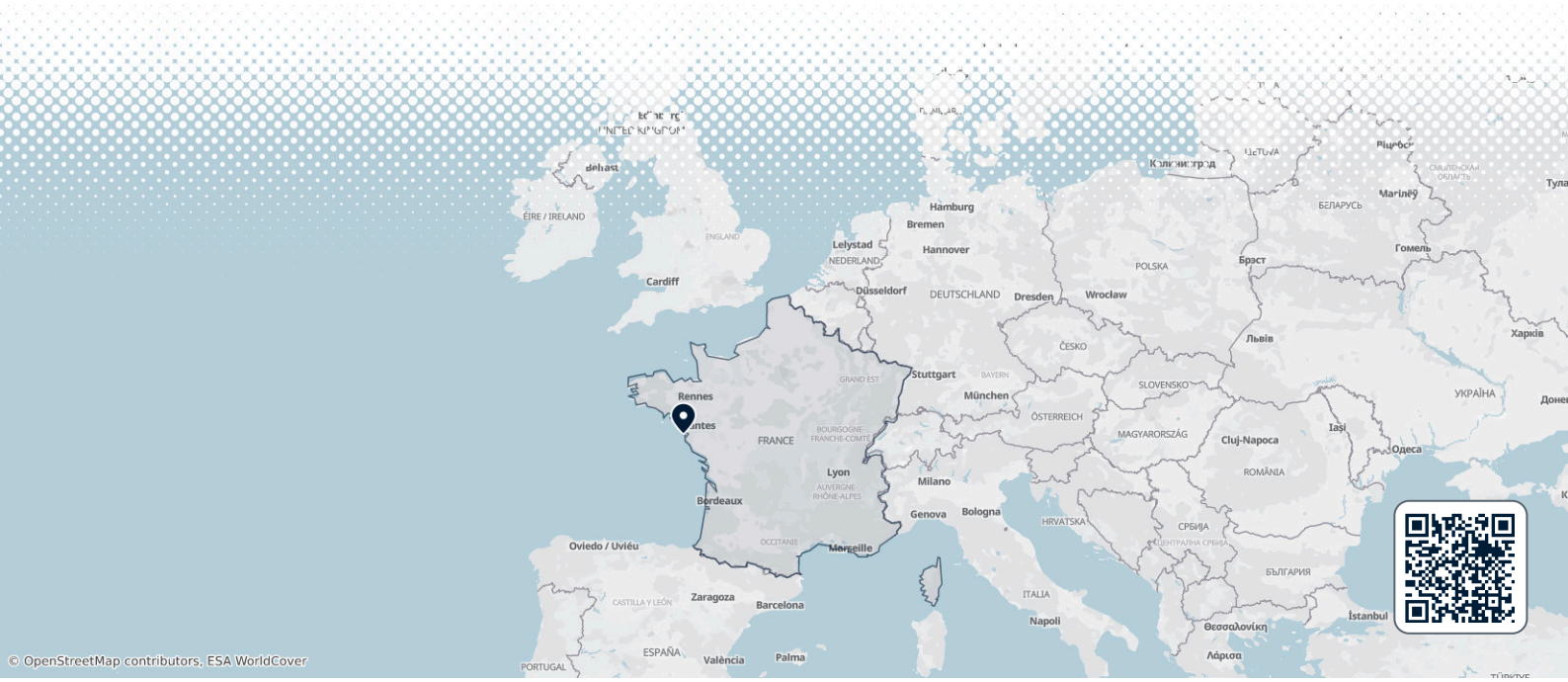


Noirmoutier Island

Pays de la Loire · France

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Noirmoutier is a long, low island off the Vendée coast in western France. It is flat, sunny and mild, with sandy beaches on the west side and salt marshes and oyster ports on the east. Woods cover parts of the north. The island has a calm, family pace and suits beach holidays, cycling and seafood lovers.

Two roads link it to the mainland. One is a bridge. The other is the Passage du Gois, a road that the sea covers twice a day. Planning your trip around the tide is part of the experience here.

