Normandy Impressionist Festival 2013

27th April – 29th September

Normandy Tourist Board

www.normandy-tourism.org
Normandy: the home of Impressionism

Impressionism and Normandy are terms naturally associated with one another, not least because the region actively participated in the birth and development of this artistic movement over the course of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Inspired by the beauty, history and unique light in Normandy, as well as the ease of access from Paris thanks to the expansion of train routes, Impressionists set up their easels along the Channel coast and the banks of the Seine.

Today it is possible to walk in their footsteps, admiring the same timeless landscapes as well as many original works. Throughout summer 2013, the second edition of the Normandy Impressionist Festival will add to the already rich experience.

From April to September exhibits and events are scheduled to take place throughout the region celebrating not only painting but also other forms of artistic expression influenced by Impressionism: music, dance, theatre, photography and architecture. The programme is designed to appeal to residents, summer visitors, fans and art amateurs alike, whether they come from France or elsewhere around the world. The international scope of this event is reflected in the major works on loan for the occasion and by the vast array of visitors expected to attend.
Museums & Exhibitions

‘Dazzling Reflections’
Musée des Beaux-Arts – Rouen, Seine-Maritime
27th April – 29th September 2013
www.rouen-musees.com
Exhibition highlighting Impressionist works inspired by colours reflected on the surface of water.

‘Pissarro and the Ports: Rouen, Dieppe, Le Havre’
Musée d’Art Modère André Malraux (MuMa) – Le Havre, Seine-Maritime
27th April – 29th September 2013
http://lehavre.fr/rubrique/musee-malraux
Exhibition celebrating the work of Camille Pissarro and in particular his depiction of the Normandy ports of Rouen, Dieppe and Le Havre.

‘A Summer at the Water’s Edge – Leisure and Impressionism’
Musée des Beaux Arts de Caen – Caen, Calvados
27th April – 29th September 2013
www.mba.caen.fr
Exhibition focussing on the Impressionists’ introduction of the human form into landscape paintings.

‘Signac, The Colours of Water’
Musée des Impressionnistes – Giverny, Eure
29th March – 2nd July 2013
www.museedesimpressionnismesgiverny.com
Over 120 of Signac’s works including paintings, watercolours and sketches as well as a section documenting his life through photographs, publications and letters.

‘Hiramatsu, the Lily Pond. Homage to Monet’
Musée des Impressionnismes – Giverny, Eure
13th July – 31st October 2013
www.museedesimpressionnismesgiverny.com
A selection of works by Monet exhibited alongside Japanese pieces inspired by the Impressionist movement.

‘Impressions Dior’
Musée Christian Dior – Granville, Manche
4th May – 22nd September 2013
www.musee-dior-granville.com
Exhibition at the childhood home of Christian Dior exploring the links between haute couture and the Impressionist movement.
Experience Impressionism

Learn to Paint Like Monet
Rouen, Seine-Maritime
This 3-hour experience gives visitors the opportunity to visit Monet’s original workshop and create their own interpretation of his famous series of paintings depicting the magnificent Rouen Cathedral. Your teacher will take you through the techniques and present the principal ideas of the Impressionist movement and then it’s down to you to immortalise one of Monet’s great inspirations as you sit face to face with the cathedral.
Prices: From €60 per person
www.so-impressive.com

Musical Impressionist Cruise along the Seine
Wednesday 5th June 2013
Take in the sights of the heartland of the Impressionist movement as you meander down the River Seine on this unforgettable cruise. This themed tour takes you from the quaint port of Honfleur all the way to the medieval city of Rouen, focussing on the importance of water and light in the work of the Impressionists. Lunch is served on board accompanied by a medley of music popular amongst the Impressionists and their contemporaries.
Prices: From €185 per person
www.so-impressive.com

Learn to Cook Like Monet
Le Havre, Seine-Maritime
Monet’s series of paintings of Rouen cathedral may have gained him great acclaim but there are also some lesser known works to which the artist dedicated much of his time and effort – his recipe books. These special cookery classes are open to novice and accomplished chefs alike and take inspiration from Monet’s personal food diaries to open students’ eyes to the beauty and inspiration to be found in fresh, seasonal produce.
Prices: From €87.50 per person including overnight B&B stay and museum entry
Not quite up to scratch on your art history? Here are the most important facts you need to know about Impressionism

What is Impressionism?
Impressionism is not one style of painting, but an artistic movement made up of a range of approaches from treating nature as light and light as colour, to painting what we see, and not what we think we should see? The result is one of unprecedented freshness and luminosity as the impressions change according to the time of day and weather conditions.

When, where, who?
Starting in France in the mid-1800s, Impressionism’s quintessential representatives were Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet and Alfred Sisley. Originally inspired by French and British landscape painters, the artists who launched the Impressionist movement – including Renoir, Cézanne, Degas and Guillaumin – branched off in many directions. And others, namely Gauguin and Van Gogh, brushed shoulders with the Impressionist movement before shooting off on their own personal, and equally controversial, quests.
Normandy in particular inspired the Impressionists, many of whom were native to the region, thanks to its ever-changing and unpredictable weather and light conditions. The painters could expect to capture several different landscapes in one day, or even a matter of hours.

