

Towns of Art in Brittany



Auray • Bazouges • Bécherel • Châteauneuf
Châteaugiron • Châtelaudren • Combourg • Concarneau
Dinan • Fougères • Guerlesquin • Hennebont • Josselin
Jugon-les-Lacs • Lamballe • Landerneau • Lannion •
La Roche-Bernard • La Roche-Berrien • Le Faou • Léhon
Lizio • Locronan • Malestroit • Moncontour • Nantes •
Pont-Croix • Pontivy • Pontrieux • Port-Louis • Quimper
Quimperlé • Quintin • Rennes • Rochefort-en-Terre •
Roscoff • Saint-Malo • Saint-Pol-de-Léon • Tréguier
Vannes • Vitré • www.cites-art.com

Editorial

A land of country folk, Brittany is renowned for the quality and originality of its rural heritage. It is an indigenous heritage, widely spread and deeply influenced by religion and military art, a fact born out by the number and frequency of chapels, calvaries, parish closes, steles, standing stones, humble cottages and fortresses to be seen across the region.

A country of seafarers, it includes a third of the coastline of France, Brittany also possesses an exceptional maritime heritage, particularly appreciated by its visitors, which can be seen in the number of the festivals dedicated to it.

Brittany is also, perhaps surprisingly, a region with strong urban traditions, whose origins reach back to the 11th century and, for some of its cities, to the Late Middle Ages and perhaps even back to the Gallo-Roman period.

There are many such cities, built around monasteries or feudal mounds, generally on defensive sites, such as the first bridge or crossing point, each according to its locality, with its own identity.

Some have survived the centuries untarnished and now take their place amongst the major cities of Brittany. Others have not been able to maintain their former glory and have lost their administrative or economic functions due to political changes or as a result of the Industrial Revolution. A good many of the formerly important textile towns and Bishoprics of the "Ancien Régime" have, thus, simply become small rural towns, relics of the past.

But here and there, there are towns which have retained their authenticity and an urban heritage, in many cases well preserved and maintained: the Cities of Art and History, approved by the Ministry of Culture, Historic Towns, on the one hand urban areas of a certain size brought together in a Breton union and, on the other, Small Towns of Character, smaller and with a real appeal to the rural tourist, organised into a regional association.

It is the discovery of this other Brittany that we are, today, inviting you to explore.

Jean-Bernard VIGHETTI

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Towns of Art in Brittany

Inspirational sites

The Cities of Art, without doubt, rank amongst the most prestigious and important destinations on the Armorican peninsula, the "Finistère" (Land's end) of Europe, and must be explored if you wish to gain an understanding of the Breton identity.

Their original sites were already in dominant positions: on steep slopes or spurs of land, at the confluence of rivers and the head of estuaries, between the two worlds of land and sea; promontories and rocky terraces, havens for meditation and contemplation high above the salty marshes and peat bogs, the plains and the opulent valleys. A combination irresistible to the war lords, merchants or religious clerics, who founded the sites from time immemorial.

But the Cities of Art are also, and more especially, sites constructed and fashioned over the generations by communities in accordance with their activities, creativity and tastes; architectural styles and types blend harmoniously together; these are special places where Brittany's history and the Breton identity were formed. Places of living memory where, even today, the breath of genius and of spirit can be felt, a doorway into the passage of time.



Ancient hearts, rich and preserved

The majority of Brittany's Historic Towns have preserved a rich architectural heritage, monumental certainly such as cathedrals, Romanesque or Gothic churches, town gateways, ramparts and châteaux, bellies and "cohue", but also and much more extensively, subtle combinations of dwellings, fountains and sculptures, parks and gardens, squares, streets and internal courtyards.

This, particularly dense heritage, has been widely renewed over the last ten years, as a result of an active policy of housing renovation, cleaning of façades, removal of external pipework, work on signs and shop frontages which has created town centres of high quality. The creation of pedestrianised areas has transformed the old hearts of the Cities of Art into, what may be termed "stone parks", stimulating local trade, increasing the activity in the area and, as a result, further increasing its attractiveness.



A place for living

A subtle and complex mix of streets, squares and avenues, monuments and houses, public and private areas, the Historic Town is, in essence, an area of conviviality that successive generations have experienced and shaped. Whatever its size, it remains a place which is sought out and animated throughout the year.

The Town of Art and History has its commercial and cultural life concentrated within its old heart, the symbolic quarter. The Small Town of Character has preserved a natural radiance, which, even today, makes it a real place of business and administration, a real "town", with its fairs, pardons, and ritual festivals.

The advantages offered by the Historic Town, its tradition of command and patronage in association with its current tourist vocation, has favoured the establishment of master craftsmen, the installation of workshops and galleries and artists residences, all adding to its appeal and its cultural impact.

Visiting Brittany's Cities of Art, means being able, at any time to dive into their past whilst sharing the life of their inhabitants, to add material nourishment to the spiritual - the appeal of window shopping added to the magic of the ancient stones.



An individualised heritage

In Brittany, all the old towns have their own unique character. If the architectural fashions have, here as elsewhere, strongly influenced the characteristics of the various buildings, they have, almost always, been adapted to match the local traditions, resulting in a very particular style which was further enhanced by the very mixed nature of the materials available on site.

Thus, the majority of the 16th century churches in Brittany are of flamboyant Gothic style and not Renaissance.

So it is that, in the towns in the Rennes basin, where stone was in short supply, half timbered constructions predominated up to the 18th century, while in the rest of the region it only lasted until the 16th century.

More, however, than simply a reflection of the external influences or the ability to adapt to the constraints of a site, the heritage of Brittany's Cities of Art is the tangible expression of their antiquity, the revelation of their historic high and low points and of the lives of their modest or powerful inhabitants of yesteryear and of today: a remarkable open book history lesson, which makes each City of Art a unique tourist destination.



Towns of Art in Brittany



Two thousand year-old towns

Few settlements in Brittany have maintained their status as towns since these urban phenomena first appeared during the Gallo-Roman period. Only three of the five major urban centres of the time – Nantes, Rennes and Vannes – retain that status, as they became and remain diocesan cities. All three presented a problem for the newly-arrived Franks and Bretons until the mid ninth century, giving rise to the creation of the Frankish marches round Nantes and Rennes. It was these two cities which were to be most prominent in the Duchy of Brittany and royal power was to rely on them for

imposing its rule on a province with a strong sense of identity and readily given to revolt. These two cities have the greatest influence in Brittany today. As a result of their two thousand-year history, these Breton cities have a rich and multi-layered heritage. All periods are represented, often in the form of monuments, as in Nantes and Rennes due to their role as regional capitals. In Vannes by contrast, elements of each era are less striking and more equally represented.

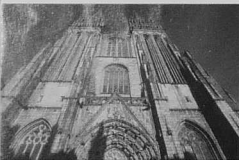


Religious centres of Breton origin

Relatively few in number, these settlements were mainly established in the Early Middle Ages and represent the second generation of towns in Brittany. As a result of Viking invasions in the ninth and tenth centuries, little remains of the original monasteries founded by Breton emigrants from across the Channel, or of the urban settlements around them.

Virtually the only examples to have survived are the large abbeys, seats of the bishops. It is worth noting that the diocesan abbey is a Celtic institution also found in Ireland and Great Britain: the abbey is the cradle and centre of the diocese whose sphere of influence is not linked to a given area but to the abbot's authority. During the Ancien Régime, Brittany had no fewer than six diocesan towns of Breton origin – Dol-de-Bretagne, Saint-Malo, Saint-Brieuc, Saint-Pol-de-Léon, Treguier and Quimper – alongside Nantes, Rennes and Vannes of Gallo-Roman origin. It is believed that the Abbey of Redon might also have become a bishop's see had it not embraced the rule of Saint Benoît and been located in what was already the diocese of Vannes. The powerful Benedictine Abbey of Redon did however exert a remarkable degree of control across the Armorican massif and contributed to the founding of other monastic towns such as Quimperlé

and Saint-Gildas-des-Bois, and of some feudal towns. The town of Locronan grew up around a hermitage, its fate bound up with that of Quimperlé. The Count of Cornouaille supported the founding of the Benedictine Abbey of Sainte-Croix in Quimperlé and gifted Locronan priory and town to the new monastic community. Religious centres of Breton origin may be few in number but they make up for this in the special and historic character of their religious heritage.



feudal towns

The influence of the chateaux was a determining factor during the urban renaissance which characterised the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Brittany. Due to their strategic importance, location at trade and crossing points and the rapid establishment of mainly abbey-owned priories, the major strongholds created in the Brittany marches quickly attracted traders and artisans. These "bourgs castraux", or defensive towns, were also scattered throughout Brittany, developing in the shadow of a fortified chateau controlling a thoroughfare. Initially founded close to a crossroads, ford or river, the feudal mottes and associated settlements subsequently took over neighbouring sites offering improved, natural protection and were thus transformed into "roches fortes", or fortified towns. Where the contours of the land afforded no natural defences, twelfth and thirteenth-century military skill enabled impressive fortifications to be laid out using water such as at Châtaudren, Jugon-les-Lacs and Malestroit.



Coastal towns

More land-based than maritime, Breton civilisation long favoured sites in the heart of bays, upstream in estuaries and at the first bridgeable points on rivers over places too close to the open ocean and more exposed to incursions by northern seafaring peoples such as Saxons and Vikings. The first coastal towns were mainly founded and developed at the mouths of bays and estuaries at the end of the Middle Ages. Their expansion continued following major exploration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the considerable growth in international trade and the linen industry which gave them strategic importance. They developed their fortifications and became Brittany's key buccaneering and privateering centres.



The epic of Linen

From the end of the fourteenth century to the mid nineteenth century, the linen industry was one of the most important sectors in Brittany's economy. Major exploration and the rise in international maritime trade ensured the establishment and expansion of this activity. Its high point was reached at the end of the seventeenth century due to exceptional opportunities afforded by the Iberian and South American markets. The industry was disrupted in the eighteenth century by conflict with Britain, which controlled the seas and which, along with Flanders, had until then represented a significant trading outlet. The industry collapsed completely in the second half of the nineteenth century with the disappearance of the Spanish market and the development of mechanized industry in which the Breton bourgeoisie had failed to invest. As a result, the history of Brittany's textile industry is evident in today's towns mainly in evocative street names and superb buildings which owe their existence to wealthy, free-spending merchants. Their investments have produced an amazing architectural heritage in relation to the tiny size of some of the places, similar to the parish closes in Brittany's small, rural communities.





Small Towns of Character



Small Towns of Character

The "Association des Petites Cités de Caractère", founded in 1975, brings together around twenty small, rural settlements all displaying most of the characteristics of a historic town and consequently featuring a first-class urban heritage which reflects their history and once prestigious role.