When to visit

June to September is the best time. Days are long and warm, and the sea is warm enough for swimming. July and August are the busiest months, so book rooms early. May and September are quieter and still pleasant. Winters are mild but wet and windy, and many seasonal shops and restaurants close.

The tide matters all year. Low tide opens the Passage du Gois and the beaches at their widest, so check the tide table before you plan the day.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for cycling	9° / 13° Feels like 4°	5° / -2°	13 rainy days · Dry air
February	Fair Fair for cycling	10° / 14° Feels like 5°	5° / -1°	Dry air
March	Fair Fair for cycling	12° / 17° Feels like 8°	7° / 2°	12 rainy days · Dry air
April	Good Good for cycling	15° / 21° Feels like 11°	9° / 4°	Dry air
May	Good Good for cycling	18° / 24° Feels like 15°	12° / 8°	Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 28°	15° / 12°	
July	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	16° / 13°	
August	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	17° / 14°	
September	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27°	15° / 11°	
October	Good Good for cycling	17° / 22°	12° / 7°	13 rainy days · Dry air
November	Fair Fair for cycling	13° / 17° Feels like 9°	9° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for cycling	10° / 14° Feels like 5°	6° / -1°	13 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: June, July, August, September

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

Top sights



- A Le Passage du Gois is the island's best-known sight. This paved causeway is about 4 km long and sits under the sea at high tide. Tour de France riders crossed it in 1999 and 2011.
- B Château de Noirmoutier stands in the main town. The stone keep is nearly 20 m high and dates from the 12th century. It now holds the island museum.
- C Église Saint-Philbert sits next to the castle. It stands on the site of the abbey founded around 680 by Saint *Philibert*. Its 11th-century crypt is the oldest part.
- D Ancienne abbaye de la Blanche is the ruin of an abbey built in the early 13th century at the north end of the island. It is quiet and good for a bike stop.
- E Phare des Dames marks the northeast point near the wooded Bois de la Chaise. Combine it with a walk through the woods.
- F Plage des Dames is a sheltered sandy beach below the woods. It is known for its white bathing cabins and an old wooden pier.

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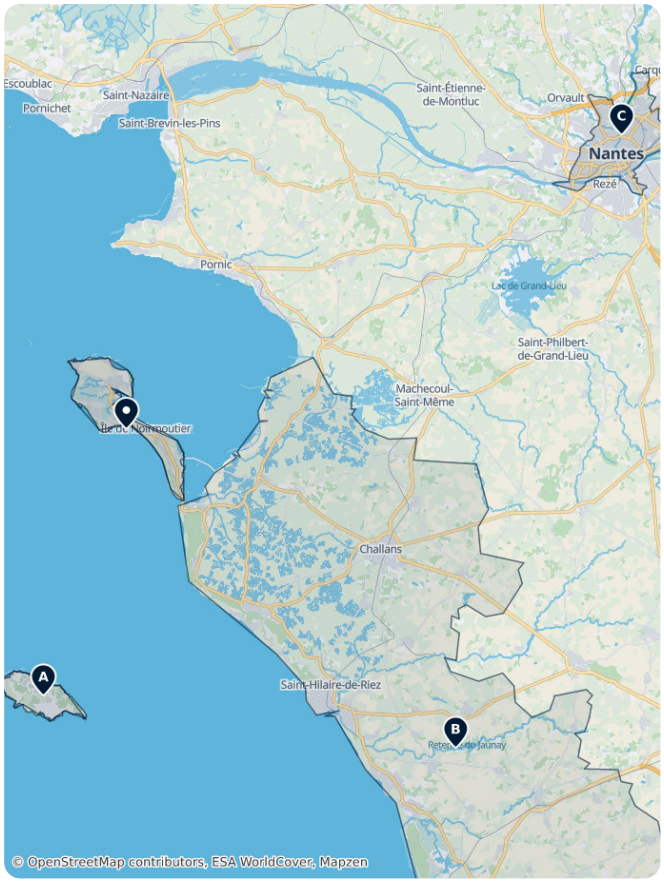
What to experience

- **Cross the Passage du Gois at low tide.** Time your drive or ride to the safe window. Be off the causeway before the window ends, not at the last minute.
- **Dig for shellfish at low tide.** Local rules apply to what and how much you can take. The tourist office runs guided outings with English-speaking guides.
- **Cycle through the salt marshes.** Salt workers still make fleur de sel here. Local shops sell it.
- **Run or watch the Foulées du Gois.** This is an annual foot race across the causeway.
- **Visit in the potato season.** A festival marks the first harvest of the local Bonnotte potato.

