

7
DAYS

An unforgettable family break
On the coast of Northern France



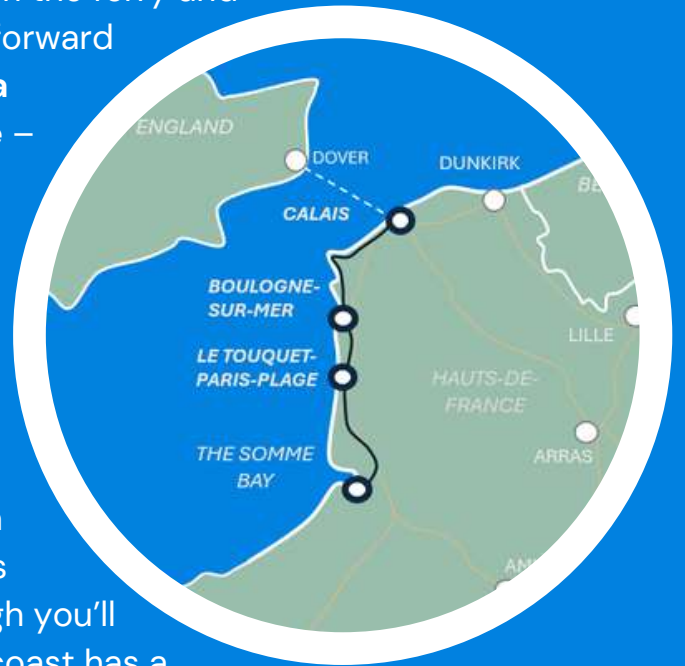
Hauts-de-France
Tourisme

#BREATHENORTHERNFRANCE

Welcome!

The Opal Coast and Somme Bay couldn't make for an easier, more hassle-free destination for a family holiday: one offering both excitement and lots of scope for unwinding together – the perfect recipe for bonding time with your crew. Wonderfully **close to the UK**, this stretch of coast running south from the ferry and shuttle port of Calais is quick and straightforward to get to while giving you and your family a **complete change of scenery and culture** – and of course lots of opportunity to introduce kids to the delicious French cuisine that is such a big attraction here, especially seafood.

Pick and choose your itinerary to suit your needs – this gorgeous sliver of coast is well worth an entire week of exploration or more, but it's perfect for shorter breaks too, given its proximity to the UK – although you'll want to keep coming back for more! This coast has a huge array of activities ideal for keeping kids entertained and busy, but it doesn't have to be hectic – there are lots of slow activities such as walking and cycling to be enjoyed, plus of course the chance to just fully relax, whether that be on the idyllic local beaches or around the table in a welcoming bistro.



Welcome to Calais


After a quick and easy morning Channel crossing by ferry or shuttle, ease gently into holiday mode with a relaxed afternoon on Calais' newly renovated seafront. Redesigned in recent years, this wide, open promenade is a wonderful place for families to stretch their legs after the journey, with sweeping views over Calais' long sandy beach.

Here, you'll come face to face with the spectacular giant mechanical creatures of Calais – and even simply watching them come to life is a show in itself.

The **Dragon of Calais** is a truly impressive, fire-breathing mechanical creature. You can admire it up close as it prowls the promenade, flaps its wings and sprays water. If you wish to take it a step further, you can ride on its back for a 45-minute journey along the seafront.

In 2025, the Dragon has been joined by a **giant Monitor Lizard**, also created by the world-famous street-theatre company La Machine. Known as Le Varan, this 3-metre-high creature leads gentle walking tours through Calais' old fishermen's quarter.

After all the excitement, you'll find the new "Flamme" restaurant nearby, inspired by these extraordinary creatures. It's an easy, family-friendly place to sit down, relax and refuel after all the excitement.

