

Advertising material exemplar

With Brittany Ferries the time you spend on board is as much a part of a French holiday as buying a freshly-baked baguette. Your trip to France begins the moment you step aboard the ship and, while the cars may be travelling by ferry, the passengers are most surely on a cruise, relaxing in the comfortable lounges, the spacious bar, the stylish restaurant, with its superb French cuisine, enjoying the distractions on offer of live entertainment, video, cinemas, duty-free shops, boutiques, and above all, soaking up that unmistakable Gallic ambience.

'Spoilt for choice' is an expression which springs to mind as you consider where to go when you leave the quayside at Caen. Here you are on the threshold of Normandy's most beautiful scenery, like the valley of the Auge, Swiss Normandy, Deauville and Honfleur, with the choice of Brittany Ferries' selection of French gites, British holiday homes, chambres d'hotels or selected hotels in which to stay. And with the special six-day-return fare for a car and driver from only £62, a week spent basking in the pleasures of rural Normandy becomes something of a bargain.

Surprisingly it's only just over 250 miles from England, using the Brittany Ferries route from Portsmouth to Caen, to the picturesque medieval harbour of La Rochelle and places like the beautiful Ile de Re', the peaceful meandering Charente and the fascinating Marais Poitevinin, a green maze of tree-lined canals and rivers. If you've time, do stop for a while en-route to the Touraine, where magnificent chateaux like Chambord, Chinon, Chenonceaux and Blois wait to be explored.

It's an easy drive from Caen to Aquitaine, with the fabled vineyards of the Medoc, the great forest of the Landes and the glorious Atlantic beaches of Arcachon and a short drive to the east leads you into the beautiful countryside of the Dordogne and to some of France's prettiest villages.

You can discover the French land's end of Finistere, which is just an hour or so's motoring from the port of Roscoff using the Brittany Ferries route from Plymouth. Here too is Morbihan, steeped in folklore, where you will discover places such as the intriguing reed-fringed marshes of the Grande Briere and villages like Ile de Fedrun and the grey-stone village of Rochefort-en-Terre.

Where to stay? Choice may be a problem here too; Brittany Ferries can offer 1000 self-catering British holiday homes throughout France from where you can buy mouthwatering produce in local markets and discover the delights of the local charcuterie and patisserie to take back and enjoy at your leisure. Or there are more than a thousand French gites to choose from, ranging from watermills to Breton cottages, poolside villas and lakeside retreats.

Alternatively, if touring is more to your taste, then the freedom of selected hotels and chambres d'hotels is the answer, either pre-booked or with vouchers for complete freedom of choice.

Throughout France and Spain, Brittany Ferries now offer more than 3000 carefully vetted properties and, with inclusive prices from as little as £252 for a week's self-catering for a family, the sheer pleasure of travelling the quiet scenic roads of France and Spain has never been more affordable.