

03. 590 France (1/3)

France - Bretagne



Abbaye Saint-Wandrille (Amis saint Colomban)



1100km long, the route Colomban took in 590 is divided into 3 parts, which can be followed successively or indistinctly. Beginning in Saint-Malo, this first part of the continental route leads to Rouen through Brittany and Normandy.

Around 590, Colomban and his Irish monks arrived on the continent via the west coast and penetrated inland to the east as far as the foot of the Vosges Mountains where they settled for about twenty years. Their exact route is not known except for a few places listed in Colomban's biography written in 640. The proposed itinerary follows this general direction, passing through the cultural and historical highlights of this northern part of France.

Useful information

Practice : Pedestrian

Duration : 0 min

Length : 402.1 km

Trek ascent : 6520 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Multi-day trek

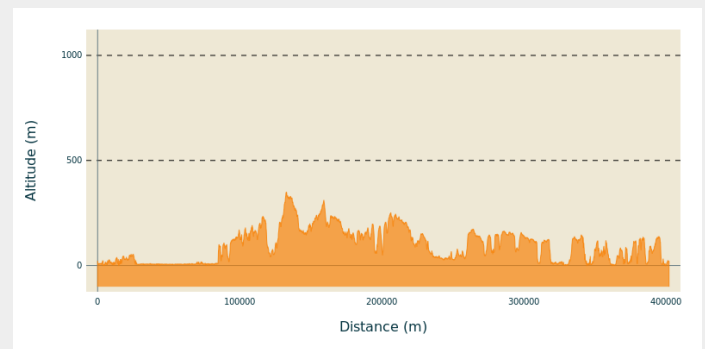
Trek

Departure : 35400 Saint-Malo

Arrival : 76000 Rouen

Cities : 1. Bretagne
2. Normandie

Altimetric profile



Min elevation -1 m Max elevation 349 m

This crossing of France is fairly straightforward, in the image of Colomban, who sought to withdraw quickly as a hermit as far inland as possible.

The first part (1/3) consists of 18 stages averaging 24km per day:













1. Saint-Malo - Saint-Coulomb
2. Saint-Coulomb - le Vivier-sur-Mer
3. Le Vivier-sur-Mer - Mont-St-Michel
4. Le Mont-St-Michel - Avranches
5. Avranches - Petit Celland
6. Petit Celland - St Pois
7. St Pois - Vire
8. Vire-Vassy
9. Vassy - Pont d'Ouilly
10. Ouilly Bridge - Falaise
11. Cliff - St Pierre-sur-Dives
12. St Pierre-sur-Dives - Lisieux
13. Lisieux - Corneilles
14. Corneilles - Pont-Audemer
15. Pont-Audemer - Our Lady of Gravenchon
16. Notre Dame de Gravenchon - St Wandrille
17. St Wandrille - Duclair
18. Duclair - Rouen

Stages :

- 1.** From St Malo to St Coulomb
17.2 km / 351 m D+ / 4 h 18
- 2.** St-Coulomb to Le Vivier-sur-Mer
19.7 km / 150 m D+ / 5 h
- 3.** From Le Vivier-sur-Mer to Le Mont-St-Michel
23.6 km / 109 m D+ / 5 h 54
- 4.** From The Mont St Michel to Avranches
29.8 km / 250 m D+ / 7 h 18
- 5.** From Avranches to Petit-Celland
17.8 km / 465 m D+ / 4 h 30
- 6.** From Le Petit Celland to St Pois
23.7 km / 569 m D+ / 6 h
- 7.** From St-Pois to Vire
23.0 km / 428 m D+ / 5 h 54
- 8.** from Vire to Vassy
22.4 km / 329 m D+ / 5 h 48
- 9.** from Vassy to Pont d'Ouilly
27.5 km / 567 m D+ / 6 h 54
- 10.** from Pont-d'Ouilly to Falaise
20.5 km / 394 m D+ / 5 h 30
- 11.** Falaise to Saint-Pierre-sur-Dives
25.1 km / 218 m D+ / 5 h 30
- 12.** Saint-Pierre-sur-Dives to Lisieux
26.9 km / 326 m D+ / 7 h
- 13.** Lisieux to Cormeilles
23.6 km / 390 m D+ / 5 h 30
- 14.** Cormeilles to Pont-Audemer
16.4 km / 152 m D+ / 4 h
- 15.** Pont-Audemer to Notre-Dame de Gravenchon
20.8 km / 235 m D+ / 5 h 30
- 16.** Notre-Dame de Gravenchon to Saint-Wandille-Rançon
17.5 km / 388 m D+ / 4 h
- 17.** Saint-Wandrille-Rançon to Duclair
24.8 km / 597 m D+ / 6 h 30
- 18.** Duclair to Rouen
28.5 km / 666 m D+ / 7 h

On your path...



