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20 great stays in Normandy

Boutique hotels, luxury treehouses, cosy B&Bs – it's not too late to pop across the Channel this summer, says **Carolyn Boyd**

Orne/South Normandy

1 Château de Saint Paterne, Saint Paterne

This fairytale hotel on the outskirts of Alençon was once a bolthole for King Henry IV of France, who conducted his dangerous liaisons here. These days it's the stylish abode of owner Charles-Henry de Valbray, a chef and cookery book author, who treats his guests to sumptuous meals in the surroundings of the luxurious candelabra-filled dining room before they retreat to one of the ten rooms. Each boasts decor that is fit for a king. Outside, take a dip in the heated pool or stroll around the 2.5-hectare park that surrounds the château.

Details Doubles from €120 (0845 034 0700, mrandmrsmith.com)

2 Château de la Mouchère, near Bellême

Beautiful Art Deco and Arts and Crafts furnishings abound in this gorgeous chambres d'hôtes set in an elegant manor house surrounded by English-style gardens. The house remained in the same family for nearly 150 years, but now it is owned by two former university professors, Roger Huss, a Briton, and his French wife Marie-Monique, who provide a warm welcome to visitors in their three bedrooms and two suites. Each has its own fireplace and is decorated with period furniture. Guests can also take part in their seasonal workshops to learn about making jams, chutneys, compotes and liqueurs.

Details From €85 per night B&B for two (00 332 33 83 02 99, lamouchere.com)

3 La Renardière, Bellou-le-Trichard

Where better to admire the countryside of southern Normandy than from a comfy treehouse perched in a 200-year-old sweet chestnut tree? Set in a 25-acre plot that welcomes a variety of wildlife, including roe deer and wild boar, the two-level arboreal abode sleeps five in two different rooms and also offers a bathroom with shower and toilet, a small kitchen area and a terrace from which to admire the gorgeous sunsets. By day, those who enjoy the great outdoors will love exploring the surrounding Perche national park.

Details From €150 per night B&B for two (00 33 2 33 25 57 96, perchedansleperche.com)



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4 Domaine de la Louveterie, Moutiers au Perche

In the heart of the Perche national park, the three bedrooms and two suites at Domaine de la Louveterie chambres d'hôtes have each been decorated in their own style: themes include Travel, the Fifties and 18th Century, and there are also two tastefully decorated gîtes in the grounds of the 17th-century property. Guests can enjoy dinner in the library, with hosts Carol and Pietro providing excellent meals using local produce. Breakfast kicks off with a glass of fresh local apple juice, and continues with bread with home-made jams and jellies.
Details From €98 B&B for two (00 33 2 33 73 11 63, domainedelalouveterie.com)

5 Le Clos du Verger, Saint-Hilaire-sur-Erre

This award-winning gîte, in the village of Saint-Hilaire-sur-Erre in the Perche national park, was restored by its owner, sculpture restorer Laëtitia Guillemain, from a crumbling wreck of a cottage and she has decorated it with a wonderful blend of crimson, sage, chocolate and mauve. With room for four in double and twin bedrooms, the cottage overlooks a small terrace and pretty garden, perfect for breakfast in the sun. In the winter, cosy up around the fire with a good book and a glass of local cider.
Details From €395 per week (00 33 2 37 52 16 34, sawdays.co.uk/le-clos-du-verger)

Seine-Maritime / East Normandy

6 La Boulangerie, Rouen

Hidden above a bakery, as its name suggests, in the narrow streets of central Rouen, this bijou chambres d'hôtes offers two double rooms and a suite that sleeps four. Each en-suite room is decorated tastefully under the beams of the 18th-century building. The friendly owner Aminata, who also runs the boulangerie, is happy to advise on Rouen's attractions.
Details From €77 B&B for two (00 33 6 12 94 53 15, laboulangerie.fr)

