



SATURDAY

June 17 2023 | thetimes.co.uk | No 74125

£3.50 £2.30 to subscribers
(based on a 7 Day Print and Digital Subscription)



Bride of Wildenstein and her \$2.5 billion



Hairy Bikers

Cancer made our friendship stronger

MAGAZINE

DAVID LEVENSON/GETTY IMAGES

Security fears over Johnson's notebooks

Officials refuse to return ex-PM's 'sensitive' journals

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Boris Johnson's 25 notebooks from his time in office are being withheld from him by the government after a review by the security services found pages of highly sensitive material.

Officials have advised that the sensitive passages should only be viewed by people with the highest level of security clearance and must be "appropriately stored" in a secure location if they are returned to Johnson. The review also raised concerns about some of Johnson's WhatsApp messages.

The dispute over the notebooks thrusts Johnson once again to the centre of a legal battle between the government and the Covid inquiry as Rishi Sunak tries to move on from an acrimonious dispute with his predecessor.

Johnson has asked his supporters not to vote against a damning report which found he deliberately misled the Commons, amid claims that attempting to put up a fight would expose his lack of support among Conservative MPs.

Allies of the former prime minister insist he wants to move on from Tory infighting but Johnson has begun writing a new column in the Daily Mail that will be followed nervously in Downing Street. The ministerial ethics watchdog accused Johnson of a "clear breach" of its rules after he informed them about the column half an hour before it was announced yesterday.

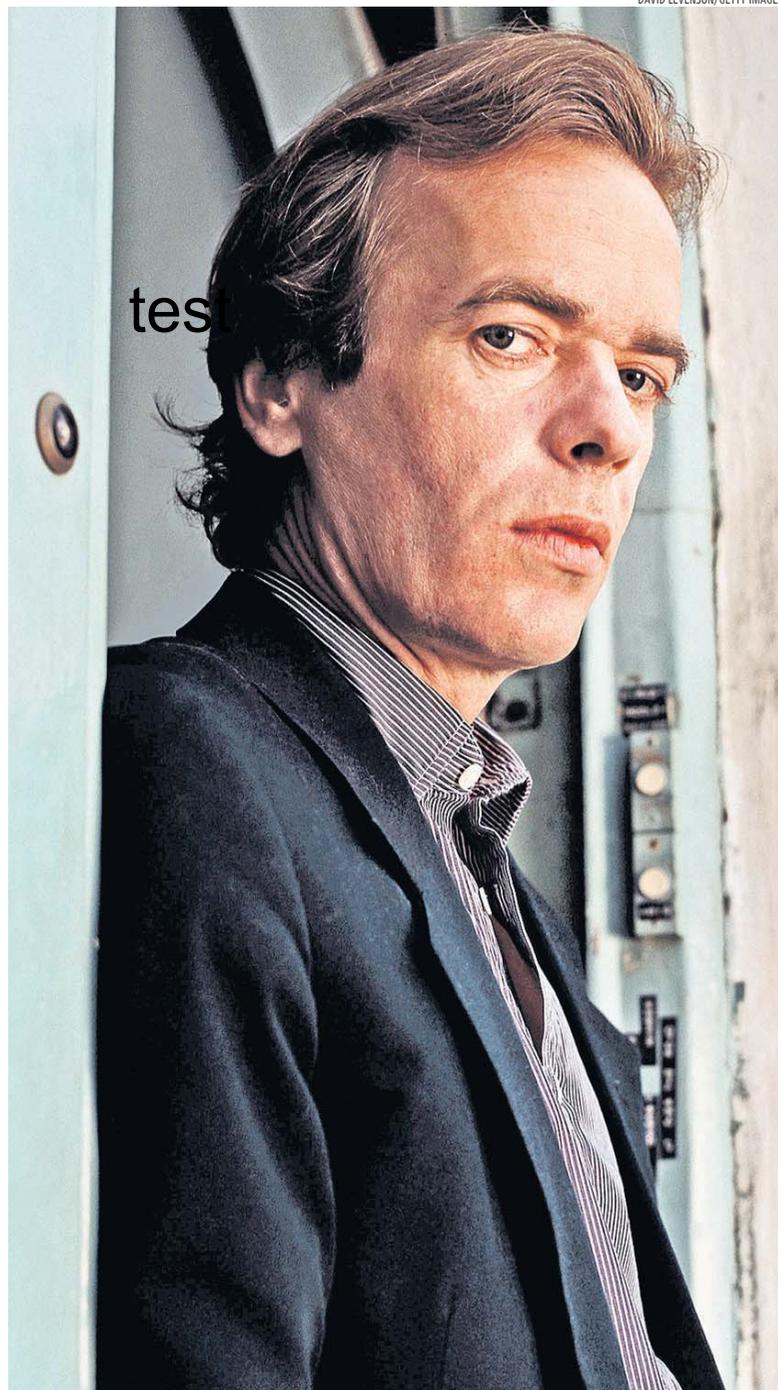
Johnson's notebooks remain at the centre of a legal battle between the government and the Covid public inquiry, due to culminate in a judicial review at the end of the month. The dispute revealed for the first time that Johnson was keeping detailed notes of his time in Downing Street, which are expected to form the basis of political memoirs.