Claude Monet – Vue générale de Rouen 1892 – Musée des Beaux-arts de Rouen
Why were they called Impressionists?

They were variously called “Independents”, then “Intransigents”, then the “Group of Batignolles” before the term “Impressionists” was coined by a journalist deriding Monet’s “Impression: Soleil Levant” (“Impression: rising sun”). And Impressionists they would remain, first as individuals, then as a group who met, exchanged and painted together, breaking new artistic ground with every brush stroke and reinventing the world of art.

What was the next step?

Excluded from official salons, 31 artists set up their first exhibition at a Parisian apartment in April 1874. Two years later, critics still struggled with the concept, claiming, “They get some canvas, colours and brushes, throw them all together and see what happens!” In fact, it would take most contemporaries some 30 years to consider Impressionist paintings to be genuine art. But once they did, as they say, the rest is history!

Charles Pecrus – Hotel de la Mer, Trouville – Musée Montebello, Honfleur

Why was Impressionism so controversial?

Today, it is hard to imagine making fun of Monet or cancelling an exhibition to avoid the scandal surrounding Manet’s Déjeuner sur l’Herbe (The Picnic), arguably one of the world’s most famous paintings. But, in the art world of the 1870s, the Académie des Beaux-Arts still made the Rules, and any self-respecting artist was expected to follow them, or suffer the consequences.

Therein lay the problem; the Impressionists didn’t follow the rules. Instead of painting mythological or historical tableaux, they depicted landscapes or scenes from everyday life. Instead of outlining the various figures in their paintings, they used dabs and strokes of colour, often in pastel shades. Instead of mixing their oils on the palette, they boldly used pure colours, letting the eye do the blending. Instead of painting in Academy-approved studios, they often painted outdoors, capturing the moment, eschewing detail for the bigger picture.
Impressionist highlights in Normandy

With so much to see, the big question is where to begin? Since you can’t be in two (or three, or four!) places at once, here are some must-see sites for visitors.

Rouen

Ideally located on the Seine between Paris and the Normandy coast, Rouen attracted numerous Impressionist painters, who flocked to the city, fascinated by the new industrial sites, the area’s natural beauty and the plethora of unspoiled architectural gems.

The jewel in the crown is Rouen’s Notre Dame Cathedral, which would have its moment of glory when Monet consecrated some 30 canvases to its façade. The artist, who painted at various times of day to capture the changes in luminosity, ensured he had the very best vantage point to do so by setting up a temporary workshop in, what is today, the Rouen Tourist Office but which, at the time, was a ladies’ lingerie shop!

Before leaving Rouen, take the cornice road up to the top of the Colline Sainte-Catherine and admire the superb view that unfolds below you. It was on this hilltop that Claude Monet painted his interpretation of the city before starting work on the Cathedral series.

Giverny

This little village was home to Claude Monet for over 43 years after he decided to settle down to paint there in 1883. It was in Giverny that Monet began painting his famous “Series”, seeking variations of light on a field, on trees or on the Seine. Today you can visit the gardener-artist’s signature gardens: the Clos Norman flower garden and, behind it, the Oriental water garden with its Japanese bridge and water lily pond. The real-life versions of his best known works!

A few minutes down the road you’ll find the Giverny Impressionism Museum which hosts Impressionist exhibits focusing on local artists including, of course, Claude Monet. The Musée des Impressionnismes Giverny opened in 2009 as a tribute to the Impressionist painters who settled in the Seine Valley either for a summer or a lifetime, and invites visitors to explore the history and influence of Impressionism.

The Seine Valley

The Impressionists found the river Seine and its banks to be a never-ending source of inspiration. The interaction between light and water was a recurring theme. Armand Guillaumin, who developed a landscape style tinged with romanticism, was just one Impressionist who rose to the challenge of the river’s unique atmosphere, namely with his paintings of snowy banks.
The Alabaster Coast

This coastline of chalk cliffs and green pastures stretches from Le Havre eastwards along the coast to Fécamp. Special mention must go to Etretat for its stunning cliff formations. Monet interpreted many of the scenes along this coast, leaving us a canvas trail to follow and an invitation to explore it on our own.

The stunning view from the summit of a nearby 350-foot cliff inspired many artists, including Morisot, Schuffenecker and Monet, who painted 22 works here, one of which can be seen in the Malraux Museum in Le Havre.

Le Havre

The Impressionists, attracted by the unique, ever-changing light play in the estuary, attempted to capture its colors on canvas. A chic 19th century seaside resort for Parisians, the town was also the summer home of Monet who frequently stayed, and worked, at his aunt’s house in Sainte-Adresse.

