

Brittany Motorbike Tour – 5 Days

Day 1 from Caen to Hotel

Saint-Suliac, 35430, France

Saint-Suliac is a lovely village which sits on the banks of the estuary of the La Rance river, between Dinan and Dinard in the Ille-et-Vilaine department of Brittany. Saint-Suliac is classed as one of the "most beautiful villages of France".

France This Way review: Saint-Suliac is a charming village with a historic centre, a riverside promenade and an ancient church among its attractions and a visit is recommended when you explore this part of Brttany. The lovely granite houses on the edge of the water and elsewhere in the village are absolutely charming. Many dating from the 15th to 18th century, most of the houses have painted shutters, a small but picturesque garden and often some sea-related ornaments such as ropes, nets, small boats and nautical colours. On the water small boats add to the picturesque view.

The centre of Saint-Suliac is quite small, with several lanes to explore. As well as the houses and gardens you will also notice a 19th century well and if you follow the Rue des Besnières, the road where linen sails were originally made, you reach a statue of the Virgin on a raised hillock. Throughout Saint-Suliac you will notice statues in the walls of the house. Many of these are 19th century statues of the Virgin, added to protect the villagers from diseases such as cholera, and others are sculptures from an ancient monastery a short distance from the village. There is an attractive 13th century church in the centre of Saint-Suliac which is quite sombre but pleasant inside and one of the oldest churches in Brittany - it was built to replace an 11th century church, of which only one door now remains. It is surrounded by a walled churchyard (or enclos paroissial) which was common to churches in Brittany at one time but is now quite rare. The churchyard is entered through ancient stone entrances called triumphal arches that have been here since the 13th century: they are identical and it is thought they were originally the entrances to an ossuary.

The bell tower of the church is a fortified tower that was once part of the town's defenses, and you can see several stone statues in the porch of the church. The churchyard was the site of a terrible battle on August 30 1597, at the end of the Wars of Religion. The church was providing shelter for the inhabitants of the village when it was invaded by an army of 800 soldiers at the same time as a bombardment from the sea took place - none of the 250 villagers survived. The promenade along the Rance is also pleasant, and you can see traditional boats as well as more granite houses. The cafes on the banks of the Rance are a good place to enjoy a coffee or a snack. When you have finished exploring the village take a walk or drive up to the Virgin of Grainfollet statue high above Saint-Suliac and enjoy the panoramic views over the estuary and village. The estuary is home to a great number of birds and is a popular spot for bird-watchers. There are also many hiking trails for walkers to explore.

Pleslin-Trigavou, 22490, France

Markets in and near Pleslin-Trigavou

- Dinan: market Thursday (*9km*)
- Lancieux: market Tuesday & Tuesday (*11km*)
- Dinard: market Wednesday & Tuesday & Thursday & Saturday (*11km*)
- Saint-Jacut-de-la-Mer: market Friday (*12km*)
- Saint-Lunaire: market Sunday - seasonal market only (*12km*)
- Plancoet: market Saturday (*13km*)
- Saint-Malo: market Wednesday & Tuesday & Thursday & Saturday & Friday (*13km*)
- Saint-Cast-le-Guildo: market Monday - seasonal market only (*18km*)
- Matignon: market Wednesday (*19km*)
- Cancale: market Sunday (*22km*)

Moncontour, France

Moncontour is a charming small town in the Cotes d'Armor department of northern Brittany, to the south of Lamballe and south-east of Saint-Brieuc. Along with some of the other towns in the region, Moncontour was once the centre of Brittany's renowned linen production (said to be the best linen in the world, at its peak in the 17th century).

This medieval walled town still contains a good amount of its original defensive walls, built in the 13th and 14th century. Combined with the fact it is on a promontory, Moncontour has a more dominant aspect than you would expect of such a small village. Entering Moncontour and exploring the streets within the walls, mostly around the church and central marketplace, you will discover many attractive medieval buildings and houses of the gentry from the 17th century built from the proceeds of the linen trade, and also some older colombage houses. The medieval houses around Place de Penthièvre and along Rue des Dames are among the most ancient and most picturesque in the village. Most of the remaining houses are built in the local granite and have interesting features including the signs hanging from the walls that are on several of the buildings indicating their original purpose (or more recent interpretations such as the one above the tourist office). The sombre grey of the granite is offset by the ironwork balconies and baskets of flowers that add interest and colour to the town centre. The Town Hall and the church of Saint-Mathurin also date from this period of prosperity: visit this baroque style church to see the ornate clocktower and the lovely stained glass windows.