Baroness Hallett, the inquiry's chairwoman, has demanded access to unredacted copies of Johnson's notebooks and WhatsApp messages so she can determine which parts are relevant.

The Cabinet Office has refused to comply, and has only been willing to provide redacted copies. Its position has perplexed many Tory MPs, who have urged the government to demonstrate a greater commitment to transparency.

The Cabinet Office has told the inquiry: "Some of the material in question may involve issues of national security and we appreciate the inquiry's understanding of the need to treat sensitive material appropriately. We will continue to work with both Mr Johnson and the inquiry to ensure that any materials that may contain ... security sensitivities are handled appropriately."

A source close to Johnson insisted that there is "no national security sensitive material" in the notebooks, describing them as "daily jottings from Continued on page 2



Knighthood for Amis the day before he died

The author Martin Amis received the same honour as his father Sir Kingsley last month **Pages 4-5**

SPORT

The Ashes Mike Atherton on a thrilling first day



WEEKEND

How to get a good night's sleep over 40 Expert guide



Only £1.07 a day for your Times newspaper when you subscribe

Page 44



9 771742 498363



24

Normandy's 23 best places to stay

LUCK PHOTOGRAPHE: MAISON CERONNE

Find a bolt hole in Rouen, a Cider Route B&B or a hotel on Mont St Michel. By **Andrew Eames**

It was art that put Normandy on the international map. The first time the word “impressionism” was deployed, it was to describe a Claude Monet painting of a sunrise over the Normandy port of Le Havre.

By the latter half of the 19th century Monet and his contemporaries had started regular sorties from Paris in search of pastoral and coastal subjects for their new way of seeing. They particularly favoured Honfleur, where the Seine meets the sea — still picture-perfect today — and Monet settled upstream in Giverny.

A lot of water has passed under Seine bridges since then, and a lot more people have discovered Normandy's idyllic half-timbered villages, orchards, pungent cheeses and fine-sand beaches.

Inland, Normandy is a rural region of meadows and orchards, dotted with grand châteaux, many with accommodation. It's a place to go to ground, visiting the weekly market and eating local. One of its finest regions is the Pays d'Auge, home to artisan cider and calvados makers, many of which are connected by a Cider Route that you can cycle, walk or drive.

Much of the landscape here is undulating and gentle, but it's more dramatic in the far south — the so-called Suisse Normande, where rocky crags and deep river gorges are perfect for climbing, mountain biking and kayaking. To the east is the Perche, a region of river valleys and colourful villages loved by weekendening Parisians.

There are broad beaches all along the coast, particularly near the resort of Deauville, famed for its sand yachts and coloured parasols. And there's so much sand lining the west coast of the Cotentin peninsula that you could easily have a mile of it to yourself. But it's not all about finding an idyll. Some of the finest beaches were the most gruelling battlegrounds of the Second World War, and the Normandy landings are a significant driver of tourism.