The "Petite Cité de Caractère" title is awarded to settlements of fewer than 5 000 inhabitants which possess in particular -

- A consistent, urban architectural heritage including a minimum of one listed or classified monument and a collection of interesting and homogeneous old buildings;
- A genuine potential for providing tourist facilities including a minimum of one information point, one or more restaurants or country inns serving local or regional speciality dishes and at least one good quality place to stay;
- An effective heritage promotion policy;
- A programme of events.

Any town bestowed such status by the Association undertakes to maintain, promote and manage its heritage by signing up to a precisely defined quality assurance charter. Depending on its fulfilment of the charter's requirements, a town is given "full" or "applied for" status.



In order to ensure visitors can read and therefore better understand the heritage of the "Petites Cités de Caractère" in Brittany, these small towns offer a range of literature interpreting their heritage. Some towns also offer a heritage interpretative trail and/or civic illuminated trail for visitors to follow.

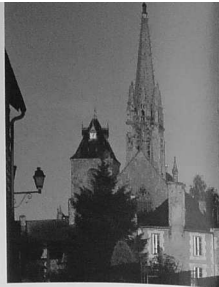

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Stands on a promontory.
Gallo-Roman religious town and
fortified town in origin.

Bazouges- la-pérouse

Throughout its history, Bazouges-la-Pérouse has been a frontier town and meeting place. It developed on the fringe of two settlements, one of the Coriosilitae and the other of the Redones, and witnessed two waves of christianisation – Gallo-Roman and then Breton. The town probably underwent a period of decline in the early Middle Ages, enjoying a revival in feudal times as a fortified town, the imprint of which can still be seen today.



At the beginning of the 16th century, the population of Bazouges numbered more than five thousand souls engaged in farming and trade. The town retains several traces of this prosperity. On Place de la Marie, the impressive Manoir du Colombier was probably the seat of the former lords of Bazouges. Up towards Place du Monument, la maison des pendus (house of the hanged) displays curious, grinning masks. In the same square, the eye is drawn to a richly decorated corner window, dating from 1604, featured on the former residence of the king's procurator in the upper town; the church of Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul is remarkable for its unique architecture: two neighbouring churches, comprising six naves and with a dual dedication reflecting the different waves of christianisation, were completely refurbished in the 19th century to create the present-day church.

In recent years, the town has experienced a genuine "renaissance". Le Village, a centre for experimental arts, aims to raise awareness of contemporary art in the rural environment, focusing on themes of "identity, culture and region". Throughout the year, different exhibition venues in disused business premises and several Bazouge artists open their doors to the public.

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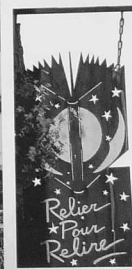


Stands on a promontory on the edge
of the Rance and Vilaine river basins.
Fortified town on a defensive site.

Bécherel



Overlooking the upper valley of the river Rance, this historic fortified town, which once played a military role, retains traces of the different periods which shaped its turbulent past and gave it its remarkable adaptability. Linen and hemp were the source of Bécherel's wealth between the 16th and 18th centuries. Today, this ancient urban settlement with its well-preserved architectural heritage has become France's foremost Book Town.



While the street names such as "de la Charvrière" and "de la Filanderie" evoke the hemp and spinning activities of the town's textile past, the houses of the noble and merchant classes, handsomely clad in granite, reveal the extent of its importance as a centre of commerce. Its linen thread, the finest in Brittany, enjoyed a reputation throughout the kingdom, as well as beyond the Channel and Atlantic. The square where the old market halls stood is lined with lavish residences such as the 15th century "Hostellerie de l'Écu de Laval" and the 16th century house known as the "Maison du Gouverneur", and represents the source of the commercial lifeblood of the town.

The rampart ruins and the old château keep remind the visitor that this fortress once played a strategic role during the Brittany War of Succession. Due to sympathetic restoration of its architectural heritage and the settlement within its walls of booksellers, artists and craftsmen, the facades of the town, imbued with so much history, now show signs of life and, in turn, breathe life all year round into the heart of the historic town of Bécherel, third major Book Town in Europe.

Second hand dealer, gallery owner, sculptor,
painter, photographer, bookseller, calligrapher,
illustrator and, of course, bookseller all
welcome art lovers and collectors, offering
them the chance to make richly varied finds.

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Town on a fortified site in the Brittany marches.

Châteaugiron



The château, close to the Breton capital which it once defended, was built in the Middle Ages and is a genuine fortress right in the heart of Châteaugiron. Nestling against the tall towers of its château, the town, founded during the same period, contains numerous houses with painted half-timbering. Today, a vibrant culture brings this rich, historic heritage to life.

The château was founded in the 11th century by Anquetil, a Norman knight who received the lands and the right to erect a castle from the Dukes of Brittany. His son, Giron, gave his name to the place.

In the Middle Ages this strategic site became a command centre for an important barony. The town developed around the château from the 12th century onwards. Monks from the Abbey of St-Melaine in Rennes founded a priory here.

Châteaugiron became an administrative and subsequently a commercial centre in the Middle Ages, famous for its weekly market, three annual fairs and trade in "Les Noyales", or sailcloth. In the 18th century a new owner converted the château for purely residential purposes, extending and transforming part of it in a classical style.

In the 19th century, with construction of a church and market halls and laying out of new streets, Châteaugiron expanded further without affecting the architectural consistency of the town.



Châteaugiron has a rich and distinctive cultural life. There are many events held throughout the year, such as the "Grande Musique" weekend, an art competition in June, the "Soirées d'Été", programme of summer evening concerts in July and August and photography month in November. Several regional arts bodies are based here - Le Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (Regional Contemporary Arts Fund) and Les Archives de la Critique d'Art, Musiques et Danses en Bretagne (Archives of Art, Music and Dance Review Literature). The nearby Château du Bois-Orcau houses L'Athénor, a museum dedicated to the sculptures of Etienne-Martin.



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Stands at a crossing over the river Leff. Town on a defensive site protected by water.

Châtelaudren



Situated at the crossing of crucial transport routes in Brittany, Châtelaudren has always enjoyed the privileges of a town on a strategic site on the banks of the river Leff. Originally a stronghold, intensive mercantile and artisan activity in the town meant it became the historic capital of Goëlo. In the 20th century, due to the establishment of the "Petit Echo de la Mode" and its production of dressmaking patterns, Châtelaudren became second capital of French fashion.



The history of Châtelaudren begins on the promontory where the ancient château once stood. It was built in the 11th century by Count Audren whose descendants entrusted the monks of St-Magloire in Léhon with the responsibility for founding a priory there and a town below. Its location at a key crossing point meant that the town could establish its role as a centre for merchants and artisans, soon making it capital of Goëlo.

As a major staging post with a thriving yarn market during the 18th century, the town saw the rise of the Place de la République bordered by tall houses with unusual gable windows.

The quarter surrounding the 18th century church of St-Magloire is an example of the architectural layout of the town in the past with its narrow streets, little squares and houses with steep and curving roofs. An artisan area with a particularly lively atmosphere, it earned the title "Quartier Latin" from a visiting Parisian and the name has stuck!

The Place du Leff, which has been completely renovated and paved, leads the visitor to the jewel in the crown of Châtelaudren, the chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Tertre. Founded at the dawn of the 14th century it features 132 extremely rare, painted wood panels.



The river has played a fundamental role in the history of the town. A clever hydraulic system enabled the Leff to be used to protect the fortress. It also turned the mill wheels down through the centuries before being used to drive the turbines of the "Petit Echo de la Mode" which was established in Châtelaudren in 1920. It is against the backdrop of the print works' extraordinary industrial architecture of riveted metal, brick and concrete that an annual exhibition is held to celebrate the "Petit Echo", first published in 1880 and one of the most famous family and women's magazines in history, a special favourite with all French dressmakers.

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Stands at a crossing point on the river
Linon.
Fortified town of Brittany's marches,
protected by water.

Combourg



Town on a fortified site on the border
of the Léon, Trégor and Cornouaille
bishoprics.

Guerlesquin



An ideal holiday base for touring Romantic Brittany, Combourg with its "tranquil lake" is a charming place for a break. The château is a key to the town's identity. The impressive and mysterious granite fortress blends in with the charm of the narrow streets and the warmth of the half-timbered houses.

Following the arrival of a preacher and monk, Saint Lunaire, from Ireland, a church was erected in the 6th century leading to the creation of a small parish town. In the 11th century, the archbishop of Dol-de-Bretagne had a château built at Combourg where he installed his younger brother, Riwallon. A second settlement, the feudal town, grew up as a result of the protection thereby afforded. Riwallon subsequently summoned some Benedictine monks who founded a priory in 1065 around which developed a third centre, a monastic settlement. Between the 16th and 19th centuries the church was rebuilt and the interior and façade of the château altered. With the arrival of the railway, the town developed and expanded. In the feudal part of town, the last examples of half-timbered houses and the 16th century house called the "Maison de la Lanterne" stand alongside those which were modified in the 19th and 20th centuries whilst beyond the chateau the part of the town centred on the former priory seems to have remained unchanged for over 300 years.



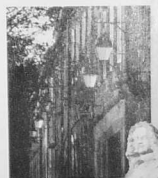
Combourg as seen through the eyes of the writer Chateaubriand:
"C'est dans les bois de Combourg que je suis devenu ce que je suis".
(It is in the woods of Combourg that I became what I am.)
A literary trail and accompanying interpretative boards reveal to visitors the richness of the tranquil lake.

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The architectural fabric of the town, the monuments and old, distinctive houses built from granite, are to be found lining a long marketplace which for centuries has been the focus for commerce. The town has successfully exploited its historic role as a centre for fairs and markets as its rich architectural heritage can testify.

Guerlesquin first appeared in the 11th century close to the site of a feudal motta. In 1434 it obtained the right from the Duke of Brittany to determine weights and measures and to call itself a town. The already flourishing commerce in the town developed further during the 16th century leading to the construction of a wooden building housing the first market halls with a courtroom and grain measuring device above. In the 17th century, the town strengthened its commercial and judicial role with the erection in 1640 of a seigniorial prison in the form of a small fortress called the "Présidial". In the 19th century, granite market halls were built to replace the original wooden ones and the 16th century church was extended in keeping with its original style. The presence down through the centuries of a major guild of stonemasons led to the creation of an architectural heritage of exceptional quality. Today, noblemen's houses still adorn square after square in the town with the altogether more modest workers' houses being confined to the adjacent streets.



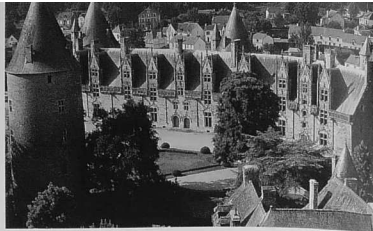
A civic illumination trail takes the visitor on a journey of observation and imagination; fountains creatively combine displays of plants and water; the Champ de Bataille is a dazzling garden where the ruins of St-Ener Chapel reveal their hidden secrets as the various elements of church architecture are lit up in gold, yellow and white; and, like scenes from an exotic shadow play, dark shapes are cast on the walls of the former seigniorial prison by surrounding vegetation.

