

IVEL VALLEY NORMANDY PRACTICAL HINTS AND TIPS

GETTING THERE

Dover to Calais - a short 90-minute crossing (or via the tunnel) and then an easy 4-hour drive to the Calvados area. Lots of departures and cost around £160 return for a car and passengers. Tolls are payable on most motorways or take the scenic route and make some stops along the way.

Portsmouth or Southampton to Normandy ports. Longer crossings, about 6 to 7 hours for daytime sailings, it's almost a mini cruise to Dieppe, Le Havre, Cherbourg or Caen but with the huge advantage of a very short drive to Bayeux. Choose Caen and depending on where you choose to stay, you could be there in 30 minutes from getting off the ferry.

Perhaps travel overnight and book a cabin - a very nice start to the holiday. Cost about £300 return plus cabin costs if appropriate. If you plan to take the longer crossing suggest you book sooner rather than later due to limited number of departures.

WHERE TO STAY

Whilst this is 'France Rurale', an area of gentle countryside it's also a major tourist destination for people from throughout the world as well as those from other parts of France. This means there is a huge choice of accommodation - campsites, gites / cottages / B & Bs / smart hotels / simpler hotels - something to suit all.

Sites such as Booking.com and Airbnb operate exactly the same as in the UK. Other sites you may find useful include

<https://www.gites-de-france.com>

<https://www.logishotels.com/>

<https://www.chambres-hotes.fr/>

DRIVING

The nature of the area makes having your own transport almost compulsory and you may wish to car share to get there/whilst in Calvados.

For those taking their car as long as you remember to drive on the right it is very easy. 'Green cards' are a thing of the past; insurers rarely make an issue of overseas driving but it is worth looking at breakdown cover. You will need a UK sticker for your vehicle (rather than the pre-Brexit GB sticker). The roads (even motorways down from Calais) are generally very quiet, in good condition and with good signage.

English is relatively widely spoken or at least understood and Google translate is great!

PASSPORTS AND HOLIDAY INSURANCE

If you are in any doubt about the validity/expiry date of your passport do renew it! Holiday insurance is entirely an individual responsibility for the entire trip. We would also suggest getting a Global Health Insurance card at no cost if your European card has expired or you have never had one. It will provide you with healthcare at the same cost as the locals.

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>

MONEY, COMMUNICATION AND MAPS

Like in the UK payment by card is now the norm in France (take some Euros in case of emergency). If the cards you use in the UK charge exchange and/or transaction fees suggest you apply for one of the few that do not. You'll get up to date information from people such as Martin Lewis or the travel writer Simon Calder.

If your phone provider charges extra to call/text UK numbers when abroad suggest you use WhatsApp.

Walking Maps – If you like to follow the walks with a map we will be walking in the area covered by paper maps Carte de Randonnee 1:25000 1512OT Bayeux and 1412OT Pointe du Hoc Omaha Beach. If you like a map on your phone, we find Outdoor Active excellent and there is no charge for their standard app.

And lastly there is a whole host of information on the UK government website about travelling to France (and other countries). You can sign up for updates at

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/france>

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