

THE  TIMES**20 best places to stay in Brittany**

Country cottages Les Chouettes, Les Alouette and Les Hirondelles are ideal for self-catering families

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From castles to cosy B&Bs and hideaway love nests, Alison Culliford picks where to go in France's Cornwall this summer

From the spectacular coastline of rocky cliff-tops and endless sandy beaches, to artists' colonies, fishing villages and Gulf Stream-nourished gardens. Brittany is France's Cornwall, a favourite with well-heeled Parisians who have been coming for generations.

So why cross the Channel for more of the same? Well, it is cheaper; it's also five times bigger and a lot less crowded. Taking the ferry to Roscoff or Saint-Malo from £72pp return, you'll slide off into easy-to-drive motorways and deserted country lanes. From the lighthouse-crowned cliffs of Finistère to the child-friendly beaches of Concarneau in the south Brittany extends a welcome to its northern cousins that many find warmer than in other parts of France. Here is our choice of 20 outstanding places to stay.

1 Best B&B Manoir de Kerlédan, Carhaix-Plouguer

We defy you to find a more enchanting *chambres d'hôtes* in the whole of France. Lovingly restored by an English couple, the manor house near the Huelgoat forest dates back to the 15th century and has been impeccably decorated. The five, very private bedrooms are romantic with taffeta drapes, plush beds and graceful en suite bathrooms, while the garden is a masterpiece of formal alleys, fragrant roses, and surprise vistas. Penny and Peter will serve you aperitifs in the drawing room and a candlelit meal in the dining room beneath a 17th-century hunting scene.

Details B&B doubles €90-€105 (0033-2989944 63, kerledan.com)

2 Best for couples La Maison du Jardinier, Morlaix

The gardener's cottage, tucked away in the grounds of the Manoir de Coat Amour that runs *chambres d'hôtes* near Morlaix on the north coast, is the perfect hideaway for two. There's a cosy downstairs bedroom and upstairs sitting room with a wood-burning stove for winter stays. Cooks will love the well-equipped, modern kitchen in a light-filled extension, or barbecuing on the terrace, but you can also opt to dine in the manor or have meals brought to your love nest.

Details €449-€799 a week for two (0033 298 88 57 02, gites-morlaix.com)

3 Best on the beach Hôtel de la Plage, Sainte-Anne-la-Palud

This is a Relais and Châteaux property, but the luxury is more than the marble-topped bathroom counters. It's the sense of space and isolation. Alone on a beach, with the odd surfer, or dog-walker, it offers perfect tranquillity. Outside of July and August you may have the pool, tennis courts and outdoor sauna to yourself. In the evening, the glassed-in restaurant is the perfect place to watch the sunset.

Details Doubles €92-€362, breakfast €20 (0033-298 92 50 12, plage.com)

4 Best for art lovers La Chaumière Roz-Aven, Pont-Aven

After visiting the art museum dedicated to the Pont-Aven school, stay in the thatched cottage painted by Gauguin in his *Cove Opposite Pont-Aven Harbour*. The three beamed rooms in the cottage are the most atmospheric, while several of those in the annexe look out on the river or over the thatched gables. The rooms are simple, with framed posters rather than original art, and bathrooms none too modern, but clean. A cosy lounge, terrace and the ground floor tea room add to the appeal.

Details Doubles €67-€105, breakfast €13 (0033 298 06 13 06, hotelpontaven.com)

5 Best for gastronomes Moulin de Rosmadec, Pont-Aven

Diners come from all over to don their lobster bibs and tuck into Frédéric Sébilleau's signature dish of *homard grillé avec ses deux beurres*. The restaurant has held a Michelin star since 1931, and the genial Sébilleau has carried on his parents' tradition. While the atmospheric dining room is filled with paintings and hunting trophies, the four sought-after rooms are serene in blue-grey and white. If you can snag one, there is nowhere better to fall into bed.

Details Doubles €88-€125 (0033 298 06 00 22, moulinderosmadec.com)

6 Best for nostalgia Grand Hôtel des Bains, Locquirec

The Grand Hôtel des Bains has a special place in the heart of France's new president, François Hollande, for he holed up here in May 2010 with his new love Valérie Trierweiler and the staff didn't breathe a word. Hollande came back in 2011 after announcing his candidature and promised to return if he became president. The Belgian magazine editor Dominique Van Lier fell in love with the old pension familial 15 years ago and redecorated it with a touch of Cape Cod. But it's what remains unchanged about this hotel that makes it lovable: real keys for the doors; a log fire; an avenue of lime trees shading wooden chairs beloved of writers along the cliff top, and a spa. French windows open onto balconies with a sweeping view of the bay. Eat at the hotel-owned Brasserie de la Plage on the seafront.