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Stands on a promontory and at a crossing point on the river Oust. Fortified town on a defensive site.

Josselin



Stands at the confluence of two rivers. Town on a fortified site protected by water.

Jugon-les-Lacs



A key staging post on the "Route des Ducs de Bretagne", Josselin comes into view perched on a hillside at a curve in the road. At its feet stands an imposing château and impregnable fortress set into the rock. This is the seat of the Rohan family whose fate has been closely linked to the life of the town.



Enclosed by a valley and with a 4-km long beautiful lake as backdrop, Jugon is like an oasis in the midst of an ocean of green. Its architectural heritage featuring granite houses and a central marketplace is a reminder of the proud place Jugon held as Penthièvre stronghold during the time of the Dukes of Brittany.

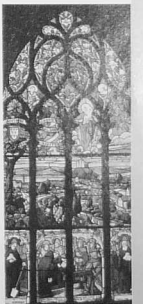
Josselin was founded in the 11th century by the Viscount of Porhoët on a site surrounding a feudal motte set on a rocky outcrop and close to the three priories of Ste-Croix, St-Martin and St-Nicolas. The château, destroyed by the Plantagenet king, Henry II, was rebuilt in stone at the end of the 12th century and progressively expanded with Jean II of Rohan having a new residence built around 1500. Between the 15th and 18th centuries, the town prospered thanks to the manufacturing of sheets, its tanneries and its fairs. In decline towards the end of the 18th century, Josselin experienced a revival in the 19th century with the canalisation of the Oust and the rise of the Marian cult.

Visitors can stroll through the narrow streets enjoying the charm of this medieval town where architectural heritage and contemporary life are harmoniously combined. There is the château and Basilica of Notre-Dame-du-Roncier to visit, the view of the town from the bell tower to admire and around fifty half-timbered houses to discover, the oldest dating back to 1538.



The whole history of Jugon, jewel in the Penthièvre crown, has centred on water. Once an essential element of defence, today water is at the heart of the town's tourism and leisure. The tranquil charm of the place makes it almost impossible to remember its strategic role in Breton history. The château of Jugon once stood on a feudal mound, protected by a clever hydraulic defence system. Following its complete removal at the beginning of the 17th century, the former stronghold became a lively administrative and commercial centre with the château defensive architecture replaced by the elegant façade of the Hôtel Sevoy. The wealthy granite houses ranged around the Place du Martray testify to the commercial prosperity of the period and are reminders of the classical style of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Benefiting from these surroundings, Jugon-les-Lacs is today an ideal rural tourist resort in inland Brittany, combining water and outdoor leisure facilities with a strong cultural heritage. A centre for anglers and walkers, Jugon is gradually rediscovering the influential role it once played.



Following its canalisation in the 19th century, the Oust became a major communications route for Josselin, linking it to other towns on navigable waterways in the west and stimulating trade, particularly the importing of wine and materials and the exporting of hides and sheets. Faced with competition from other forms of transport by road and rail, the canal fell into disuse in the mid 20th century to undergo a renaissance associated with pleasure cruising and tourism from 1970 onwards.

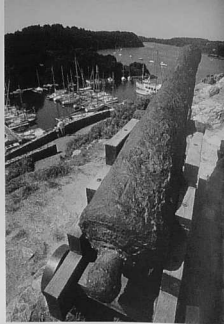
From the 13th century onwards, the inhabitants of Jugon successfully controlled the many streams which ran through the valley making their town a genuine blueprint for a fortified town with water defences. The two rivers which flow through Jugon, the Rosette and Arguenon, feed two large bodies of water which once protected the château and which today support the many outdoor leisure activities of the tourist resort.

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Stands on a promontory at a confluence of two rivers.
Fortified town on a defensive site.

La Roche-Bernard



Stands on a promontory and crossing-point at the head of an estuary.
Fortified town on a defensive site.

La Roche-Derrien



Perched on its rocky promontory overlooking the river Vilaine, La Roche-Bernard has treasures to reveal to those who take the time. Careful listening reveals the river, lifeblood of the town, as it surges with the tide and close observation makes it possible to imagine its heyday of barons and sailing ships. Private mansions, old depots and salt warehouses wait to be discovered by chance down narrow streets, presenting their own testimony to its rich past.



The town was founded in the 11th century on a rocky promontory overlooking the estuary of Le Jaudy. Derien, son of the Count of Penthièvre, built a fortified chateau protected by ramparts and Argoat. Successive pillaging and sieges associated with the wars of succession brought about the destruction of the chateau. The last ramparts were razed to the ground in 1420.

Around one thousand AD, the Viking chief Bern Hart sailed up the Vilaine. He noticed a rocky promontory and because of its strategic location settled there.

Once converted to Christianity his successors received the title of baron and controlled movement on the Vilaine. They founded a fortified town and invited the Benedictine Abbey of Redon to establish a priory in 1063. The feudal

motte and fortified town were established on the rocky spur called Le Ruicard. In the Middle Ages, harbour trade boomed and brought prosperity as can be seen from the salt warehouses, the rue de la Salinerie, harbour depots and Place du Bouffay market halls. In the 16th century, under the influence of Baron François de Coligny the town became a Protestant stronghold. Numerous private mansions on the Place du Bouffay with their blend of Gothic and Renaissance styles date from this period. Faced with competition from the expanding rail network, the harbour saw activity decline from the beginning of the 20th century onwards. Road and tourist traffic has enabled the town to maintain its great tradition as a place of hospitality and gastronomy.



Walking along the narrow streets, which have preserved their original character and names, the visitor can discover the principal elements which constituted the settlement in the Middle Ages. These include the lazaret house with its 12th-century ruins and Place du Pilon and Rue de la Fontaine, which feature old merchant houses with street-stall windows, and which link the old town, haunt of rag-and-bone merchants, with Place du Martray which is lined with bourgeois, half-timbered houses from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. The harbour, one of the oldest on the north coast, owes its size to the trade in salt and wine. The feudal motte and ruined keep of the chateau high above draw the visitor on as far as the 13th-century church of Sainte-Catherine, fortified after the capture of Charles de Blois during the siege of 1347. Substantial buildings constructed from local stone are a reminder that La Roche-Derrien prospered until the middle of the 19th century thanks to the flax industry. The town is still known today by its nickname, "Capital Stoup", capital of flax strippers.



Opening the door on history – a heritage trail guiding visitors round the town at their own pace follows 22 interpretative circuits covering four themes, namely the political and administrative history of the barony, the site's economic and strategic importance, places and buildings linked to ecclesiastical history and the French Revolution. In addition every evening the architectural outline of the Place du Bouffay can be discovered as part of a civic illumination trail.



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An interpretative trail, "In the footsteps of the Rag-and-Bone King", takes the visitor exploring La Roche-Derrien, discovering its heritage, alleyways and remarkable viewpoints. Although compact in length, the trail offers a dream-like journey into the past and, during a quiet moment in the gardens of Le Presbytère, the visitor can reflect on it in the soothing presence of the flowering flax.

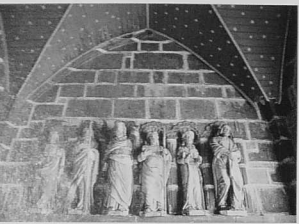
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Stands at a crossing point at the head of an estuary.
Town on a defensive site.

Le Faou

A gateway to land and sea, the port of Le Faou on Brest bay is a former staging post between lower Léon and upper Cornouaille. Due to its exceptional location, the town possesses a long history and rich heritage.



The imposing Place de la Maine is a reminder that, although feudal in origin, Le Faou has long promoted its role as a marketplace. The succession of 16th century half-timbered and pointed-gable houses running down the main street are evidence of urban development aimed at providing those travelling through the town with a focal point for its trading activities.

Down through the centuries, the facades have been dressed with finely worked slate giving each house its own distinctive appearance. Le Faou is one of the very few Breton towns to have preserved these beautiful houses.

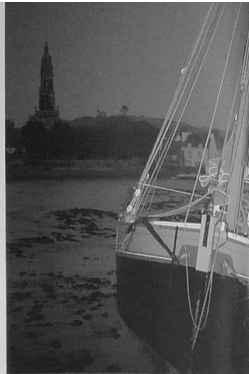
Following this route, the visitor reaches the amazing 16th century church of St-Sauveur, firmly planted in the steep-sided valley or ria of the "Steir Goz", the old Breton name for the river. The bridge provides a link between Brest and Quimper and encourages the visitor to stroll along the Quais Quelen, once a major harbour in Brest bay.

Today, Le Faou maintains its centuries-old role as a place to stop over, being both gateway to the Crozon peninsula and showcase for the Armorica National Park.



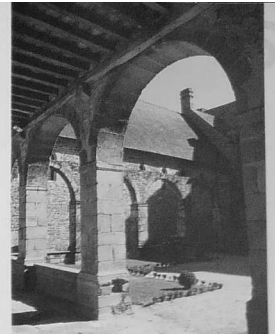
Open in high season, the "Maison de Pays", museum of the 16th and 18th centuries, houses a permanent exhibition on the history of the town with costumes, plaster models and photos, plus temporary exhibitions.

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Stands on a promontory and crossing point at the head of an estuary.
Religious centre of Breton origin.

Léhon



Situated in the picturesque valley of the river Rance, Léhon has retained a historic and religious heritage which reminds us of its importance in medieval times. The Benedictine abbey founded in the 9th century by Nominob, King of Brittany, the 12th century chateau built on the promontory overlooking the bridge and the houses of the town continue to attract visitors who have flocked here since the 19th century.



Essentially Léhon is a town shaped by monks who established their monastery at a bend in the river Rance. King Nominob and his lords contributed generously to the monastic establishment which, up until its closure during the Revolution, had a strong spiritual influence due to its possession of the relics of Saint Magloire. The lords of Dinan established their fortress on a rocky outcrop to protect the abbey's possessions and to defend the river crossing.

The chateau was demolished in the 17th century. The river and the Dinan to Rennes road encouraged commerce and trade. Local trades of weaving sailcloth, tanning and selling goods flourished. Moulded cornices and sculpted lintels on the houses indicate a level of affluence. In the 19th century, the viaduct, which diverted the Dinan to Rennes traffic, brought about the decline of this trading town.

Today Léhon successfully and elegantly blends historic and contemporary architecture, preserving memories of its past but staying very much open to the present.



The banks of the Rance offer a special way to explore Léhon. Visitors are always struck by the majestic architecture of the abbey rising proudly above the blue roofs of the houses. Even the chateau seems to defer to it. The abbey continues in a host of ways to reflect the town's cultural heritage. Everything is a reminder of the distant past, a past that is not simply to be admired but one which speaks directly to the present.

