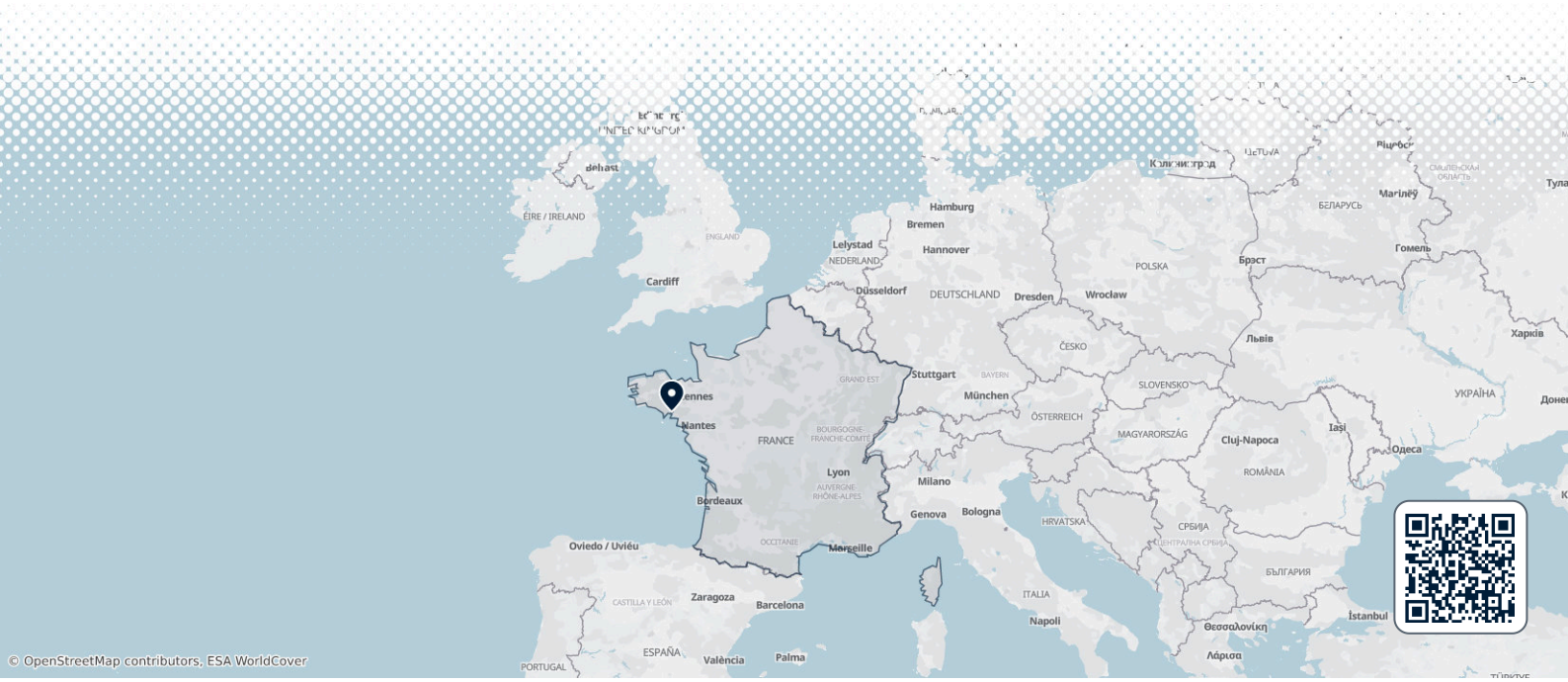


Vannes

Brittany · France

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Vannes is a walled medieval town at the head of the Gulf of Morbihan, a sheltered inland sea with about 40 islands. It was a capital of the Dukes of Brittany. Its centre has timber-framed houses, old gates and a cathedral, all within a short walk.

It suits a relaxed stay of two to four nights. Many visitors use Vannes as a base for boat trips in the gulf and for the standing stones at Carnac. The town is also a good stop for travellers who like Breton food, markets and the sea without big crowds.

When to visit

Late spring and summer are the best time for boat trips, walks and outdoor meals. Rooms are busiest in July and August. May, June and September are quieter. Winter is mild but grey and wet, and some island services run less often.

The biggest annual event is the Festival d'Arvor, held in mid-August since 1965. It brings Breton music, dance parties, parades and street shows to the old town. Fireworks are launched from the ramparts on 15 August. Book rooms well ahead for that weekend.