 www.compagniedudragon.com





Exploring Calais on a rainy day

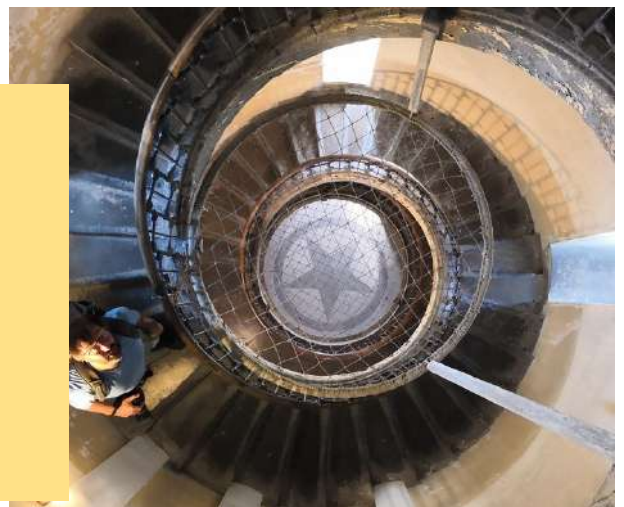
The Belfry, the Burghers of Calais and the Fine Arts museum

Calais was English for two centuries – a fact that will intrigue children as you journey through the city’s history. First up is the soaring UNESCO-listed belfry – take the steps or lift to be rewarded by views of Notre-Dame church, the medieval Guet Tower, the historic Grand Théâtre and more.



Calais lighthouse

Head up the 271 winding stairs to this 58-meter summit and gaze over the rooftops to the beaches, port and marina – and, if you’re lucky, the cliffs of the English coast



Le Musée de la Dentelle et de la Mode - Lace and Fashion Museum

Educational and fun, this state-of-the-art venue has breathed new life into an old lace factory on Calais’ docks. Kids love taking in the dazzling catwalk collections against a soundtrack of clanking old machines, as well as the building’s contemporary metal façade with its lace-like patterns.



www.cite-dentelle.fr/en



Les 2 caps – Sightseeing on Northern France’s famous clifftop nature trail

The stretch of coast between Calais and Boulogne is famous for its spectacular cliffs, **Cap Blanc-Nez and Cap Gris-Nez** – together known as Les Deux-Caps. It’s a beautiful natural area just a **15-minute drive from Calais**, ideal for a breath of fresh air and for walking or cycling together.

Some highlights of your walk

At the **obelisk of Cap Blanc-Nez**, you’ll be rewarded with a **breathtaking view** of the sea stretching out to the horizon; on clear days, you can even see the English cliffs. Another highlight is the small path leading down to **the beach of Escalles**—perfect for a blissful stroll past local sheep grazing on the steep slopes during the milder seasons.

If little limbs allow, make a day of it trekking across the 7.5 miles of **Wissant beach**, classed among France’s most beautiful beaches by Vogue magazine. It comes with dunes to hurtle down, seawater pools to splash in and migratory birds to identify.

If you prefer cycling, you can hire bikes (or ebikes) to explore the coast at La Maison des 2 caps, close to Audinghen and Cap Gris Nez.



Mini-road trip on to Boulogne-sur-Mer

Continue chilling out on a mini-road trip from Wissant to Boulogne, making a few stops along the very pretty D940 road to take in seaside villages and other local highlights.

Audresselles

First stop is the **tranquil fishing village of Audresselles**, where you can hop from one rock-pool to the next as fishermen haul their traditional wooden 'flobart' boats up the pretty, mainly pebbly beach.

Ambleteuse

A little further along the coast, **Ambleteuse** has a **landmark 17th-century fort on the shoreline** that looks like it's been lifted out of the pages of a storybook. There's a family-friendly three-mile circular trail weaving its way through the **wild Slack Dunes**, the largest dune area in Pas-de-Calais, teeming with biodiversity.

If the weather isn't being kind, drive inland to Les Frères Bernard cheese factory, 9 miles from Boulogne, where there are morning sessions demonstrating how the cheese is made, and the chance to taste it too.





Wimereux

By contrast, **Wimereux** is a people-watcher's paradise, with beach huts along its family-friendly stretch of sand (complete with a natural swimming pool) and a **bustling seafront promenade lined with colourful Anglo-Norman style villas** that are the stuff of postcards, plus several places to stop for some traditional gaufres (waffles), crêpes or an ice cream (chez Nicole).



Totemus: a free digital treasure hunt for kids

A fun and gentle walk through Belle Époque architecture, along the seafront and wide open spaces — a different way to discover the city as a family. Available in English. Scan this QR code below



totemus.com/wimereux





From street art to sea-to-fork dining in Boulogne-sur-Mer

An ancient Roman trading port, Boulogne-sur-Mer has an **enchanting fortified Old Town with cobbled streets lined by café terraces and boutiques**. It's great fun to trace its ramparts on a mile-long, elevated, circular walk, passing sturdy towers and gateways as you take in far-reaching sea views.