The surrounding region is known as the 'Pays de Mercantour', a quiet region of Brittany that has lots of signed routes through the countryside for walking, cycling and horse-riding, each following a particular theme - visit the Mercantour tourist office for more information. A noteworthy destination for enthusiasts of religious architecture is the Chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Haut, south of Moncontour towards Trédaniel, where you can see medieval statues in painted wood of six saints, each with a reputation for healing the sick.

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L'EAU QUI DORT - Chambres et Tables d'hôtes - Pleslin-Trigavou

Hotel 18th – 19th July

Ploumanac'h, 22700 Perros-Guirec, France

Ploumanac'h is a village on the north coast of Brittany, in the Cotes-d'Armor department. It is part of Perros-Guirec, an important town a few kilometres to the east. I was not sure when I was in Ploumanac'h and when I was in Saint-Guirec which is the adjacent secteur, so comments below refer to both...

The beach here is called the Plage Saint-Guirec, and is not very large but is picturesque, sandy and surrounded by the lovely pink granite of the region. There are various small sandy coves along the coast but if you prefer a large sandy beach with all facilities and lifeguards you should travel to the Plage de Trestraou at Perros-Guirec, a few kilometres from Ploumanac'h. A few hundred metres south of the beach you can walk around the harbour, which has a small number of hotels and restaurants (and not enough parking spaces) which is pleasant for a promenade.

The main attraction of Ploumanac'h is the area around the lighthouse, called the Phare de Men Ruz and at the northern end of the promontory. The lighthouse and the few houses here are surrounded by great boulders of the pink granite, and while the lighthouse is not particularly interesting the views are exceptional. You can walk along the coast from here to reach further impressive rock formations such as the Cale de Ploumanac'h and the Récif de la roche branlante viewpoint. This area around the Phare de Men Ruz lighthouse is probably the most beautiful part of the Coast of Granite Rose. Your children will also enjoy clambering on the big rocks. This location is extremely popular with visitors so it can be rather crowded: try and visit in the morning if possible.

Locronan, France

Locronan is a very impressive and unspoiled Brittany village and one of our personal favourite villages in France. Officially one of the 'most beautiful villages of France', the village is 15 kilometres north-west of Quimper in the Finistere department of western Brittany. With a history that goes back more than 2000 years, Locronan was originally a sacred place for the celts known as a 'nemeton'. It then became an important religious centre during the middle ages, and an important centre for the manufacture of sail-cloth for the local ship-building industry during the 16th and 17th centuries. Each of

these epochs has left its mark on the town and region, which is of course now better known as a popular tourist destination.

The whole centre of Locronan is extremely well preserved and quite extensive, and largely built in the distinctive local granite. The solid houses with traditional slate roofs are interspersed with plenty of greenery, making for a very attractive village. ancient street in centre of Locronan Park in the main car park and enter the village by walking along the straight street that leads from here to the centre of the village (some cars had driven into the centre of Locronan when we visited but you are only saving about 100 metres of walking by doing this and cars do little to help make the village look medieval!) There are a traditional granite houses and a few restaurants and shops along this street and the village church is straight ahead of you. You quickly reach the cobbled Place de l'Eglise: from this square you can easily reach all the highlights in the village and explore the surrounding streets. The Place de l'Eglise is a large, attractive square entirely paved and surrounded on all sides by very well preserved ancient buildings, with the substantial vaulted church the most imposing among them. Almost all the houses date from the 17th and 18th centuries and are different heights and have small architectural highlights and characterful roofs that make them interesting, and there is an ancient well in the centre of the square.