Today, the Malraux Museum boasts a collection of Impressionist works rivalling Rouen's Fine Arts Museum. These include paintings by Boudin, Courbet, Corot, Sisley, Pissarro, Renoir, as well as some Post-Impressionist collections. While you are there, take the time to wander Le Havre’s city centre, a stunning example of modern post-war architecture that has been named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Honfleur

A charming fishing port with traditional Norman architecture, Honfleur looks much as it did when Monet was a frequent visitor. Forerunner of the Impressionist movement, Honfleur-born Eugène Boudin was a strong influence on Claude Monet, who once said, “If I became a painter, I owe it to Boudin”.

Monet first met Boudin in Honfleur, and would subsequently drag the whole band of renegade artists - Courbet, Corot, Sisley, Pissarro and Renoir - to the Saint Simeon farm, which is now a 5* hotel. From this promontory they endlessly painted the colors of the Seine bay and surrounding area, earning them the title of “Estuary Painters”. Today, a number of these paintings are on exhibit at the Eugène Boudin Museum next to the Place Eric Satie.

Deauville Trouville Cabourg

Scenes from these trendy seaside resorts were painted by a number of Impressionists, including the Plage à Trouville by Eugène Boudin (1893). Deauville’s sandy beach dotted with brightly colored beach umbrellas, its white-washed bath houses and traditional boardwalk confers a timeless feel to this familiar scene. Monet also painted the famous seaside resort of Cabourg and its “Grand Hotel”, reflecting the varying moods of the sea and sky.
Impressionist itineraries

Normandy helped the Impressionists break away from academic tradition, an act that would earn them scorn in their lifetime, and universal admiration today. So where better to admire their works or try your hand at painting your own, than in the Normandy countryside or along the Channel coast - where it all began?

Circuit 1: The seaside resorts
Dieppe – Pourville - Varengeville-sur-Mer - Offranville

Stroll through the streets of Dieppe like Camille Pissarro used to do, gaze up at the Castle, or even visit its museum.

Next stop, the chalk cliffs of Pourville and Varengeville, two favorite haunts of Claude Monet. In Varengeville, the local church boasts stained glass windows by Ubac and Braque, while the beautifully landscaped Moutiers Wood Park is also worth a visit.

Then continue on to Offranville where the Jacques Emile Blanche Museum houses works of William Farcy.

Circuit 2: The Sea
Fécamp – Yport – Etretat

Walk in the footsteps of Morisot, Manet and Courbet, as well as writer Guy de Maupassant, and discover the charm of these seaside resorts, fishing ports and the famous sculpted cliffs of Etretat.

Take the chalk trail leading up from the pebble beach to reach a vantage point no Impressionist could resist.

Circuit 3: The light
Sainte-Adresse – Le Havre – Honfleur

These were favourite sites for Impressionists exploring the play of light on water. Sainte-Adresse was a favorite seaside resort for 19th century Parisians and Claude Monet.

Just next door, Le Havre - whose unique post-war architecture recently earned it UNESCO’s World Heritage Site label - is definitely worth a visit. Don’t miss the large Impressionist collection at the Malraux Museum.

Just across the Seine, Honfleur is indisputably one of the most beautiful towns on the Normandy coast. There, the Eugène Boudin Museum houses a collection of the artist’s works as well as paintings by other “Estuary Artists”.

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Circuit 4: The river
Caudebec-en-Caux – Saint-Pierre-de-Manneville – La Bouille

Follow the meandering Seine and discover the lush landscapes of its banks that the Impressionists painted time and time again.

Don’t miss the Seine Marine Museum in Caudebec-en-Caux, the exquisite 11th century abbey in Jumièges, and the cliff-top splendor of La Bouille immortalized by Sisley and Turner.

Circuit 5: The moment
Rouen

Wander the city streets in the footsteps of Monet, Pissarro, Manet and Sisley, making sure to stop at the cathedral immortalized by Claude Monet’s famous Series.

The Rouen Tourist Office offers painting classes in the very room that Monet used as his workshop whilst painting this series. Find out more at

Also of interest are the medieval streets of the antique dealer district (Saint-Maclou), and the art galleries around the rue Eau de Robec.

The Fine Arts Museum houses an impressive permanent collection, and is planning a major exhibition of loaned masterpieces as the flagship event of the 2013 Impressionist Festival.

Circuit 6: The gardens
Giverny – Vernon – Les Andelys

Celebrating nature was the very cornerstone of the Impressionist movement. It was natural beauty that drew artists to Giverny, where you can visit the home of Claude Monet: soak up the ambiance of his studio and gardens, featuring the quintessential water lily pond and Japanese bridge.

Visit the Giverny Impressionism Museum for a fix of Impressionist paintings before heading to Vernon, where a permanent collection of Bonnard awaits you at the A.G. Poulain museum.

Finally, follow the Seine up to Les Andelys where the river’s banks, once again, inspired countless artists, this time against the imposing backdrop of Richard the Lionheart’s Chateau Gaillard.
Map of Normandy