The basilica and the museum

The city's main landmark is **its basilica with its remarkable crypt**, one of France's largest. This captivating maze of step-back-in-time chambers, relics and curious frescoes is wonderfully intriguing for kids.

Just a few steps away, the doors of **the Boulogne-sur-Mer Museum** open onto a wide range of collections. From ancient Egypt to New Caledonia and from pre-Columbian Peru to the Channel Coasts... A journey from one culture to another. In the 'Petit Salon', discover an exhibition made especially for children.





Some highlights of your walk

Then you can bring things back into the present day with a 4-mile self-guided tour of Boulogne's 109 street-art pieces dotted through the city.

Boulogne is also **France's biggest fishing port** – all glistening hauls, steaming crates of ice and bellowing traders, especially in Quai Gambetta's daily fish market. And don't miss the regular market on Place Dalton (Wednesdays and Saturdays mornings), shaded by the church, with top-quality local produce for the best French-style family picnic.



Sand yatching

With thrill-seeking kids, book a sand-yatching session in Boulogne-sur-Mer (or in many other spots along the coast). Here, under the watchful eye of an instructor, you'll learn to rig the yacht and master the paddle, then get comfy in the low-ride seat and satisfy your need for speed on the three-wheeled vehicle as it hares across the vast sands.

Explore the Oceans at Nausicaá, Centre National de la Mer

Now, imagine if you could gift your little ones a key to a magical underwater kingdom where they could explore all the world's ecosystems – from coasts and lagoons to high seas and beyond. It's the daydream that becomes reality on a family day out at Nausicaá, where the kids not only get to see with their own eyes the creatures they've only ever seen on screens and in books before, but to activate their superpowers to protect our fragile Oceans; Nausicaá is a UNESCO Centre of Excellence for Marine Environmental Education.

WWW.NAUSICAA.FR/EN



Nausicaá takes you on an exciting journey into high-impact and immersive spaces... First up it's an awe-inspiring dive into **JOURNEY ON THE HIGH SEAS** replicating the rich biodiversity of Malpelo Island off the coast of Colombia.

In **MANKIND AND SHORES** expect a whole host of wow moments on this world tour of captivating coastlines from watching seastars and sealions to observing submerged superhero keepers.

Then, in **IN THE EYE OF THE CLIMATE** it's time to witness melting ice, rising seas, hurricanes and fires and find out which creatures need our help the most. Little wonder Nausicaá has had kids leave at the end of their visit inspired to study marine conservation! This perfect balance of **entertainment, hands-on education and science** could be the best four hours you invest in the future of the Blue Planet. And, right by the beach, you can hop in and out all day as you wish!

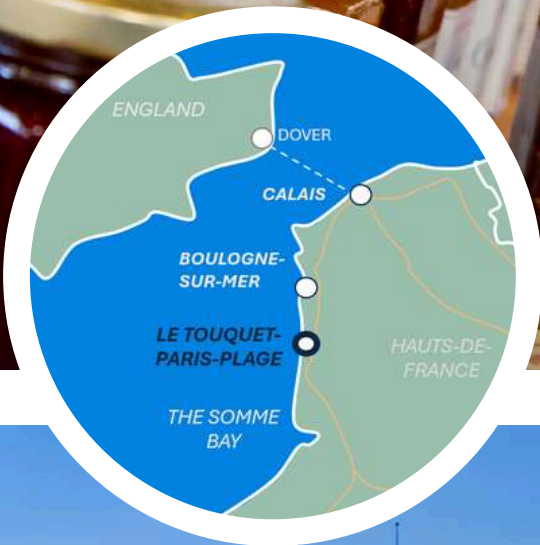
Don't miss our new exhibition: dive into an immersive tropical escape through mangroves, lagoons and coral reefs, and discover the beauty and fragility of these extraordinary ecosystems.

Discover the Opal Coast aboard the "Vent d'Opale"

Embark on a coastal exploration with expert guides from Nausicaá, who will introduce you to the local maritime heritage. This inspiring boat tour raises awareness of environmental issues while highlighting the strong bond between the sea and the people who live by it.




