



The long, sand dune beaches of Normandy, where “Operation Overlord” or the Battle of Normandy - D-Day Landings of WWII took place on 6 June 1944 near Colleville-sur-Mer, stretch from Juno (Canadian), Sword & Gold (British) to Omaha Beach and involved 1200 planes, 5000 vessels and 160,000 troops. There were 2 million Allied troops in France by the end of August 1944. Who could ever have imagined it could look so peaceful it looks today.



*Landcruising - from the Beaches of Normandy to the Beaches of Biarritz!
- April/May 2019*



The Canadian War Museum and Remembrance and Renewal Memorial at Juno Beach , which opened in 2003, was financed by the fund-raising efforts of a group of Canadian veterans. Perched only 100 m. behind the dunes, the building is a stylized 5-point Maple leaf clad in titanium scales and is manned by Canadian students who come for 9 months at a time. 90,000 Canadians were involved in the battle. 5500 never made it home and are laid to rest in two beautiful cemeteries. Each headstone has a maple leaf, name and regiment. The stories of their families are particularly touching.



Nearby at Omaha beach is perhaps the most awe-inspiring memorial of them all – at least in terms of scale, The Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial. Americans take care of their own it must be said. Pictures cannot do it justice. The Visitors Centre, opened in 2007 at a cost of 30 million USD and receives over 1 million visitors a year. Near the entrance to the meticulously manicured lawns and cemetery is a stunning infinity pool. 9,388 soldiers are laid to rest here- each cross has a name- it stretches on forever. 172.5 acres. Plus 1557 names on the Wall of the Missing. Encouraging to see that many school parties and youth groups are brought here – a sombre lesson. Not sure they really get it. But let’s hope so. Maybe they should bring the politician’s here instead.



Also a lovely evening at lovely Honfleur, for a meal of “moules et frites” (mussels and chips) and a quiet stroll around the harbour. After we had gotten Otter ship-shape again, we took off to visit three other cities, all in the Basque region. Biarritz (French) (below), 6 km. of dramatic Atlantic coastline on the Bay of Biscay ...a grand old lady of a seaside resort, luxurious, posh, and now a surfing mecca (where surfing was born in 1957!)

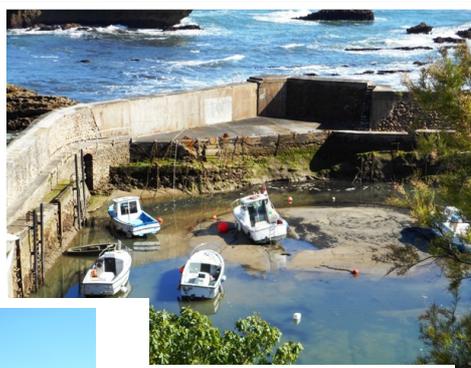
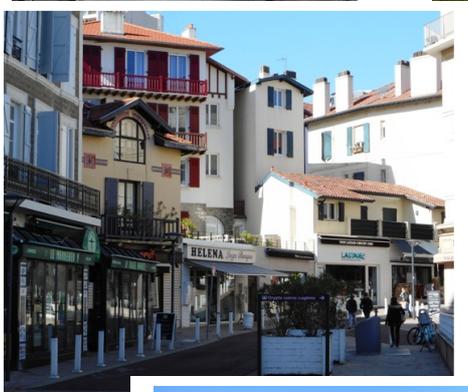
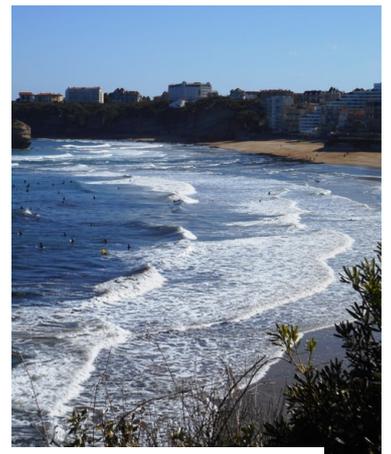


Once the darling of European and Russian nobility, the cliffs are still lined with huge mansions of the wealthy. Empress Eugenie (wife of Napoleon III) started it all by building a summer palace here.



Below: Lovely views from the lighthouse across 6 km. of golden sands.

And thus the old whaling town became a trendy spa and holiday destination. The huge tides and rough seas bring in large amounts of seaweed which are used in therapeutic treatments. Anyone for seaweed pizza? (just kidding...)



Empty harbours at low tide, rock pools and line dancing on a Sunday morning. It's gorgeous.