



# A TOUCH OF NORTHERN FRANCE

Normandy boasts of exquisite sandy beaches, great sea food and glamorous hotels, making it an ideal summer destination.  
- By Aruna Rathod

A little away from Paris lies the almost undiscovered region of Normandy with its dramatic coastline. Easy to access, it's a drive down the highway or a train ride that takes about two hours. Normandy has traces of World War II, where the beaches were landing areas, lush farmlands and typical half-timber facades of country homes that mark this region.

On my visit to Normandy, I was welcomed by cold weather of zero degrees, which later turned to snow in the morning. It was the first time I saw a layer of snow on sand! The beach at Trouville, opposite Cures Marines Trouville Hôtel Thalasso & Spa-MGallery by Sofitel, seemed magical as I walked out for a stroll.

## BE CHARMED AT THE WEEKEND MARKET

Sunday is time for the weekend market set up alongside the Touques (river), and it was lively and full of people despite the weather being freezing cold. Delicious aromas of fish and meat wafted in the air and I saw the amazing range of seafood, local cheese and great options like Paella and fried potatoes, sausages and roast

chicken on offer in the stalls. Once I had my fill and was warm, I strolled to some stalls that had woollen stoles, jackets, stylish winter wear, leather goods and more. For a cup of coffee, I walked to the opposite side from the Belgian bridge, on the walkway dotted with quaint cafes, cheese makers, florists and boutiques.

## TWIN DESTINATIONS TO SAVOUR

Deauville, a few minutes away, and Trouville are picture perfect towns that can be visited in any season, but summer is most popular for people from Paris and around the world. The glamorous resort



town of Deauville is home to the rich and famous, and it hosts an American film festival every year in September. Its twin city, Trouville, separated from Deauville by the Touques (river), is a calm and peaceful fishing village.

Over the three nights that I spent in the twin towns, I saw that sandy beaches, fishing boats, fish markets, chic boutiques, fantastic restaurants and casinos allow for enough action during the day and night.

The fish market of Trouville is a historic one and has an amazing display of fish, crabs, lobsters and shell fish, and it's a delight to see the colourful catch neatly displayed. If you like, you could eat, relax in one of the enclosed tents (to keep one warm in winters) and enjoy the flavours of fresh sea food.

Besides the Fish Market, other attractions are the Roches Noires Hotel, the Montebello Museum, the Town Hall, the Thalassotherapy Spa at the Cures Hotel, the Casino dating from 1912, the boardwalk lined with exceptional seaside villas, the picturesque little fishermen's houses, the pedestrian Rue des Bains, and the quay lined with fishing boats.

## PICTURE PERFECT

Writers like Gustave Flaubert and Alexandre Dumas frequented Trouville, and so did Claude Monet, the famous painter. Trouville owes its reputation to the charm of the fishing port, the beautiful long beach of fine sand, and the rich architectural heritage dating from the 19th century.

Sea bathing was a fashionable novelty, which attracted crowds of tourists and artists every year, and caused Trouville's beach to become known as "the Queen of Beaches". From the beachfront, one can see the splendid mix of architectural styles on the hills.

Trouville's artistic history began in 1825 when a young Parisian artist, Charles Mozin, fell in love with a picturesque little fishing port, admiring the unique light of the estuary and the variety of unspoilt natural scenery. Marcel Proust was also a regular visitor to Trouville.

The Villa Montebello became Trouville's museum in 1972. Built in 1866 for the Marquise de Montebello, the villa is typical of Second Empire seaside architecture.

## SEA FOOD GALORE

Oysters are famous here and the port originally had five oyster beds. In 1825, Trouville was a modest fishing port of ancient foundation on the spot, where a stream from the Callenville valley flows into the River Touques. Hennequeville was a hamlet facing the sea on a site called "La Chapelle". In 1847, Trouville annexed Hennequeville and Trouville-sur-Mer was born. To this day, Trouville has over two kilometres of short, winding passages and blind alleys. This maze of streets contains some typical narrow



three and four storey fishermen's houses (with 1 room on each floor). Some families have kept fishing boats in the port for over four generations, and continue to earn their living from fishing.

Trouville-sur-Mer is famous for scallops and shrimps, as well as various seawater fish (sea bass, mackerel, sole, plaice and turbot) and Trouville's Fish Market was added to the list of historic monuments, which means that the whole quayside is now protected as a national heritage site. Trouville has a reputation for gastronomy, with about 70 good restaurants on the quay, in town and along the beach. These include some famous brasseries, like Le Central and Les Vapeurs, as well as many tapas bars, wine bars,





tea and coffee shops, boutiques full of regional specialities, and an elegant restaurant, "Le 1912", with a star in the Michelin Guide.

### CASINO CALLING

Designed by the Parisian architect Alexandre Durville, and opened in 1912, the Casino Barrière has slot machines, board games, a poker room, as well as restaurants, bars and rooms for concerts and shows. Gambling was authorized in Trouville from 1808 so as to provide another leisure activity for rich Parisian families who came to Trouville for the benefits of sea bathing.

