

About this supplement

Imagine a land with sun, sea and sand, glorious rolling countryside, towering mountains, fairy-tale castles and legendary gastronomic delights. A voyage of discovery awaits just a short, comfortable ferry ride away in France, where the many and varied attractions draw millions of visitors each year.

A country where hallowed tradition sits comfortably alongside stylish sophistication, France has something for everyone. For total relaxation, the rustic, boules-and-baguettes charm of village life is hard to beat; for the love-struck, there's a romantic break in Paris or an elegant country château; for the gourmet, a chance to explore famed regional delicacies and world-class wines; while outdoor types can enjoy the Alps and Pyrenees – on foot, skis or mountain bikes.

All this, and more, lies just beyond a small expanse of sea. So, read on for more information – and be sure to make France your next port of call.

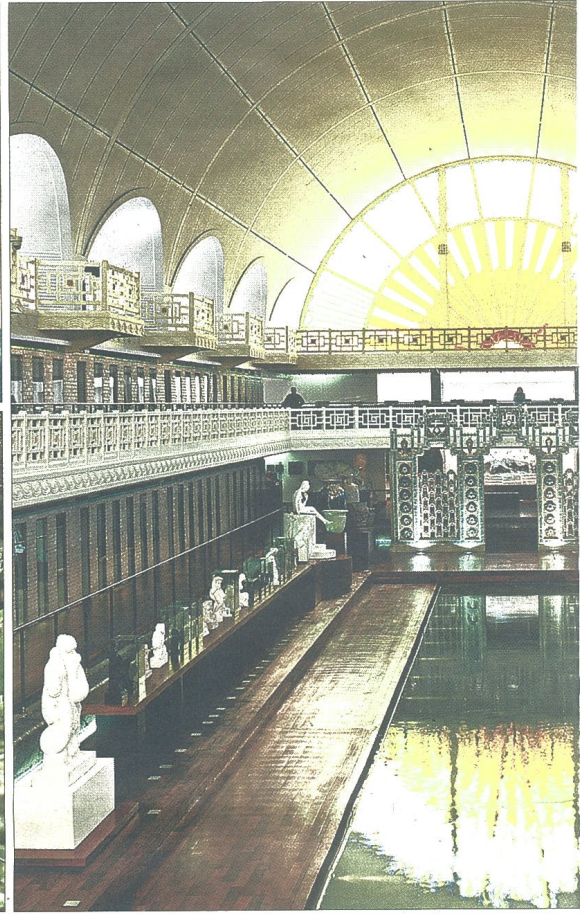
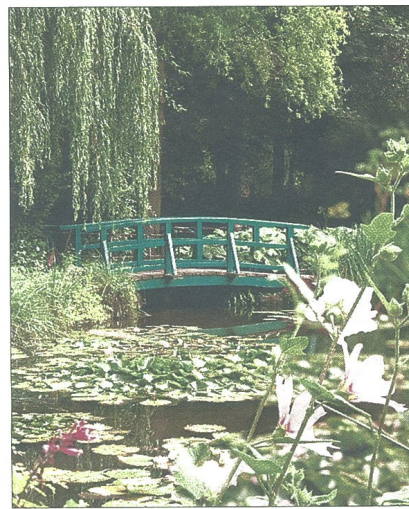
Contents

ON THE FERRY	4-5
CULTURE AND HERITAGE	6
FRANCE SHOW 2010	7-10
ROMANTIC FRANCE	11
SHORT BREAKS	12
FAMILY FUN	13
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	14
TAKE THE TOUR	15

PRODUCED BY TELEGRAPH CREATE

Editor Jackie Holland Managing editor Emma Northam Creative director Dawn Squance Art director Jon Farley Picture editor Abi Patton Design Lena Konstantakou, Elton Lam Production Paul Carroll, Caroline Elderfield

PICTURES P2-3: Pictures Colour Library, P6: Pictures Colour Library, Superstock.com, P11: Superstock.com, P12: Pictures Colour Library (2), P13: Abbie Trayler-Smith, © Parc Asterix 2009, P14: Alamy, Getty



A DESTINATION LIKE NO OTHER

FRENCH MARVELS Spectacular scenery, rich history, fabulous food... there is so much to see and do in France. Jon Bryant nominates 10 top activities

1 Monet's house and gardens at Giverny
The magnificent, dreamy grounds that Claude Monet spent more than 40 years creating at Giverny are now the most famous gardens in France. Monet had originally glimpsed Giverny from a train window when he was travelling through the area. He bought a house there in 1890, where he spent the rest of his life.

