

# Log for the Trip to Normandy

May 2018

by Colin Le Conte

This blog covers the trip of two boats “Whatever!” and “Echo Beach” to Lower Normandy in May 2018.



*Photo 1 Echo Beach and Whatever! in Cherbourg Marina*

The Bay of Saint Malo has many fine marinas available to boaters and so our previous journeys have been to Northern Brittany together with frequent visits to Carteret and Dielette. In 2017 we visited Southern Brittany and enjoyed our 10 days there.

For 2018, at the recommendation of Edward Fattorini, we decided to visit lower Normandy covering the area from Cherbourg to Honfleur.

We planned the trip, starting with a long run direct from Guernsey to Honfleur in hopefully ideal conditions and make our way back along the coast.

Almost all of the marinas in Normandy have lock gates and many are tidally restricted to between 2 and 3 hours either side of high water. In addition, the tide times vary widely with the difference between Honfleur and Carentan of around 1 ½ hours. Some marinas are based on Cherbourg times and some are based on Le Harve times. With 10 lock gates and bridges to negotiate, this all takes a bit of planning to get right.

## Wednesday May 23rd 2018

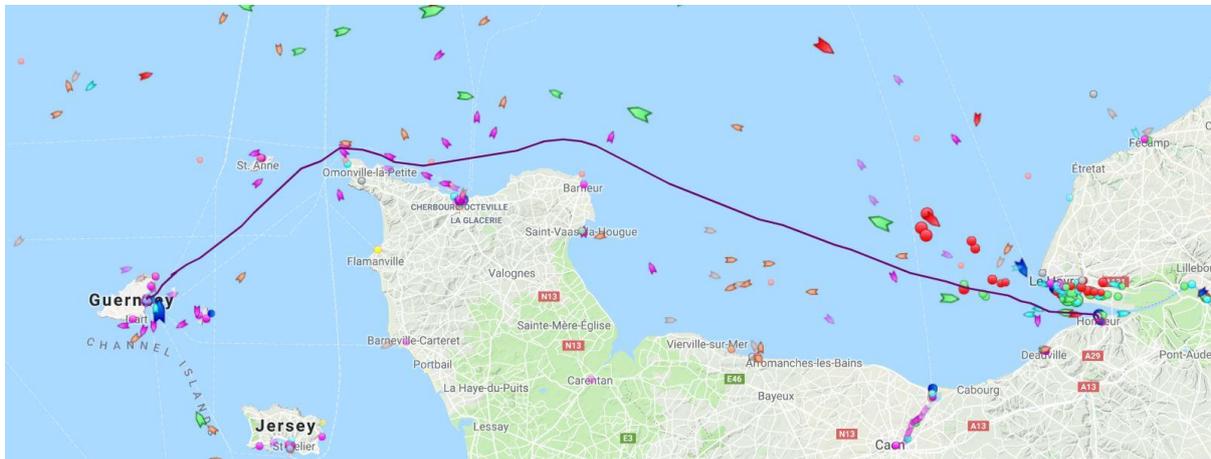
### Guernsey to Honfleur – 119nm

We had a fairly tight window for when we could leave and when we had to be back, so we were keen to depart on the Wednesday.

The forecast was not ideal. F4 from the North East meant the wind would be on the nose for the Race – between Alderney and the Cherbourg Peninsular and would provide us with little protection once we got “around the corner”, an area normally sheltered from Westerly and Southerly winds.

The sea had been calm the previous two days and so we decided to start the trip and review the sea conditions and stop in Cherbourg if necessary. We also had a number of other possible ports of refuge along the coast however there were all tidal and had lock gates.

We timed the Race well and it was pretty calm, however the North West of the Cherbourg peninsular had the overfalls from Gorey which made it pretty rough. It then calmed down as we approached Cherbourg and so we decided to continue.



The overfalls off Barfleur were the roughest part of the trip and then again calmed down, although as we were almost head in to the waves, it proved to be a slow journey at between 18 and 22 knots.

The final 20 miles into Honfleur provided rough seas as the wind increased to gusting F5 and even though we were getting close to Le Harve, there was no relief in the wave height and confusion. It was not until we got into the Seine estuary we found calmer water.

The navigation up the Seine went well in poor visibility, keeping out of the main shipping channel by passing the red navigation buoys to the North (except buoy 6 which is shallow) as instructed.