Take the time to explore in and around the Church of Saint Ronan that dates from the 15th century and the almost separate building on the right side of the church that was built to hold the tomb of Saint-Ronan and has a tall thin spire-belltower. In the interior of the church there is an intricate altar, numerous stained glass windows, carved reliefs and medieval religious statues of painted wood: the 'pieta' of the Virgin and dead Christ and the statue of Saint Ronan are among the most interesting. Behind the church you can see an attractive small cemetery and a small garden area which you should take a stroll around. Church of Saint Ronan There are a few small shops and cafes around the square. From here it is easy to explore the rest of centre of the village as streets depart in all directions: to the left of the church follow the loop formed by Rue des Charrettes and Rue du Four and opposite stroll along the narrow road called Venelle Toul Prichen. Locronan tourist office do have a leaflet suggesting the best route to follow while you are exploring to ensure you don't miss the highlights, but even without it you will manage pretty well! The other two streets that lead from the main square in Locronan both have highlights that are not to be missed: - walk south along the Rue Saint Maurice which quickly leaves the village - there are lovely views across the village and surrounding countryside as you approach the top of the hill - walk a short distance north along Rue Moal to visit the delightful Chapelle Notre Dame de Bonne Nouvelle, an ancient chapel that also has a small pond area called the Fontaine Saint-Eutrope and is in a picturesque setting. This chapel is one of 12 stages along a pilgrimage route called the Grande Troménie that follows the route between villages as originally followed by Saint Ronan. A shorter procession called the Petite Troménie takes place here on the second Sunday in July each year. Rue Saint-Maurice in Locronan There is a reasonable choice of cafes, creperies and artisan boutiques throughout Locronan and some of the little art galleries scattered around the town were surprisingly impressive. The Museum of Art and History of Locronan provides an interesting look at the history of the town. If you think Locronan looks familiar perhaps you are recognising it from one of the films

that have been made here - it has featured in several films including Tess by Roman Polanski.

Quimper, France

Quimper is a popular and interesting town in south-west Brittany, and it is the capital (prefecture) of the Finistere department. The town is also in an attractive setting, in a pretty valley at the confluence of the Odet and Steir rivers. Although the history of Quimper dates back to roman times it was in medieval times that the town became an important regional centre. The town became wealthy from the 17th century onwards due to and the growth of the pottery making industry here.

Quimper has quite a large historic centre and plenty to explore - a visit is recommended when you are in this part of Finistere. Your visit will almost certainly start in the large square in front of the cathedral, Place Saint-Corentin: this is the eastern end of the old town and within easy reach of all the most important attractions. Most of the historic centre is pedestrianised making it very pleasant and safe to explore. cathedral entrance The cobbled streets and paved squares in the old town to the north of the River Odet - the large river that runs through the heart of Quimper - and around the smaller Stire River that joins the Odet in the centre of town are where you will find the most interesting buildings and sights. You will come across numerous medieval half-timbered buildings as you explore and several small bridges across the river. Among the most interesting roads in the centre to see medieval houses are Rue Kéréon (straight down from the front of the cathedral) and around the Place Terre au Duc (take the Rue de la Herse off Rue Kéréon), with others also to be found in the streets in the historic centre around the cathedral. The Cathedral of Saint-Corentin is in the gothic style and dates from the 13th - 16th centuries. It is both the oldest and the largest building of its type in Brittany. The facade and the stained glass windows are among particular highlights although you should be aware that the stained glass windows and the two spires that dominate the front of the cathedral were only added in the 19th century when substantial renovations were carried out. To the right of the Cathedral there is another important historic monument: the Palais des Eveques was built in the middle of the 17th century and for several hundred years was home to the local bishops.

Advertisement On Rue des Douves, the north-east edge of the old town, you can also see parts of the original defensive walls for this region which was known as the Ville Episcopale. The old town further to the west, beyond the Steir River, is known as the Ville des Ducs de Bretagne. There are more paved streets to explore, around the attractive Place Terre au Duc, and the Ursulines Convent is the main historic monument in this part of Quimper. There are lots of pleasant small restaurants and creperies in the old town, which is largely closed to cars, where you can take a welcome pause from exploring. old street in heart of Quimper One of the best places to find these restaurants, epecially if you are looking for crepes which are remarkably popular in Brittany and come in every type and flavour imaginable, are in and around the Place au Beurre: follow Rue Elie Freron north from Place Saint-Corentin then left after 100 metres on Rue du Sallé. Place au Beurre is also very pretty so take a look even if you are not searching for a creperie! If you are looking for art and culture you will enjoy visiting the Quimper Museum of Fine Arts (Musee des Beaux Arts) on the north side of Place Saint-

Corentin which has some interesting paintings by local artists (including those from the so-called Pont-Aven school of painting); and the Museum of Breton History (next to the cathedral in the Palais des Evêques) also has some interesting exhibits about the history of the town and region. There is also a covered market in the centre of Quimper which is lively and popular, and open every day except Sunday.