Utah beach, where the Americans came ashore, at the foot of the Cotentin peninsula, now has a flourishing shellfish business. The handsome port of Granville is the jumping-off point for the largest archipelago in northern Europe, little-known Chausey, which at low tide comprises 365 islands, with some 300 of them submerged when the water rises.

Towering over the same huge tides is Mont St Michel. The celebrated abbey-topped isle has more than 2.5 million visitors a year. Stay in one of its hotels, though, and you will get a sense of why the monks chose it as a place of contemplation.

With this list of characterful hotels, chambre d'hôtes and guesthouses you're sure to find your own peaceful corner too.

The best way to access all this is by ferry to Dieppe (from Newhaven; dfds.com), Le Havre, Caen and Cherbourg (from Portsmouth and Poole; brittany-ferries.co.uk). Or trains to Rouen from Lille, connecting with the Eurostar. Allez!



Château Côte de Nacre, Arramanches



Maison Ceronne, Mortagne-au-Perche

IN THE SOUTH

Le Tribunal Mortagne-au-Perche

Southern Normandy's Perche region is a succession of gentle hills clad in beech and oak. Much of it is designated a protected natural park. Its main hub is Mortagne-au-Perche, a market town of cobbled streets, antique shops and magnificent mansions that is famous for its black pudding. Comfortable Le Tribunal, with an excellent restaurant, has colonised a mix of buildings from the 16th and 18th centuries, popular with weekendening Parisians. Dine on poached egg with asparagus and morel, foie gras with rhubarb chutney, black pudding with rosemary crumble, and lemon and tonka bean soufflé (four courses £37).

Details Room-only doubles from £106 (hotel-tribunal.fr)

Maison Ceronne Mortagne-au-Perche

If ever there was a sign that chic Parisians are Perche fans, this is it. Maison Ceronne, near Mortagne-au-Perche, may have just eight rooms, but it also has a cinema, gym, sauna and hammam, as well as indoor and outdoor pools in black marble. Large fireplaces, exposed beams and eclectic art are married with polished concrete and chrome. The surrounding landscape is full of quiet scenic villages and churches.

Details B&B doubles from £326 for a two-night minimum stay (maisonceronne.com)

Domaine de la Pommeraye near Caen

The so-called Suisse Normande, south of Caen, has the highest hills in Normandy,

and although they reach only 305m (1,000ft) this is nevertheless where Normandy goes a bit wild. Its dramatic rocky outcrops are loved by hikers and rock climbers, while its river, the Orne, is popular with kayakers. The Domaine de la Pommeraye has a spa offering treatments from Thai reflexology to body wraps, and lavish, loft-like rooms where huge oak beams contrast with light-coloured stone.

Details B&B doubles from £108 (pommeraye.fr)

CAEN AND THE WEST

Château Côte de Nacre Arramanches

The handsome neoclassical Château Côte de Nacre, set in grounds with its own lake, has been remodelled into five modern, light-filled apartments. The white and bright spaces are pepped up with pineapple-shaped mirrors, antique furniture and sequinned cushions. A small spa features an indoor pool and a sauna. Outside, guests can take the rowing boat out on the lake or borrow bikes to explore Ver-sur-Mer. The Bayeux Tapestry and the Normandy beaches are within easy reach.

Details Minimum two nights' self-catering for four from £374 (en.chateaucotedenacre.com)

Nid d'Hirondelles Caen

William the Conqueror's home town was in the thick of things during the Second World War, so a lot of its centre has been reconstructed. That has created room for art and fashion boutiques, while its pedestrianised Vaugueux quarter is filled with excellent restaurants, serving local specialities such as salt marsh lamb, and tripe if you're feeling brave. Its

11th-century castle is one of the largest medieval complexes in Europe and an impressive piece of military architecture. The Nid d'Hirondelles apartments are decorated with the artistic creations of their owner, and are within easy walking distance of Vaugueux.