7 Les Lodges de la Villa Quartz, Pourville-sur-Mer

For a stay in more contemporary surroundings, check into one of the five Lodges de la Villa Quartz in the seaside resort of Pourville-sur-Mer, near Dieppe. They were built in 2009 and are perched on a hill overlooking Normandy's Alabaster Coast, offering unrivalled views over the chalk cliffs and the sea. The lodges, which sleep up to four or six, are constructed from steel and glass, with black and white interiors, and sunny terraces.
Details Villas from €479 per week in low season (00 33 6 77 30 87 54, pourville-sur-mer.com)

8 Hôtel Vent d'Ouest, Le Havre

Take some time to explore Le Havre's Unesco-listed modernist architecture and

check into the charming three-star Hôtel Vent d'Ouest, set in a residential area not far from the town centre and beach. Decorated in a maritime theme, the 30 rooms are cosy and comfortable. The hotel also has a billiards room. The famous cliffs at Étretat and the pretty harbour town of Honfleur are close by.
Details Doubles from €100 per night (00 33 2 35 42 50 69, ventdouest.fr)

Eure / South-east Normandy

9 Château du Jonquay, Epreville en Roumois

For a big friends-and-family gathering, book a stay at the Château du Jonquay, in a quiet corner of Normandy not far from Rouen. This self-catering property, with fresh white walls and blue shutters, sleeps 16 in seven large, elegantly decorated bedrooms, and has a kitchen, dining room and living room and a heated outdoor pool. The village of Bourg-Achard is 4km away.
Details From €4,750 per week (00 61 425 727 920, sawdays.co.uk/chateau-du-jonquay)

10 La Canotière, Les Andelys

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Set beneath white chalk cliffs on the banks of the Seine in the pretty town of Les Andelys, this neo-Norman-style guesthouse offers four elegant bedrooms decorated in tasteful grey and white tones. Each room has a sensational view of the Seine, the hillside or the imposing Château Gaillard, built in the late 12th century by

Richard the Lionheart. Outside are manicured gardens and a riverside terrace that is perfect for an early-evening aperitif.

Details From €85 for two (00 33 6 26 56 73 66, lacanotiere.net)

11 Péniche BlauPaz, near Giverny

For a self-catering holiday with a difference, climb aboard the Péniche BlauPaz on the banks of the Seine, close to Monet's famous gardens at Giverny. The tastefully decorated *péniche*, a large houseboat, sleeps up to five in two cabins and on a sofa bed in the living area. There's also a well-equipped kitchen and terrace with tables and chairs from which to watch the world float by.

Details From €90 per night, or €420 per week for up to five (00 33 1 64 22 89 20, gite-insolite-peniche.fr)

Manche / North Normandy

12 Manoir de la Fieffe, La Glacerie

Just a quick hop from Cherbourg, the small and quiet Manoir de la Fieffe B&B offers an excellent stopover en route to or from the ferry. Emmanuel de La Fonchais and Michel Niciejewski, the new owners, took over in spring 2012 and have used their creativity to decorate each of the three bedrooms and a holiday cottage with real flair, using fresh colours and characterful furniture. Outside, with the Cotentin Peninsula's favourable climate on his side, Emmanuel is using his experience as a

rare-plant nursery owner to create his own little botanical garden.

Details From €95 for two in the Manoir, or from €300 for two in the cottage (00 33 2 33 20 81 45, manoirdelafieffe.com)

13 Hôtel l'Ermitage,

Mont Saint Michel

Four kilometres from Mont Saint Michel, the luxurious Hôtel l'Ermitage makes a great base for exploring the Unesco-listed monument. The former coaching inn, which dates from the 19th century, has seven beautifully decorated suites that sleep up to five, while one of the rooms is suitable for disabled guests. Supper — using local produce — can be enjoyed on the rooms' terraces or in a dining room that opens on to a large terrace.

Details Junior suite (sleeps two adults and children) from €133 (00 33 2 33 89 09 99, lermitage-montsaintmichel.com)

14 Manoir de Beaucron, Brucheville

The four bedrooms of this 16th-century manor house B&B are named after birds, the ideal touch for its location at the heart of the wildlife haven of the Cotentin and Bessin regional park. The rooms, reached via a grand stone staircase, are decorated in tasteful tones of beige and raspberry. Host Anne-Laure Guerche treats her guests to a delicious breakfast of pastries, fruit juice, home-made jam and rice pudding. The Manoir is within easy reach of the D-Day beaches, Tatihou island and Bayeux.