In the end, the journey which we hoped would take around 4 ½ hours took 5 ½ hours.

Arriving in Honfleur, the lock gate was in free flow and so we were able to go straight through.



The Visitors moorings are on the right as you enter Honfleur and there is a long pontoon for boats to moor alongside or raft up. There are some visitors' spaces in the old Harbour which is accessed through the Lieutenants Bridge but there were 2 boats in there which were poorly moored which meant this was not an option.



The facilities are near the outside pontoons and it is fairly quiet there except for the passing boats, some of which can create a bit of a wash.

The Town of Honfleur is lovely. Lots of old buildings around the harbour and interesting, high class shops with artist goods and clothes.



Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018

## Honfleur

We spent a wonderful day in Honfleur, exploring the Fisherman's church, narrow streets and up market shops.



There is a nice garden to the west of the lock gates, themed with busts of famous and not so well known former residents of Honfleur.



The town was busy with visitors, not only from the Cruise Ship moored in the Seine, but also from two river cruise ships moored in the inner lock gates.

Visits to the museums and churches were a delight as were the fine restaurants which provide good value once you move away from the Old Harbour.

## Friday 25th May 2018

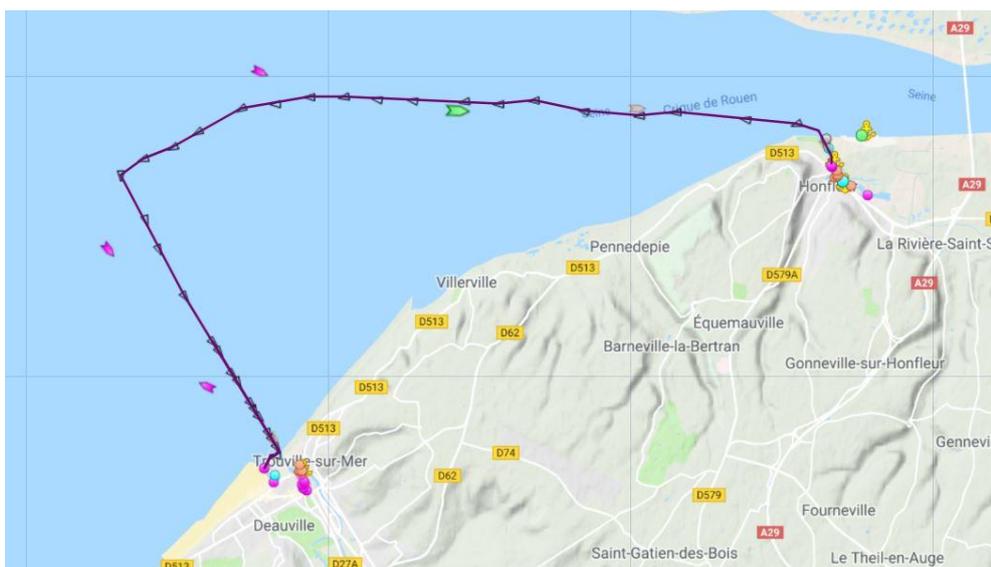
### Honfleur to Deauville – 12nm

The next morning was very misty and on the high tide, one of the river cruise boats left for its trip up the Seine towards Paris. A trip we must do one day.



We fuelled up with croissants from the local Boulangerie and headed out while the lock was still in free flow, an hour or so before the high water, to get to Deauville marina while that was also in free flow.

The red and green cardinal buoys lining the Seine really showed up well on the radar and the HD digital radar picked up any traffic well. We were able to carefully cut across the sand bank that dries at low water, making sure to avoid the dykes which mark the side of the river. This meant we only had 12nm to go but in 200m of visibility, we took it slowly.



The guide books talk of the great view of the large beaches and the two casinos on arrival, but we saw none of that. We were fortunate it cleared a little as arriving at a new marina in thick fog can always be a little daunting.



The Cowes to Deauville yacht race was due to arrive that evening and we assumed they would go in the old Inner Marina so we chose the newer Deauville Marina for our stay.

It can hold 70 visiting boats and was pretty empty so we need not have worried about getting a berth. This marina also has better tidal access than its older neighbour and so can be useful if you are tight for time.



The downside of this marina is the 6 min walk to the facilities and the long walk to the marina office. A map on arrival or on the pontoon would have been so useful but alas was not available.

