

Brittany: Nantes & La Roche-Bernard

September 23-25

This was another last minute weekend trip that turned out to be one of the best weekends I have done in France yet. In part, we were lucky to have magnificent weather. But this itinerary also offered a great variety of cities and small towns, countryside and coast, and despite a bit of driving Friday night and Sunday night, was quite relaxing. The total cost of this trip was approximately €150, including the car, gas & tolls and 2 nights' hotels, but not including food (and this is based on three people sharing a room).

Date	To	Flight/Hotel/Car Details	Cost	Comments
Fri, Sept 23	Drive to Nantes	<p><i>Car:</i> Alamo (pick-up Gare Montparnasse)—reserved through www.Autoescape.com</p> <p><i>Hotel: Residhome Nantes Berges De La Loire</i> 31 Quai Malakoff - 44000 NANTES Tel : +33 (0)2 40 99 07 07 Fax : +33 (0)2 40 99 07 08 nantes.bergesdelaloire@residhome.com http://www.residhome.com/residence-hoteliere-aparthotel-nantes-198.html</p>	<p>£80 (car total, or about €92 for 3 days)</p> <p>U.S.\$114.45 (or about €85, total hotel-triple through www.booking.com)</p>	<p>Once again, we found that Autoescape.com found us the best deal on the rental car. You could save a bit of time by taking the train to Nantes and then renting a car, but renting a car from Paris gave us more flexibility with the departure and return timing. And with three people splitting the cost of the car, gas (approx. €10—two full tanks) and tolls (approx. €50), it was cheaper to drive from Paris as well. We left Paris around 9:30pm, arriving in Nantes at 1am. We returned to Paris Sunday night around 1am as well, so both ways we avoided Paris traffic.</p> <p>The Residhome Nantes is not in the very center of Nantes but it was quite convenient for a late-night arrival and it was only a short drive (1 ½ km) into town the next day. For only about €85, we had a two-room suite that was quite modern and very clean, overlooking the Loire. Service was very friendly.</p>
Sat, Sept 24		<p><i>Hotel: L'Auberge Bretonne</i> 2 Place du Guesclin 56130 Roche Bernard (La) 02 99 90 60 28 http://www.auberge-bretonne.com/</p>	<p>€16.50 total (hotel-triple)</p>	<p>Saturday morning we walked around Nantes, stopped at the tourist information office (2 Place Saint-Pierre, 44000 Nantes, Tel. 08 92 46 40 44) for some maps of the region and advice on nearby hiking trails, and found the most delightful café for lunch: Le Select (14 rue du Château, 44000 Nantes, Tel. 02 40 89 04 49). We arrived before noon and even so were lucky to get a table—be sure to reserve in advance. The food was excellent café fare and the décor was amazingly creative. I would go all the time if this café were in Paris.</p> <p>We then drove just over an hour to Le Pouliguen, where we parked and took the coastal path west towards Le Croisic. This “Côte Sauvage” or wild coast offers beautiful sand beaches, rocky cliffs and a number of waterside cafés. We walked about 2 ½ hours then back, stopping at Café de la Plage in Batz-sur-mer for <i>panachés</i>.</p> <p>We had unfortunately run out of time, but if you have not, it may be worth stopping off at the medieval walled town of Guérande between Le Pouliguen and La Roche-Bernard.</p> <p>We spent the night in La Roche-Bernard, a “Petite Cité de Caractère” that may be my new favorite town in all of France (after Paris of course). We had a nice dinner with extremely friendly service at Restaurant Le Vieux Quartier (8 Place Bouffay, Tel. 02 99 90 61 19) then drinks at the lively Sarah B. (Quai Saint-Antoine, Tel. 02 99 90 74 60, www.lesarahb.fr) in the old port, where we even caught the end of a concert by a band called Stabar (http://www.myspace.com/stabar).</p>

Sun, Sept 25	Drive to Rochefort-en- Terre, dinner in Rennes, then back to Paris		<p>Sunday, we walked around the old town of La Roche-Bernard, then took a 1 ½ hour or so walk along the river (La Vilaine) north to the second bridge (the one past the big suspension bridge), crossed over, then back on the suspension bridge, following the red and white GR (<i>grande randonnée</i>) markings. We had a quality yet cheap lunch at the Crêperie right next to our dinner restaurant (Crêperie de la Roche, 14 Rue Saulnerie, Tel. 02 99 90 63 60). Then we walked along the far side of the old port and then followed the GR34 south down La Vilaine for about an hour before we had to turn around.</p> <p>About a half hour's drive northwest of La Roche-Bernard is one of <i>Les Plus Beaux Villages de France</i> (prettiest villages in France), Rochefort-en-Terre, which despite being a bit touristy is definitely worth a visit. Its stone buildings, château and wealth of flowers and flower boxes are picture-perfect.</p> <p>Another 1 ½ hours north of Rochefort-en-Terre is the city of Rennes. We enjoyed a surprisingly good Italian dinner at La Lupa (10 Rue Rallier du Baty, 35000 Rennes, Tel. 02 99 79 31 15) in the historic center before the 3 hours drive back to Paris.</p>
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We did not have time to visit the Parc Naturel Régional de Brière (www.parc-naturel-briere.fr/), between the Côte Sauvage and La Roche-Bernard, but if you have more time than we did, it may be useful to visit their visitor center:

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