Today, visitors can drift around his two gardens and take an underground walkway to the famous lily ponds and arching Japanese-style bridge, impressions of which grace placemats, coasters and jigsaws all over the world. The bowers, hedges and pink and lavender flowers make it a supremely restful, scented place, full-blooming towards late spring when the gardens fill with hundreds of visitors.

Monet's studio is now the gift shop, the blue-and-white tiled kitchen and chrome-yellow dining room are fully restored and the artist's extensive collection of Japanese prints covers the walls. www.fondation-monet.com

2 Deauville and the festival of American cinema
Past the Opal coast and Alabaster coast, past Dieppe and Le Havre, you eventually arrive at the twin resorts of Deauville and Trouville, a double act of promenades, parasols and wealthy visitors on their way to the casino. "Doctors sometimes recommend Deauville, they even prescribe it, but only to healthy patients," wrote Joseph Roth in 1927.

It was and still is the typical "fashionable sea-bathing spot" where Americans flooded in the Twenties to spend the season and

where Parisians made up the numbers at the racetracks and in the private beach huts.

Deauville is altogether posher with a wider boardwalk (*les planches*), greener lawns and larger mansions – two of which belonged to the Rothschilds and the Citroëns.

Trouville is more bistros and junk shops, but both towns are packed in the summer with visitors who spend time in both (with the appropriate change of clothes). In September, Deauville hosts the Festival of American cinema and for a €150 Blue Pass you can watch more than 100 American films in nine days. www.festival-deauville.com

3 Cheese, calvados and cider
A much better shopping experience than drifting round the supermarkets of Calais or Boulogne is a day's drive away

in Normandy, where you can buy local produce in the very village where it has been fermented, pressed or stored in a barrel.

The three Cs – cheese, cider and calvados – are why some people are in northern France at all. The Pays d'Auge region has developed a *route du fromage* and a *route du cidre* to make the voyage easier and almost every village has a tasting centre and stone presses and cellars to visit.

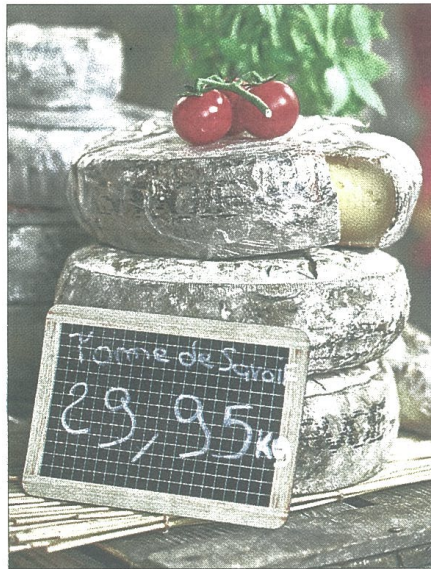
Head to Livarot for Le Colonel cheese or go to Cambremer and Beuvron-en-Auge for a series of picturesque cider tastings. Distil your cider and leave for at least two years in an oak cask and it turns into calvados, the region's eau de vie.