### GET PAMPERED AT TROUVILLE

Sea air, yoga on the beach, boat trips, sports in the open air, walking tours and nature walks, sailing, kayaks, canoes and stand-up paddle, two swimming pools, beauty treatments and massages.

The Thalassa Sea & Spa at Les Cures Marines has some amazing treatments to revive you. In 2015, Trouville revived the tradition of sea cures, which made the resort famous in the 19th century. The opening of the Cures Marines Hôtel and Thalass Spa gave Trouville not only a 5 star MGallery hotel, but also, and above all, a thalassotherapy institute to make the most of the benefits of sea water.

The benefits of sea water are combined with innovative approaches to well-being and the latest cosmetic procedures: respirology, oxygenation, detoxification, rejuvenation, massages, fitness and relaxation exercises, cryotherapy, nutritional assessments, beauty treatments, etc.

So, from beaches to sea food, gastronomy to a Californian massage, I was refreshed by the French holiday and energised to explore the rest of Normandy.

### LUXURY RE-DEFINED AT DEAUVILLE, NORMANDY

A new concept was unveiled at Deauville called Haute Villégiature – encompassing designing and delivering travel experiences with the highest quality standards.

The question of "How to create the Haute Couture of Travel" was raised in 2017 as a result of regular discussions with the Luxury Travel Lab – a think tank created by Quentin Desurmont and a gathering of international experts of the luxury goods industry. And this year, in Deauville, a new concept called Haute Villégiature was unveiled!

Innovative and interesting categories at the Traveller Made awards functions threw up two Indian winners! Some of the categories 'designed' by Traveller Made are Most Thorough Designer, Most Creative Designer, Most Expert Designer, Best Champion, Most Expert Designer, Supplier Knowledge Travel Designers (Indian winner - Sanjay Arya – CEO – KFT Corporation), Friendliest Owner/GM DMC 2018 (Winner Jamshyd Sethna – Managing Director – Banyan Tours, and what was unveiled was that the most desired preferred destination is New Zealand.

### DEFINING HAUTE VILLÉGIATURE

Haute-Villégiature is about designing and delivering travel experiences with the highest quality standards, by highly knowledgeable people who are experts in their business and led by passion.

Each Maison has its own style and personality, but they are all creative and innovative to surprise and exceed expectations of their clients, who are unique and have specific expectations. The overall objective of Haute Villégiature is thus to be a wow factor in the travel industry.

Doctor Anne-Flore Maman Larraufie, Academic Director at the ESSEC Business School in Paris, Researcher and Consultant to famous luxury brands, was appointed to conduct this scientific Delphi research amongst a panel of 18 luxury travel experts.

In addition to this research, she also carried out a WOW effect study amongst 150 professionals of the luxury travel industry, brought together by Traveller Made on two occasions.



## QUENTIN DESURMONT

CEO of Traveller Made



### Q: What is Traveller Made? What made you create it?

Traveller Made is an association of luxury travel designers based all over the globe. Today, we are the world's leading community of luxury travel designers. We currently have 318 member agencies in 60 countries: 40% of them have their headquarters in Europe and 60% in North America, as well as in Russia, India and Asia Pacific.

I created a luxury travel agency in France ten years ago, in 2008, and after a few years, I thought it would be good idea to find a way to properly differentiate between the various travel designers because Google can't find these kind of designers very easily. Also, given the overload of information we are subjected to nowadays, there are a lot of scams around and nobody knows what is real or not; there are no regulations. So, my idea was to select the very best travel designers using the industry's well-established system of recommendations, monitoring and regulations. For me, it was a good way of showing very high-profile people that they could select, try out and employ the world's best travel designers.

### Q: What are the main trends in luxury travel and how do they suggest luxury travel agencies will evolve over the next few years?

We are also investigating luxury travel trends and we've discovered that some trends have meant that very high-profile people want to experience strong emotions. They work hard running companies and they like doing activities that you can't do every day. So, when they go on a trip, they want to include their family and they want it to be incredibly exciting. Some of them are looking for brand new experiences; the kind of people who want to be pioneers and have the most outstanding experiences in places so remote that very few people ever go there.

Privatisation is also one of the most important trends. More and more clients want to have villas or chalets all to themselves. Sometimes they belong to a hotel and sometimes they are privately-owned, but the clients want privacy and will even reserve private islands. They also want to be able to meet people from other cultures and see how they live: people you cannot easily reach, such as Aboriginal Australians, because this experience gives you knowledge and another view of the world.

### Q: What does a client most value when they are travelling?

Well, first of all, what they most value when they travel is the service they receive from the service-providers and from us. They value being with their family and friends in a setting that is comfortable, yet stimulating. Sometimes, they have the opportunity to tackle a challenge or indulge in a very special experience, which is why they want to be sure you are with them at all times. Nowadays, more and more agencies rent out portable WiFi systems because clients want to stay connected in case there's a problem, so the agencies must always be available.