A Tasty Tour of Le Touquet with its Market and Foodie Shops



If it's a Thursday or a Saturday, keep breakfast light so you have the appetite to sample many of Le Touquet's culinary treats on a morning stroll. Make a beeline for the **atmospheric Art Deco market** on Rue Jean-Monnet, but also for shops such as Les Mignardises (for a crêpe or an ice cream; it is renowned for its home-made chocolate spread), Beussent and Au Chat Bleu (for chocolates), Manufacture du Touquet (for sablé biscuits made before your eyes), Chez Trogneux (for yummy macarons with a twist), and Terre de Fromages and Fromagerie Pasquier (for cheese).

For locals, markets aren't just about getting the groceries in, they're morning entertainment, with many Touquettois meeting up for oysters afterwards. Join them at the market's oyster bar or head for Perard, a buzzing fish restaurant.

End your foodie tour of the town with a walk up to the seafront and the beach; don't miss Place du Centenaire with its iconic sandy Eiffel Tower (a nod to the town's full name, Le Touquet Paris-Plage).



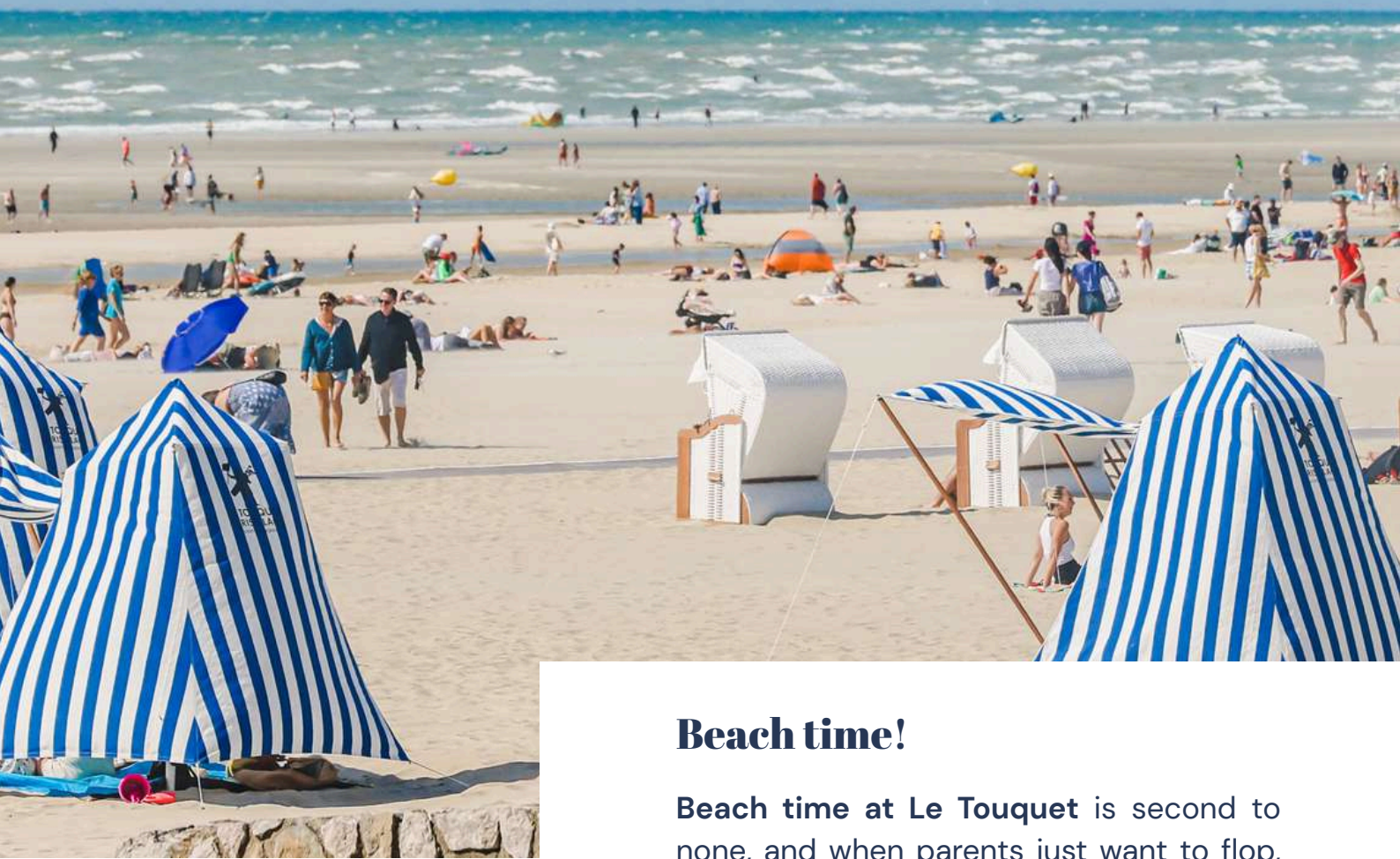
Le Touquet by pedal power, pony, SUP paddle-board or more