After exploring the historic centre you can also take a stroll along the River Odet. Although the buildings here are less ancient it is a pleasant walk and you can also see the imposing renaissance style Hotel de Préfecture on the south side of the river, built around 1904-1910. This is a convincing Renaissance style building: although it is largely based around a concrete structure you never would have guessed if I hadn't told you! We also liked the Theatre Max-Jacob on Boulevard Dupleix which is another interesting example of architecture in Quimper from the beginning of the 20th century. Hotel de Prefecture in Quimper Ancient Quimper: Locmaria To discover more about the local pottery industry you can follow the Odet downstream a little way to the Locmaria part of Quimper (still on the southern side of the river). Locmaria was historically the region of the town where pottery was produced and is the oldest part of the town. Highlights here include the church in Locmaria, built in roman style in the 12th century and the oldest church in the Quimper region, and the 17th century priory. The cloisters and the priory garden are both very pretty and well maintained, then you can visit the Museum of Faïence to see impressive examples of the local pottery. Note: on the southern side of the River Odet you will also find a good selection of cafes and restaurants on and around Rue Sainte-Catherine which we thought offered good value for money and were less visited by tourists than those in Quimper old town, and still with 200 metres of the cathedral.

Pont-Avon, France

The historical port town of Port-Aven is between Quimper and Quimperlé in south-east Finistere (Brittany region). For several hundred years Pont-Aven was a quiet port town with an industry based around its watermills and port, then towards the end of the 19th century it also gained a reputation as an art town. A significant number of artists are still attracted here, with the town referred to by the local tourist authorities as a 'city of artists'.

France This Way review: Pont-Aven is a charming town famous for its watermills, artists and biscuits and is well worth a visit. The town is best known for the historic watermills along the banks of the quiet river Aven, and it is these that provide the scenic backdrop for the town - although only four now remain, and it is said that were 14 or 15 here when Pont-Aven was at its most prosperous. river in Port-Aven Ask for the guide 'Promenade des Moulins' in the Pont-Aven tourist office for a walk that discovers both the mills that still exist and those that are now in ruins or no longer in existence. Apart from the mills you will want to stroll around the quiet port overlooked by Breton houses, and to explore Pont-Aven town centre where there are a good number of traditional granite and whitewashed houses. As you stroll along the river notice the sailing boat 'le Minahouët, which was built in Royan in 1912. It was found abandoned and has been renovated and is now permanently docked on the river at Pont Aven. The whole of the centre of Pont-

Aven is very pleasant and one of our favourite towns in the region. Be sure to explore the streets both sides of the main bridge, and to amble down some of the smaller side streets such as Rue des Meunières (to the west of the port) to see the most traditional parts of the village. There are numerous pizzerias et creperies as well as more traditional restaurants in Pont-Aven, along with banks, shops and all other commerces necessary if you are staying nearby. We recommend you visit the Pont-Aven tourist office before exploring because there are several megaliths, chapels and natural highlights nearby that you are likely to not see if you just wander around.

Pont-Aven is famous for its biscuits called galettes which have been made here since 1890. There are three main factories producing the delicious butter biscuits and these are all visitable, ask at the tourist office for details. The 'biscuiterie de Pont-Aven' factory is located in the town centre and the Traou Mad and Penven factories are located nearby in the Kergazuel industrial zone.

An artistic community had already been established in Pont-Aven around 20 years before, but its fame became assured in 1886 when Paul Gauguin first discovered the town and its picturesque setting, and came here to establish a studio. Other artists followed including most notably Paul Sérusier and Emile Bernard. An interesting way to explore the town is to use the guide from the Tourist Office that follows in the footsteps of these famous artists. As you follow the walk there are information boards at the key places which have featured in their paintings along with a copy of the painting. The Musée d'Orsay in Paris has some of their best work on display. The 'Bois d'Amour', the 'wood of love', is part of the walk which runs through the woods alongside the river, and is reputed to be where Gauguin and Paul Serusier began the trend towards abstract art. Look for the information board of 'Le Talisman' where Serusier followed Gauguin's advice to use vibrant colours and created this painting. Enthusiasts of Gauguin will also want to visit the small Chapel of Tremalo just outside Pont-Aven to see the wooden cross that inspired Gauguin to paint The Yellow Christ, one of his most famous paintings, and is surprisingly similar to the painting. gauguin painting of yellow christ You can see some high quality examples of the 'Pont-Aven art' in the Museum of Fine Arts in the town, which has quite a remarkable collection given the size of the town and is a highlight of a visit.

