

Normandy Highlights Mini-Guide

A Walk Through History in One of France's Most Storied Regions

Normandy is where the past is alive in the landscapes, stories...and quiet moments that take you by surprise.

Yes, there are the famous D-Day beaches. But there's also a thousand-year-old tapestry, hilltop churchyards still bearing battle scars, and sleepy villages that once held the line during WWII.

If you're drawn to places that blend history with emotion, and meaning with beauty, this guide is for you. Whether you want to follow in the footsteps of WWII heroes or trace medieval roots, you'll find what you're looking for here... and probably something you didn't expect.

Which Normandy Traveler Are You?

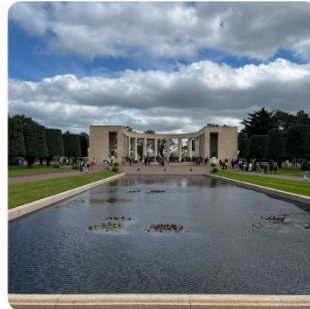
The WWII Pilgrim

You're here for the pivotal moments: Omaha and Utah Beaches, Sainte-Mère-Église, Pointe du Hoc, and the Normandy American Cemetery. You want time to reflect and context to go deeper.



The Heritage Hunter

You're not stopping at the 20th century. You want to see the Bayeux Tapestry, climb the ramparts in Caen, and explore abbeys, churches, and castles that shaped European history.



The Cultural Context Seeker

You're interested in the "why" behind the headlines. You seek out museums, resistance stories, and contrasting memorials, including German cemeteries, for a fuller understanding of the past.

The Reflective Traveler

You like history served quietly: a candlelit church, a rural memorial with no crowds, or a cliffside walk above a former battleground. You travel to remember, not to rush.

Not sure where you fit? No problem...most of us are a blend. This guide is built to help you shape your ideal experience, no matter your pace.

What to See, When to Go, and What to Know

Sample Itinerary Ideas-

3 Days:

A focused WWII trip based out of Bayeux. Visit Omaha and Utah Beaches, Pointe du Hoc, Sainte-Mère-Église, and the American Cemetery.

5 Days:

Blend key WWII sites with medieval Bayeux and Caen. Add in a tasting stop (Calvados or cider) and explore a lesser-known village or two.

6+ Days:

Loop through the region: start with WWII beaches, then explore the Pays d'Auge countryside, Mont-Saint-Michel, and Gothic Rouen for a complete picture of Normandy's historical layers.

Best Time to Visit

- May or September: Milder weather, lighter crowds
- November: Quiet and contemplative, especially around All Saints' Day
- June (maybe?): The good- You get D-Day anniversary events and commemorations; The bad- Expect significant crowds and limited availability (book early!!)

Pro Tips for History Travelers

- Hire a local guide for key WWII sites. Many offer personal insights and avoid the touristy versions
- Some museums are closed or operate on limited hours in winter
- Mont-Saint-Michel is stunning, but better experienced at night or at dawn in order to avoid the tour buses- be prepared for large crowds and LOTS of steps
- Don't underestimate how emotional some sites can be...build in time to pause or decompress

What to Skip or Rethink

- Trying to cover both WWII sites and Mont-Saint-Michel in one day: you'll miss too much
- Assuming every museum will offer English signage or audio. Check ahead or bring a translator app
- Overlooking smaller cemeteries or German memorials: these can be incredibly moving

Bonus Spotlight – Calvados: Normandy in a Glass

History doesn't end at the battlefield... sometimes it's distilled.

Calvados, the region's famed apple brandy, has deep roots in Normandy's identity. Produced here for centuries, it remained a local staple through war and reconstruction. It's a testament of rural Normandy resilience.

After days visiting cemeteries and cliffside bunkers, visiting a Calvados distillery is a thoughtful way to unwind and still stay connected to the region's story. Some estates even carry wartime anecdotes passed down through generations.

Suggested Calvados Stops for the History-Inclined:

- Château du Breuil (Pays d'Auge): Tour a 16th-century estate that's survived wars, revolutions, and weathered it all with elegance. [Click here](#)
- Calvados Père Magloire (Pont-l'Évêque): An interactive museum and tasting experience with strong storytelling. [Click here](#)
- Small family-run farms: These often offer raw, rustic insights into how agriculture shaped, and sustained, Normandy through war and beyond.

Tip: Pair Calvados with Camembert after a full day of exploring. Apple brandy and cheese are good for the soul...You've earned it.

What to Pack + Plan Next


Your Normandy Packing List

- Comfortable walking shoes (expect sand, stairs, gravel paths, grass, and cobblestones)
- Layers, scarf, and a lightweight rain jacket
- Notebook or journaling app for reflections
- Tissues (yes, really...some sites will hit you harder than expected)
- Daypack for museum brochures, snacks, and Calvados bottles
- Portable phone charger- these are all-day events, plan accordingly
- Optional: WWII reading list or film recs, printed maps, translation app

Ready to Go Deeper?

Whether you're traveling in honor of a loved one, following in the footsteps of history, or finally visiting a place you've read about for years...Normandy is powerful. And it deserves more than a rushed bus tour or checklist approach.

I work with travelers who want to experience Normandy with intention. I'll help you shape a custom itinerary that leaves space for emotion, education, and yes... enjoyment.

 Want personal help planning your Normandy trip? Schedule your planning session now

Next Steps: Working with Extended Escapes

Planning Your Normandy Tour with Extended Escapes

Let's be honest: You're not flying across the Atlantic just to check off another cathedral. Normandy is for travelers who like a side of depth with their croissants...history, charm, and maybe a splash of Calvados while you're at it.

Whether you're tracing D-Day footsteps, wandering half-timbered towns, or just here for the cheese (zero judgment), I help you plan a trip that actually feels like *you*. Less tourist trap, more personal journey.





Hi, I'm Stephanie Austin — founder of Extended Escapes and your go-to for travel that blends culture, storytelling, and a good glass of something local.

What You Can Expect From Me:

- Custom-crafted itineraries that leave room for real enjoyment
- A partner who takes care of the hard stuff so you can actually *relax*

If this guide sparked ideas for your next escape, let's talk. My consults are complimentary... and they're the first step to a well-planned, well-poured adventure.



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