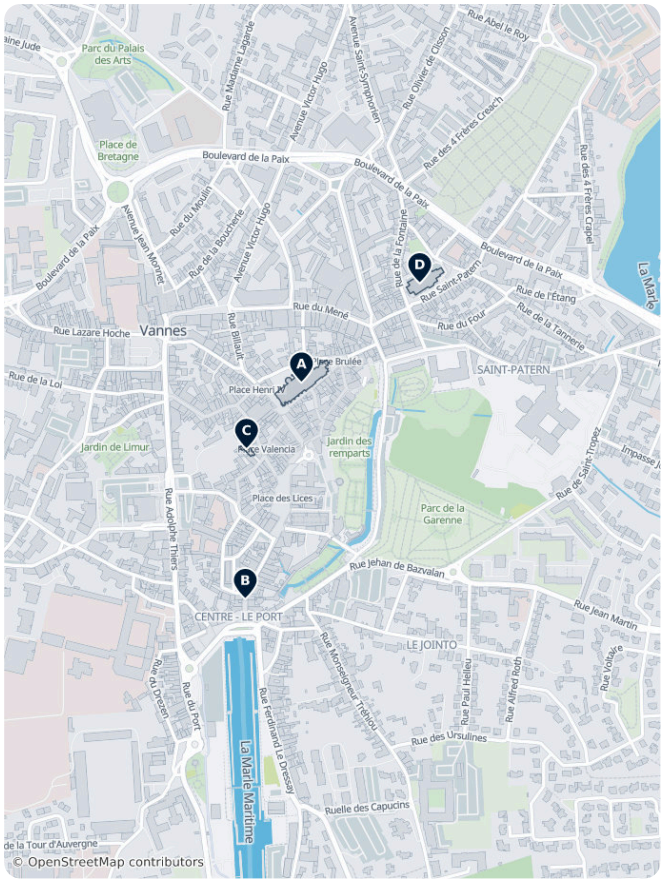
Every two years, the Semaine du Golfe fills the gulf with traditional sailing boats. The next one is in 2027.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for cycling	9° / 13° Feels like 5°	5° / -2°	13 rainy days · Dry air
February	Fair Fair for cycling	10° / 13° Feels like 6°	5° / -1°	Dry air
March	Fair Fair for cycling	12° / 17° Feels like 8°	6° / 1°	12 rainy days · Dry air
April	Good Good for cycling	15° / 21° Feels like 11°	8° / 3°	Dry air
May	Good Good for cycling	17° / 24°	11° / 7°	13 rainy days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27°	14° / 10°	Dry air
July	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 29°	15° / 12°	
August	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 29°	15° / 12°	
September	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 26°	14° / 10°	Dry air
October	Good Good for cycling	17° / 21°	11° / 7°	13 rainy days · Dry air
November	Fair Fair for cycling	13° / 16° Feels like 9°	8° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for cycling	10° / 14° Feels like 6°	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 Cathédrale Saint-Pierre stands in the heart of the old town. It mixes a Romanesque tower with Gothic and later work. *Saint Vincent Ferrer*, a Spanish preacher who died in Vannes, is honoured here, and his relics are kept in a chapel.
- The ramparts and their gardens run along the foot of the old town. The Tour du Connétable and several old gates are part of the walls. Walk the garden path for the best views of the walls, then enjoy the old wash houses below.
- B Porte Saint-Vincent is the gate that opens from the old town to the port. Jean Bugeau built it in 1622-24.
- C Château-Gaillard is a medieval house that now holds the archaeology museum. The collections cover the prehistory of the Gulf of Morbihan area, including the standing-stone region around Carnac.
- La Cohue is a medieval market hall beside the cathedral. It now holds the fine arts museum.
- Place Henri IV and the streets around the cathedral have many timber-framed houses. Look for the carved figures known as *Vannes and his wife* on one house front.
- D Église Saint-Patern is a church a short walk north of the cathedral.
- The port is a short walk from the old town. A canal links it to the gulf, and boats and cafés line the quays.

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What to experience

Vannes has a strong local culture and a sea-based way of life. These are some of the best things to do.

- Take a boat trip in the gulf. Cruises pass between the islands and stop at Île aux Moines or Île d'Arz. Tides and currents are strong here, so the boat captains decide the route.
- Go to a fest-noz. This is a traditional Breton dance evening where everyone joins in. Festival d'Arvor in August has many, and other evenings take place across the region during the year.
- Walk or cycle to Conleau. This small peninsula is about 3 km from the centre and has sea views and a sea-water swimming pool.
- Paddle a sea kayak with a local club or guide. The gulf is calm, but strong tidal currents make a guide a good idea.

