

Cherbourg Cycling Tour



An easy 212 mile, 7800' total climb, route around the Cotentin Peninsula, part coastal, part rural. The eastern coast, scene of the D-Day landings, is picturesque and largely undeveloped. Much of the middle of the peninsula is beautiful marshland with cows peacefully grazing and it's flat! The first of two cycle paths follows the pretty valley of the River Vire and the other, a 42 mile stretch of former railway line, finishes the route going north towards Cherbourg. Along the way are interesting old towns and charming villages, plenty of fresh air and birdsong.

Mini Cherbourg Route

If you just fancy a two or three day break, try this one. 100 miles. Take a short cut from Carentan to Haye-du-Puits along a good quality cycle track (see Cycling in Manche guide).

1 Cherbourg – Lively port. Hotels, youth hostel, campsite 2 miles east in Tourlaville. Try to get a "Plan Touristique" of Cherbourg from their TI before you go or from the ferry terminal if arriving during the day. This shows cycle routes in and around Cherbourg. If you can't, just head east on the fairly quiet D116. Leave this road from time to time to visit coastal hamlets to your left such as Gatteville with its pretty bay and lighthouse with 365 steps. There are numerous campsites along the D116. **19 Miles to Barfleur**

2 Barfleur – Small, elegant harbour. Hotel and campsite. **6 miles to St-Vaast-la-Hougue**

3 St-Vaast-la-Hougue – charming resort and busy fishing port. Hotels and campsite. If you speak good French it's worth a detour to Quinéville for their museum of life under Nazi occupation. **17 miles to Ste-Mère-Eglise**

4 Ste-Mère-Eglise – pleasant small town. Look out for the dummy paratrooper on the church steeple. The Musée Airborne tells the story of the American landings on Utah Beach. Hotels. Campsites on coast. **16 miles to Carentan**

5 Carentan – Capital des Marais (marshland). Many interesting buildings near the Hotel de Ville. Hotels and campsite. From here, use the Cycling in Manche guide (from any TI) to follow the cycle route to St-Fromond.

You can choose to detour to Bayeux and Pointe du Hoc. Bayeux is a grand medieval town with the famous tapestry and a cathedral. Hotels (more expensive than elsewhere) and campsite. Pointe du Hoc's cliff tops are pitted with huge shell holes and German bunkers. **16 miles to St-Fromond Airel**

6. St-Fromond – Continue on the cycle path, next to the river. Signs will show "Chemin de Halage" (tow path). The path by-passes unremarkable St Lo which offers hotels and a TI. The path south

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of St Lo is narrow and very bumpy in parts so can be slow but is very scenic. You can walk up the Roches de Ham a rocky promontory above the river with good views. Campsite at Torigni-sur-Vire. **28 miles to Tessy-sur-Vire**

7 Tessy-sur-Vire – Campsite You can link to the Caen route here. **14 miles to Villedieu-les-Poëlles**

8 Villedieu-les-Poëlles – ancient, lively and touristy town which specialises in copper pans and cast bells – good for heavy souvenirs! Hotels and campsite. **10 miles to La Haye-Pesnel**

9 La Haye-Pesnel – not a tourist town but has everything you need. Hotel, campsite, TI. If you wish to visit le Mont St Michael, leave the route here. **9 miles to St Pair-sur-Mer**

10 St Pair-sur-Mer - small market town. Granville, just to the north has an impressive citadel in the old town – well worth a visit. Hotel, hostel, TI. **22 miles to Coutances**

11 Coutances – old hill town with cathedral. Hotels and campsite. Cycle track: Cambremer to Rocheville 42 miles. See Cycling in Manche guide. To find the start, in Coutances, take the D341 for Cambremer and follow green voie verte signs. This wide, well surfaced track follows the path of an old railway line. Hotels at Haye-du-Puits, St Sauveur-le-Vicomte and Briquebec. In Briquebec, go through an archway to look at the 12th century chateau in its courtyard setting. Camping at Lessay and La Haye du Puits. 42 miles to Rocheville. If you don't like cycle tracks, there are many minor roads nearby you can take instead. Or take a longer coastal route from La Haye du Puits to windswept Cap de la Hague and Omonville la Rogue via Portbail. This route is scenic and hilly in places and traffic at the Cap is heavy in peak season.

12 Rochville – from here the bike route to Cherbourg is marked on a low traffic road which finishes at the Chateau de Ravalet (café), just south of Turlaville. Use the Plan Touristique de Cherbourg to find cycle paths through Cherbourg to the port. **13 miles to the port.**

Cherbourg – departure port

Useful information

Maps. Buy maps that are no more than 3 miles to one inch. 2 miles to 1 inch will make it much easier to find quiet country roads. Satellite navigation is useful and likely to be well used!

Cycle routes. France has many voies vertes (cycle routes). These are well marked (different signs for each French department) and can be paths or quiet roads shared with other vehicles. Pick up the Cycle La

Manche guide from a tourist information centre to see all cycle routes in the Cotentin area – it's invaluable. Alternatively, download from this link: <http://www.manchetourisme.com/uk/pdf/manche-velo-GB-2009.pdf>

Roads. The main D roads are more direct and very well signed but often very busy. Un-numbered roads, or small D or C roads connecting small hamlets are much quieter. These are often shown as white roads on maps. Approach roads to any large town and main coast roads can be busy depending on the time of day and year. Drivers are generally courteous.

Bikes. The cycle tracks state that they are suitable for mountain bikes, hybrids and tourers. In wet conditions, they may not be suitable for road bikes. The path, 4 miles south of St Lo to Tessy-sur-Vire, is on grass and very bumpy and narrow in parts and is unlikely to be comfortable or even possible on a bike with narrow tyres. Alternative roads are available here. The rest of the route is unsuitable for any type of bike. Tourist information offices (Office du Tourisme, TI) have maps for cycle routes and accommodation and camp site lists.