Cycling in Le Touquet

Depending on how energetic (or otherwise) you're feeling, there's lots to do in Le Touquet with kids. It's easy to rent some bikes for the day (try La Baleine Royale or Bike4you) and make use of the cycle lanes safely separated from the roads.

One lovely option is **cycling about 10 minutes along the dunes from the town centre to the Base Nautique** (a 1.8-mile round-trip). Here you can drop off your bikes and walk up to the viewing point at the end to soak up the glorious vistas over the estuary where the Canche River meets the sea (there are information boards to fill you in on the local plants and animal life). If you want to carry on, there are more paths you can link up with, some **along tree-lined avenues of lavish seaside villas**.





Beach time!

Beach time at Le Touquet is second to none, and when parents just want to flop, there are six beach bars with kids' clubs nearby where junior visitors can have fun and make new friends in a secure environment.

You can also rent beach huts by the day or half day. Meanwhile, at the nautical centres you can get active in the water with the likes of giant stand-up paddle-boarding and canoeing.

There are also **pony rides at the Equestrian Park and in the forest outside Le Touquet** for children six or even younger – at the Equestrian Centre parents can walk alongside the ponies holding the rope.



And don't miss a guided tour of Le Touquet's lighthouse (with a minimum age of six years) for fabulous views back over the resort.



Exploring Le Touquet on a rainy day

Mareis

Located in the port of Etaples near Le Touquet, this engaging museum explores the local fishing industry with interactive exhibits on techniques and marine life from the Channel and North Sea. With films, a motion simulator, and changing exhibitions, it offers a lively, complementary experience to Nausicaa—both are worth a visit.



Beussent chocolate factory

Just 30 minutes from Le Touquet, Beussent runs its own cocoa farm in Ecuador and offers lively 45-minute tours during school holidays (in French and English – book ahead). Its shops across northern France sell a wide range of classic and creative chocolates.



Agincourt 1415 for history

At the Agincourt 1415 Visitor Centre, dive into the world of knights and archers through interactive exhibits and immersive 360° battle reconstructions. Learn how Welsh longbowmen shaped history and explore medieval weaponry—an engaging experience for families and history fans alike.



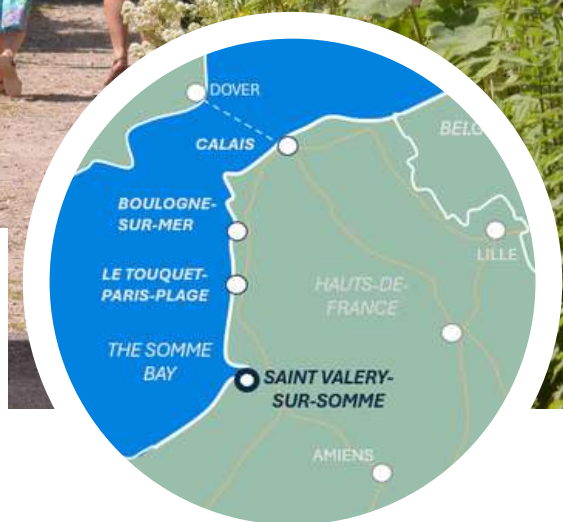
 azincourt1415.com

Discover the the slow pleasures of the Baie de Somme

One of the Grands Sites de France (a kind of short cut for saying it's quite simply spectacular), the Somme Bay is a place to really take your time exploring. There are many ways to do so – we especially recommend hopping aboard **the old-time steam train from Saint-Valery** to Le Crotoy, giving you and the kids the time to soak in the magical landscapes of the Somme Bay.

