

# A parisian fairy tale

NORMANDY IS AN IMPRESSIONIST PARADISE STRAIGHT OUT OF A MONET PAINTING



● NEENA JHANJEE



One of the most picturesque and ancient regions of France, travellers sum up Normandy's bucolic beauty in three Cs— cows, camembert and the countryside. Think 360-mile coastline of rolling green farms, mouth-watering cheese, apple cider and rustic fishing villages. It also has a rich history, which includes Roman invasions, Anglo-French conflicts and of course, the D-Day landings of World War II. It is also steeped in art and culture. Normandy is a delightful cocktail of the old and new, where unabashed whiffs of the old-world vie with Parisian-style luxury.

I decided to explore one of Normandy's most romantic and artistic regions — the Côte Fleurie or the Flower Coast in Lower Normandy. Why should you travel here? Well, because this 40-kilometre stretch that runs along the Channel nabs some of the prettiest real estate in Normandy. Its magical landscape boasts of flowers and greenery, and is dotted with beaches, 19th century villas, manors and resorts. No wonder, Basse Normandy was a favourite with Impressionist superstar-painter, Claude Monet, who loved to paint its luminous beauty. There is tons of interesting history to discover in the many towns that feature along this coast, from Deauville to Honfleur.

My journey through the

Flower Coast started off with a day at Trouville-sur-Mer. Trouville was at the heart of the 19th century social and artistic scene. Writers like Gustave Flaubert came here to bathe in its sea, a fashionable practice in the 1800s. The seaside resort town still retains its vintage charms without getting too touristy. There are beautifully restored hotels from the old days, a gorgeous casino from 1912 and a lively seaside with carnival rides. While Trouville is cheerful and carnivalesque, Deauville is its more glamorous and elegant neighbour. Take a stroll along the famous boardwalk-Les Planches—which runs parallel to the sea to soak up the town's fancy vibe. Deauville has a frenetic social calendar with horse races, film and jazz festivals, yachting regattas and tennis tournaments taking place through the summer.

There is something enchanting about Honfleur. This little town has been the muse for many famous impressionist art works — the incandescent light falling on the Seine estuary regularly featured in Monet's paintings, for instance.

Another hidden gem in Lower Normandy that usually slips under the tourist radar is Giverny. Its biggest claim to fame is that it was the home of Impressionist superstar, Monet. The artist's home and its gardens, which feature in his most famous works (like 'Water Lilies'), have now been turned into a museum.

*The writer gave up a successful career in finance to start a luxury tour operator called Diva Odysseys*



Manor houses in Trouville

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