The facilities are in what looks like a white painted German bunker but is probably just an underground facility. From there it is not too far to the Deauville Town centre. The marina office is best accessed across the lock bridge although this is not possible when the lock is in free flow.



# Saturday 26th May 2018

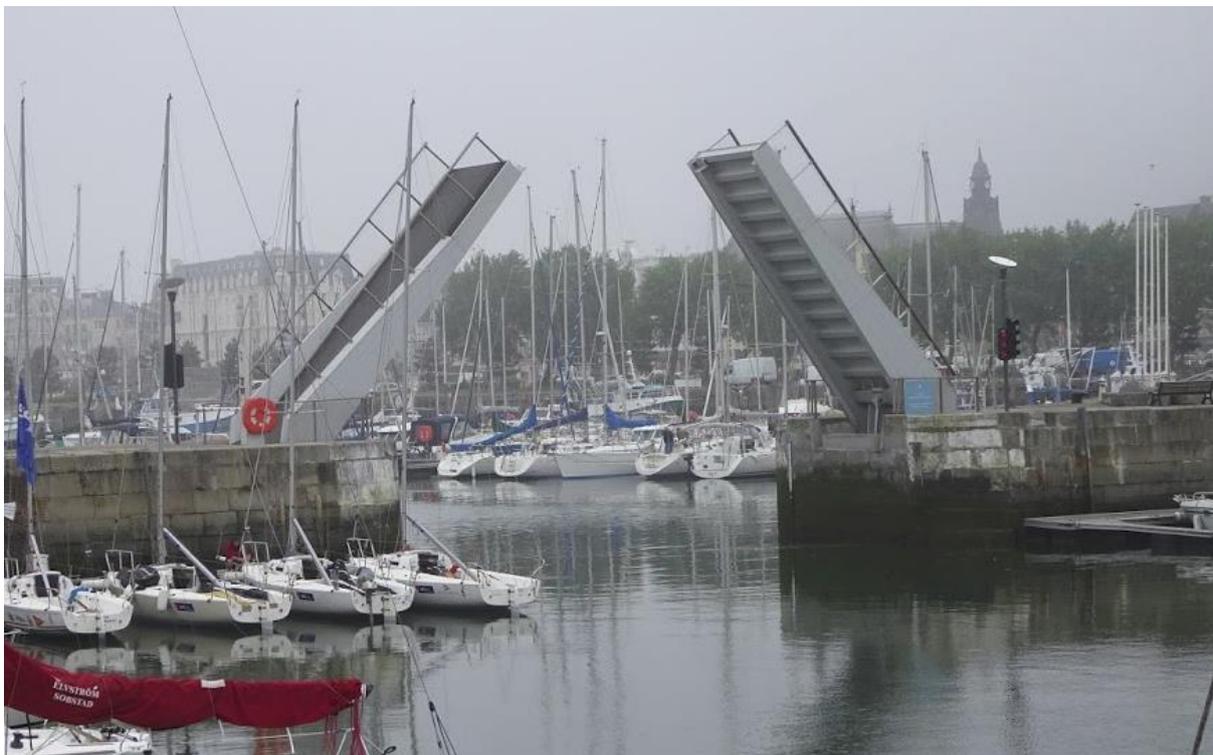
## Deauville and Trouville

Deauville and Trouville turned out to be great places to visit. Deauville is probably a little more up market but Trouville is more interesting.

They are very different to the quaint town of Honfleur and have large Parisian type buildings for the visitors from Paris who can travel by train to their seaside home in 1 ½ hours.

The Inner Marina (Bassin Morny) is more central but the facilities are really poor. Hopefully they will improve with the development which is taking place in the area.

There is an outer lock gate to the commercial area and then an inner bridge which needs to be raised to gain access to the Inner Marina.



The centre of Deauville is very pleasant with fountains, bells and a market.



A boat (or walkway at low tide) can take you across to Trouville for Euro 1.40, where there is another fine beach, a very large Casino and a lovely fish market. Lots to see and easy to spend a good day sightseeing.

The railway station is very close to the Inner Marina and provides good connections, especially to Paris.



The beaches are huge and have changing / storage areas with celebrity names on the fences.



# Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2018

## Deauville to Ouistreham to Caen – 25nm

We left Deauville lock on free flow and timed the journey to arrive in time for the Ouistreham lock which only opens 5 times per tide.