Day trips

Vannes is a good base for day trips on land and by boat. Times are approximate, one way, by car unless stated.

- Île aux Moines and Île d'Arz: about 20 to 30 minutes to the boat departure points, then a short crossing. Île d'Arz boats leave from Conleau, about 20 minutes. The Île aux Moines shuttle leaves from Baden (Port-Blanc) all year. Gulf cruises run from April to September. The islands have quiet lanes, small beaches and gulf views.
- Auray: about 20 minutes by car or train. The old river port of Saint-Goustan has stone houses and a stone bridge.
- Gavrinis: about 25 to 30 minutes to Larmor-Baden, then a guided boat visit. A large stone burial mound on a small island has carved stones inside. Book ahead in the high season.
- Carnac: about 40 minutes. Thousands of standing stones stand in long lines in the fields. The Carnac area has one of the largest groups of prehistoric stones in the world.
- Rochefort-en-Terre: about 40 minutes. This small hill village has granite houses and flower-covered streets in summer.
- Quiberon: about 1 hour. This long peninsula has beaches, a wild west coast and ferries to Belle Île.
- Josselin: about 50 minutes. A large castle stands above a river and a canal in a small medieval town.

Where to explore

Vannes is in the region of Brittany. Nearby places in the gulf and on the south coast:

- For a small island with lanes and beaches, visit Île aux Moines.
- For prehistoric standing stones, visit Carnac.
- For sea views, beaches and the ferry to the larger island of Belle Île, go to Quiberon.

Getting there

- **By air**: The nearest large airports are Nantes Atlantique (NTE) and Rennes–Brittany (RNS), each about 110 km away. Lorient South Brittany (LRT) is closer and has limited service. From any of them, take a train or drive.
- **By train**: Vannes station is about a 15-minute walk from the old town. TGV trains run from Paris Montparnasse in about 3 hours. Rennes and Nantes are about 1 hour away, and Lorient is about 30 minutes away. Book tickets at SNCF Connect.
- **By bus**: A bus station stands next to the train station, with regional coach services.
- **By car**: The N165 expressway links Vannes with Lorient, Quimper and Nantes. The N166 runs to Rennes. These roads are free of tolls.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The old town and the port are compact and mostly closed to cars. Most sights are within a 10-minute walk of each other.
- **Public transport**: The Kicéo bus network serves the town and nearby communes. The bus station is next to the train station. Ask at the tourist office or at the stop for current fares.
- **Boats**: Gulf cruises leave from Vannes port. Île d'Arz boats leave from Conleau, and the Île aux Moines shuttle leaves from Baden.
- **Cycling**: The town is flat and has bike lanes. Bikes can be rented in town. Quiet roads and coastal paths lead to Conleau and Arradon.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The old town and the port are compact, and most sights are within a 10-minute walk.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

The town is flat and has bike lanes, but narrow old streets are best on foot.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not for the town itself. It is useful for Carnac, Rochefort-en-Terre and the boat departure points for the gulf islands.
- **Parking**: Park outside the walls. There are paid car parks near the port and at Place de la Libération. From there, walk to the old town.
- **Restrictions**: The old town has narrow streets and areas closed to cars. Follow the signs.

Food & drink

Vannes is a good place to eat seafood and Breton food. Oysters and shellfish from the gulf are common. Look for galettes (savoury buckwheat pancakes), crêpes and local cider. Try *kouign-amann*, a rich butter cake, for dessert.

The best way to eat well is to follow the areas rather than single restaurants:

- The Halles des Lices at Place des Lices open Tuesday to Sunday from 8:00 to 14:00. There is also a fish hall, the Halle aux Poissons, open four mornings a week.
- The open-air market fills Place des Lices and nearby streets on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.
- The port, Place Gambetta and the streets around the cathedral have the most restaurants and cafés.

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

Vannes is a safe town. Petty theft is uncommon, but keep bags closed in crowds, especially during festivals and in summer.

- The gulf has strong tides and currents. Check tide times before swimming, kayaking or walking on the shore.
- Atlantic weather changes quickly. Bring a light waterproof layer, even in summer.
- Sun protection is needed on boats and beaches in summer.

