

HOLIDAY



La Plage is right next to a large sandy beach, with the site providing direct access via a path. This part of France is littered with beauty spots



The site is in a rural location around a mile from La Trinite and the plots at La Plage are neatly divided by trees and hedges

Camping in Brittany is perfect for families

Report by **Jim Wildman**

The bags were packed, the children in the car and the house locked up. We were about to set off for glorious Brittany – our second visit in less than a year.

Yet I was filled with a considerable degree of trepidation, if I am honest.

Not because I was concerned about where we were heading, but because our first holiday there was so fantastic I was struggling to imagine how a return visit could match up.

Looking back now, I wonder what the worry was all about. Brittany truly is a great location for a family holiday.

The experience offered by the likes of Eurocamp is perfect for children and it was the excitement of my two lads that overcame any of the doubts I had. The weather helped too.

Superior

As we reached Portsmouth, it was glorious, the forecast even better and my four-year-old son was overflowing with excitement at the prospect of getting on the “flag boat” – the ferry to France that made such an impression on him barely a year earlier; the Brittany Ferries logo the inspiration for the term “flag” I presume.

The holiday fun begins as soon as you arrive on the ferry. If you have young children, in my opinion this is far superior to flying to your holiday destination, although a fly-drive holiday is an option if that is what you prefer, with regional airports in France at Brest, Dinard, Rennes and Nantes.

The great thing about the boat is that there is none of the queueing for hours at the airport followed by several more hours packed like a tin of sardines on a plane, punctuated with two moments of excitement – take off and landing. The ferry is part of the holiday experience. There is lots to do – restaurants,

cafes, shops, play areas and even a cinema.

Being a night crossing, there were lots of parents, like us, enjoying a glass of wine while the children ran around before bedtime. Having our own cabin was a source of particular excitement for the boys. They loved the fact we would all be sleeping overnight before arriving in St Malo the following day.

Waking up in St Malo, we were fresh for the three hour drive to our destination – La Trinite sur Mer, near Carnac.

The roads in France tend to be far less congested than our busy motorway network and so we arrived fairly quickly. During our previous visit to Brittany we stayed further up the coast near Pont Aven, but were persuaded to come further south near Carnac, a popular seaside resort, as it is home to the alignments – rows of 2,000 or more menhirs, which along with Stonehenge is one of the most important prehistoric sites in Europe.

I need to emphasise just one thing here, wherever you journey to in Brittany, the likelihood is you will end up somewhere beautiful. This part of France is littered with beautiful golden, sandy beaches and picnic areas – all with free parking.

They are rarely that busy either, frequented mainly by the locals and just a few tourists. The coast stocks the restaurants and markets with an array of shellfish and other seafood and at the weekend you will often see the locals scouting the warm, shallow waters on La Grande Plage in Carnac with buckets, picking up mussels, clams and other crustaceans to cook for supper.

The menhirs near Carnac are a must see, and can be admired via a short journey by land train or under your own steam. There is a beautiful woodland spot just off the main

road overlooking the menhirs that was a regular haunt for us, offering ideal shade for a picnic at lunchtime.

But journey out of La Trinite in any direction and you will find something to admire. We did not travel far, happy to enjoy relaxing by staying relatively close to our campsite. But Auray, which is just 13km away is worth a visit. The town has some delightful 15th and 16th century houses. The pretty port of Saint-Goustan, located in the lower town, is the place to head for.

A half an hour journey south down the peninsula brings you to Quiberon, another pretty town with a lovely beach and harbour where the children, particularly my two-year-old, enjoyed watching the ferry depart for the island of Belle Ile, which is the main reason for people to visit.

Closer to the site, the market at La Trinite usually visits twice a week and is particularly good fun – especially if you don't mind being a little adventurous in trying out some of the local produce.

Beach

Our site, La Plage is around a mile south of La Trinite, which is a lovely little town and home to a beautiful harbour filled with yachts and small shops.

La Plage is in a rural location, right next to a large sandy beach, with the site providing direct access via a path.

Set amidst the well kept garden of an old Breton farmhouse, it is quiet and all the more pleasant for it. All plots on site are neatly divided by trees and hedges.

Offering activities for children in high summer, it has a reasonably sized swimming pool and water slide with a separate pool for young children, and there is a small shop and bar/restaurant

overlooking the beach around five minutes' walk away.

The bar was the perfect place to enjoy an evening drink, while the children, who were often too over excited to go to bed at their normal time, tired themselves out in the play area. This was also the location for the occasional evening concert organised by the site.

All plots come with a gas barbeque and linen hire, but what sets the holiday apart is the service offered by the on-site couriers. I have to say the two we had were excellent.