Arriving a little early, we looked at mooring on the lock waiting pontoon but the boats there were very poorly spaced out so there was no room. Strangely a yacht moored there with crew on board left as the lock opened and went out to sea!



Pleasure boats normally use the left hand lock which is smaller and the lock signals clearly provide instruction. This is a very large lock with green seaweed clad walls. Despite its size, the water drops or rises really fast and there is no free flow, so make sure your ropes are not tight.



Interestingly the lock times published give the closing times for the lock rather than the opening times.



Just the other side of the lock is Ouistreham marina which is tree lined and quiet. We moored up while each of the boats refuelled at the pump just outside of the marina. We had completed around 150nm of our journey and with 150nm to go, this was the ideal location, although the Euro 1.5 per litre for marine diesel was a bit of a shock.

There are 3 convoys a day heading up river at 10:10, 13:30 and 16:30 and down river at 8:45, 12:00 and 15:00.

We travelled the 2nm up the river to meet at Pegasus Bridge and arrived about 10mins early. This is an amazing sight, especially if you know the history of the bridge and its importance. We were joined by 4 small boats who accompanied us up the river to Caen.



Exactly on time, Pegasus Bridge opened much to the delight of the many visitors to the Pegasus Bridge museum and the convoy passed through. We then had an amazing journey up through a further 2 bridges and made our way up river, entering Caen marina some 80mins later.



Although there are only 8 visitors moorings in Caen Marina, there was plenty of room for us and we were soon met by the harbourmaster on land.

The marina is very centrally located and very convenient for visits to the cathedral, castle and the old quarter. A little further away is the Abbey of Saint Etienne (Abbaye aux Hommes) where William Le Conqueror is buried and the Abbaye aux Dames where his wife Matilda is buried.



William the Conqueror's tomb

Unfortunately the town was heavily bombed during WWII and the buildings that developed with the rebuilding of the town are not very inspiring.

There is a pleasant old quarter with a few restaurants which is very popular in the evenings.



## Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018

### Caen to Ouistreham – 8nm

We had originally thought about staying in Caen for 2 nights but working out the timings for the Tuesday, the first convoy from Caen to Ouistreham would have meant we could only catch the high water lock gate at Ouistreham and then the 50nm journey to Carentan would be too tight to get into Carentan safely on a falling tide.

Following a noisy night due to youths in the town until 2am who left due to the equally noisy rain, we did some more sightseeing and then caught the early afternoon convoy back down the river. This time we were just the 2 boats and so were able to travel closer to the 7 knot speed limit and the bridges magically opened remotely as we arrived, saving some 20mins on the trip.

Ouistreham as a marina and town are very underrated. The marina is very pleasant although we never did work out where the advertised 70 visiting yacht spaces were. The facilities were fine and there is a walk across the lock gates to a nice town, approx. 40mins walk away. Just over the lock there are some shops and restaurants.



The local otter came to visit us and we all had a very peaceful evening.



## Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2018

### Ouistreham to Carentan – 50nm



An early start ensured we caught the first lock gate out to sea and we were soon on our way along the coast to the Mullbery Harbour at Arromanches. The remains of the harbour is impressive from the land, but even more impressive and moving from the sea. We motored inside the harbour and then continued on our journey to Carentan.



Mist again meant we did not see the great views of Omaha and Utah beaches or the amazing cliffs that are such a feature.

We were pleased we had found and plotted the 2018 positions of the lead buoys into Carentan from their website as they would have been difficult to find. Although on a Spring High Water, depth was not a problem. The trip up the final section to the lock gates is amazing with the land appearing to be lower on the sides than the sea.



Calling the marina on VHF 9, the lock keeper soon provided us with access into the small lock and we were allocated good moorings in Carentan marina, although they were a few pontoons from the facilities and a good walk from the Town.



Carentan marina is very quiet, the harbourmaster is helpful and there are a couple of restaurants overlooking the end of the canal.



The town has all the normal facilities including the Town hall



*The Capitainerie*

## Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018

### Carentan

The next day we hired a car and did some sightseeing. Within a few miles of Carentan are the American and German cemeteries, the Overlord museum, the new D Day parachute regiment museum and the Point du Hoc which is where the American Rangers scaled the cliffs and most of the original craters and bunkers still remain.



We also used this as an opportunity to visit Grandcamp Maisy from land so we could take some photos and plan a visit at a later date.