Day trips

Most visitors stay on the island. These trips suit a rainy day or a change of scene.

- **Pornic**: about 1 hour by car. A small harbour town with a castle and beaches.
- **Île d'Yeu**: take a ferry from Fromentine, near the island bridge. A Île d'Yeu is a small island with rocky coves, a castle and cycling routes. Check ferry times and book ahead in summer.
- B Les Sables-d'Olonne: about 1 hour 15 minutes by car. A large beach resort with a working fishing port.
- C Nantes: about 1 hour 30 minutes by car or 1 hour 45 minutes by bus. A big city with a castle, a cathedral and a strong food scene.



Where to explore

- Main town on the island: Noirmoutier-en-l'Île.
- Nearby islands and coast: Île d'Yeu and Les Sables-d'Olonne.
- Towards the north: La Baule-Escoublac, a long beach resort.
- For a city break: Nantes.

Getting there

- **By car**: the island bridge opened in 1971 and has been free since 1994. Nantes is about 1 hour 30 minutes away. Bordeaux is about 4 hours 30 minutes, and Paris about 5 hours.
- **By train and bus**: there is no railway on the island. Take a train to Nantes or La Roche-sur-Yon, then a regional bus. From Nantes the bus takes about 1 hour 45 minutes. From Paris, allow about 2 hours 50 minutes by train and then the bus. See the island tourist office for routes.
- **By air**: the closest large airport is Nantes Atlantique. Continue by bus or rental car.
- **Via the Passage du Gois**: the safe window depends on the tide and weather. It is at most about 90 minutes before to 90 minutes after low tide, and much shorter on weaker tides or in bad weather. Check the official tide table and the signs at both ends. Never start a crossing outside the window. If you miss it, use the free bridge.

Getting around

- **Cycling**: the island is very flat, and the highest point is only about 20 m. Cycling is the easiest way to reach beaches, salt marshes and villages.
- **Car**: useful for the north and south ends, but beach parking fills up fast in July and August.
- **On foot**: the main town and the harbours are easy to walk. Beaches are far apart.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The main town and harbours are easy to walk, but beaches and villages are far apart.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

The island is very flat, and cycling is the easiest way to get around.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Not essential for a beach stay if you cycle. A car helps if you stay far from the main town or want to see the whole island in a day.
- **Parking**: car parks near the beaches and in the main town fill up fast in summer. Arrive early.
- **Tide**: the Passage du Gois is closed to traffic when the sea covers it. Do not follow other cars into the water.

Food & drink

The island is known for seafood, oysters and fleur de sel. The local Bonnotte potato is a seasonal speciality. Fish and shellfish are on most menus.

Eat by the water rather than chasing a single restaurant. The fishing port at L'Herbaudière and the harbour in the main town have the most seafood places. In summer, book dinner ahead. Oyster huts near the ports sell oysters to eat there or to take away.

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

Noirmoutier is very safe for visitors. Petty theft is rare, but do not leave bags in cars at beach car parks.

The tide is the main risk.

- **The Passage du Gois**: cross only in the safe window around low tide. Rising water covers the road fast, and fog makes it harder to see. Never follow other cars or a GPS route onto the causeway. If caught by the sea, climb a refuge mast and call 112. Do not try to drive through.
- **Shellfish digging**: people get trapped by the rising tide. Watch the clock and carry a phone.
- **Swimming**: choose supervised beaches in summer. Check local conditions before you swim.

Call 112 for any emergency.