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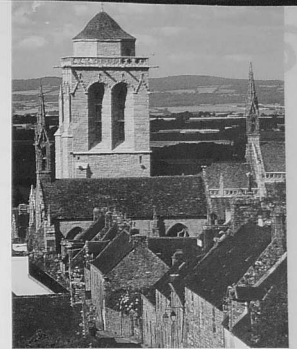
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Lizio



Stands on a promontory.
Religious centre of Celtic origin.

Locronan



Situated in the heart of a granite region dominated by the stately town of Josselin and set apart from the main arterial routes, Lizio was considered by many towards the end of the 1970s as nothing more than a pretty little Breton village destined for obscurity. But that was reckoning without the fierce determination of the local people who decided to boost economic activity through a policy of systematic restoration of its architectural heritage.

There is no château or basilica in this historic outlying dependency of the parish of Sérent, but instead there are granite houses belonging to notables and merchants of the village in the 17th and 18th centuries when weavers were the source of parish wealth. Virtually no monument from an earlier period exists, even though Gallo-Roman remains testify to much older human occupation and legend and place-names evoke the presence of the Knights Templar here in the 12th century. There is therefore great homogeneity about the architectural fabric which the local council has undertaken to upgrade.

In the space of a decade more than 80 dwellings have been refurbished as main homes, property for rent or holiday accommodation. A visitors' centre has been created and outdoor recreation areas developed. The village today appears in a new light, especially on the second Sunday in August when craftsmen and women come from across Brittany and indeed the whole of France to work in houses, courtyards, sheds and streets displaying their skills to the thousands of visitors.



The blue-grey granite houses of Locronan, a small town nesting against a hillside, rise up around the solid and distinctive edifice of its square church tower. Originally founded on a sacred site and capital of Brittany's sailcloth industry from the end of the 15th to the middle of the 18th century, this major Breton tourist centre, much loved by filmmakers, has not forgotten its historic dual role.

A beautiful collection of houses in the Grand'Place, framing the priory church, testifies to the history of this town. A key Celtic spiritual site (a 'nemeton' or sacred grove of trees) christianised in the 7th century by Saint Ronan, the town began as the site of a palace at the foot of the hill. Most likely destroyed by the Normans, the original palace was in the 10th century replaced by a new residence on the site of Saint Ronan's hermitage. The reverence shown by the counts of Cornouaille and indeed by the dukes of Brittany towards Saint Ronan led to the construction of the first church in a Romanesque style, then to the founding of a Benedictine priory and finally to the erection in the 15th century of the priory church. Exempted from various taxes by ducal decree, Locronan became a major centre for the manufacture of sailcloth. The houses in the square – former sailcloth industry office, India Company headquarters and homes of tradesmen, lawyers, king's inspectors and officers, bear witness to this industry.



All the houses in the village show the same care in the cutting and dressing of the stone which, in summer, is highlighted by meticulous floral displays. What is exceptional, however, is attention to detail in the construction and subtle ornamentation – on an exceptionally finely crafted chimneystack here and on a sculpted fountain there. This consummate art of working in granite is to be found throughout the village and affords many surprises for those who love beautiful craftsmanship.

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The priory church, a place of contemplation, contrasts with the bustle and activity of the historic town where regular customers have replaced ship owners, who once came to fit out their vessels heading for the New World, and where discovering traditional gourmet specialities has replaced the production of sailcloth destined for voyages of discovery. Visitors strolling through town today follow in the footsteps of all those who have climbed the "Montagne de Locronan", a sacred hill and witness to two thousand five hundred years of history.

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Stands at a crossing point at upper navigable limit of a river. Town on fortified site protected by water.

Malestroit



A small island protected by a feudal motte and subsequently by a fortified château, Malestroit in the 15th century became one of the nine baronies of Brittany, encircled by fortifications traces of which can still be seen today. In the 16th century, the construction of two twin locks, among the earliest in France, linked Malestroit to Redon. Commerce boomed and the "Town of the Golden Bezants" rapidly expanded.



Quae numerat nummos non malestrica domus translates from the Latin as "Whoever counts his bezants (gold coins) is not from Malestroit". The town motto shows the importance attached to the quality of its welcome. From the town's rich Crusader past and flourishing river-based commerce, the Place du Bouffay preserves its impressive bourgeois houses in sculpted granite and, under the gaze of the remarkable St-Gilles church (12th, 15th and 16th century), some astonishing half-timbered houses with unique statuettes – a hog running off a donkey playing the "biniou" (Breton bagpipes) and a pelican, which recall the fabliaux or humorous tales of the Middle Ages.

Narrow streets lead down towards the canal, out into the surrounding countryside and to the chapel of La Madeleine, meeting place in 1349 for the signatories of a truce during the Hundred Years War. Today, Malestroit continues to enjoy special status thanks to its dynamic economy which makes this small town appear larger than it really is.

The "Pearl of the Oust" can be explored at the visitor's own pace following the Bezants Trail, an interpretative tour with 37 information boards explaining the history and architecture of the thousand-year old town. A map is available from the Tourist Office and from shops in the town. During the summer, or throughout the year for groups, guided tours provide more detailed information of interest for those wishing to know more.

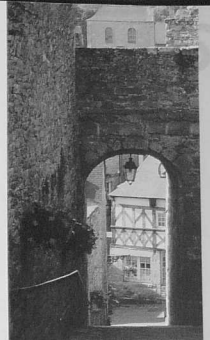


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Stands on a promontory at a confluence. Fortified town on a defensive site.

Moncontour



Perching proudly on a rocky escarpment at the confluence of two small rivers, Moncontour-de-Bretagne is still encircled by imposing 13th and 15th century ramparts. A period atmosphere makes life here seem gentle and pleasant. Peace reigns in the present-day town enhanced by surrounding woodland and dazzling floral displays, all in striking contrast to the town's turbulent past. The impressive Penthièvre fortress withstood countless attacks during the Middle Ages and even minted its own coins in the 14th century!

The medieval castle was founded in the 11th century to defend Lamballe, capital of Penthièvre. Despite being dismantled by Richelieu in 1626, the ancient defensive wall still retains 11 of its 15 towers as well as the Porte-d'en-Haut gateway and St-Jean postern gate.

From the end of the Middle Ages to the industrial revolution, Moncontour turned to manufacturing textiles – "berlingue" cloth and hemp, exported to Spain and the Indies via the ports of St-Malo and Lorient. The houses on the 16th and 17th century Place Penthièvre, the 16th to 18th century rue du Temple and rue des Dames, St-Mathurin church from the 16th and 18th centuries, as well as the Hôtel de Kerjégu (now the town hall), are evidence of the spectacular development of the town during this period.

Today, Moncontour has successfully maintained its civic importance, considerably enhanced by rapidly expanding cultural tourism which has prompted the recent addition of a second museum, the Théâtre du Costume.



This old, medieval town was a republican stronghold during the French Revolution. Today it makes the most of its dual distinctiveness by hosting a medieval fair in August aimed at recreating Moncontour during the Middle Ages as well as by promoting its museum, the "Maison de la Chauannerie et de la Révolution" which offers a better understanding of the town's significance during the various stages of its history.

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Stands on a promontory and crossing at the head of an estuary. Fortified town on a defensive site.



Pont-Croix

A bridge over the river Goyen flanked by a tidal mill and reached by steep, narrow streets heading up towards a summit crowned with remarkable religious monuments and a market place complete the picture presented today by Pont-Croix, originally a feudal motte and now capital of Le Cap Sizun headland.



From the second half of the 19th century, Pont-Croix attracted artists and writers. An "arts club" was formed based in the Hôtel des voyageurs. Paul de Lassence, Lionel Floch, Gaston Bouillon, Da Silva, Max Jacob, Henri Matisse and many other well-known painters stayed there. Artists and craftsmen living in the town today demonstrate the continuity and vitality of artistic creativity in Pont-Croix.

Pont-Croix developed around a feudal motte and subsequently a château constructed on this exceptional site. In the 13th century the local lords founded the collegiate church of Notre-Dame-de-Roscuden, symbol of the town's wealth and beginning of the development of a Cornouaille "school" of architecture.

The spiritual influence of Pont-Croix persisted until the middle of the 17th century through the establishment of an Ursuline convent which housed the Catholic secondary school in the 19th century. The historic centre contains beautiful 15th and 16th century houses, such as the "Marquisat", an old aristocratic mansion now the heritage museum. The rue des Courtils with its gazebos and the rues Chères lead the visitor down towards the river Goyen, its bridge and tidal mill.

This is also the site of the old, sheltered harbour, once accessible to ocean-going ships and key to local trade between the 14th and 19th centuries. On the opposite bank stands Kéridreuff, one of the oldest quarters in the settlement which was also a centre for economic activity associated with tapestry weaving and canning.



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Town bridging the head of an estuary.

Pontrieux



Like many Breton towns, Pontrieux is medieval in origin, owing its existence and its prosperity to its position at the head of an estuary, site of the first bridge over the river Trieux. For a long time the Trieux estuary at this point afforded the only link between the areas of Trégor and Goëlo. Today it offers a navigation route perfect for pleasure craft but once much exploited to great effect by the Vikings.

At the beginning of the 15th century, following the sack of the fortress of Châteaulin-sur-Trieux and the primitive village upriver from the site of the present town, the inhabitants built a new village on both sides of the river Trieux linking them with a bridge. The town of Pont-Trieux was born.

In a favourable location for trade, Pontrieux also became the port for Guingamp but lost its status as sole crossing point after the construction of the Lézardneuf Bridge in 1840. The arrival of the railway at the end of the 19th century led to the development of industries based on wood, cardboard and linen. Finished goods were dispatched by sea throughout Europe boosting activity around the harbour where Danish and English schooners moored alongside ships heading for Icelandic fishing grounds.

Tracing the curves of the river the town presents to visitors the spectacle of two squares which are actually three-sided and linked by a ribbon of tall houses. The fifty washhouses running down towards the Trieux are evidence of the long and happy relationship between the river and Pontrieux.



Nesting around its two "triangular squares", Pontrieux extends down towards a marina, which openly invites visitors to set sail for the islands of Bréhat, Jersey and Guernsey. Spanning a viaduct and two bridges, the town is perfect for a gentle stroll, even at night when a wonderful civic illumination trail highlights washhouses, half-timbered and dressed stone houses, 18th century fountain and famous "Tour Eiffel" house.

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Town on a defensive site protected by water.

Quintin



Situated between Armor and Argoat, Quintin, ancient fortified town and centre of the Marian cult, boasts thirteen classified historic monuments and an architecturally rich urban heritage which is principally the legacy of two centuries of prosperity arising from the manufacture of Brittany hemp textiles. Established in the heart of the lovely "Le Gouët" river valley, this town in bloom openly invites visitors to explore.

Arriving in Quintin from the east, visitors are surprised by the imposing 17th century château and large defensive wall linking it by two 15th century towers to the Porte Neuve gateway. This first impression of the town conjures up its history as fortified settlement.

