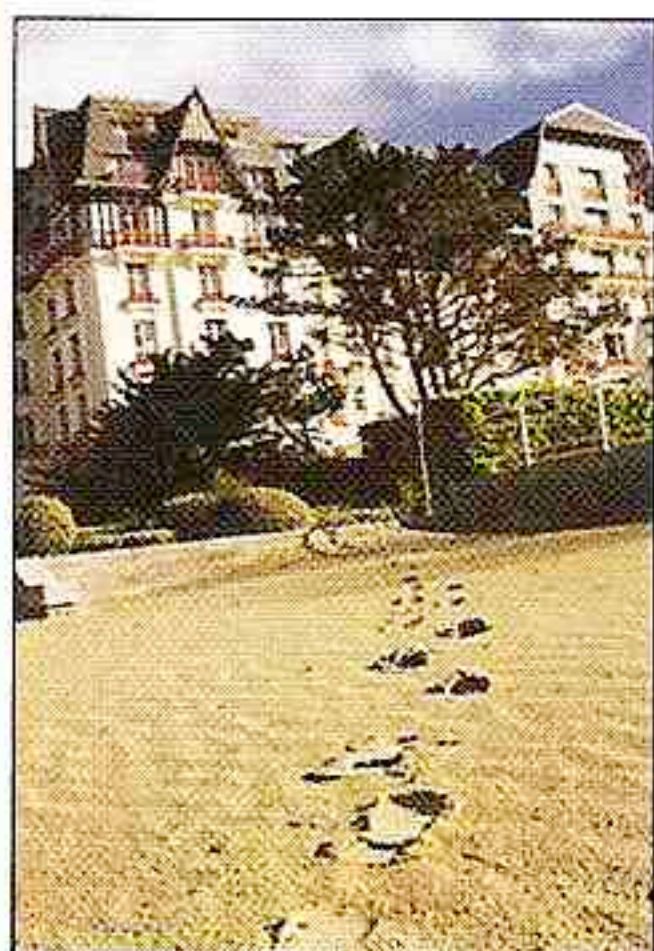
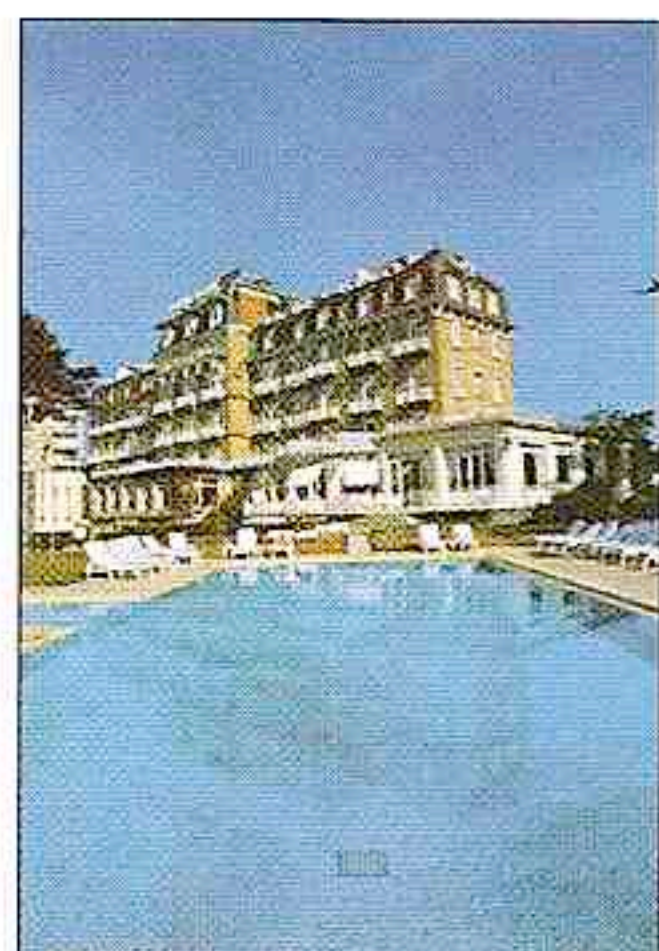


# FAMILY TIDES

Our diarist joins her friends and their children, who write in her journal about their family-centered jaunt through Western France



**Hermitage Barrière**



**Royal Thalasso Barrière**



**Golf International Barrière La Baule**



**Grand Hôtel Barrière**

GROUPE LUCIEN BARRIÈRE (5)

## Dear Diarist's Diary,

It all began when our diary-devoted friend learned that we were planning a holiday in Western Loire, Brittany, and Normandy with the kids. She jumped at the chance to travel with us, so Doug (my husband) and I (Vivian), who have thrilled at her adventures published in the pages of this magazine, had to say yes!