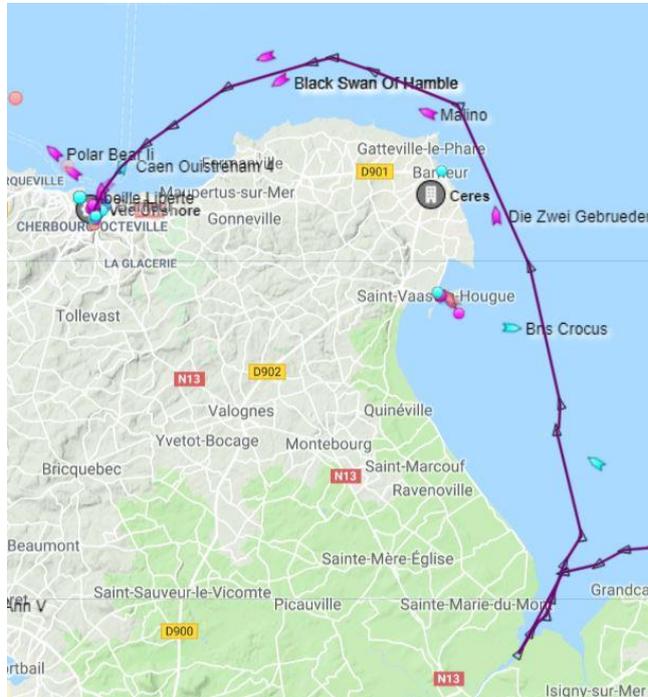


*Grandcamp Maisy entrance gate*

## Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018

### Carentan to Cherbourg – 47nm

We had planned to stop at Saint Vaast for 2 nights but the forecast was due to deteriorate on Friday with a small weather window on the Saturday morning to return home before F5 again on the Sunday.



We calculated that even with calm seas and the speed of our boats, it would be very tight leaving Saint Vaast marina as soon as it opened and be able to get in to Guernsey marina before it shut, so we decided to head straight for our last stop, Cherbourg marina which has the advantage of being non tidal.

The Isles Marcouf appeared out of the mist and we took some photos before travelling on our way.



The staff at Port Chantereyne were very helpful with e-mails and we found a good couple of moorings. The facilities were good and the whole marina is well organised. It is amazing how much visitor boating activity there is in Cherbourg marina compared to the other Normandy ports we visited.

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018

## Cherbourg

Our last day sightseeing. The La Cité de la Mer with its Redoubtable submarine, Titanic exhibition and aquarium was amazing, especially the experience of walking inside a nuclear powered submarine with which was built to fire nuclear rockets.



The City of Cherbourg is nothing spectacular. Again I guess we have to blame the British for destroying much of it in WWII.



On the way to the Town from the marina is the Monument to Napoleon on his horse “Marengo”, facing the sea, pointing to the right arm the military port (not England) and the church.



We completed our last day with a lovely meal at the old-fashioned Café de Paris in the evening. Listed in the Michelin Guide.

## Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2018

### Cherbourg to Guernsey – 49nm (punching tide)

Saturday saw our final leg home.

The outer harbour of Cherbourg has a speed limit of 14 knots, which is a bit slow as it is a long way from the inner to the outer harbour walls.



We kept close to Gorey lighthouse and although the sea was fairly flat, the seas outside of the lighthouse still caught our attention, but we soon ploughed through and were back to calm waters. We completed our Normandy trip with our arrival back in Guernsey and refuelling at a more palatable 56p a litre.



## Boats

### Echo Beach



A Princess V39 with Volvo Penta D6-330hp engines.

Colin's Princess was built in Plymouth in 2016 – see <http://www.princess.co.uk/boat/princess-v39/>

### Whatever!



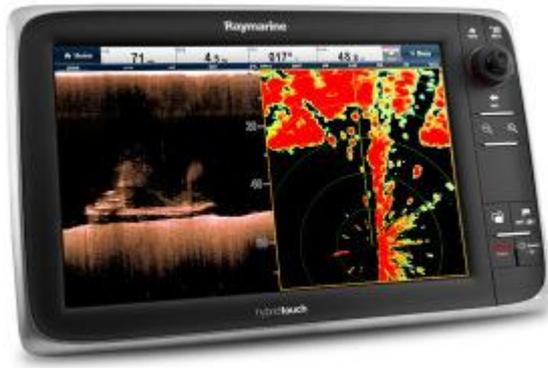
A Princess V42 mk2 with Volvo Penta D6-370hp engines.