The heart of the town reveals a second impression created by the elegant architecture of the houses surrounding the central square. Here, half-timbered houses from the 16th century and granite residences from the 17th and 18th centuries are the very private mansions which belonged to the textile merchants who made Quintin's fortune at a time when fine Brittany cloths, so prized by the Spanish, were being exported as far as the Americas.

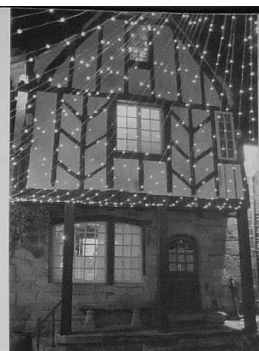
On leaving the central square, visitors discover streets with a strong commercial tradition and, in the narrow lanes and alleys, a dense concentration within a limited area of remarkable and varied cultural heritage — from religious monuments and fountains to shady parks and panoramic viewpoints, all of it enhanced by a very high standard of floral displays.

On returning from the Grand Menhir, visitors might be interested to see the 16th century half-timbered houses on the Place 1830, those dating from the 17th century in rue Notre-Dame, 18th century private town houses in the Grand'ruë, rue au Lin, rue St-Thurian, rue Martray and rue St-Yves, as well as the more modest houses in the Rochonnet, Vau de Gouët and Croix-Jarrot quarters. En route, visitors should not miss the two châteaux (17th and 18th century), basilica and parks as well as "Quintin nocturne", a unique tour in high season discovering the narrow streets and alleys at nightfall.

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Stands on a promontory. Town on a fortified site, a stronghold protected by water.

Rochefort-en-Terre



A town on a fortified site surrounded by deep valleys, Rochefort-en-Terre is a collection of several hundred houses set on an outcrop of schist. Famous for its 16th and 17th century residences and for its displays of geraniums, a unifying motif throughout the town, this small settlement is equally renowned for its château and collegiate church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Tronchaye.

Traces of a stronghold dating back to the 11th century have been found at this natural, defensive site controlling a route linking north and south Brittany. The power of the feudal lords on whom economic activity partly depended is also evident in the religious and civic buildings. The church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Tronchaye, for example, which became a collegiate church in 1498, was endowed in 1527 with a late Gothic-style façade on its north side by Charles de Rieux, the ornamentation seemingly inspired by decoration on the adjacent houses. Whole sections of ramparts, bases of towers and souterrains remain of the original fortress. The present château, comprising old, 17th century outbuildings, was transformed into a manor house by the American artist, Klotz, at the beginning of the 20th century.

Rochefort-en-Terre is today a unique collection of 16th and 17th century architecture, enhanced by a wealth of harmonious floral displays.

Rochefort-en-Terre highlights its architectural heritage with a special civic illumination project, "Les Chemins Lumineux". Created by lighting designer Pascal Gaugeon, the project reveals the town from a new angle, bringing out the façades, dry-stone walls, sculptures and dormer windows, a wealth of architectural detail that generally passes unnoticed in the daylight.

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Stands on a bay.
Coastal town.

Roscoff



On a peninsula in Morlaix bay lies a town of granite and floral displays with a privateer past and a historic, 16th century heart. Its stonework still exudes the past wealth of rich merchants, of the famous "Onion Johnnies" and of numerous poets, painters and writers on whom Roscoff cast its spell.



The history of Roscoff begins in a quarter known as Roskogoz. In the Middle Ages, the site was no more than an outer harbour for St-Pol-de-Léon. A 15th century Calvary cross still testifies to the existence of the village. The silting up of the harbour and repeated attacks by the English encouraged the "Roscovites" to move further to the north to the site of the old harbour today. It was here the town rapidly expanded. From the 16th century, merchants, captains and privateers stamped their wealth on the buildings of the town.

Their granite houses and the church still stand close to the harbour today, built on land reclaimed from the sea. From then onwards, Roscoff developed more towards the east. The Bloston headland, close to Ste-Barbe chapel, was fortified in the 13th century.

In the second half of the 20th century, a new deepwater harbour was constructed, able to handle the cross-Channel ferry services as well as fishing industry activities.

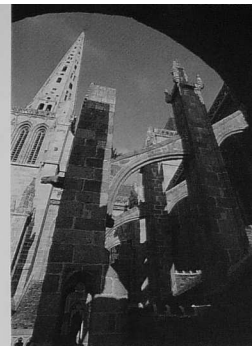
Everything about the historic heart of the town is a reminder that the sea is the source of life here. From church to wealthy houses and from boats carved in stone to turrets and bastions of the old harbour, everything evokes wealth linked to maritime trade. The spirit of the privateers, smugglers, and merchants still hovers around the entrances to carved-out cellars opening on to street and shore. It was the sea that launched the heyday of the "Onion Johnnies" with their first Channel crossing to sell the pale pink onions of Roscoff.



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Stands at a crossing at the head of an estuary.
Religious centre of Breton origin.

Tréguier



The historic capital of Tréguier enjoys a particular prestige among the people of Brittany. As a centre of intellectual prowess, noble sentiment, careful reflection and critical appreciation, down through the centuries it has inspired men of letters, law and the cloth, from Saint Tugdual to Saint Yves, Ernest Renan to Anatole Le Braz and Angéla Duval to Henri Pollès and Yvon Le Men.



When looking down from its square, one has the feeling that it has been exuded one house at a time by the mighty stone-built nave towering over it. Anatole Le Braz thus describes the key influence the Church has had over the town. Tugdual, a Welsh monk, founded the monastery of Landreger in the 6th century.

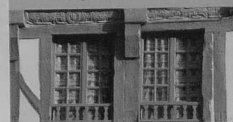
Abbots were succeeded by abbot-bishops and in turn by full bishops once Tréguier had become one of the nine bishoprics of Brittany around one thousand AD. St-Tugdual cathedral (14th century) and the original and later bishop's palaces (15th and 17th century) are some of the treasures of the Episcopal legacy. Against this unique and enlightened backdrop several exceptional individuals came to prominence such as Saint Yves, the "poor man's lawyer", and Ernest Renan, renowned philosopher.

Over time, Tréguier developed as a permanent centre for arts and philosophy in Brittany, from the founding of a print works around 1500 through the publication of the "Catholicon" (first Breton/Latin/French dictionary) to the presence in the town at the start of this century of numerous artists and craftsmen.



All of Tréguier history is laid out in its streets, alleys and hidden gardens half glimpsed through carriage gateways – from La Psalette, La Chanterrie and the private mansions to half-timbered houses, the birthplace of Ernest Renan and the Augustine convent. The buildings are imbued with memories of the past and reveal the centuries-old life of this, the ancient capital of Tréguier.

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Towns of Art and History



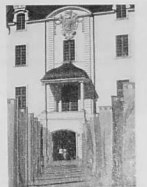
The title of "Villes d'Art et d'Histoire de Bretagne", conferred by France's Ministry for Culture on Brittany's towns of special artistic and historic interest, denotes towns which see themselves in terms of their high standard of architectural and urban heritage and strong cultural traditions. Organised into a regional association since 1984, they have signed up to a mutually agreed charter aimed at developing each town as a distinctive tourist destination on a par with the Flemish or Italian towns of special artistic interest.



At a national level, the Ministry for Culture and Communication has since 1985 been responsible for implementing a heritage management and promotion policy in partnership with regional authorities, which in concrete terms has led to the designation of towns and areas as "Ville et Pays d'Art et d'Histoire".

This ministerial undertaking is defined in an agreement drawn up with the national architecture and heritage body, the regional bodies for cultural affairs and the local authorities concerned. This agreement entails financial and technical support on the part of the ministry and an obligation on the part of the local authorities to have access to a qualified staff, approved by the Ministry for Culture and Communication, and to guide-lecturers and heritage event organisers.

At a regional level, the charter signed by Brittany's "Villes d'Art et d'Histoire" requires its members moreover to maintain, highlight and promote their heritage as well as to support the contemporary arts.



These towns of artistic and historic interest offer a programme of heritage-related events which is aimed at everyone, implemented and co-ordinated by a heritage event organiser, led by a qualified guide-lecturer and which features –

- Discovery tours, themed tours and exploration tours;
- Temporary exhibitions and an interpretative centre about architecture and heritage;
- Events aimed at the residents, summer events for 6-12 year olds, heritage workshops and classes for young people.

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Stands on a bay.
Coastal town.

Concarneau



Stands on a promontory and at a crossing on the Rance estuary.
Fortified town on a defensive site.

Dinan



Stretching along one of Brittany's most beautiful bays, Concarneau today embraces the historic heart of the town lying within a ring of granite ramparts. As one of the towns benefiting from the 19th century fishing industry, it developed around the harbour. Following the valley contours, it moved away from seascape to landscape acquiring its own range of idyllic rural settings. Concarneau is a town which invites relaxation.



Situated upriver on the Rance estuary, which opens out on the Emerald Coast between Dinard and St-Malo, Dinan is still encircled by an unbroken line of the oldest and most extensive ramparts in Brittany. Much appreciated for the protection they afforded during the period of the Duchy and the Catholic Holy League, the ramparts, together with other examples of monumental architecture and the many half-timbered houses, constitute a major asset for the medieval town.



Concarneau first appears on record in the 13th century when it was established on a tiny island in the heart of the bay. It was soon enclosed by impressive ramparts, which were subsequently altered in successive phases. A fortified town, Concarneau was also a key crossing point on the route from Quimperlé to Quimper. The defensive architecture arising from its dual role encircled the oldest dwellings in the settlement.

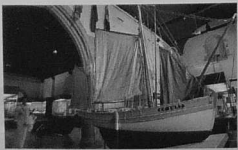
The 19th century proliferation of canning factories and demographic expansion were behind the development of the areas on the landward banks. The architecture of the town outside the walls is therefore the result of its industrial and working past and the layout of the harbour at the time can be viewed in the Musée de la Pêche (fisheries museum).

In the 20th century, Concarneau joined forces with its two neighbouring communes – Beuzec-Connq in 1945 and Lannec in 1959. Recent building work in the town centre is aimed at enhancing its continually evolving architectural heritage.



The town of Dinan grew up around a feudal motte at the intersection of a land and river route. From the 12th century onwards, it sheltered the commerce of merchants and craftsmen attracted by its famous fairs. In the 13th century it became a ducal town and acquired a ring of ramparts followed, at the end of the 14th century, by an impressive keep. A textile-producing town, it underwent a remarkable period of expansion up until the Revolution. Dinan proudly displayed its wealth, trumpeted its identity and created a unique architectural heritage comprising the Tour de l'Horloge (15th century), St-Malo Church (15th – 19th century), a renovated Basilica of St-Sauveur (17th – 18th century) and private town houses (17th – 18th century).

But it is to the everyday inhabitants of the town, the shopkeepers and stall holders, that Dinan owes the flourishing of its half-timbered houses which are so characteristic of the place – 15th century houses with overhanging upper storeys, 16th century houses with porches and 17th century houses with display windows. With the arrival of the industrial revolution, economic activity declined but did not disappear entirely. Today's shopkeepers, craftsmen, fairs and market ensure Dinan continues to fulfil the role of commercial capital of the Pays de Rance.