## Go West!

After the flight to **Paris**, Billy and Mary had a lot of bottled-up energy. Fortunately, once we boarded a super-fast TGV from Paris's Gare Montparnasse, they could vent some steam exploring the train in perfect safety. The adults rested as we all sped toward our destination!

Three hours later, in Western Loire's coastal town of **La Baule**, one of Europe's most fashionable fine-sand Atlantic beach resorts, we unpacked into an afternoon of luxury and self-indulgence at the **Hermitage Barrière**, an enormous Anglo-Norman manor right on the sea. While I went for some pampering at the **Talgo**



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**Thalassotherapy Center**, our diarist friend teed up at **Golf International Barrière La Baule** (to prepare for her upcoming golf trip to Provence, page 54). And while the kids were whooping it up in the hotel's monitored kids' play lounge, Doug took a short bike trip along the **Presqu'île de Guérande** to see the sea pans from which workers harvest his favorite cooking salt.

## Of Sorcerers and Knights

In the morning we picked up the car and, heading north into Brittany, drove through **Brière Natural Regional Park**, which preserves the area's unique heritage through museums, cultural events, and traditional thatched-roof cottages. After about 75 miles (120 km) of delightful back roads, we arrived in **Paimpont**.

*Hi. My mom asked me to write about the **Forêt de Paimpont**. I remember reading about it in my book about King Arthur, although in that book it's called the enchanted forest of **Brocéliande**. Dad said Paimpont is all that's left of Brocéliande. We saw cool stuff like **Merlin's tomb** and **Comper Castle**, where the fairy Viviane (just like Mom's name), who was kind of like Merlin's girlfriend (look out Mom!), took care of Lancelot when he was a boy like me. Today the castle is the **Centre Arthurien**, and it's full of things from the Middle Ages and people who know everything about Arthur. One thing: I wish I had been allowed to hike into the **Val Sans Retour** (Valley of No Return), but Dad said no.*

Thank you Billy. At least by the time we covered the 37 miles (60 km) north to **Dinan**, all that medieval adventuring had tired him out. Still, the beauty of Dinan's **Vieille Ville** (Old Town) wasn't lost on him. Nor was the majesty and comfort of the **Grand Hôtel Barrière**, located just a few miles away in **Dinard**.

## D-Dipping into History

Since Billy wrote, now it's my turn. In the morning we drove about 20 miles (32 km) up the **Vallée de la Rance**, across the big electricity-making dam, to the incredible walled city of **St-Malo** sticking out into the ocean. We walked along the top of the really old **ramparts** that completely surround the old city and have great views of everything, including the **castle**! Then we went east for about 30 miles (48 km) to **Mont-St-Michel**. It was like a huge fairy-tale chapel balanced on a tiny forgotten island, but for real! We saw the abbeys and cloisters and crypts and more. I didn't want to leave, but we still had to drive 85 miles (135 km) northeast to **Caen**, which was also very cool. The museum there, the **Mémorial de Caen**, taught us all about the **D-Day Landings** of World War II.

Nothing was better than finishing off the day only 30 miles (48 km) further east at **Deauville**, in the legendary **Hôtel Normandy Barrière**, residence of the stars during the Deauville Festival of American Cinema. Our diarist friend, Doug, and I were even able to enjoy a sumptuous adult dinner while Billy and Mary proudly ate at La Fermette, the hotel's delightful kids-only restaurant.

The next day, we dropped off the car and trained back to Paris for our flight home. Who would have thought the kids would be so captivated? Who could have imagined that they would learn—and remember—so much? We cannot thank our diarist friend enough for helping to make our family trip a wonder.



**Hôtel Normandy Barrière**



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