David's Princess was built in 2008 – see <http://www.princess.co.uk/>

## Equipment used

In addition to the charts, compass, flares, liferaft, EPIRB, DSC radio, radar reflector, backup GPS and backup radio we are using the following technologies.

Colin is using the latest Raymarine v17 Lighthouse II software on the Raymarine E125 Chart plotter. It has an external and internal GPS antenna, EV1 heading sensor, autopilot and i70 screens.



The courses have been plotted using the excellent and highly recommended Navigation Planner software v7.10 which uses the Navionics charts.



The Navionics charts are the latest Navionics+ and cover the vast area from the Netherlands to Morocco and goes as far as Italy and Corsica. The chart is called 46XG Central and West Europe.

- Raymarine E125 Chartplotter using Navionics charts with May 2018 chart updates
- AIS transponder and receiver
- Raymarine digital HD radar
- Raymarine DSC VHF radio
- Navigation Planner PC software with Navionics Charts
- Navionics App for android
- NV Chart Books number 2
- Various Charts covering the whole area
- WiFi repeater with "3" SIM card 24gb for 24 months
- TripAdvisor
- Vodaphone SIM which works in 40 countries
- Windguru pro
- Windfinder Pro
- The Shell Channel Pilot by Tom Cunliffe 8<sup>th</sup> edition

## Facts and Figures

### Distances and fuel

Name	Distance	Time	Echo Beach Fuel estimate (litres)	Whatever! Fuel estimate (litres)
Guernsey to Honfleur	119nm	5:30	404	375
Honfleur to Deauville	12nm	0:30	40	37
Deauville to Ouistreham	17nm	0:45	48	44
Ouistreham to Caen	8nm	1:20	8	7
Caen to Ouistreham	8nm	1:00	10	8
Ouistreham to Carentan	50nm	2:00	162	150
Carentan to Cherbourg	47nm	1:45	150	140
Cherbourg to Guernsey	49nm	2:00	166	154
<b>Total</b>	<b>310nm</b>		<b>988 litres</b>	<b>915 litres</b>

### Refuelling

Name	Echo Beach	Whatever!
Ouistreham	506 litres	460 litres
Boatworks+	490 litres	455 litres
<b>Total</b>	<b>996 litres</b>	<b>915 litres</b>

### Marina costs

Our boats are 12m long and there was an interesting difference in the price of the marinas. Carentan was the only marina to include the width of the boat in the calculation.

Name	Nights	Cost
Honfleur	2	Euro 80.40
Deauville	2	Euro 70.00
Caen	1	Euro 23.90
Ouistreham	1	Euro 28.20
Carentan	2	Euro 59.90
Cherbourg	2	Euro 61.12

## What we learnt

Normandy is very different to Southern Brittany. The Harbourmasters generally speak better English and are more used to receiving boats from the UK. There are more motor boats than in Southern Brittany, although there are still a lot of yachts.

The tidal range is greater and there is a significant difference of almost 2 hours from Cherbourg High Water to Honfleur High Water.

All the marinas except Cherbourg have gates or lock gates and are quite tidally restricted. Sometimes they are only open 2 hours either side of HW in neap tides. Most marinas also have a shallow lead up to the entrance which dries at low tide or below half tide.

In theory you should be able to get good shelter from the Normandy coast from any wind with a bit of South in it and from Westerly winds as you approach the east side of the Cherbourg peninsular. Unfortunately on our trip the wind was mostly north east. Winds from the North can make the sea conditions rougher as the coast is more exposed and the waves increase as the sea bed shallows out as you get close to the shore. Be careful when coming out of some of the harbours if there is a strong northerly wind.

Normandy is quite expensive, especially towards Honfleur. It got less expensive as we went further West.

This is a great area to explore and we still have marinas to visit. Most of the marinas are fairly close together and you are never far from land. It is also a shorter journey from most ports in the South of England than to Brittany.

There are lots of places to visit, especially if you are interested in history and especially WWII.

Getting around the Cherbourg peninsular can be a challenge with the strong tides and overfalls at both the Gorey (west) side and the Barfleur (east) side.

## Advert!

Should you require any further information on the marinas, please do not hesitate to visit <http://marinas.digimap.gg/> and do tell your boating friends.