Strolling the streets of the medieval town of Saint-Valery is another must, making sure to stop off at Watterlot Pâtisserie Boulangerie or Fournée de la Baie Bakery to taste the local speciality, gâteau battu – a brioche-type delicacy given to friends and families on special occasions.

If the sun's out, carry on walking to the end of Quai Jeanne d'Arc and La Buvette du Mouton for a drink on the beach, perhaps stopping by at the mini-golf by the quayside for a round or two. There are also plenty of lunch spots serving that child-friendly local favourite, **moules frites** (mussels and chips).





The Somme Bay by Dugout or on Two Wheels



Canoeing

There are several ways to explore the beauty of the Somme Bay through exciting sporting activities, and canoe/kayak or pirogue outings is one of them. **La Canotière** was founded by a Canadian and runs professionally guided excursions on the water in search of wild nature including migratory birds, seals and local ecosystems. Children need to be six and over and able to swim, and teens must be accompanied an adult.

Other ways to explore this bewitching area are guided walks teaching you about local plant and animal life.



Cycling

The Somme Bay is also a **brilliant place for cycling** – there are lots of cycle lanes and it's mainly flat. The north is particularly wild, with pine trees, marshes and incredible birdlife in the Marquenterre reserve.

Or in the south the amazing **Route Blanche** takes you from La Pointe du Hourdel to Cayeux (8.5 miles) – a straightforward path alongside the dunes and pebbly beaches, separated from the road, and hence perfect with kids.

You can find all the **details on the Baie Cycllette website**, from short (5-mile) trails to the complete tour of the bay between Cayeux and Le Crotoy (20 miles). You can even take your bikes aboard the steam train between Le Crotoy and Saint-Valery.



www.baiecycllette.com



Flying high in the Marquenterre bird preserve



Learn about birds and other epic nature on a visit to **the Marquenterre bird preserve** with its breathtaking array of migratory species you can learn all about from one of the nature guides, who bring telescopes to help you with sightings (it's a good idea to bring binoculars too).

This place has a unique history: once used for growing tulips, it's been a protected area and ornithologists' mecca for 40 years, with its 200 hectares of marshes, dunes and reed beds between land and sea playing host to around **300 species across the year**, as well as other animal life. Among your sightings may be little grebes, common kingfishers, great egrets and Eurasian spoonbills.

The Parc's self-service restaurant, La Table du Marquenterre, serves fresh seasonal produce. It also has a terrace surrounded by pine trees and a bar serving local drinks from beers to apple juice, plus artisan ice cream and crêpes.



Slow down your way: on horseback or at the beach

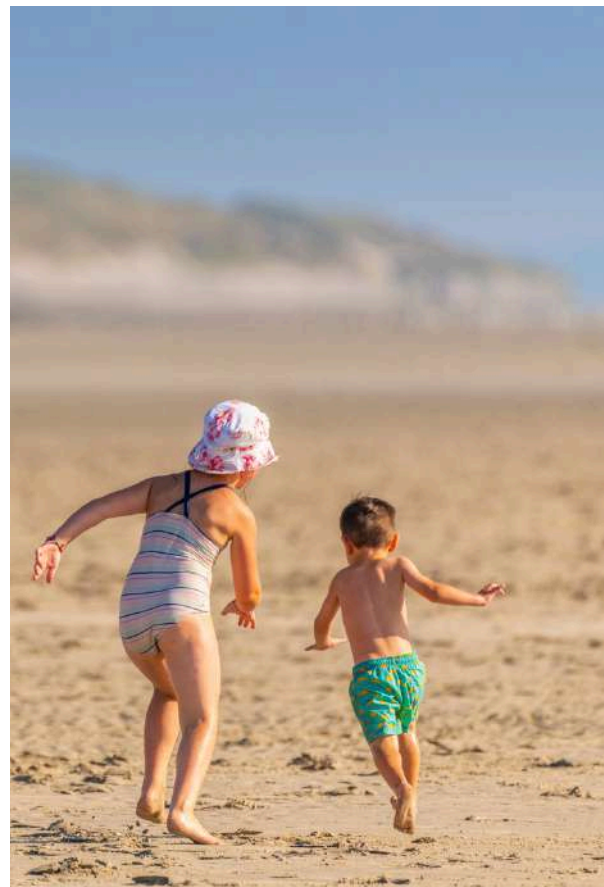
Horse riding

Riding a local Henson horse (a famously gentle breed) through **the peaceful forest and across the dunes and meadows of the Somme Bay** is a spellbinding way to discover this region. Rides at a leisurely rhythm take three hours and are available for all levels; children must be taller than 1.3m to take part.