We stayed in a spacious, modern Eurocamp two-bed Superior mobile home, which can actually accommodate seven people. There are a number of varieties of mobile home, ranging from the two-bed like ours to those with three beds. All come with shower and WC, fridge/freezer, oven and hob, mosquito net and blinds and a heater and fan. Depending on what mobile home you go for, there are other mod cons including an iPod docking station if you want. Some sites offer chalets and lodges or you can hire one of the well-equipped family tents.

I came home feeling as relaxed as if I had been away for two months, never mind two weeks. My eldest son is already asking when he can go on the “flag boat” again. For more information log on to www.eurocamp.co.uk

Fact BOX

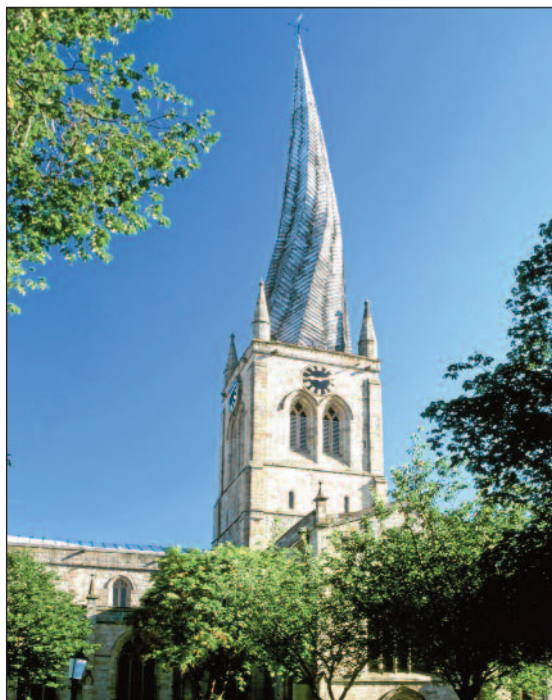
A seven night break at La Plage parc in La Trinite sur Mer, Southern Brittany, staying in a two-bed 'comfort' mobile home costs from £222.30 for a family, accommodation only. For further details call 0844 406 0552 or visit www.eurocamp.co.uk



There are plenty of activities for children of all ages at the campsite



One of two swimming pools at La Plage. There is also a waterslide



Chesterfield's eye-catching twisted spire is an important landmark

Town's £20m hotel has Spanish

A new multi-million pound Spanish-themed hotel has opened in Chesterfield, which is best known for its eye-catching twisted church spire.

The opening of the town's first four-star hotel Casa, with 100-bedrooms, has brought a Spanish flavour to the heart of this historic area.

Casa is the Spanish word for home reflecting the family background of hotel developer and Chesterfield-based entrepreneur Steve Perez, the man behind the VK Vodka Kick drinks brand.

This £20 million independent hotel has 94 deluxe bedrooms complete with 32inch flatscreen televisions, Wi Fi, and floor to ceiling windows.

There are also six stylish suites, which include Jacuzzi baths, a lounge and dressing area, super king or four poster beds and balconies.

For that extra touch of luxury, two suites also have hot tubs on the balcony. The Spanish theme runs throughout the decor.

There are plenty of great places to stay in this market town. But the creation of Casa has given visitors to the Peak District's historic border country a very different choice



The multi-million pound Casa hotel is the creation of Chesterfield entrepreneur Steve Perez

of accommodation – and firmly placed Chesterfield on the list of Derbyshire towns that can be used as a base to explore Britain's first National Park.

The hotel's international flavour can be found at Casa's stylish Cocina restaurant

serving traditional Spanish tapas. It is not the only eatery in Chesterfield serving fine cuisine. Nearby Italian restaurant Nonsolovino, for example, has acquired a good reputation since opening to the public.

Recently featured in the Good Food

Guide, Nonsolovino also incorporates a state-of-the-art wine tasting opportunity, the only one of its kind outside of London and the only one in Britain stocked exclusively with Italian wines.

Anyone in search of a more traditional English experience, will be delighted to discover The Northern Tea Merchants on the bustling Chatsworth Road.

Stocked with teas from around the globe, and serving a mouth-watering range of homemade cakes, The Northern Tea Merchants is an emporium of treats for tea and coffee lovers.

And a short distance along Matlock Road from the town centre is Chesterfield's next big thing: the creation of 26 luxurious rooms at the famous Red Lion Inn at Stone Edge.

Why famous? Largely because this historic inn the edge stands at the very epicentre of the British Isles. But also because of the reputation it has earned for the exceptional food that it serves guests on a daily basis, as well as during two seafood festivals throughout the year.

For accommodation suggestions and short break ideas in the area visit www.visitchesterfield.info