Three sign-posted, interpretative, heritage trails have been laid out in each of the three parts of town – the fortified town, coastal town centre and coastal quarter of Le Passage. The town's heritage is also revealed through discovery tours and children's workshops. A programme of civic illumination highlights the unique architectural features of the town.

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Three themed, colour-coded town trails invite visitors to discover the streets, squares, monuments and gardens of Dinan – Ramparts trail (red), Old Dinan trail (gold) and Religious Treasures trail (emerald green), giving them the chance to immerse themselves in the town's unique atmosphere.

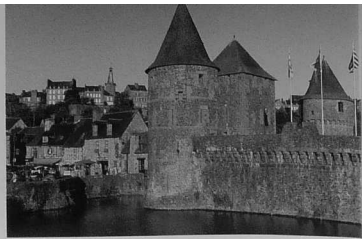
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Stands at a crossing point on the river Nançon.
Town on a fortified site in the Brittany marches.

Fougères



Stands at the confluence of two rivers at a crossing inland from an estuary. Gallo-Roman town in origin dating back two thousand years.

Nantes



Fougères essentially owes its cultural heritage and influence to its exceptional location on the borders of Brittany, Maine and Normandy. An important frontier barony in ducal times, it has retained an impressive fortress from its role during that period.

From the 11th century onwards, a settlement developed at a bend in the river Nançon around the base of a wooden château, replaced in the 12th century with a stone fortress. Its defences, improved over 400 years, have made the château of Fougères into a wonderful record of military architecture.

Cloth manufacturers, dyers and tanners set up water mills on the Nançon. The expanding population attracted tradesmen and artisans who settled on the plateau overlooking the valley where they were soon protected by a fortified enclosure. The inhabitants of the upper

town, with its separate military defences, established a court and town hall in order to acquire political and judicial power.

The town succumbed to terrible fires in the 18th century and was quickly rebuilt entirely from granite along the lines of Rennes and of town plans identical to those recommended by Gabriel, architect to the king. In the 19th century, with the industrial revolution, Fougères turned towards a single industry and became the "shoe-making capital".

A programme of diversification begun during the 1970s means Fougère today faces the 21st century with confidence.

Literary tour: Following in the footsteps of writers who have loved Fougères, spent time here and written about the town.

Gardens tour: From the public gardens with panoramic views of the château and medieval quarter to the Val Nançon linking the château to the upper town.

Tour at dusk: Illumination of civic buildings.

Arts and skills tours: From the Maison de Savigny to the Urbanist convent, numerous exhibition spaces, Harlogerie museum-workshop, Brittany Crystal Works and JB Martin Shoes.



A town in the Loire region at the intersection of land, river and sea routes, Nantes has through the centuries confirmed its status as a major commercial and industrial port, important staging post and trading centre and meeting place for different cultures.



Originally known as Nannètes, Nantes was first established on the innumerable islands lying in the Loire estuary affording an easy crossing point over the river.

In the 15th century, at a time when Nantes was affirming its role as capital of Brittany, Jean V, François II, and then Duchess Anne saw to the construction of the Dukes of Brittany château and the cathedral of St-Pierre-et-St-Paul. Foremost port in France during the 18th century, the city expanded westwards along the Quai de la Fosse creating unique urban developments such as Foyeaud island, the Bourse, Place Royale and Graslin quarter.

In the 19th century, as Nantes was becoming industrialised, new symbols of the modern built environment appeared, such as the iron and glass construction of the Passage Rommeray and the branches of the rivers Loire and Erdre were filled in. Following the devastation of the Second World War, a reconstruction programme and urban development linked to the arrival of the tramway transformed the historic centre.

Contemporary architectural developments offer new focal points bringing balance to the framework of the city.



Nantes publishes two themed brochures:

- "Laissez-vous conter les promenades vertes en cœur de ville" (A walk and talk through the green heart of the city) encourages visitors to discover the city's green heritage (botanical gardens, Versailles island, etc).
- "Laissez-vous conter Jules Verne et Nantes" (In production) takes the visitor on a trail discovering the life of Jules Verne in his native city, visiting not only those places where he lived but also those which inspired the famous writer.

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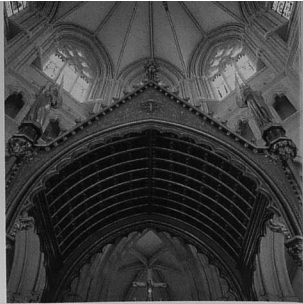
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Stands at a confluence and crossing at the head of an estuary. Two thousand-year old town of Gallo-Roman origin.

Quimper



An Episcopal and ducal town, Quimper has established itself as the historic capital of Cornouaille. Its medieval aspect, dominated by its cathedral, does not mean it is any less a town of the 19th and 20th centuries.



Throughout its history, Quimper has been a haven and a crossing point. Established upriver on a narrow, steep-sided inlet, the earliest town developed in the Roman period based on activity around its harbour.

In the Middle Ages, it was the site at the confluence of the rivers Steir and Odet ('kemper' in Breton) which became important, no doubt due to its defensive characteristics. The image of this Episcopal town, former capital of the powerful counts of Cornouaille, is inseparable from the name of Saint Corentin, bishop and friend of the legendary King Gradlon.

Today the town features a centre enclosed by ramparts. From the 13th, 15th and 17th centuries, is bordered by half-timbered and stone houses from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. The 19th century town with its harbour and administrative buildings lies along the banks of the Odet. As visitors will note, the quaysides are attractively laid out featuring numerous footbridges decorated with floral displays.



Visitors can explore the town following the heritage trail signboards. Tours at nightfall led by actors and musicians provide another, unique way of discovering Quimper. Each summer the tours are devoted to a different theme.



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Stands at a crossing at furthest navigable point upriver. Two thousand year-old city of Gallo-Roman origin.

Rennes



Dating back more than two thousand years, Rennes was capital of the Celtic Redones tribe and thereafter coronation city in the time of the dukes, seat of the parliament and regional administration during the Ancien Regime and subsequently capital of the region of Brittany. These prestigious roles explain why its architectural heritage bears all the signs of a noble and solemn pedigree.



Around the cathedral, the original heart of the city is marked by medieval influences – ancient ramparts with towers and gates and narrow streets and little squares with houses featuring half-timbering and overhanging storeys. Further east, the present-day centre was rebuilt after the fire in 1720. Its plain but elegant large stone buildings are arranged around two royal squares, the Place du Parlement with an important French 17th century building and the Place de l'Hôtel de ville. The quarter with the ancient abbey, an eastward extension of the town

in the 18th century, preserves a certain calm emphasised by the presence of the gardens. The "lower town" to the south of the Vilaine reveals amongst the 19th and 20th century buildings a few old streets with half-timbered houses and a number of monuments such as the former Palais du commerce, central food markets, Lycée E Zola and Toussaints church. Since the Second World War, whilst confirming its status as a university and technology centre, Rennes has experienced one of the most rapid periods of growth in France and is now a major European city.

In the 15th century chapel of Saint-Yves, a permanent exhibition or "architecture and cultural heritage interpretative centre" illustrates the history of the city through its building materials. A series of open-air boards helps visitors and those interested to understand better the history and cultural heritage of Rennes.



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Stands in the heart of a gulf.
Two thousand-year old town of Gallo-Roman origin, seat of the first bishops of Brittany.

Vannes



Stands on a promontory.
Fortified town and stronghold in the Brittany marches.

Vitré



Situated in the heart of the Gulf of Morbihan, Vannes has maintained its historic traditions and activities down through the centuries. The richness of its dual heritage, its marina and its proximity to the Gulf, as well as its major cultural events, make Vannes a key Brittany coastal tourist attraction.



"To see a complete Gothic town, entire and of a piece, as still exists in a handful of places – Nuremberg in Bavaria, Vittoria in Spain and Nordhausen in Prussia."

Victor Hugo referring to Vitré, "Notre-Dame de Paris".



Daniontum, capital of the Veneti, was founded by the Romans in the first century AD. The medieval town, with the cathedral and La Cohue (marketplace) at its centre, grew up within the Roman camp established in the 3rd century. A favourite residence of the dukes of Brittany, Vannes was transformed at the end of the Middle Ages. The enclosure wall was enlarged and the urban settlement extended. Close to the cathedral, which was rebuilt in the 1450s, the town has preserved numerous half-timbered houses from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. Stone buildings began to appear in considerable number during the modern period. The rue St-Vincent, lined by private town houses used by members of Parliament when it sat here from 1675 to 1690, leads through the St Vincent gateway to the harbour. Economic heart of the town, it was here that tradesmen and ship owners built their houses of stone.

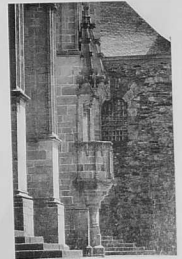
In the 19th century, the town expanded beyond its walls as can be seen in the public buildings such as the prefecture and hôtel de ville and in the new squares, Place Gambetta and Place de la République.



Endowed since the 11th century with a powerful fortress, Vitré acquired a defensive wall between 1220 and 1240 and prospered from the 15th century onwards thanks to international trade in canvas (canvas). Export merchants, who formed a confraternity in 1472, built imposing houses such as those in the rue d'En-Bas and contributed to construction of the late Gothic-style Notre-Dame church.

Following conversion by its overlords to Protestantism, Vitré became a Huguenot town undergoing a period of isolationism after the repeal of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Made a "sous-préfecture", or local administrative centre, it experienced a revival with the arrival in 1857 of the railway followed by the establishment in the town of the 70th infantry regiment and the inauguration in 1883 of the neo-Romanesque church of St-Martin. After 1918, with the decline in traditional activities such as tanning and textiles, the town once again turned inward.

At the start of the 1970s, Vitré recovered its dynamism to become one of the main centres of economic development in Brittany today.



First floor of the Pavillon du Tourisme houses a fun exhibition exploring the history and architectural heritage of Vitré. Several themed exhibition tours are offered – medieval town and château, evolution of architectural styles, religious heritage, rural history of the Pays de Vitré and life, and times of Madame de Sevigné. At nightfall, there is a programme of civic illumination – "Laissez-vous conter Vitré, Ville Lumière", which won an award in 2000 for the quality of its lighting.

- Ramparts trail (way-marked tour of ramparts)
- Intro-muros town (way-marked urban trail)
- Walks at dusk (civic illumination tour in July and August)

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Historic Towns



Historic Towns

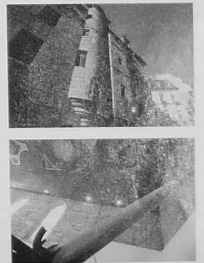


Although members of the "Union des Villes d'Art et d'Histoire de Bretagne", the region's historic towns do not benefit from a title and official recognition. They have however all been accepted by the Union for the standard and interest of their cultural heritage and for their historic centres. As a result, they enjoy the active support of the "Villes d'Art et d'Histoire".



