Long before **Brittany** became subsumed into France, the inhabitants of this rugged Atlantic promontory were risking their lives fishing and trading on the violent seas, and struggling with the arid soil of the interior. Today this toughness and resilience continues to define the region, which is deeply infused with Celtic culture: mystical, musical, sometimes morbid and defeatist, sometimes vital and inspired. Archeologically, Brittany is among the richest sites in the world – the alignments at Carnac rival Stonehenge. It first appeared in history as the quasi-mythical “Little Britain” of Arthurian legend, and in the days when travel by sea was safer and easier than by land, it was intimately connected with “Great Britain” across the water. Settlements such as St-Malo, St-Pol and Quimper were founded by otherwise unrecorded Welsh and Irish missionary saints. Brittany remained **independent** until the sixteenth century; after its last ruler, Duchess Anne, died in 1532, François I took her daughter and lands, and sealed the union with France with an act supposedly enshrining certain privileges. Successive violations of this treaty by Paris, and subsequent revolts, form the core of Breton history since the Middle Ages. Many Bretons continue to regard France as a separate country. Few, however, actively support Breton nationalism much beyond displaying Breizh (Breton for “Brittany”) stickers on their cars. But the **Breton** **language** remains very much alive, and the economic resurgence since the 1970s, helped partly by summer tourism, has largely been due to local initiatives, like Brittany Ferries re-establishing the old trading links with Britain and Ireland. At the same time a Celtic artistic identity has consciously been revived, and local festivals – above all August’s [**Inter-Celtic Festival**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/inter-celtic-festival/) at Lorient – celebrate Breton music, poetry and dance, with fellow Celts treated as comrades. For most visitors, the Breton [**coast**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/eastern-brittany-north-coast/) is the dominant feature. Apart from the Côte d’Azur, this is France’s most popular resort area, for French and foreign tourists alike. Its attractions are obvious: warm white-sand beaches, towering cliffs, rock formations and offshore islands and islets, and everywhere the stone dolmens and menhirs of a prehistoric past. The busiest areas are the [**Côte d’Émeraude**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/eastern-brittany-north-coast/the-cote-demeraude/) around [**St-Malo**](file:///C:\destinations\europe\france\brittany\eastern-brittany-north-coast\st-malo\); the [**Côte de Granit Rose**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/eastern-brittany-north-coast/the-cote-de-granit-rose/) in the north; the **[Crozon peninsula](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/finistere/crozon-peninsula/" \o "The Crozon peninsula)** in far western **[Finistère](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/finistere/" \o "Finistère)**; the family resorts such as **[Bénodet](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/finistere/benode/" \o "Bénodet)**just to the south; and the [**Morbihan coast**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/southern-coast/golfe-morbihan/) below [**Vannes**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/southern-coast/golfe-morbihan/). Hotels and campsites here are plentiful, if pushed to their limits from mid-June to the end of August. Be sure not to leave Brittany without visiting one of its many islands – such as the [**Île de Bréhat**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/eastern-brittany-north-coast/), the [**Île de Sein**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/finistere/ile-de-sein/), or [**Belle-Île**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/southern-coast/belle-ile/) – or taking in cities like [**Quimper**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/finistere/quimper/) or **[Morlaix](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/brittany/finistere/morlaix-2/" \o "Morlaix)**, testimony to the riches of the medieval duchy. Allow time, too, to explore the much quieter **interior**, despite its sketchy transport and shortage of accommodation. If you’re looking for traditional Breton fun, and you can’t make the large-scale summer events in Lorient or Quimper, look out for gatherings organized by **Celtic folklore groups** – Circles or Bagadou. You may also be interested by the **pardons**, pilgrimage festivals commemorating local saints. Bear in mind, though, that these are not phoney affairs kept alive for tourists, but deeply serious and rather gloomy religious occasions.