Details One night's self-catering for two from £81 (sawdays.co.uk)

Le Normandy Deauville

Deauville is Normandy's Cannes — an upmarket beach resort for Parisians who flocked here in the railway age. It's known for its grand casino, horse races, and American Film Festival (September 1-10, festival-deauville.com), and its wide, sandy beach is backed by the 1920s boardwalk Les Planches, where film stars such as Rita Hayworth came to strut their stuff. Over the years a good few of them have stayed at Le Normandy, a 270-room pile in the heart of the action. Its interiors are all pale timbers, pastel fabrics and designer wallpapers, and there's a pool and spa.

Details Room-only doubles from £250 (hotelsbarriere.com)

Domaine de la Cour au Grip Repentigny

The Pays d'Auge, to the east of Caen, is an unhurried, painterly landscape, mixing oak and hazel woodland with cattle-filled orchards where morning mists lie low in the valleys and the autumn colours are magnificent. This is cider country, and there are still 20-odd cider makers on the 25-mile Cider Route. The former farm of Domaine de la Cour au Grip is on that route in the village of Repentigny, not

More hotels next page

48 Travel

► far from Beuvron-en-Auge, one of the prettiest villages in France. You can choose to stay there in a converted cider barrel — cosy but comfortable — and there is a gîte and guest rooms, with exposed beams and white walls in a half-timbered house.

Details B&B doubles in the cider barrel from £90 (domainedelacouraugrip.com)

Le P'tit Beaumont Beaumont-en-Auge

Pungent cheese from Pont-l'Évêque and Camembert, cider and calvados from the Pays d'Auge and all the seafood of the Normandy coast mean the whole region is an embarrassment of riches. There's a benefit to staying local when you pick somewhere such as Beaumont-en-Auge, a pretty hilltop village that is a brilliant base for any kind of exploration; you could rent an old-fashioned Citroën 2CV in Pont-l'Évêque (from £214 a day, balades-2cv-normandie.com). The hub of everything here is Le P'tit Beaumont, a village hotel where cider workers gather for gossip and lunch. It has small and simple yet cheerful rooms, and a large outside terrace.

Details Room-only doubles from £51 (leptitbeaumont.com)

Château d'Audrieu near Caen and Bayeux

The handsome Château d'Audrieu, halfway between Caen and Bayeux, was built in 1715 and is listed as a historical monument. The exteriors have remained

unchanged, although the 12 acres of formal gardens have been enhanced by a swimming pool and a luxury treehouse, and the interiors have been rejuvenated in keeping with the period. That means tapestries, cabinets and fabric wallpapers, but also a spa and fitness centre, plus quality dining.

Details Room-only doubles from £262 (chateaudaudrieu.com)

Manoir de Mathan Crépon

The Normandy landings were an epic slice of human endeavour, and the Second World War museums and cemeteries that dot the coast bring the period roaring back to life. Arromanches, where a giant port was assembled overnight, is an essential stop, as is Utah Beach, where the Americans landed. Gold Beach, where the British fought their way ashore, is two miles from the Manoir de Mathan in the village Crépon. This nicely understated hotel of exposed beams and brickwork, surrounded by meadows, has been created out of 17th-century manor-farm buildings.

Details Room-only doubles from £74 (normandie-hotel.org)

La Maison Gervaiserie Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue

Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue is a picturesque fishing and sailing base at the northeast corner of the Cotentin peninsula, famed for its oysters and yacht marina and not far from Cherbourg. It was voted



Hôtel du Fort et des Îles, Chausey Islands



France's favourite village in 2019 by viewers of a popular TV show, *Village Préféré des Français*. Its 17th-century Vauban de la Hougue tower is Unesco-registered, and at very low tides you can walk across the sandy flats to the

Polynesian-sounding island of Tatihou for gardens, cafés and a museum. Stay north of town in La Maison Gervaiserie, which has two gîtes and four guest rooms in the handsome stone main house. Each features individual decor,

test






THE FINALE SALE

If you've been waiting for the perfect moment to escape with Seabourn, now is the time. Our last-remaining suites are your chance for a spontaneous adventure and savings of up to 30% on select sailings.



