

# Bayeux

**Bayeux** is a small town (population 16,000) in northern France within the region of Basse-Normandie. Bayeux is best known for the remarkable **Bayeux Tapestry** that chronicles in a visual form the conquest of England by Williams the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, in 1066.

## Understand

Bayeux is known for two famous trans-Channel invasions. The conquest of England by William the Conqueror in 1066 started from Bayeux, while on June 6th, 1944 the Allied D-Day (French: Jour-J) invasion force struck the beaches just north of the town. Bayeux was the first French town to be liberated from Nazi occupation during the 1944 Battle of Normandy and survived almost completely unscathed. On 16 June 1946 General Charles de Gaulle made his first important speech on liberated French soil in Bayeux. The town hosts the largest British war cemetery in Normandy and is an excellent base for visiting the Normandy beaches.

## Get around

Most of the town can be navigated on foot after arriving at the train station, even with a wheeled suitcase. The 'downtown', a ten minute walk from the train station, mostly lines the main street which seemed to change names a few times as it goes along.

Streets are narrow and uneven and often cobblestone or similar, so bring comfortable footwear (especially if going on local expedition tours -- see below for more information).

## See

The **Bayeux Tapestry** (*Tapiserie de Bayeux*), *Centre Guillaume le Conquérant, Rue de Nesmond, tel 02 31 51 25 50, fax 02 31 51 25 59, open daily all year, except for the 2nd week in January, 24-26 December, 31 Dec-2 Jan, hours: (mid-March-October) 9am-6.30pm (summer an extra half hour) (November-February) 9.30am-12.30pm and 2pm-6pm*, - the historically unique Bayeux Tapestry is a 70 meter-long, 50 cm high embroidery made from wool on a linen canvas in the late 11th century to chronicle the conquest of England by William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, in 1066. Scenes include the Channel crossing, the Battle of Hastings (14 October 1066), the death of the Saxon English king Harold and the subsequent coronation of Duke William as King of England. Audio guides available. Allow 1-2 hours to visit.

The **Bayeux Cathedral** towers over the entire town, and is interesting to circle around outside and explore inside. The exterior is surrounded by the occasional helpful informational signage on stone or wood blocks, each explaining aspects of the church's construction or architectural features. The interior has some excellent views of the architecture, statues and murals, and there are several (empty) crypts you can visit beneath the church. Open for touring during the daytime hours (when no church services are in session), and definitely worth a visit.

## Eat

### Budget

- **Le Marsala - Pizzeria-Grill Restaurant**, *rue des Cuisiniers*, tel 02 31 92 47 60 - great pizzas at a reasonable price, friendly service

### Moderate

- **Le Petit Bistrot**, 2, *rue du bienvenu*, closed We, tel 02 31 51 85 401

## Get out

**World War II Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial**, (*Take Highway N-13 west to Formigny, then follow D-517 to St. Laurent-sur-Mer and D-514 to Colleville-sur-Mer*). Open daily, 9:00AM-5:00PM except for December 25 and January 1. The cemetery is the final resting place for 9,387 American military dead, most lost during the Normandy Invasion. A monument is inscribed with the names of 1,557 Americans whose remains were never found or identified. The memorial contains maps and narratives of the military operations in Normandy. Free.

**Guided Tours of World War II Historic Sites** (*There are several guided tour companies in the area; Bayeux has a central designated meeting spot where all of the tours embark from in the morning and return to each afternoon*). Battlebus <http://www.battlebus.fr/> provided excellent tours on our trip to Normandy. Having a guide was extremely helpful and efficient to zip us around to the various sights through the backroads of rural France. They offer tours of sights including the nearby Utah Beach, Omaha Beach, Juno Beach, the Canadian Juno Beach Museum, the Canadian Cemetery, the American Cemetery (above) and countless other hard-to-find sites. Tours offered are divided into zones of coverage (American, British, Canadian, and others), as each zone is fairly large. A one-day American tour and a one-day Canadian tour give you a good overview of most of the highlights the region has to offer. Guides are experienced, interested, and respectful of the great history of the region. Stellar for history buffs and laypersons alike. Tour guides even kindly gave us a lift from our hotel to the train station at the end of a day of touring when we were leaving town! Tours should be booked in advance, as they tend to fill quickly, especially in the summer months. Other tour companies also service the region.

**For more info see: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)**

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