History

Vannes is one of the oldest towns in Brittany. The Veneti, a seafaring Celtic people, gave it its name. The Romans built a town here, and the first walls date to the end of the 3rd century. A church council met in Vannes in 461.

In the 14th and 15th centuries Vannes was a capital of the Dukes of Brittany. Duke Jean V was born in the Château de l'Hermine. The walls and gates you see today come from this period and later. Porte Saint-Vincent looks over the port.

The Parliament of Brittany met in Vannes from 1675 to 1689. The union of Brittany with France in 1532 took place here. Cathédrale Saint-Pierre holds the relics of *Saint Vincent Ferrer*, who died in Vannes in 1419. Pilgrims came for centuries to his tomb.

Today the Château-Gaillard shows the area's older history, from Stone Age graves to Roman times.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for France at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



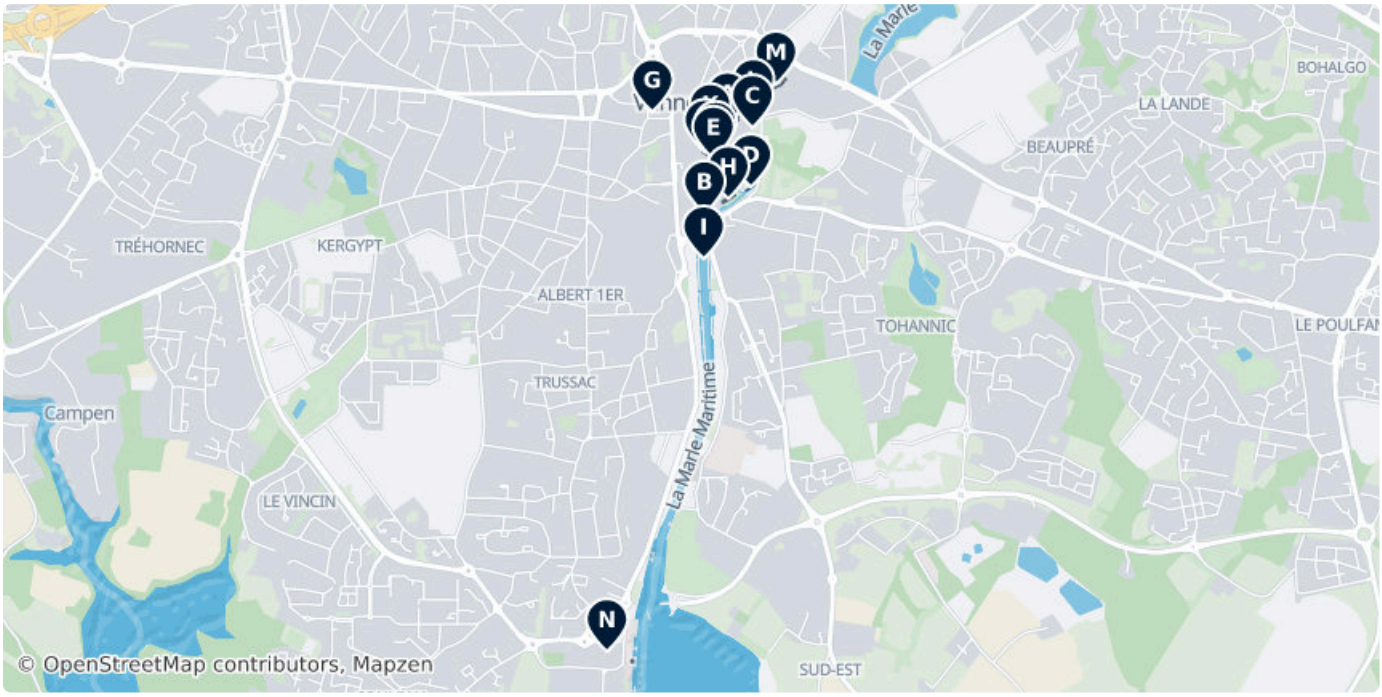
Type C / Type E
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Vannes Essentials

Vannes features a well-preserved medieval center enclosed by fortifications built between the 3rd and 17th centuries. The city's architectural heritage includes the Gothic Saint-Pierre Cathedral, timber-framed houses like the Maison de Saint-Vincent, and the 19th-century Town Hall. Key landmarks include the historic washhouses along the Marle River, the Château-Gaillard archaeological museum, and the Saint-Vincent Gate, which connects the old town to the marina. The Musée des Beaux-Arts is housed in the medieval La Cohue market hall.