SAVE UP TO 30%

Journey	Date	Nights	Ship	From/to	Veranda suite from (pp)
Adriatic & Riviera Gems	08 Jul 23	10	Seabourn Quest	Venice to Barcelona	£4,119*
Aegean Allure	23 July 23	7	Seabourn Encore	Athens to Istanbul	£3,599
Western Europe Treasures	24 July 23	8	Seabourn Quest	Lisbon to Dover	£4,199
Greek & Turkish Isles	30 July 23	7	Seabourn Ovation	Istanbul to Athens	£3,999
Greece & Dalmatian Delights	20 Aug 23	7	Seabourn Encore	Athens to Venice	£3,899
Adriatic & Greek Treasures	27 Aug 23	7	Seabourn Encore	Venice to Athens	£3,999
Gems of Scandinavia	03 Sep 23	7	Seabourn Ovation	Copenhagen to Dover	£2,899
Path of the Ancient Seafarers	24 Sep 23	14	Seabourn Ovation	Dover to Lisbon	£5,119

Experience The Seabourn Difference with intimate ships and personalised service including all-ocean front suites, complimentary premium drinks, gratuities, and WiFi. Book by 10 July 2023



THE CRUISE LINE

YOUR LUXURY CRUISE EXPERT

0808 304 4324

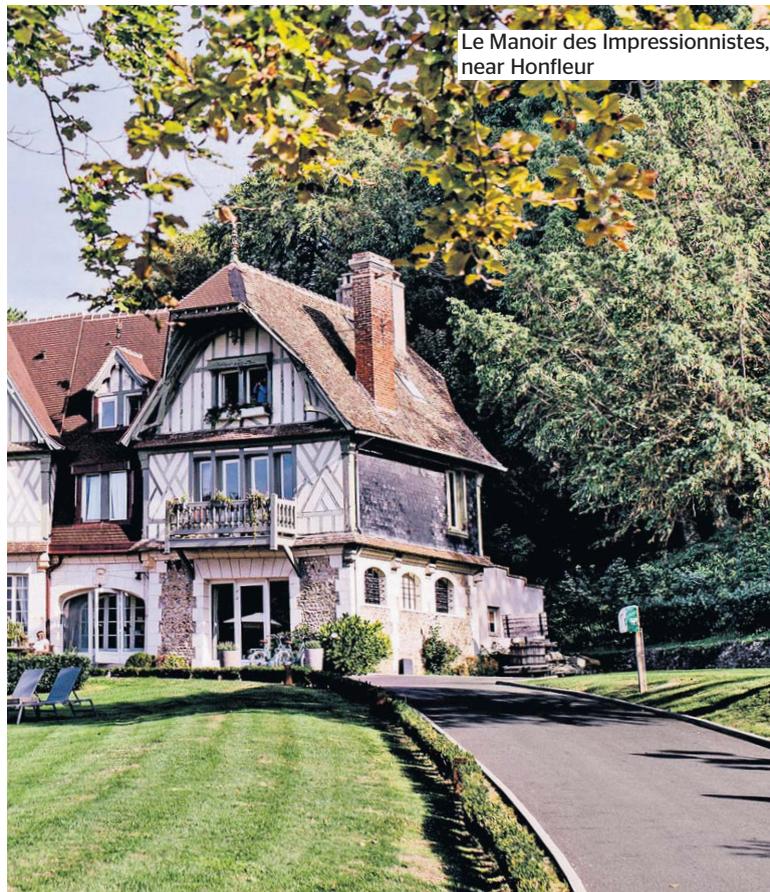
www.cruiseline.co.uk

res@cruiseline.co.uk




The Finale Sale Offer is applicable on select 2023 sailings and select suite categories. Book by 10 July and receive up to 30% off when you book a fully non-refundable cruise fare. Fares are cruise only per person based on twin share. *Based on Ocean View Suite. Offers are subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time. All prices are correct at the time of going to press. E&OE