The locals say it's the digestif that fills *le trou Normand* (the Norman hole), the gap between the fish course and the meat course. While in Normandy, it's

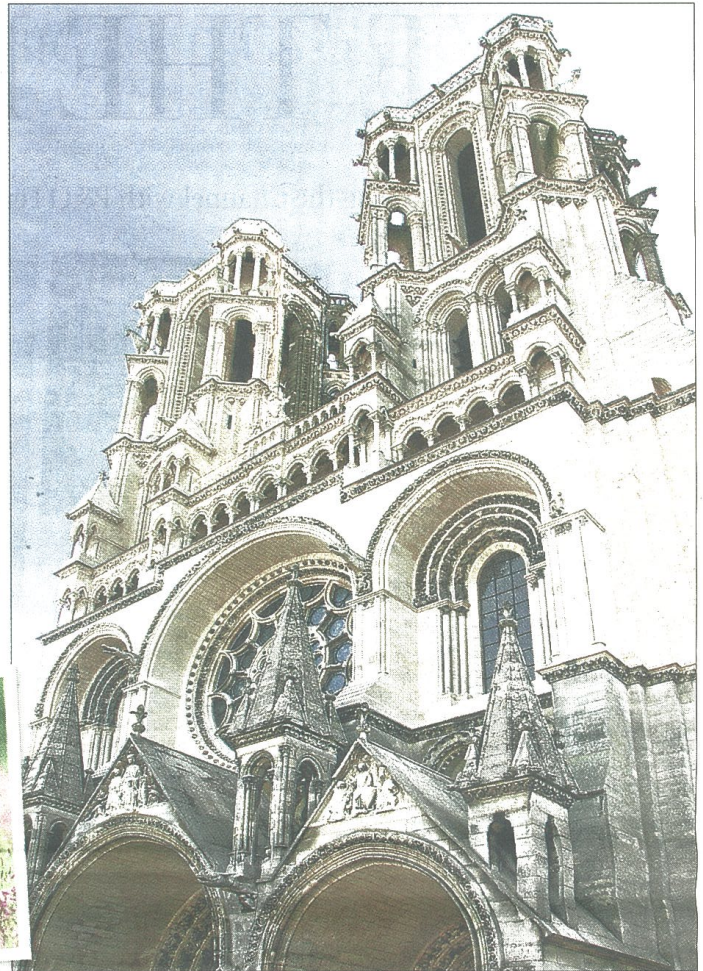
For more great holidays in France, visit
telegraph.co.uk/poferries

Distributed with The Daily Telegraph

DESTINATION FRANCE



Magnificent treasures: clockwise from top left, a bronze fountain in the gardens of Versailles; Roubaix's art deco pool museum; follow your nose on the route du fromage; Laon Cathedral; Marquenterre bird sanctuary; Monet's garden in Giverny



also worth trying pommeau, a mix of cider must and calvados.

4 Epernay champagne cellars

Reims is the champagne capital of the world, but to get a taste of the bubbles it's best to drive another 15 miles south to Epernay. Here you can tour around the cellars of Mercier, Perrier-Jouët and, of course, the Nebuchadnezzar of them all, Moët et Chandon.

Moët's tour includes a video followed by a descent into its 17 miles of chalk cellars where each bottle is still turned by hand. After a look at some Napoleonic souvenirs (he was a friend of the founder's grandson, Jean-Rémy Moët), there's a glass of champagne in the extravagant tasting room. It's certainly worth doing a few of the smaller houses' tours and at De Castellane, you can walk up the 237 steps of the company's private tower.

Epernay itself is clearly soaked in vintage champagne and all the finery that comes with it but the glorious 18th- and 19th-century mansions are also pleasantly bucolic with views over the vineyards of the Marne.

5 Roubaix's pool museum

Bombing and diving may be more acceptable in swimming pools on the Continent but strict French laws have ruined many a hot holiday afternoon by insisting that all bathers wear swimming caps and men sport tight briefs.

At Roubaix's La Piscine, however, there are no such wardrobe concerns as you are not even allowed to go swimming. The art deco pool was converted into a stunning arts and textiles museum in 2001 by Jean-Paul Philippon (who also converted the Musée d'Orsay in Paris).

The narrow pool is now surrounded by a wooden floor and lined on all sides with marble sculptures, giant cobalt urns and bronzes by among others Camille Claudel and Auguste Rodin. The upstairs galleries and former changing rooms are now full of paintings and textiles and there are ceramics by Dufy and Picasso in the old shower cabins.