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Our Lady of the Great Gate (A) |  The forts of St Malo Bay (B) |
|  Sculpted Rocks of Rothéneuf (C) |  Church of Rothéneuf - Stained glass window of St Colomban (D) |
|  Lupin Tide Mill (E) |  Roz Ven (F) |
|  Cross St Colomban de l'anse du Guesclin (G) |  Malouinière de la Ville Bague (H) |
|  St Coulomb's Church (I) |  Duchess Anne's Dyke (J) |
|  Mussel Port of Le Vivier and Bay House (K) |  Ste Anne's Chapel (L) |
|  West Polder (M) |  Dam on the Couesnon (N) |

All useful information

How to come ?

Access

A major port, Saint-Malo is the point of arrival for many public transport services (bus, train or ferry for those crossing the Channel).

Rouen is a major city, accessible by bus and train.

On your path...



Our Lady of the Great Gate (A)

The Grande Porte is one of the old main entrances to the fortified town of St Malo. It is also known as the Porte Notre-Dame.

A copy of a statue of the Virgin and Child is located in a niche above the gate.

The original was moved to St Malo Cathedral in 2003. The statue, made of painted limestone, dates from the 15th or 17th century. Its origin is unknown. Beheaded during the French Revolution, it was blown up by a shell during the liberation of St Malo in June 1944.

Many people in St Malo consider her to be the town's protector.

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colombran



The forts of St Malo Bay (B)

The bay of St Malo has many rocks and islets. While these reduced access to the port to a few passes, they also provided hiding places for enemy ships (English and Dutch). Vauban ensured the city's protection by building several forts at sea, which could be used to close off the passes with their crossfire. St Malo was never taken.

The La Conchée fort, located 3.7km from the coast, is the most impressive of these.

Fort National is located on the Islet rock, accessible at low tide in front of the ramparts. Originally called Fort Royal and then Fort Impérial, it was built in 1689 by Siméon Garangeau to Vauban's plans. It is open to the public (when the flag is raised).

[To find out more](#)

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colombran



Sculpted Rocks of Rothéneuf (C)

In 1894, having become deaf, Abbé Fouré had to leave his post as rector and retire to Rothéneuf.

For thirteen years, he sculpted more than 300 bas-reliefs in the rocks overlooking the sea. Paralysis forced him to stop his work. These sculptures were subjected to the sea spray and the assaults of the sea. They are deteriorating rapidly. An association is trying to save them.

You have to pay to enter the site via the restaurant, but you can get there from the beach (the site is located on maritime land). A little further on, the little chapel of ND des Flots overlooks the sea.

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colombran



Church of Rothéneuf - Stained glass window of St Colombran (D)

Stained glass window visible from the gallery. Signed by Jean Clamens of Angers in 1897 (the gallery is accessible from the back of the church).

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colombran



Lupin Tide Mill (E)

At the end of the Lupin cove (the name of the part of the cove in the commune of St Coulomb - the part in St Malo is called the "Havre de Rothéneuf"), you can make out the ruins of an old tide mill, one of the few in the region not to be found on the Rance. Mentioned in documents dating back to 1180, it could be one of the oldest in Brittany. It is the forerunner of the hydroelectric dam on the Rance.

The landscape of this cove is highly variable: at high tide, it presents a magnificent sheltered stretch of water; at low tide, only a trickle of water crosses it. It is a haven for birds.

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colombran



Roz Ven (F)

Villa Roz Ven is tucked away in the dune above La Touesse beach.

In 1910, it was acquired by Colette and her friend. The writer lived there until 1924. She wrote several novels here, including "Le blé en Herbe".

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colombran



☀ Cross St Colomban de l'anse du Guesclin (G)

Inaugurated by Loïc Levillain, Mayor of St Coulomb, and blessed by Monseigneur D'Ornellas, Archbishop of Rennes, on 20 July 2019 during the pardon, this new monument replaces the crosses dating from 1892 and 1987.