History

Saint *Philibert* founded a monastery here around 680. The island name comes from this monastery. Vikings raided it in 799 and later used the island as a base. In 830 the abbot built a fort to protect the island. The Château de Noirmoutier that visitors see today replaced it in the 12th century.

Église Saint-Philbert stands on the old abbey site. Its crypt still dates from the 11th century. In the early 13th century monks also built the abbey now in ruins at Ancienne abbaye de la Blanche. Protestants damaged it in 1562.

Dutch forces took the island in 1674. For centuries, the Passage du Gois and boats were the only links to the mainland. The bridge opened in 1971, and tolls ended in 1994.

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

Île de Noirmoutier Essentials

Île de Noirmoutier is characterized by its diverse landscapes, from the 12th-century Château de Noirmoutier to the salt marshes that still produce traditional fleur de sel. The island's heritage is preserved in the Romanesque crypt of Église Saint-Philbert and the 19th-century Phare des Dames in the Bois de la Chaise. Modern attractions include the butterfly greenhouse and Sealand aquarium, while the Port de l'Herbaudière hosts world-class gastronomy at the three-Michelin-starred La Marine. This selection covers the essential historical, natural, and culinary landmarks of the Vendée island.





A Phare des Dames

Built in 1867 in the Bois de la Chaise, this 19th-century lighthouse features a square tower and a red lantern. It stands as a landmark for the Plage des Dames and the surrounding maritime pine forest.

(Unnamed Road), 85330, France (47.01122, -2.22098)



B Château de Noirmoutier

The Château de Noirmoutier is a castle on the Île de Noirmoutier in the Vendée département of France.

7 Rue des Douves, Noirmoutier-en-l'Île 85330, France (47.00047, -2.24212)



C Ancienne abbaye de la Blanche

A former Cistercian monastery founded in 1205. While largely reconstructed in the 17th and 18th centuries, the site remains a significant example of the island's monastic history.

85330, France (47.02674, -2.27022)

D Moulin à vent de la Fosse

A traditional stone windmill located near the southern tip of the island. It serves as a historical reminder of Noirmoutier's agricultural past and wind-powered milling industry.

(46.90808, -2.16017)



E Église Saint-Philbert

This parish church features a rare 11th-century Romanesque crypt containing the original tomb of Saint Philbert, the monk who founded the island's monastery in 674.

688 Rue du Cheminet, Noirmoutier-en-l'Île 85330, France (47.00021, -2.24117)

F Marché de Noirmoutier-en-l'Île

A bustling local market held in the town center, specializing in regional products such as the famous Bonnotte potatoes, fleur de sel, and fresh Atlantic seafood.

(46.99993, -2.24684)

Oct-Mar Fr	08:00–12:30
Apr-Sep Tu–Su	08:00–12:30

G L'île aux papillons

France's largest tropical butterfly greenhouse, where hundreds of species from Africa, Asia, and America fly freely in a climate-controlled environment.

Rue de la Fassonnière 5, 85680 La Guérinière (46.97160, -2.24418)

Mo–Su	10:00–19:30

ile-aux-papillons.com, +33251357788

H Sealand

Located at the port of Noirmoutier-en-l'Île, this aquarium houses over 200 species of marine life and features regular presentations with California sea lions.

(46.99924, -2.24754)

aquariumdenoirmoutier.com, +33251390811

I L'Atelier du Sel

An artisanal salt production site offering guided tours of the marshes. Visitors can observe traditional harvesting techniques and purchase hand-harvested fleur de sel and coarse salt.

(46.97962, -2.26972)

fr-fr.facebook.com/angibauds/, +33618010608

J La Marine

A three-Michelin-starred restaurant led by chef Alexandre Couillon. Located at the Port de l'Herbaudière, the menu focuses on hyper-local ingredients sourced from the island's waters and its own vegetable garden.

(47.02371, -2.29993)

Mo	12:15–13:30, 19:15–21:00
Tu–We	Closed
Th–Sa	12:15–13:30, 19:15–21:00
Su	12:15–13:30

alexandrecouillon.com, +33 2 51 39 23 09

DATA SOURCES

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