-Guinou, characteristic of the region's traditional granite ecclesiastical architecture.

7 Place de l'Église, Saint-Guinoux 35430, France (48.57541, -1.88267)

I Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste

Traditional Catholic church serving the commune of Sougéal, featuring elements from various architectural periods.

D89, Sougéal 35610, France (48.51020, -1.52346)

J Église Saint-Nicolas

Reconstructed in the 18th and 19th centuries, this church stands in the coastal village of Cherrueix.

8 Place de l'Église, Le Vivier-sur-Mer 35960, France (48.60254, -1.77595)

K Église Saint-Éloi

19th-century church built on 16th-century foundations, located near the coast in Saint-Benoît-des-Ondes.

51 La Croix Blanche, Lillemer 35111, France (48.56403, -1.86171)

L Église Saint-Vigor

Romanesque church from the 12th century, featuring significant modifications dating to the 16th century.

7 Rue du Bourg, Champeaux 50530, France (48.73932, -1.52707)

M Église Saint-Louis

A 19th-century parish church located in the village of La Gouesnière.

2 Place de l'Église, Vildé-la-Marine 35120, France (48.61356, -1.84086)

N Église Notre-Dame

Romanesque church dating to the 12th century, serving as a historical departure point for pilgrims crossing the bay.

(48.68521, -1.47827)

O Église Saint-Benoît

19th-century church located in Saint-Benoît-des-Ondes, replacing an earlier medieval priory.

7 Rue cour de Vienne, Saint-Benoît-des-Ondes 35114, France (48.61634, -1.85091)

P Église Saint-Cyr et Sainte-Julitte

Features architecture spanning the 12th to the 17th centuries, located in the commune of Ponts.

22 Rue André Parisy, Céaux 50220, France (48.63164, -1.38775)

Q Saint-Brandan de Saint-Broladre

15th-century church dedicated to Saint Brendan, featuring traditional Breton granite construction.

7 Rue de la Poste, Saint-Broladre 35120, France (48.58594, -1.65654)

R Église Notre-Dame

12th-century Romanesque church at the foot of Mont-Dol, known for its well-preserved 15th-century interior frescoes.

21 Rue des Écoles, Hirel 35120, France (48.60602, -1.80156)

S Église Saint-Michel

A significant Romanesque structure built by the Dukes of Normandy in the 11th century, featuring a transition to Gothic elements.

7 Rue de l'Église, Beauvoir 50170, France (48.59812, -1.50439)

T Église Saint-Martin-de-Tours

Small parish church in Beauvoir, dating primarily from the 13th and 14th centuries.

2 Rue de la Poste, Roz-sur-Couesnon 35610, France (48.58857, -1.59246)

U Notre-Dame

12th-century Romanesque church in Genêts, a historical landmark for guided crossings to Mont Saint-Michel.

(48.68521, -1.47827)

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