This support takes the form of –

- Helping prepare future applications by the historic towns to the Ministry of Culture and Communication for "Ville d'Art et d'Histoire" status through an exchange of information and advice on educational and promotional heritage-related events;
- Encouraging the historic towns to implement a heritage maintenance and promotion policy, and also to provide support for the contemporary arts;
- Involving these towns in the development and promotion of tourism in urban destinations in Brittany in particular in towns with historic centres.



Given that an important aspect of this quality assurance initiative is the way it encourages towns to set up sound educational activities promoting their heritage, guided tours, interpretative trails and heritage workshops generally feature on the programme of events offered by Brittany's historic towns.

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Stands on a promontory and crossing point at the head of an estuary. Fortified town on a defensive site.

Auray



The "Alréens", as the inhabitants of Auray are known, built their town on either side of a bridge spanning the Loc'h estuary in the Gulf of Morbihan. The historic priory settlement, which became the port of St-Goustan, is still very much in evidence. It remains almost intact despite the ravages of time and leads through its gateways to the upper feudal and commercial town which grew up around a fortress. The granite of its streets, quaysides and house fronts continues to reflect the richness of its past.

St-Goustan, a working port since the Middle Ages featuring half-timbered houses, is divided from the upper town by the Loc'h estuary. Beyond the stone bridge spanning the estuary the fortified town rises up the hillside. The terraced Loc'h walkway was built on the site of the former château of the Dukes of Brittany, demolished in 1560. Vast market halls constructed of wood and destroyed in 1905 once stood on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, heart of the commercial town.

Further on, on the edge of old Auray stand the 17th century church of St-Gildas and the chapel of St-Esprit dating from the 13th and 15th centuries, last vestiges of a major centre for the charitable care of the sick.

Finally a short distance away lies the hamlet of Kerléano, birthplace and last resting place of Georges Cadoudal, leader of the Breton Royalist insurgents. "Les Chouans": a mausoleum built in the 19th century is dedicated to him.

Auray conceals numerous treasures – here a sculpture in the shadow of a doorway, there a weather-vane on the curve of a roof and ruins at the side of a lane. So many small details testifying to the past show how the everyday can us help understand history's bigger picture... "Auray, au détail près" is a detailed tourist guide of Auray aimed at the general public.

Stands at a crossing and the furthest navigable point upstream on a river. Fortified town in Brittany's marches.

Châteaubriant



Since its origins, Châteaubriant has been a frontier town. It is capital of the area known as the "Pays de la Mée" or "middle ground", a meeting or confrontation point between the historic counties of Nantes, Rennes and Angers and an outpost of Brittany's marches. The Béré fair, held in the shadow of the church of St-Jean-de-Béré and attracting more than 45 000 visitors every year, testifies to the key role commerce has played for over a thousand years in this market town of the marches.

At the beginning of the 11th century, Brient, envoy of the count of Rennes, built a fortress and asked the Benedictine monks of Redon to establish a priory, St-Sauveur-de-Béré, the original name of the Romanesque church of St-Jean-de-Béré. The town was grew up in the shadow of the great château built between the 11th and 14th centuries and probably about the 13th century saw the addition of the ramparts whose outline is still followed by the town centre.

The modern age saw the destruction of the wall surrounding the fortified town. The main axis of the town then swung through 90° with the creation of the rue Aristide Briand and the demolition of the old market halls in 1865.

Along its streets, the "Hôtel de la Houssaye", "Maison de l'Ange", "Porte Neuve", tower of "Le Four Banal" and "Hôtel de la Botheleire" testify to the rich past of Châteaubriant, whilst the Grand Rue reveals to the attentive observer the town's process of urban development as from 1860 onwards it spread beyond the confines of its enclosure wall.

"Literary tours" held in July and August. Poets, novelists and historians have all written about Châteaubriant...

Using these texts as starting-point, over one hundred volunteer actors lead spectators through the historic streets discovering the wealth of this town's history.

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Stands at a crossing at the head of an estuary dominated by a promontory. Fortified town on a defensive site.



Hennebont

Spanning the river Blavet and fortified in the 13th century, Hennebont is a town with a history of strong characters, such as its founders, the hermits Gunthiern and Caradec, Geoffroy, its first feudal lord, who reputedly insulted the Duke of Brittany at a gathering of loyal supporters, and Jehanne la Flamme, who successfully withstood the siege of Charles de Blois' army during the Brittany War of Succession. Also numbered among these are the Les Forges foundry men, pioneers of the workers' movement in Brittany.

A town bridging the head of an estuary, Hennebont takes its name from the structure spanning the river. On the Place du maréchal Foch stands the 16th century basilica of Notre-Dame-de-Paradis, which combines austere granite and rich, late Gothic ornamentation. From there, the visitor can explore the 15th-century ramparts built on the site of the first fortifications erected by Duke Jean Le Roux around 1250. The gateway to the medieval town, called the Porte Broërech, houses a museum of arts and traditions within its two towers. In the heart of the fortified town, beautiful 16th, 17th and 18th century houses, which survived the bombings of the last war, are continuing evidence of the town's rich past. Along the river visitors can explore the St-Caradec quarter with its 18th century well, the Fontaine des manès, towpath and lock gates. The Haras National, a national stud farm housed in the former abbey of Notre-Dame-de-la-joie, has a discovery centre about the horse in Brittany.

Situated close to the centre of Hennebont, the Haras National, or national stud farm, houses the Brittany horse museum and discovery centre. This thriving business has within its legendary courtyard maintained the traditions of stud farming and its renowned stallions since 1857. Here the visitor can discover through the history and working of the national stud farms how the horse became man's finest conquest. The tour takes visitors round the stables, revealing a way of life full of surprises in this unsuspected world centring on seven stables and 70 magnificent stallions.



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Stands on a promontory overlooking a meander in Le Gouessant River. Fortified town on a defensive site protected by water.



Lamballe

Sited on the edge of the ancient Gallo-Roman route from Corseul to Carhaix, Lamballe has been capital of the dukes of Penthièvre since the 10th century. A centre for commerce and crafts and, since the 19th century, for horses, the town has existed under several different guises and conserves a unique heritage as a result. Lamballe has a taste for the arts and a gift for sharing this with others particularly through its Mathurin Méheut Museum and its cultural centre, Le Quai des Réves.

In the upper town, only the fortified collegiate church of Notre-Dame is a reminder of Lamballe's military origins. In the lower part of the fortified site, three priories were founded which shows the desire of the dukes of Penthièvre to make their town a powerful capital. The priories, protected by the meanders of Le Gouessant River, have given rise to the settlements of Saint-Martin, Saint-Lazare and Saint-Jacques, which explains the evidence of historic buildings in these somewhat outlying quarters. The originality of Lamballe's architecture lies in the varied styles of its timber-framed houses influenced by those in Broche, Guingamp and also Rennes. Le Haras (stud farm), founded in 1825, is where the "trait postier breton", a type of Breton post horse, was first bred. The French artillery used this draught horse extensively making Le Haras the second major stud farm in France following the First World War.



An interpretative trail accompanies visitors on their exploration of the town. A booklet encourages visitors to look out not only for must-see monuments but also for less visible traces of both past and present. The museums and stud farm are open throughout the year and a programme of events encourages visitors to share in the history and contemporary life of Lamballe.

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Stands at a crossing point on the Elorn estuary. Feudal town.

Landerneau



Landerneau and its magnificent inhabited bridge dating back to the 16th century span the meeting point of river and sea at the crossroads of Léon and Cornouaille. The narrow streets of the town, which has successfully preserved its heritage, are full of history and together with the open-air museum and re-discovered banks of the Elorn are an invitation to visitors to explore the town at leisure.



Situated on the Elorn ria, a steep-sided river estuary first crossed by a ford and later by a bridge, Landerneau owes its origins and development to its position at a crossroads. The town was established at the point where the tide is no longer discernable and where the river can be easily bridged. From the 17th century onwards, proper quays were laid out and these represent special axes of urban development along both banks of the Elorn. The houses of ship-owners and traders, built in warm-toned Logonna stone, are evidence of the town's dynamic harbour trade linked to commerce in sailcloth. The latter was produced in Léon and exported throughout Europe with Bordeaux wines representing the bulk of incoming goods. In the 19th century, with industrialisation and the arrival of the railway, a new era opened in the expansion of the town. Numerous private mansions, villas and manor houses testify to the quality of Landerneau architecture during this century.



Open-air museum: 32 information boards placed at significant sites and buildings allowing visitors to discover the town at their own pace. A leaflet accompanies this architectural trail.

Banks of the Elorn trail: A 6-kilometre walk by the Elorn both upriver and down towards the sea.

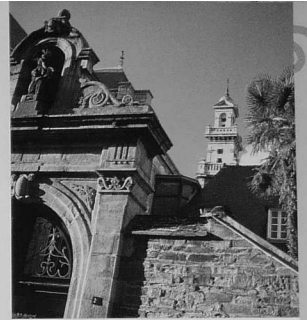


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Stands on a promontory and crossing point upriver on an estuary. Town on a fortified site.

Lannion



An important centre for trade laid out on the terraced right bank of the river Léguer, Lannion is lucky enough to combine industrial development with maintaining a cultural identity, as can be seen from its famous market, historic houses with overhanging storeys and remarkable church of Brélévenez approached by a flight of 140 steps.



Standing on a site occupied since Neolithic times, Lannion developed around a ford where the Kernaria bridge now spans the river Léguer. In the Middle Ages, the river was defended by a château and the town by a circle of ramparts. The rhythm of life was set by the tides and by activities centred on the harbour. The medieval town has succeeded in retaining its period half-timbered or slate-fronted houses with sculpted ornamentation testifying to the originality and wealth of its inhabitants. It preserves too its private town houses and manors with their external spiral staircases housed in solid towers set into their facades.



Since the establishment in 1960 of the National Telecommunications Centre, Lannion has become an industrial and university centre of excellence in electronics, IT and telecommunications. Today a town of 19,350 inhabitants, Lannion is the administrative, commercial, sports, cultural and tourist capital of Trégor.

The suggested town trail leaves from the majestic church of Brélévenez which looks down on the town from the top of its 140 steps. On returning back down the steps lined with small, traditional houses, the visitor reaches the historic quarters of the town. There is much to admire along streets, through squares and down cobbled alleys – carved wood timbering, caryatids, sundial, fine town houses and manors, house with watchtower, historic convent and cloister, fresco, altarpieces and crypt. Unaccompanied and guided tours available.

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Stands at a crossing over the river Blavet.
Town on a defensive site.



Pontivy

Situated right in the heart of Argoat, on the edges of the Breton and Gallo regions, the historic bishoprics of Cornouaille, Vannes and St-Brieuc and the départements of Morbihan and Côtes d'Armor, Pontivy has often seemed the ideal place to establish a new regional capital. The first French Emperor himself thought so, re-baptising the ancient feudal seat of the Rohan family, "Napoléonville", and doubling its size with the addition of a new town!