The place still has the feel of a glamorous Thirties lido; it's a vast, airy space perfect for looking at



art. Until the end of February, 2010, La Piscine is holding an exhibition on the Bloomsbury Group with works by Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Roger Fry. The museum is closed on Mondays. www.roubaix-lapiscine.com

6 Gothic cathedrals

France's most impressive cathedrals are all in the north of the country. The gothic monsters of Rouen, Amiens and Reims possess rose windows and decorated facades that make you gasp.

But other cathedrals in the north are perhaps more striking since they dwarf the small settlements that surround them. In Laon, the 12th-century cruciform cathedral has huge, square towers soaring up above the town and the tops of its façades are framed with life-sized stone oxen.

In nearby Soissons, the tower of the cathedral is the same height as Notre-Dame in Paris and the spireless Cathedral of St-Pierre in Beauvais was once the highest vaulted construction in Europe. Closer to God at the time but now they are heavily buttressed in 21st-century repairs.

7 Vieux Lille and Pâtisserie Meert

Lille's old quarter is a surprisingly charming centre to the transport hub of northern Europe. The centre is overlooked by a well-preserved Vauban Citadelle and has a formidable Grand Place where every mansion

façade is different and where the old exchange rooms, opera house and theatre vie to be the most extravagantly excessive.

Charles de Gaulle was born nearby in 1890 (his house is now a museum) but to get an authentic flavour of Vieux Lille, it's best to spend an hour or so choosing cakes at the Pâtisserie Meert tearooms on rue Esquermoise.

Here, at one of the delicate tables, you can eat a violet and blackcurrant waffle, slices of crystallised orange or something called Le Safari amid dainty mirrors, chandeliers and balustrades that look as if they too were made from sugar icing and millefeuilles in 1761. www.meert.fr

8 Le Marquenterre bird haven

The Marquenterre on the Picardy coastline is a 200-hectare birdwatcher's heaven. Godwits, avocets, lapwings and white storks all fly in at different times of the year and there are four miles of trails so you can wander round with binoculars ready and hope to keep calm as a flock of white spoonbills lands in the pool in front of you.

There are observatories and guides dotted around the park and about 300 bird species have been spotted among the giant

ponds, dunes and forested areas. The Marquenterre sanctuary is just that – a safe haven for migrating birds.

New laws in France mean no migrating bird can be shot after January 31, returning a part of the Somme estuary to its post-war, gun-less peace. www.baiedesomme.fr

9 Hilltop Cassel

Heading south-east towards towns with clipped names ending in -beke or -ijk or -euw is the hilltop village of Mont Cassel. The town holds a famous festival on the Sunday before Mardi Gras and then again on Easter Monday, featuring huge, leather-and-wood heads and floats with wicker-bodied giants (known as reuzes) squeezing through its narrow streets. Accompanying the parade are lots of drumming and cakes and fire.

At other times of the year you will find the red-sailed wooden windmill and a hundred small chapels and gardens to visit. It is one of the historical

contenders to be the hill up which the Grand Old Duke of York marched his 10,000 men at the failed Battle of Tourcoing in 1794.

Cassel is a little bit of Flemish

finesse in a land of croissants, cheese and shrugging Frenchmen and they say, on a clear day, you can see four different countries from the hilltop. www.ot-cassel.fr

10 Paris

It's perfectly possible to have a late breakfast in Calais and still make it in time for lunch in a Left Bank brasserie in central Paris. The capital is an easy drive from the northern ports, even if some drivers find the *périphérique* challenging.

Follow the Traversée de Paris car rally on January 10 which has 450 "exceptional" automobiles driving round the city, or else there's the annual Rétromobile fair at the Porte de Versailles in the last week of January which is celebrating the 200th anniversary of Peugeot. The company originally made peppercorns.

GETTING THERE

A crossing from Dover to Calais with P&O Ferries for a car and up to nine people for any duration costs from just £25 each way. Sailing from Hull to either Rotterdam or Zeebrugge for a car and two people including en-suite cabin costs from £119 each way.

For more information and to book call 087 12 22 02 99 or visit poferries.com/tel4

Calls cost 10p per minute plus network extras. Calls from mobiles will be higher.