And the fun starts even before the ride, with time for the kids to get their horses ready and hence develop a bond with them. Hensons are calm, confident and hardy, bred to live for part of the year in the wet marshes of the bay and its surroundings.

Beach time!

Alternatively, spend a lazy afternoon at the beach: **Quend Plage and Fort Mahon** are among the most beautiful in the region, with plenty of restaurants and ice-cream stands for when you want to refuel.



Last thrills before heading home

On your way back to Calais, between Berck-sur-Mer and Le Touquet, enjoy a last exhilarating day of fun on the coast at Parc Bagatelle, France’s oldest amusement park

With 35+ attractions, live shows, a mini animal farm and plenty of places to eat and relax, it’s a must for a fun-filled day with children of all ages. In 2026, the Parc unveils its new attraction called “North Storm”, plunging visitors into the heart of a storm.



www.parcbagatelle.com/en



Seal watching in Berck

A magical sight for all ages. At low tide, sandbanks appear just offshore and colonies of grey and harbour seals — sometimes up to 100 — can be seen resting and sunbathing only 50 metres from the shore near Berck-sur-Mer.

Please keep your distance and follow safety guidelines to protect these shy animals.



Simply follow the Chemin aux Raisins path from the watersports centre in Berck-sur-Mer.



Where to Stay ?

IN LE TOUQUET



HIPPOTEL **

Av. de la Dune aux Loups, 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
hippotel.fr

Equipped with family rooms/appartments with a kitchenette.



LE GRAND HOTEL ****

4 Bd de la Canche, 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
legrandhotel-letouquet.com

Connection rooms available for families. Arcade games for kids.



DOMAINE DE LA PETITE FORÊT

Av du Maréchal Foch, 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
legrandhotel-letouquet.com

A secured outdoor patio for kids and a swimming pool.



VOCO ****

Av du Maréchal Foch, 62520 Le Touquet-Paris-Plage
www.vo-letouquet.com

BETWEEN LE TOUQUET AND BOULOGNE



EVANCY RESIDENCES

35 Av. des Canadiens, 62224 Équihe-Plage
www.evancy.fr

A chain of Luxury holiday rental properties along the coast: in Boulogne-sur-Mer, in Camiers Sainte-Cécile near Le Touquet and in Equihen near Hardelot. Most of them have an easy access to the beach.

IN THE SOMME BAY



LE CAP HORN HOTEL ***

1350 Chaussée du Cap Hornu, 80230
Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
www.hotelcaphornu.fr





Where to eat ?

IN CALAIS

AU TONNERRE DE BREST

As French as stripy tops, berets and bicycles, you simply have to have a crepe while you're here! In addition to all the sweet classics, try a 'galette' savoury such as the Opal Coast – a chef's-kiss meeting of mushrooms, bacon and local Wissant cheese.

creperie-calais.fr

BISTROT DU CHANNEL

The combination of a good French lunch and somewhere you can be relaxed about fidgety kids moving around comes neatly packaged at Le Channel's bistro. Loved by locals, it's Calais' cool vibes arts and culture venue.

lesgrandestables.com/le-channel/

AU COIN DE LA FERME

Centrally located in Calais, the restaurant of this urban farm also has a restaurant that serves homemade dishes and sandwiches. It's a safe enclosed space where children can wander around and see the farm animals.

au-coin-de-la-ferme.adlccalais.com



Where to Eat ?