Details B&B doubles €160 to €250 (0033 298 67 41 02, grand-hotel-des-bains.com)

7 Best for ocean views Hostellerie de la Pointe Saint-Mathieu, Plougonvelin

Jutting out into the Atlantic beyond Brest, the Pointe Saint-Mathieu is one of Brittany's most westerly points and when the wind is up you'll feel all the drama of the ocean. Guests can choose from 25 modern rooms with sea-view terraces or lighthouse and abbey views (it's worth splashing out for the terraces). Dining is in a 14th-century, vaulted room with a fire. The heated indoor pool and spa make this a perfect place to unwind.

Details Doubles €80-€230, breakfast €13 (0033 298 89 00 19, pointe-saint-mathieu.com)

8 Best treehouse Domaine des Ormes, Dol de Bretagne

In the grounds of a château to the east of Saint-Malo, 25 treehouses have been built in mature oaks and cedars, offering a real ecotourism adventure. Ranging from the family treehouses that are five metres off the ground to the 19 metres Seventh Heaven for two, they're not for the faint-hearted. Instructors show you how to get up and down (some involve harnesses), but once up there you can enjoy champagne on your terrace. Dry toilets are in the treehouse; you have to descend for a shower.

Details Treehouse for two from €118 a night, including breakfast (0033 299 73 53 00, lesormes.com)

9 Best gypsy caravans Les Roulottes des Korrigans, Brasparts

While several Breton campsites offer gypsy caravans, at Les Roulottes your fantasy won't be dampened by adjoining tents and cabins. Here at Goarem Edern, in the heart of the Armorique regional park, the 12 wooden caravans look out on butterfly-filled hillsides and the Arrée mountains. Inside they are surprisingly large, with beds tucked into cubbyholes, plumbed toilets, pots and pans, an imitation wood stove and a barbecue. The site has a sauna and hot tub and themed walking weeks can be arranged where you set off with a packed lunch.

Details €474 to €600 a week self-catering; from €79 a night B&B (0033 298 81 41 62, roulottes-des-korrigans.com)

10 Best rural retreat La Ferme de Kerscuntec, Combrit

Though it's only half a mile from the beach, this old cider farm in the Pays Bigouden feels deeply rooted in the countryside. The five fresh guest beds named after islands include Ouessant with its own terrace and a roll-top bath. Flowers from the garden are everywhere, and in summer you'll want to breakfast outside, where home-made jams from the orchard fruit make a delicious start to the day.

Details Doubles €85-€120, including breakfast (0033 298 51 90 90, lafermedekerscuntec.fr)

11 Best seaside resort Hôtel Printania, Dinard

Dinard is a seaside resort full of *belle époque* charm. While the Lucien Barrière and the Emeraude Plage offer what their luxury credentials promise, the affordable Printania is a family-run delight. Filled with carved Breton furniture, paintings and porcelain, it's a step back in time.

Details Doubles €75-€154, breakfast €10.50 (0033 299 46 13 07, printaniahotel.com)

12 Best near the ferry ports Hôtel Beaufort, Saint-Malo

Run by a Franco-American couple, this classic seafront hotel not far from the ferry has been freshened up with white walls and colonial furniture, giving it a young, contemporary feel. Perched on top of the sea wall, it has direct access to the beach.

Details Doubles €97 to €217, breakfast €13 (0033 299 40 99 99, hotelbeaufort.com)

13 Best in a fishing village Le Poisson d'Avril, Guilvinec

If you hanker after a real fishing village where the boats arrive with their catch and unload at the *criée*, come to Guilvinec in the Celtic south corner of Brittany. You can see it all happen from your sea-view terrace in one of the four simple rooms attached to this seafood restaurant at the entrance to the port. The restaurant menu changes to reflect what the ocean has yielded that day.

Details Doubles €85 to €125, breakfast €8.50 (0033 298 58 23 83, lepoissondavrill.fr)

14 Best for a house party Château du Bois Glaume, Poligne

This four-bedroom castle dates from the late 17th century and is elegantly decorated. You must book all the rooms during the summer — making it perfect for a French aristocracy-style house party. Some of the bedrooms have been renovated with a contemporary look, but all have lovely old French antiques. There's a hottub and ten acres of grounds.