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Maison Castel Braz - 12 Rue du Bois d'Amour, 29930 Pont-Aven, France
19th – 20th July

Rochefort-en-Terre, 56220, France

Rochefort-en-Terre is a village on a raised promontory in the quiet countryside of the Morbihan department (south-west Brittany) between Vannes (to the west) and Redon (to the east). It is officially classified as one of the 'beautiful villages of France'.

Park near the bottom of the village and then walk up through the village to appreciate the charming houses on the edge of town. When you get to the main street - the Rue du Porche you will be stunned by the beautiful architecture. The town is based around an

attractive central square and main street which have some lovely ancient houses from the 17th century, a few in colombage but mostly built in the sturdy granite typical of the region. One of the most impressive is the Tour du Lion hotel, an imposing granite house with a tower in the Rue du Porche. The attractive mix of colombage and granite, medieval and Renaissance means that most of the pleasure of a visit comes from simply strolling around the centre of Rochefort-en-Terre admiring the buildings and stopping for a coffee in one of the cafes but there are also two or three individual monuments that you should also pay attention to. Advertisement One notable monument in the town is the medieval castle, the Château de Rochefort-en-Terre. This beautiful building dates back to the 12th century but was badly damaged in the 1800s and only the facade is original. The castle was bought by an American painter Alfred Klotz in 1907 and he renovated it. His son inherited the castle and also painted here and invited his artist friends to come here to paint. When he died his wife gave the chateau to the French government. The castle is open to the public from May to September and contains some paintings by Klotz. The gardens and park around the castle are open all year and free to enter. As well as getting to admire the beautiful castle you can enjoy the views over the surrounding countryside from its elevated position. In the grounds of the castle you can visit the Naia museum named after the witch who once lived in the town. Inside is a small museum of art and sculpture. lovely chateau in Rochefort-en-Terre The Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Tronchaye is also interesting and found one street lower down than the main street. Built originally in the 12th century using the local dark granite but largely rebuilt in the flamboyant gothic style in the 16th century the outside of the church has an unusual design - look along the sides of the church in particular. The interior also reflects the different periods in which the church was built and rebuilt and also includes a much more recent addition with very attractive 20th century stained-glass windows. As interesting as the church itself is the carved stone cross in the square in front of the church. This dates from the 16th century and the sculptures represent various Biblical stories. The traditional village lavoir (ancient public linen washing area) is another historic monument in the centre of the village. After exploring the narrow streets that lead off from the village centre, you can return to one of the cafes in the main square which a very pleasant place to relax for a while after your explorations. Advertisement Rochefort-en-Terre is a '4* Ville Fleurie' (you might guess this from the flowers that are present pretty much everywhere you go in the town during summer, and soften the hardness of the granite buildings), which of course adds to the villages's charm. The tradition of decking the town out with geraniums every summer was started by Klotz who encouraged the locals to decorate their houses. The town has also paid attention to its lighting of the ancient buildings so the town merits a second look after night has fallen. If you are lucky enough to visit the village near Christmas time you will find it is like stepping into a Christmas card!

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La Tour du Lion - 10 Rue du Porche, 56220 Rochefort-en-Terre, France

20th -21st July

Saint-Germain-le-Guillaume, 53240, France

Saint-Germain-le-Guillaume is situated in the Mayenne department and Pays de la Loire region.

Saint-Germain-le-Guillaume is a small village in the northwest of France. The village is located in the Mayenne department in the Pays de la Loire region. The village of Saint-Germain-le-Guillaume belongs to the borough of Laval and the canton of Chailland. The postal code of the village of Saint-Germain-le-Guillaume is 53240 and its Insee code is 53225. The inhabitants of Saint-Germain-le-Guillaume are called the Germans.

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La Sicorie - Rue la Sicorie, 53240 Saint-Germain-le-Guillaume, France

21st – 22nd July