A Vannes Cathedral

Vannes Cathedral is a Roman Catholic church dedicated to Saint Peter in Vannes, Brittany, France.

19 Rue Saint-Guenhaël, Vannes 56000, France
(47.65789, -2.75679)



B Saint-Vincent Gate

The Saint-Vincent Gate is a former city gate in Vannes, Brittany, France. It is listed in the Base Mérimée as a historic monument.

6 Rue Saint-Vincent, Vannes 56000, France
(47.65460, -2.75806)



C Rempart

Fortifications built between the 3rd and 17th centuries to protect the city, featuring stone walls, defensive towers, and landscaped gardens.

24 Rue des Vierges, Vannes 56000, France (47.65780, -2.75541)



D Lavoirs de la Garenne

19th-century outdoor laundry washhouses located along the Marle River, featuring a distinctive long slate roof and timber-framed structure.

Rue porte Poterne 15, 56000 Vannes (47.65560, -2.75550)

E Maison dite de Vannes et sa femme

A 16th-century timber-framed house featuring a famous polychrome stone sign depicting the smiling busts of a man and a woman.

(47.65663, -2.75757)



F Maison dite de Saint-Vincent

A 16th-century timber-framed house located at the corner of Place des Lices, notable for a statue of Saint Vincent Ferrier on its facade.

8 Rue du Bienheureux Pierre-René Rogue, Vannes 56000, France (47.65681, -2.75743)

G Vannes

An Italian Renaissance-style building constructed between 1880 and 1886, serving as the city's administrative center.

Rue Alain René Lesage, 56000 Vannes, France (47.65837, -2.76093)

mairie-vannes.fr, +33 2 97 01 60 00



H Château de l'Hermine

An 18th-century residence built on the ruins of the medieval fortress of the Dukes of Brittany, now used as a cultural exhibition space.

6 Rue de la Porte Poterne, Vannes 56000, France (47.65516, -2.75675)

mairie-vannes.fr/vannesloisirs/musees... , +33 2 97 01 63 00



I Port de Vannes

A deep-water marina at the end of the Gulf of Morbihan, lined with cafes and a tree-filled promenade leading to the historic gates.

19 Rue Ferdinand Le Dressay, Vannes 56000, France (47.65294, -2.75810)



J Château-Gaillard

The Château-Gaillard is a French hôtel particulier and an archaeological museum, built in the late Middle Ages in Vannes.

Rue Noé 2, 56000 (47.65688, -2.75803)

mairie-vannes.fr/vannesloisirs/musees... , +33 2 97 01 63 00

K Ancienne cohue

The Museum of Fine Arts, housed in a medieval market hall dating back to the 13th century.

Place Henri IV, 56000 Vannes, France (47.65746, -2.75774)



L Porte Prison

One of the oldest gates in the city's ramparts, which served as both a defensive entrance and a prison during the Middle Ages.

2 Rue de la Porte-Prison, Vannes 56000, France (47.65839, -2.75537)

Mo–Su Open 24/7



M Église Saint-Patern de Vannes

Église Saint-Patern de Vannes is a Roman Catholic Church in Vannes, France.

10 Rue Saint-Patern, Vannes 56000, France (47.65940, -2.75412)

N Aquarium de Vannes

A public aquarium showcasing marine life from the Gulf of Morbihan alongside tropical species and crocodiles.

