



# Touring Normandy

With three hundred seventy-five miles of beaches, cliffs, farming villages and ports, Normandy is a contrasting landscape of ancient fortresses and castles, ruined monasteries, and rolling farmland replete with memories of World War II and scarred with evidence of the Allied D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944. While there are many faces of Normandy, this fact sheet provides some basic suggestions for those travelers wishing to visit D-Day-related sites.

## Top Sites (travelling east to west):

**Pegasus Bridge.** Located on the Caen Canal, this key bridge was captured by British airborne troops in the early morning hours of D-Day, helping to secure the eastern flank of the invasion. Although the original bridge was taken down in 1994, a museum marks the site of this crucial *coup de main* operation.

**“The Memorial and Museum of Peace.”** Caen’s Battle of Normandy Museum offers guided tours of the landing beaches (British and American) along with a pass to the memorial. Caen is the site of the British breakout through German lines.

**WWII Museum at Bayeux.** While this town’s chief attraction is its 11<sup>th</sup> century tapestry honoring William the Conqueror’s victory at Hastings in 1066, the *Musée Mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie 1944* paints a vivid picture of the Allied invasion and campaign in Normandy.

**Arromanches.** See the remnants of Mulberry B, one of two huge artificial harbors the Allies towed to Normandy from England. The Museum here has a great model, showing how the structure worked.

**Omaha Beach.** One of two beaches attacked by American forces on D-Day (the other is Utah Beach). Located near the town of St. Laurent, Omaha Beach was the bloodiest of the D-Day beaches. You can still see remnants of one of the Mulberries, or artificial harbors, the Allies built to support the invasion.

**American Military Cemetery at St. Laurent.** Stretching across the bluff overlooking Omaha Beach, the rows of white marble crosses and stars commemorate the men who died fighting for the Allied victory in Normandy. A must see.

**Pointe-du-Hoc.** The elite U.S. Rangers scaled this 40-meter high cliff between Omaha and Utah beaches to neutralize a dangerous German gun battery. Check out the cliffs, the ruins of German bunkers, the bomb craters, and see if they were successful.

**St.-Lô.** In the town where the Americans finally broke through the German lines, the *Holy Cross Church* is home to a memorial to Major Thomas Howie, who had vowed to be the first American in St.-Lô. He was killed shortly before his troops took the city.

**Utah Beach.** The area around Utah Beach contains monuments, abandoned tanks, and pillboxes—reminders of D-Day. **The Musée du Débarquement**, near La Madeleine, is located in a German bunker, and offers striking accounts of the battle for Normandy.

**Ste-Mère-Eglise.** In this town which was taken by the US Airborne on D-Day, the **Musée des Troupes Aéroportées** includes photos, a glider, and parachutes commemorating the morning of June 6, 1944 when American paratroopers dropped over the town to secure the western flank of the invasion.

## Recommended Travel Books:

- Holt, Tonie and Valmai. *The Visitor’s Guide to Normandy Landing Beaches.*
- Williams, Nia. *AAA Essential Normandy: All You Need to Know.*
- Braunger, Manfred. *Insight Compact Guide: Normandy.*
- Shilleto, Carl and Mike Tolhurst. *A Traveler’s Guide to D-Day and the Battle for Normandy.*