Details From €65 for two or three (00 33 2 33 42 40 25, manoirdebeaucron.com)

Calvados, Central Normandy

15 Le Château de la Pommeraye, La Pommeraye

In the heart of the area known as "Swiss Normandy", Le Château de la Pommeraye offers luxurious chambres d'hôtes in its 17th-century mansion, surrounded by a part-moat and a 60-acre park. Each of its five available bedrooms has been decorated in an elegant style inspired by a different era, including that of Napoleon III and Louis XVI. If you fancy dining like an aristocrat, ask for their tables d'hôtes and spend the evening in their beautiful dining room. There is also an on-site spa.

Details Doubles from €175 (00 33 2 31 69 87 86, chateaudelapommeraye.com)

16 Le Gîte de l'Ecurie,

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Orbec en Auge

In the heart of Normandy's cider country, the Pays d'Auge, this former stable block is now a comfortable gîte, lovingly restored using natural materials such as hemp for the curtains and clay for the walls. Set next to a 300-year-old chestnut tree, the traditional timber-framed abode sleeps up to six in three delightful bedrooms. There is also a lounge, dining room and superb terrace overlooking the grounds. Foodies will enjoy the cheese, cider and calvados from the surrounding country.

Details From €600 for two nights sleeping six (00 33 2 31 62 24 75, gitesenpaysdauge.free.fr/OrbecenAuge.html)

17 Calvados barrel, Domaine de la Cour Au Grip, Repentigny

Most visitors' experiences of calvados consist of drinking the typical Norman tippie, but at the Domaine de la Cour Au Grip, you can spend the night in a 10,000-litre calvados barrel. This cosy little nest sleeps two and is in the grounds of a 19th-century farm and cider press. Hosts Paulette and Patrick Esnard, who also run cookery courses on the farm, are happy to prepare a romantic meal for two to be enjoyed inside the barrel. However, if such close confines don't appeal, you can also book into one of the charming gîtes and chambres d'hôtes.

Details €90 for two per night in the barrel, or from €60 for two in the chambres d'hôtes (00 33 2 31 63 85 85, lacouraugrip.blog.capital.fr)

18 Manoir de la Rivière, Géfosse-Fontenay

The tiny former watchtower in the grounds of a manor house, the Manoir de la Rivière makes the perfect escape for two. It is thought to have been used as a lookout for customs officers hunting smugglers along the coast, but is now a cosy gîte. Hosts Gérard and Isabelle Leharivel have created a comfortable place to stay in a tiny space, with a bed and shower cubicle upstairs, and a living area with kitchenette downstairs. The beach is a short walk away and the D-Day beaches and the Cotentin Peninsula are nearby.

Details From €280 a week for two (00 33 2 31 22 64 45, sawdays.co.uk/manoir-de-la-riviere)

19 Cerza Safari Lodge, near Lisieux

"France" and "safari holiday" aren't words that often appear together, but a stay at the Cerza Safari Park, near Lisieux, will mean waking up with wallabies, giraffes and rhino. Choose between their lodges, which sleep up to six, the *zooservatoires* (six triangular wooden huts overlooking the park that sleep four), both of which have kitchenettes, or the yurts which have outdoor picnic tables. The park was established in 1986 and is dedicated to protecting endangered species.

Details Two nights in a lodge costs from €316 (00 33 2 31 31 82 30, cerzasafarilodge.com)

20 Le Grand Hôtel, Cabourg

Perched beside the beach at the fashionable Belle Epoque resort of Cabourg, this splendid five-star hotel was where Marcel Proust holed himself up to write *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The large hotel was completely renovated in 2011 and has 70 spacious and elegantly decorated rooms with fantastic views. The ground floor is particularly impressive, with its magnificent ballroom, while its light and airy restaurant is the perfect place to enjoy coffee and a delicate madeleine cake, made famous by Proust himself.

Details Doubles from €180 (00 33 2 31 91 0179, mgallery.com)

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