Le Manoir des Impressionnistes, near Honfleur



La Maison Gervaiserie, Cotentin Peninsula



Le Landemer, near Cherbourg

from black-and-white striped walls offset by tropical-print panelling and rugs. **Details** B&B doubles from £107 (lamaisongervaiserie.com)

Le Landemer Urville-Nacqueville

Not every ferry traveller wants to hurry home. Le Landemer, barely ten miles along the coast from the ferry port of Cherbourg, is for those who like to linger. This designer conversion of a coastal house is as much an eating as a sleeping place, with five traditional rooms in the main house, and four more modern rooms with big picture windows smuggled away in an adjacent building. Most of them have stunning sea views, as does the gastronomic restaurant in its glass conservatory, featuring fish and local produce (six courses for £60). The hotel is at the beginning of the 50-mile Sentier des Douaniers (customs officers' path), which runs around the wild Cap de la Hague.

Details Room-only doubles from £138 (le-landemer.com)

Maison de Juliette Granville

The port of Granville, on the Bay of Mont St Michel, is the most handsome town on the Cotentin peninsula. Famous for lobsters, it is also the birthplace of Christian Dior. The fortified upper town that shelters the harbour is a bit of a seaside Montmartre, rich in painters and potters. In its narrow winding streets, echoing with seagulls' cries, is the tall Maison de Juliette, with three chambre d'hôtes up a winding stair. Distinctive, personable and immaculate. **Details** B&B doubles from £73 (tourisme-granville-terre-mer.com)

Hôtel du Fort et des Îles Chausey Islands

The Chausey Islands, a granite archipelago with huge tides and white sand beaches, lie 45 minutes by ferry from Granville (vedettesjoliefrance.com). A century ago the main island was home to 500 people, mostly fishermen, seaweed gatherers and quarrymen.

Today barely ten permanent residents remain, but its village houses have become gîtes, and Hôtel du Fort et des Îles has eight rooms. The hotel looks a bit like an Algerian gunslinger's saloon with touches of Île de Ré decor. It's a good feeling to stay on when the day-trippers have gone.

Details Room-only doubles from £112 (hotel-chausey.com; email or phone for bookings)

La Mère Poulard Mont St Michel

The tidal island Mont St Michel's distinctive abbey-topped silhouette is instantly recognisable, but not many people realise that it has a couple of traditional small hotels, one of which is La Mère Poulard, a sweet inn with simple rooms in red-and-white stripes, raspberry and moody hues. The property has lots of stairs, but the setting is magical. Climb the winding road to sit on a parapet and watch the huge tides celebrated by Victor Hugo come galloping in. Return for Mère Poulard's signature dish — a fluffy omelette cooked over a fire.

Details B&B doubles from £237 (lamerepoulard.com)

ROUEN AND THE EAST

Le Manoir des Impressionnistes near Honfleur

Honfleur is a deliciously picturesque, mostly 16th-century river port, painted by Monet, Corot and Boudin, with 100 restaurants and 80 art galleries. It is regularly overwhelmed by visitors, which is why we like the elegant Le Manoir des Impressionnistes. The 18th-century mansion sits half a mile west of the port, presiding over sandy flats where the Seine meets the sea. The interiors are simple yet chic while remaining true to the period. There's a pool, gently sloping lawns, and the lights of Le Havre twinkle across the water after dark.

