

MEDIEVAL KNIGHTS TO MONET VISITING NORMANDY

THURSDAY 18 – WEDNESDAY 24 AUGUST 2022 (7 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£2495

- **Wonderful opportunity to explore Medieval Normandy**
- **See the historic abbeys of William the Conqueror & Matilda at Caen**
- **Discover remarkable Bayeux & the famous ‘Tapestry’**
- **Explore the world of the Impressionists & visit Monet’s Garden at Giverny**
- **Gardens & Châteaux including inspiring Jardin Plume, Vesterival & Balleroy**
- **Comfortable 5* hotel in central Rouen**



‘Messengers signal appearance of a comet’, Bayeux Tapestry

OVERVIEW

The verdant landscapes of Normandy are an oasis of peace and tranquillity. However, this masks a history full of incident; from the emergence of one of the great feudal dynasties, the Dukes of Normandy, to the momentous events of World War II. In between these ‘book-ends’ its rural semi-obscurity attracted some of the finest painters of nineteenth century France, the precursors to and creators of Impressionism, above all Claude Monet.

“1066 & All That...” is one of those references which evokes mixed memories, but there is no denying the importance of the date itself. Duke William’s life is full of incident, not least his invasion and conquest of England. Today we see this reflected in the shared style of Romanesque architecture which we know as ‘Norman’ - most obviously in the two mighty abbeys commissioned by William and his wife, Matilda, at Caen. The conquest itself is immortalised in the great Bayeux Tapestry, magnificently displayed, while the town’s cathedral is a fine example of the new, Gothic, style; carried to new levels of flamboyance in the cathedral at Rouen.

By the end of the sixteenth century, walled towns and thick-walled châteaux gave way to sophisticated styles based on new ideas coming in from Italy. One of the delights of Normandy is the way in which these renaissance, baroque and later idioms fused with local materials and customs. The idyllic Château de Balleroy is a good local example with its echoes of Versailles. The River Seine meanders its sleepy way through Normandy, doubtless one of the attractions which brought several generations of painters to re-imagine nature in its fields, woods and on its coast. From Corot and the Barbizon School to the innovative approach to capturing how we perceive colour in light - what we now call “impressionism”, it was an unprecedented chapter in the history of art. Given that Claude Monet is the dominant force behind this movement we shall spend time exploring his house and garden at Giverny, together with other sites associated with the painter and his contemporaries.

The modern art of gardening will also feature in our daily itineraries. The renowned partnership of Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens can be found at Bois de Moutiers, until recently the home of the Mallet family. Though the house is currently closed for restoration, it is hoped the garden designed by Miss Jekyll may be visited. Just along the coast is a more recent horticultural icon, Le Vasterival, where over fifty years Princess Greta Sturdza tamed wild thickets creating a magical garden of ambition and intent. Back near Rouen and on a contemporary note, living colour weaves its way through the glorious gardens of the Jardin Plume, described by Robin Lane-Fox in the *FT* as one of the most exciting gardens to be created in France in recent years.

Participants will meet at and depart from Ashford International Station in Kent, where we join our coach which will be with us throughout the tour. We travel to France via the Channel Tunnel and continue to Rouen for our six-night stay at the 5* Hôtel de Bourgtheroulde. The excellent facilities include a fine dining restaurant, indoor swimming pool and spa. This converted sixteenth century palace could not be better placed as the River Seine, Old Market Square, restaurants, cafes and shops are all minutes away.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Thursday 18 August – We meet at **Ashford International Station** in Kent, where we join our coach which will be with us throughout the tour. We travel to France via the Channel Tunnel and continue to **Rouen** for our six-night stay at the **5* Hôtel de Bourgtheroulde**, ideally set in the historic centre. Dinner will be in a nearby restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Friday 19 August – Today will be spent in and around the famous Norman city of **Caen**. On our way we pause to visit the gardens at the **Château de Canon**. The fine eighteenth century ensemble is framed by an enchanting garden uniting Italian formality, French ornament and English planting. After our group lunch we visit two remarkable ‘Norman’ churches in **Caen**. The **Abbaye Sainte-Trinité** known as the **Abbaye aux Dames** and the **Abbaye Saint-Étienne** known as the **Abbaye aux Hommes** were founded by William the Conqueror and his wife, Matilda of Flanders in the 1060s. We return to Rouen where the evening will be free.

Day 3: Saturday 20 August – This morning we explore **Rouen** on foot. We begin by walking through the old town admiring its fine medieval buildings, including visits to the wonderful Gothic **Église de Saint-Maclou** and the even more impressive **Cathedral**, a font of inspiration for Monet. We continue to the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** with its impressive collection of French art from the Renaissance to the Romantic and Impressionist periods. Lunch (not included) and the remainder of the afternoon and evening will be free to explore Rouen at leisure.

Day 4: Sunday 21 August – We travel across Normandy to the remarkable town of **Bayeux**, where we visit the town’s early Gothic **Cathedral**. We continue to the **Bayeux Museum**, home of the extraordinary ‘**Tapestry**’ – an embroidered cloth documenting the events of 1066. Following a group lunch in the town, we visit the nearby **Château de Balleroy**. Built in the seventeenth century in the style of François Mansart, the gardens are said to be designed by André le Nôtre who transformed Versailles. More recently the château was the home of American entrepreneur and publisher, Malcolm Forbes. We return to Rouen where the evening will be free.

Day 5: Monday 22 August – **Dieppe** lies to the north on the coast and here at nearby **Varengeville-sur-Mer** we begin with a garden visit to the renowned **Bois des Moutiers**. Though the house designed by Edwin Lutyens is likely to remain closed due to restoration, the charming surrounding gardens designed by Gertrude Jekyll will, we hope, be available. After a group lunch we continue to the nearby **Jardin Le Vasterival**, where for over fifty years, Princess Greta Sturdza transformed and gardened tricky, wild coastal thickets, creating a magical garden. We return to Rouen where the evening will be free.

Day 6: Tuesday 23 August – We drive along the course of the Seine to Giverny to visit **Monet’s House**, his home for forty years, exploring both the house and gardens. Here the nasturtiums should have clothed the path running through the Grande Allée towards the Water Garden - where the water lilies will also be in bloom. We continue to the **Musée des Impressionismes**, the former American Impressionist Museum, set in contemporary borders inspired by movement, and especially by the work of Monet. After some free time for lunch (not included) and to explore this very pretty village, we return to Rouen, stopping for a visit to the important **Jardin Plume** where contemporary plantsmanship is displayed to the highest standards – truly inspiring. Our final dinner takes place in one of Rouen’s locally regarded restaurants.

Day 7: Wednesday 24 August – We leave Rouen stopping for a late morning snack (not included) and return to the UK via Calais. Following our crossing we end our formal journey at Ashford International Station mid-afternoon.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2495 **Single Supplement** £395 (Double/Twin Room for Sole Use) **Deposit** £350

Hotel 6 nights with breakfast at the 5* Hotel Bourgtheroulde in Rouen

Hotel Upgrade £325 per room for Privilege Room

Coach We meet at Ashford International Station, Newtown Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 0PS, which can be easily reached by train or by car. There are two car parks with rates between £5-10 per day. Further details can be found at <https://ashfordintl.co.uk>

Price includes 2 dinners & 3 lunches with wine, water & coffee, UK coach for the full tour, Channel Tunnel crossing, City Tax, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan as lecturer & James Hill as tour manager

Not included Travel to/from coach meeting point, 4 dinners & 4 lunches



CICERONI TRAVEL
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167 Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188
Email info@ciceroni.co.uk Website www.ciceroni.co.uk