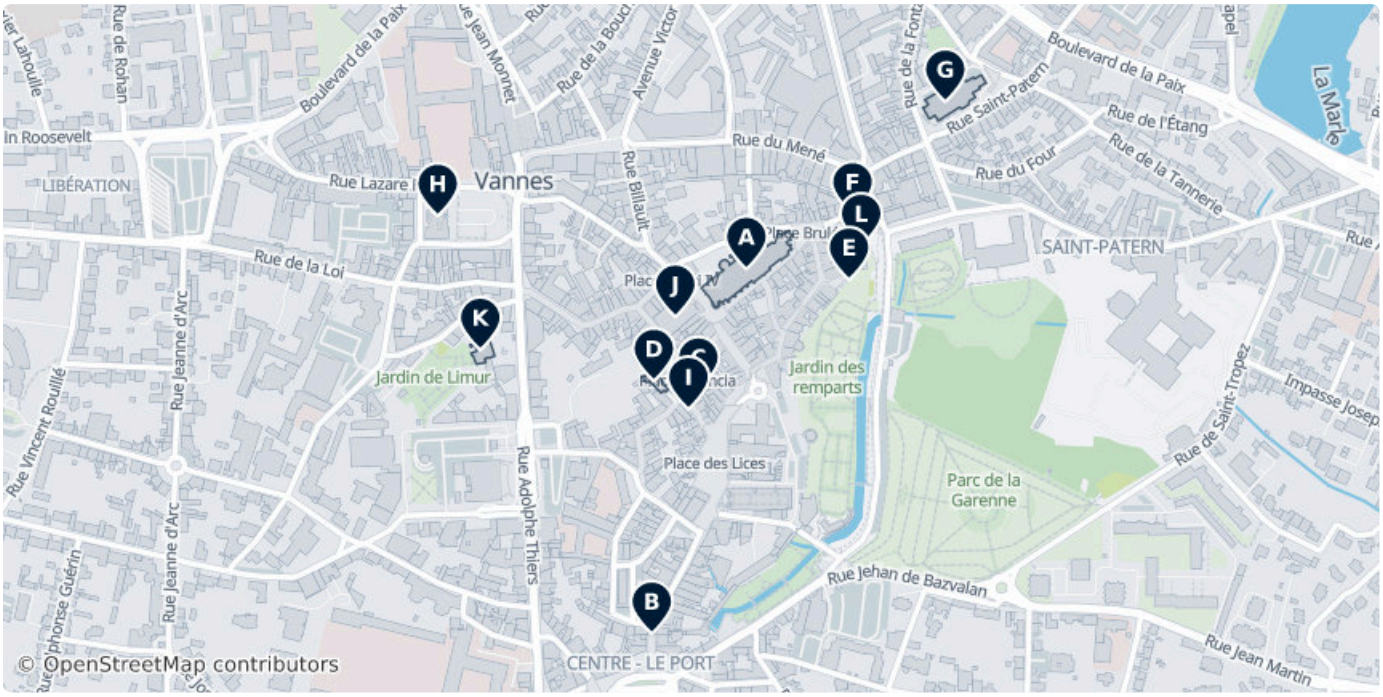
21 Rue Daniel Gilard, Vannes 56000, France (47.63839, -2.76342)

Mo–Sa 09:30–19:00

aquariumdevannes.fr, +33297406740

Historical Vannes

Vannes preserves an extensive architectural legacy within its medieval core. The city's fortifications, built between the 3rd and 17th centuries, surround a network of timber-framed houses and granite mansions. Key sites include the Saint-Pierre Cathedral, the 19th-century Town Hall, and the 'Vannes and his Wife' stone carving. Cultural highlights are found at the Château-Gaillard archaeological museum and the La Cohue Fine Arts Museum, housed in a former medieval market hall.





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C Maison dite de Saint-Vincent

A traditional timber-framed house located in the historic center of Vannes.

8 Rue du Bienheureux Pierre-René Rogue, Vannes 56000, France (47.65681, -2.75743)



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E Rempart

City fortifications constructed between the 3rd and 17th centuries to protect the town.

24 Rue des Vierges, Vannes 56000, France (47.65780, -2.75541)



F Porte Prison

A historic city gate that served as part of the town's defensive system.

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Mo–Su Open 24/7



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H Vannes

The city's town hall, an architectural landmark constructed between 1880 and 1886.

Rue Alain René Lesage, 56000 Vannes, France (47.65837, -2.76093)

mairie-vannes.fr, +33 2 97 01 60 00

I Maison dite de Vannes et sa femme

A 16th-century polychrome stone sign depicting the busts of a couple, a famous symbol of the city.

(47.65663, -2.75757)

J Ancienne cohue

The Museum of Fine Arts, located within a former medieval market hall known as La Cohue.

Place Henri IV, 56000 Vannes, France (47.65746, -2.75774)

K Hôtel de Limur

An 18th-century private mansion, also known as the Hôtel des Douves, which now serves as an art center.