Details B&B doubles from £325 (manoirdesimpressionnistes.com)

test



La Maison Caillet near Fécamp

Wedge in the cliffs, Fécamp is an important handler of seafood and was France's premier herring port. It is the home of Benedictine in a fantasy-château distillery, and has an interesting war history and surprising connections to British working men's clubs, big consumers of the liqueur made there. Stay in the pint-sized Maison Caillet inland at Valmont, in one of its five immaculate rooms featuring drapes with colourful nature-themed designs and star-burst mirrors. The chef, Pierre, and his wife, Cécile, are hands-on in the vegetable patch as well as in the kitchen. Everything is homemade, and you won't find a better-value Michelin-starred

menu, with dorado carpaccio and a fragrant, soft fillet of turbot on the five-course tasting menu (£75). **Details** B&B doubles from £135 (maisoncaillet.com)

Le Donjon Domaine Saint Clair Étretat

The 19th-century's artists (Monet) and writers (Maurice Leblanc, author of the Lupin mysteries) must have had healthy incomes to afford Étretat. This Belle Époque resort, with its covered wooden market, is set in a cleft in the chalk cliffs, famous for their arches and pinnacles. Stay here in Le Donjon Domaine Saint Clair, a glamorous spa property that presides over the back of town. There's a celebrity guest list and a Michelin star for one of its two restaurants, using only seafood and seasonal vegetables (menus from £47). Rooms are spread between three buildings and have cool globe lights and leaf-pattern wallpaper. There's an outdoor pool and spa too. **Details** Room-only doubles from £163 (hoteletretat.com)

Relais Hôtelier Douce France, Dieppe

Most UK visitors coming off the ferry at Dieppe rush south, unaware that one of northern France's loveliest spots is a

stone's throw away. Victor Hugo and Guy de Maupassant cherished Veules-les-Roses, ten miles west of Dieppe along the Alabaster Coast. Many an artist has come here to paint the River Veules as it winds through watercress beds and between half-timbered houses. Stay in the charming Relais Hôtelier Douce France, with its tranquil terrace by the waterside, and take afternoon tea under the cloisters in its flowered courtyard. Rooms are in pretty plaster pink with floral headboards.

Details Room-only doubles from £98 (doucefrance.fr)

Bourgtheroulde Rouen

Normandy's capital is a destination in its own right. Its medieval centre is mostly pedestrianised, with a 14th-century astrological clock still ticking after 634 years. Its ancient cathedral has a sculpture-encrusted façade that Monet painted repeatedly. Its free Beaux Arts Museum is stuffed with goodies by Géricault, Delacroix and Degas (mbarouen.fr/en/the-museum-4). The grand Bourgtheroulde is in a Renaissance building with a spa and indoor pool.

Details Room-only doubles from £327 (hotelsparouen.com)

La Musardière Giverny

This elegant village on the banks of the Seine is suffused with the influence of its most famous resident, Claude Monet. The impressionist's house is a visitor magnet; its garden blazing with colour, its interiors simple, and its pond covered in lilies and shrouded in willow (£10, fondation-monet.com). Giverny is rich in dining and hotels, and you can do both at La Musardière, a 19th-century former convalescent home for young ladies. Natural linens and light oak furniture characterise the bedrooms. The restaurant's outside terrace is busy on summer lunchtimes; try the homemade terrine and fish soup (mains from £22). **Details** Room-only doubles from £129 (lamusardiere.fr)

Domaine le Clos des Fontaines near Duclair and Le Trait

The Seine meanders west of Rouen, throwing big loops around orchards and marshes. The area is a regional park, but it is the river and its erratic passage that have deterred developers and preserved traditional lifestyles. Once upon a time powerful monasteries controlled the river, including a large one at Jumièges, a ruin since the Revolution but still impressive. Secreted in the refined little abbey village is a spa hotel, the Domaine le Clos des Fontaines, with an outside pool and simple rooms with chirpy wallpapers. **Details** Room-only doubles from £98 (leclodesfontaines.com)

Manoir de Villers near Rouen

There are few opportunities to stay in a picture-book Normandy château that is truly authentic, right down to its owner-hosts. West of Rouen is the 16th-century Manoir de Villers, beautifully half-timbered with gracious hosts, the Mery de Bellegardes, whose family have been in residence for nearly 300 years. Rooms are old-school with brocaded cushions, creaking floorboards and family portraits.

Details B&B doubles from £146 (manoirdevillers.com)