The town, whose origins are ascribed to Saint Ily – one of the many hermits in the early Middle Ages who chose the magnificent Blavet valley as a place of contemplation, is in fact founded on a fortress controlling the bridge and key crossing point.

From its period as a defensive township, fortified during the 13th century, Pontivy has retained the château, re-built in 1485 by Jean II of Rohan, and, around the Place du Martray, a whole historic quarter of half-timbered, gabled houses laid out in irregular fashion and contrasting with the regimented Napoleonic town with its straight roads, wide squares and solemn buildings.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Pontivy is an average sized town and vibrant commercial and industrial centre in the heart of a particularly rich agricultural basin, its influence extending over an area inhabited by around 60 000 people.

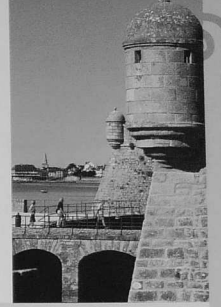


The historic town centre has the distinction of being two-fold in character. Two types of urban fabric harmoniously co-exist – on the one side the medieval town with narrow, little streets – and on the other the Napoleonic town with its wide, straight avenues. A circular trail highlighting the town's medieval and Napoleonic heritage is currently being developed.

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Stands at the entrance to a bay and at
the mouth of a river.
Coastal town.

Port-Louis



This port at the mouth of the river Blavet has had an unusual history thanks to the kings of France who made it a harbour of major importance in the 17th century and to Queen Amélie who brought it fame as a seaside resort in the 19th century!

Originally called Blavet, the town from the Middle Ages onwards exploited trade in salt, wine, fish and cereals. The fortress, begun by the Spanish during the wars of the Catholic League, was completed by Louis XIII from 1618. The latter took the decision to fortify the town and to construct the La Pointe harbour, thereby giving his name to Port-Louis. The presence of the Spanish from 1590-1598 is still evident in the town in the tiled houses, which are quite distinctive from other local architecture.

In the 17th century, Port-Louis became the headquarters for the East India Company, before Le Fauëdic, on the right-hand side of the bay, superseded it, adopting the name "L'Orient", ("The Far East"). The rich-looking houses belonging to merchants and ship-owning bourgeoisie testify to the opulence of the times.

After a period of decline, the town experienced a revival from the time of the July Monarchy, thanks to the interest Queen Amélie showed in a sea-bathing establishment, one of the very first in southern Brittany.



"Port-Louis on foot" is an interpretative trail with 21 heritage information boards. The walk takes visitors from the Garden of La Muse past the gunpowder magazine to Le Papegaut fort and from Locmialo harbour through the historic centre to the port of La Pointe, bringing to life the turbulent history of this small town which today lies peacefully between bay and ocean.

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Stands at a river confluence and crossing point at the head of an estuary dominated by a promontory. Religious centre of Breton origin protected by water.

Quimperlé



Stands at the entrance to an estuary. Religious centre of Breton origin and coastal town.

Saint-Malo



All those who have lingered here, from Brizeux to Flaubert, have found Quimperlé reflects a gentle way of life. Situated at the gateway to Cornouaille, the town is a focal point for Breton culture, numbering among its native inhabitants Matlin an Dall, the most renowned bombarde (traditional oboe) player of his generation, Dom Morice, historian and father of Breton literature, and Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué, poet author of "Barzaz Breiz", a work which revealed the quality and power of oral literature in Brittany.

The lower town stands on three rivers. The first two, the Ellé and the Isle, surround a small island, cradle of the town since the 11th century when Benedictine monks founded the Abbey of Ste-Croix there. It contains evidence of religious and civic history: wealthy town houses in the aristocratic quarter from the 16th to 19th century and half-timbered houses from the 15th to 17th century. Created from the other two, the third river, the Laita, boasts beautiful stone-built houses along the quayside, evidence of flourishing harbour trade in the past.



An interpretative trail invites visitors to discover the history of the town looking at its maritime links and historic harbour, the Laita estuary (home to an extremely rare plant), the numerous mills, rope manufacturing, the 16th century Frémereu hospital, old tanneries, traces of the fortified town, the floral bridge dating from medieval times, the river Ellé gardens, the fisheries and viewpoints over Quimperlé and surrounding countryside.



Soon too cramped for its original site, the settlement set about conquering the surrounding hills, creating a new, upper town crowned with the church of Notre-Dame, an "inland Mont-Saint-Michel". Characterised by its interesting and diverse ecclesiastical buildings – the 13th and 15th century Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption, 16th century Ursuline chapel and convent and 16th century chapel of St-Eutrope, this promontory offers beautiful views across the rivers to the distant forested horizon.



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It is perhaps from Dinard that "Saint-Malo de l'Isle", as it was once known, offers the most impressive views of its private mansions with tall chimneys, sloping roofs, granite façades and sober, awesome architecture.



A rocky promontory dominating the Rance estuary, the site of Saint-Malo is a natural bastion. Down through the centuries, the independent spirit of the "Malouins" enabled the town to acquire freedoms and privileges. With its harbour a centre for transatlantic trading, commerce and foreign trade, the town has become synonymous with daring exploits such as those undertaken by Le Duguay-Trouin and Le Surcouf.

The town accumulated immense wealth in the 17th century with its ship-owners lending money to King Louis XIV and building their "malouinières", or private mansions, in the surrounding countryside. The ramparts and St-Vincent gate were constructed in the 18th century along with the beautiful private town houses. The latter were replaced with exact replicas immediately after the war. Where previous besiegers had always failed, the might of the German forces in 1944 succeeded, bringing destruction to a large part of the town.

The "seaside resort" part of Saint-Malo developed in the 19th century with the construction of a casino, large hotel and countless villas. Wide avenues dedicated to the car replaced the sandy roads used at the beginning of the century by the milk carts from Paramé.



A visit to the heart of the privateer fortress, or Cité d'Alet as it is known standing at the gateway to the Rance, is a must for visitors. The "Promenade de la Corniche" provides the chance to walk around the outside of the fortified town admiring views over it and Saint-Malo bay. At the town's highest point can be found the remains of the ancient cathedral of St-Pierre, Carolingian in origin, the 1939-45 Memorial and, down towards Saint Père cove, the Tour Solider.

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Stands on a bay.
Religious centre of Breton origin.

Saint-Pol- de-Léon



A peaceful town surrounding a religious building of almost overwhelming proportions and encircled by a favourable and fertile belt of land, Saint-Pol-de-Léon is quietly moving on from its prestigious past...



Narrow, labyrinthine streets heading away from the square in front of the stunning 13th and 16th century basilica lead to the depths of the secular quarters of old Saint-Pol.

A town of considerable wealth, Saint-Pol-de-Léon replaced its half-timbered houses with solid, dressed stone constructions, pure in line and ostentatious in style. At the corner of rue Rozière, a house with ornamental turret epitomizes the fortune of this well-off town. The street-name game reveals its own surprises and poetry – rue des Eaux, once called "rue aux os" (Bones Street) comes from the guild of butchers, the rue au Lin is the last vestige of the weaving industry and the rue du Lavoir features a miraculous well, blessed by Saint Pol Aurélien and source of untainted water since the 7th century.

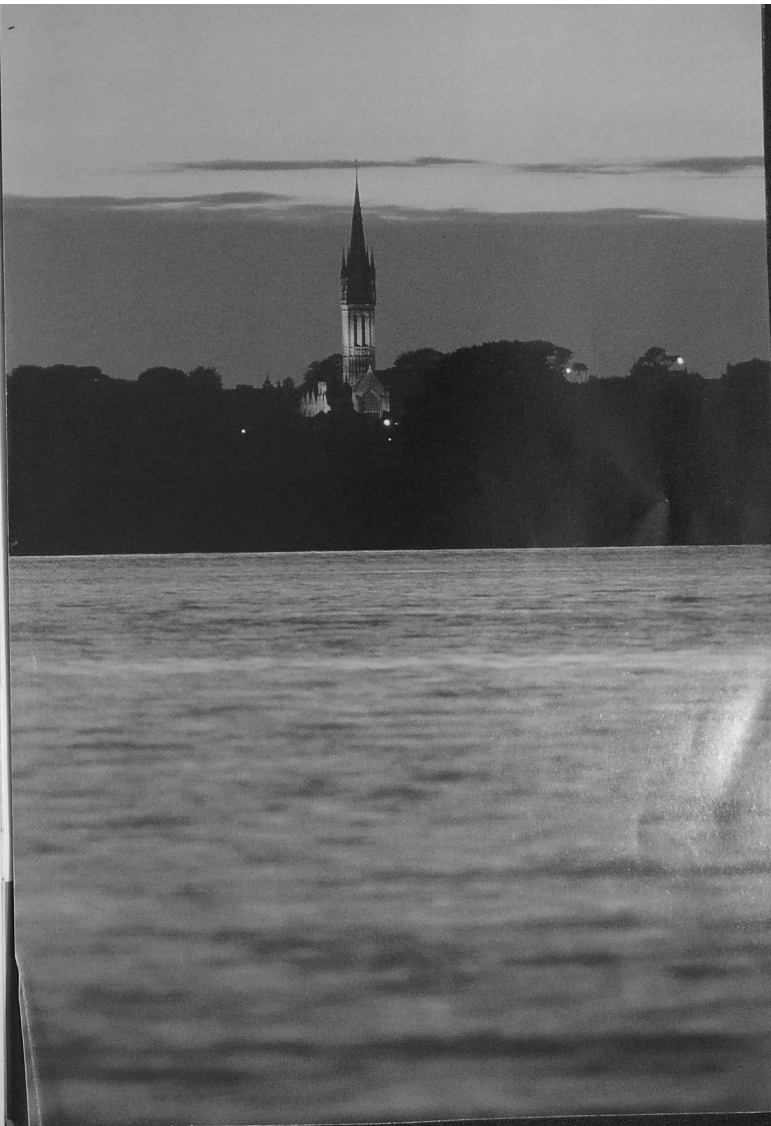
At the intersection of the two main cross-town routes stands the Kerisker chapel, its steeple piercing the sky overhead in defiance of men, time and weather.



A religious centre and seaside resort, Saint-Pol-de-Léon is today capital of the largest vegetable-producing area in Europe. 70% of French artichokes and 90% of cauliflowers leave from here. The full range of vegetables on offer however extends to around thirty. In addition, the town has worked hard to become one of France's foremost horticultural centres producing millions of camellias, roses, rhododendrons and alstroemerias. This dual agricultural/horticultural role is described every summer in a series of guided tours.



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the Towns of Art in Brittany

- Small Towns of Character
 - Towns of Art and History
 - ▲ Historic Towns
- (Regional Association Member Towns)



Tourist Offices in Brittany's Towns of Art offer an information and advice service to all visitors. Contact details for each office are given on the relevant town presentation page.



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