Rue Adolphe Thiers 31, 56000 Vannes (47.65716, -2.76036)



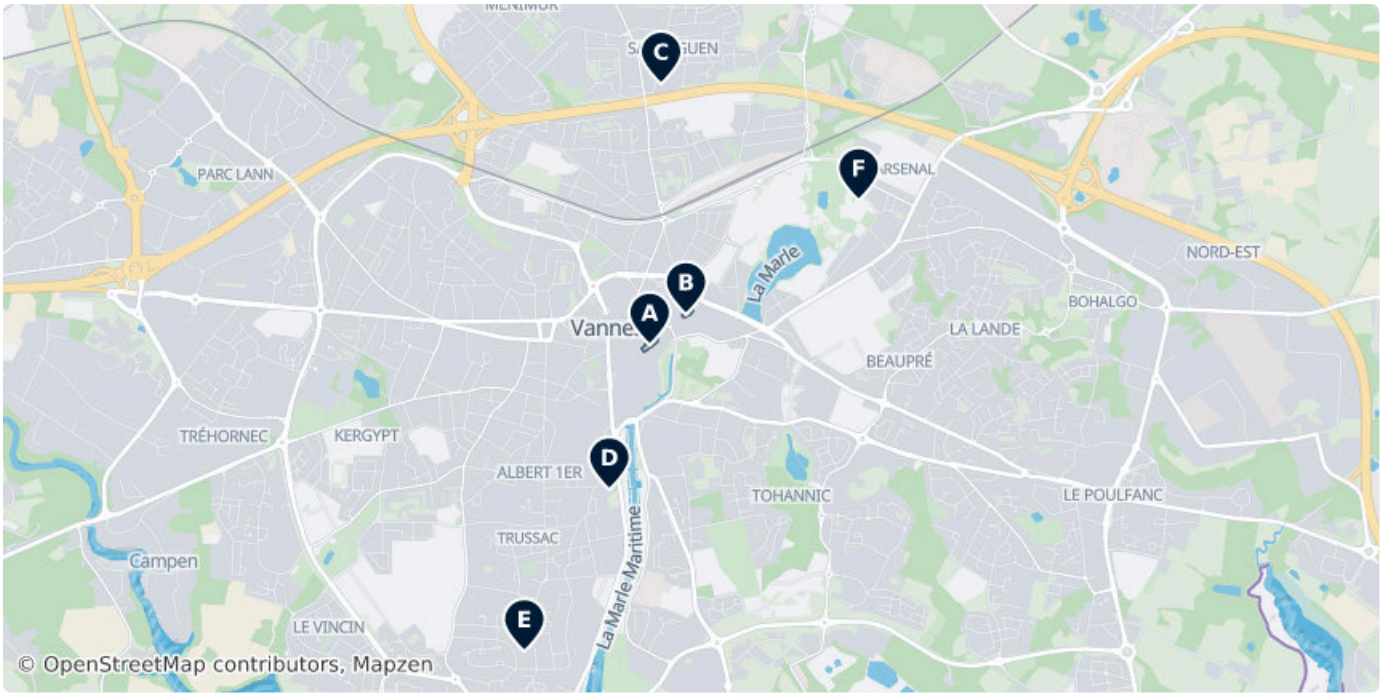
L Rempart

Fortified walls built between the 3rd and 17th centuries to defend the historic center.

19 Rue Francis Decker, Vannes 56000, France (47.65810, -2.75525)

Historic Religious Sites

Vannes features a diverse collection of religious architecture, centered on the Cathédrale Saint-Pierre, a Gothic structure housing the relics of Saint Vincent Ferrer. This selection includes the 18th-century Église Saint-Patern, dedicated to one of Brittany's founding saints, and the 17th-century Couvent du Père-Éternel. These sites range from medieval foundations to 20th-century additions like Église Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, reflecting the city's ecclesiastical evolution and its role as a major stop on the Tro Breizh pilgrimage route.





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10 Rue Saint-Patern, Vannes 56000, France
(47.65940, -2.75412)

C Église Saint-Guen

A 20th-century Roman Catholic church located in the northern district of Vannes, featuring contemporary architectural design.

19 Rue Irène Joliot Curie, Vannes 56000, France
(47.67077, -2.75596)

D Couvent du Père-Éternel

A 17th-century former convent founded by the Urbanist sisters, featuring a chapel and historic buildings that represent the religious expansion of Vannes during the Counter-Reformation.

(47.65075, -2.75975)

E Église Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes

A 20th-century Roman Catholic parish church serving the southern neighborhoods of Vannes.

28 Rue Charles Lindbergh, Vannes 56000, France
(47.64276, -2.76599)

F Chapelle du Grador

A small Roman Catholic chapel located on the outskirts of Vannes, representing the region's traditional local places of worship.

(47.66502, -2.74146)

DATA SOURCES

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