IN BOULOGNE-SUR-MER

LE CHATILLON

For a lunch recommendation in Boulogne, the horse's mouth has to be the fishermen, right? Hands down they'll all say this legendary eatery in the shipyard. Catch of the day comes fresh from the boat and there's a great kids' menu.

www.le-chatillon.com/en

LA POISSONNERIE GOURMANDE

Follow the locals who lunch at this smart fishmongers, restaurant and oyster bar in the industrial district. Share a mountainous shellfish platter and make full use of the 'traiteur' service for later if you're self-catering – ready-prepped meals to enjoy in your accommodation with a bottle of white.

www.olca.com/boulogne/poissonnerie-gourmande

AU CRAN GOURMAND - AUDRESSELLES

Nothing says French comfort food quite like a crêpe and this seventh-generation artisan family have made theirs, and their signature ice cream too, into a legendary artform. Follow caramelly wafts inside for a sweet treat or opt for a savoury made with lipsmacking local cheese

LA MAISON - WISSANT

Unsurprisingly for a restaurant whose name alludes to home comforts, 'La Maison' in the pretty little fishing town of Wissant is warm, welcoming and preps its delicious dishes on site. Expect the likes of mussels, croquettes and flatbreads and an open-plan on-trend look too.

www.joliecote.fr/guide/la-maison-wissant

Where to Eat ?

IN LE TOUQUET

MARÉE BASEE

A place where the whole family can enjoy simple, local, gourmet cuisine. On the terrace, when the weather is fine, children can play safely in the large pedestrianised Quentovic square, the perfect place to enjoy a friendly meal.

www.maree-basse-letouquet.fr

CROQUES AND PIES

Specialising in the Croque Monsieur (and more than just the one variety of!), here's a great address – doubling up as a fab deli – for brunch or lunch. On the light side, its colour-pop salads are a great pick.

en.letouquet.com/restoration/croques-pies

JEAN'S CAFÉ

A lively and cosy brasserie, typically French in the centre of Le Touquet.

www.perard-letouquet.fr

PÉRARD

Known for its piled-high seafood platters and the signature secret-recipe fish soup wheeled table-to-table, sprawling Perard has a buzzing and laid-back ambiance. Book to avoid disappointment – it's popular!

www.perard-letouquet.fr/en

LA NONNA

The Italian restaurant of the tennis club with a warm atmosphere and a great terrasse. Right next door to the tennis club swimming pool.

www.labellehistoiregroupe.com/la-nonna





Where to Eat ?

IN THE SOMME BAY

IN SAINT-VALERY-SUR-SOMME

O'JARDIN

In the heart of town, this restaurant has a beautiful terrace for when the sun is out. Regional produce takes pride of place in the globally inspired dishes.

bienvenueaujardin.fr

LA CRÉPERIE DES REMPARTS

Everybody loves a good crêpe. At les Remparts, crêpes are made using local produce and locally sourced flour.

LA TERRASSE

Great location with a view on the bay. Local dishes on the menu including the classic moules frites.

LE COURGAIN

Located at the foot of the old fishermen's district, this traditional brasserie-style restaurant offers a tempting selection of local specialties at reasonable prices.

www.somme-tourisme.com/en/restaurant

IN CAYEUX-SUR-MER

LE MYTILUS

Seasonal cuisine with many products sourced locally for reasonable prices.

restaurant-cayeux-sur-mer.fr

LE NEPTUNE

Le Neptune offers a delicious seasonal cuisine made with local ingredients at great value in a simple, fuss-free décor.

www.hotelneptunecayeuxsurmer.com



Where to Eat ?

IN LE CROTOY

LE BELLEVUE

For fresh seafood and fish with a beautiful view on the Bay. Lovely terrace in the summer.

www.bellevuelecrotoy.fr

LE BISTROT DE LA BAIE

A great choice in Le Crotoy to sample local specialties like moules frites or salt-meadow lamb. Good value for money. Booking recommended.

www.bistrotde labaie.com

L'AUBERGE DE LA MARINE

Facing the Somme Bay, this welcoming inn showcases salt-meadow lamb, seafood, seaweed, samphire, seasonal vegetables and more in its authentic, refined cuisine. Reservations are recommended.

www.aubergedelamarine.com

Travel essentials - how to get here

Via the Channel tunnel:

From Folkestone to Calais, take Le Shuttle through the Channel Tunnel, a journey time of 35 minutes.

By ferry:

Travel by ferry from Dover to Calais with P&O Ferries, DFDS Ferries, or Irish Ferries, a journey time of around 1 hour and 30 minutes. From Calais, Saint-Valery-sur-Somme is an onward car journey time of approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

WWW.HAUTSDEFRANCETOURISM.COM

WWW.FRENCH-WEEKENDBREAKS.CO.UK



This guide was put together with the help of [Nausicaa](#) and [Le Touquet-Paris-Plage](#) tourist office



Photo credits

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