The monument, created by the Association des Amis Bretons de Colomban, recalls the arrival of St Colomban on this beach in 590. It recalls the monk's journey through Europe, from his native Ireland to his death in Bobbio, Italy.

[To find out more](#)

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colomban



🏡 Malouinière de la Ville Bague (H)

The malouinières are country residences built by privateers and shipowners from Saint Malo at the end of the 17th century. They are located less than 2 hours' ride from St Malo and many were built by Garangeau, a pupil of Vauban. There are more than twenty in the commune of St Coulomb.

The panoramic wallpaper in the living room, dating from 1820 and depicting Pizarre's arrival among the Incas, is a listed historic monument (manufactured by Dufour et Leroy).

The park also includes a dovecote and a semi-enclosed chapel dedicated to St Sophia.

[To find out more](#)

Attribution : alain.faveraais



St Coulomb's Church (I)

In the church you can see

a monochrome wooden statue of St Colomban. It predates 1820 (previous church). The base of this statue contains two relics of St Columban, one of which was presented to Father Michel, the parish priest of St Coulomb, by Monsignor Ambrosio, Bishop of Bobbio, in July 2017, on the occasion of Columban's Day 2017 in Pianello Val Tidone.

the curragh: displayed in front of the gallery, it is used during the pardon procession and was made by a member of the association "Les Amis Bretons de Colomban" in 2015. The curragh is the ship used by the monks to travel between Ireland and the continent.

the banner: recently made, it evokes the arrival of St Colomban

The wooden bas-relief at the foot of the altar: This depicts the arrival of St Columban on the beach, awaited by the local people. It was made in 1953

the stained glass window of St Colomban in the choir, made in 1868 by the master stained glass artist Ernest Steizi.

At the end of the village in the direction of Cancale: statue of St Colomban dating from 2000 and donated by Martine Latimier and Bertram Wawera.

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colomban



Duchess Anne's Dyke (J)

The Digue de la Duchesse Anne is a dyke built on the ancient barrier beaches that separated the bay from the marshes of Dol de Bretagne. It stretches for around thirty kilometres as far as Ste Anne's chapel.

Construction probably began in the 11th century and continued over the following centuries, transforming the marshes into polders.

A comparison of the ground levels on the bay side and the polder side confirms that the bay has silted up.

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colomban



Mussel Port of Le Vivier and Bay House (K)

The port of Le Vivier is a major mussel-farming centre. The bouchots (rows of wooden stakes planted in the bay on which the mussels are hung) are harvested using amphibious equipment.

The Maison de la Baie, located on the harbour, offers exhibitions on the bay and mussel cultivation. It also offers discovery walks in the bay.

[To find out more](#)

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colombran



Ste Anne's Chapel (L)

Ste Anne's chapel is thought to date from the construction of the dyke. It was destroyed by a flood in 1630 and rebuilt in 1684.

A pardon is held here in July.

It marks the end of the Duchesse Anne dike and the beginning of the western polders.

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colombran



West Polder (M)

On 21 July 1856, Napoleon III signed a 99-year concession with the Compagnie des Polder de l'Ouest for the creation and operation of new polders.

The 3,000 hectares of polders were created by gradual dyking, mainly in the area where the Couesnon River had dived.

The last flood dates back to February 1869.

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colombran



Dam on the Couesnon (N)

This dam on the Couesnon is the central element in the series of works carried out to restore the Mont's maritime character. At mid-rising tide, it lets the water in through the gates to prevent sediment from entering the river. At half-tide ebb, it allows the Couesnon to empty into the bay through the bottom of the sluice gates, creating a "flushing" effect that moves sediment away from the Mont. To increase the volume of water involved, the Couesnon and the Moidrey cove were dredged. A number of symbols can be seen on the promenade bridge at this dam:

- in reference to the scriptorium, the bronze desk on the railing is engraved with letters from the four alphabets (Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic),
- The bronze access doors to the piers are marked using the four numbering systems above.
- An extract from a 12th-century manuscript dedicated to astronomy is engraved in the centre of the lectern.
- The Couesnon forms the border between Brittany and Normandy. This is why the coats of arms of the two regions are engraved at each end. You can also see mouldings of shells from the bay (scallop, coquilles St Jacques or white cockles), symbols of the pilgrimages that converged on the Mont.

Attribution : Amis Bretons de Colomban