Details €1,500 for a week in the summer, sleeps ten (0033 2 99 43 83 05, chateau-du-bois-glaume.com).

15 Best family self catering Les Chouettes, Les Alouettes & Les Hirondelles, Tremblay

A short drive from the Saint-Malo ferry, these cottages set amid rolling fields and woodland are ideal for one family or several holidaying together. Children will never be bored with a trampoline, swings, boules and heated swimming pool in the two acres of garden, free bikes for outings, and a zoo, adventure park and aquarium near by. The 17th-century cottages are both practical and attractive.

Details The cottages sleep 12, 8 or 4 and cost €350 to €2,400 a week (0033 299 97 74 20, brittany-cottages.co.uk)

16 Best for Arthurian legends Le Manoir du Tertre, Paimpont

The forest of Paimpont, to the west of Rennes, is thought to be the Arthurian Brocéliande, where Merlin fell in love with Vivien le Fey. Whether or not you believe the myths, nowhere is better to immerse yourself in the magic of this ancient forest than at this manor with its own ghost, the former owner Geneviève Zaepffel, whose icy stare greets visitors in the grande salle. Fling your windows wide in the five spacious rooms and awake to birdsong or listen to the stags rutting in the forest.

Details B&B doubles €50-€100 (0033 299 07 80 01, broceliande.manoir-du-tertre.fr)

17 Best for yachties Hôtel Kermoor, Concarneau

Every room has a sea view at the Kermoor, and there's direct access to the sandy beach below, but that's not all that makes this 11-room hotel special. The owner, whose father was a sailor, has spent a lifetime collecting nautical memorabilia and filled the place with gorgeous old wooden bits and pieces. In sunny weather you can lounge on the private terraces and in a storm hole up in the galley bar.

Details Doubles €107-€142, breakfast €12 (0033 298 97 02 96, hotel-kermor.com)

18 Best for cyclists Laura's Chambres d'Hôtes, Huelgoat

Laura's is all about the welcome, as hundreds of soaked cyclists and weary walkers in the guest book testify. About 60km from Roscoff, this affordable B&B is an ideal first stop for those plying the green route on two wheels, and guests rave about Laura's cups of tea, offers to wash and dry clothes and open-house welcome at any time of day. Simple rooms and breakfasts are part of the deal.

Details Doubles €55 (0033 298 99 91 62, bnbhuelgoatlauras.vpweb.co.uk)

19 Best for children Hôtel Le Cardinal, Belle-Ile-en-Mer

French families love Belle Ile. Brittany's largest island, it is a 35-minute ferry crossing from the Quiberon peninsula. This family-friendly hotel with 66 rooms, including apartments, has thought of everything to keep children amused: babysitting, pool, kids' club, guided nature walks and a team to organise horse riding, kayaking and fishing outings. Meals are buffet-style and they can prepare picnics.

Details Family apartments €125-€267 a night. Breakfast € 14 (adults), €7 (children) (0033 297 31 61 60, hotel-cardinal.fr)

20 Best for history Le Gradlon, Quimper

Named after the king of Cornouaille, this hotel in the heart of Quimper's medieval old town makes a comfortable base for exploring its heritage and faience shops, as well as the surrounding Pays Bigouden with its summer festivals of folk culture and music. Rooms are decorated in classic style and there's an interior garden.

Details Doubles €89-€160, breakfast €12 (0033 298 95 04 39, hotel-gradlon.fr)

Need to know

Brittany Ferries (0871 2441400, brittany-ferries.co.uk) travels from Plymouth to Roscoff (six hours) with prices this summer from £72pp return based on a family of four taking a car, and Portsmouth to Saint-Malo (nine hours, overnight from Portsmouth), from £98 return on the same basis, including an en suite cabin on the overnight crossing.

Generally, prices are lower and availability is better on daytime sailings, midweek. It is also less than two hours' drive to Brittany from Caen and Cherbourg in Normandy.

Brittany Ferries sails to Caen (3.5 hours) from £72pp return and to Cherbourg (three hours by fast ferry) from £84.50pp.

Flybe (flybe.com) flies to Brest from Birmingham and Southampton, and to Rennes from Exeter, Manchester and Southampton, return fares from £94.98.

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