



A typical Breton trawler



Plateau de fruits de mer

BRITTANY'S *FRUITS DE MER*

TAKE A QUICK SPIN THROUGH SOME OF BRITTANY'S SOUTHERN COASTAL TOWNS, INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN FOR THEIR SEAFOOD

BY ETHAN GELBER

Signed charters are generally reserved for treaties and government laws, but Brittany shows us that they can be used for anything truly important. *La charte du plateau de fruits de mer frais bretons* (Breton Seafood Platter Charter) commits 116 restaurants, some of them Michelin-starred, to the freshness and variety of this classic regional dish. Best enjoyed with a glass of dry white wine—a Muscadet-sur-Lie or Gros-Plant—no fewer than six delectable *crustacés* (crustaceans) and *coquillages* (mollusks) await you at an adherent Breton inn.

Begin your trip with a high-speed train to **Rennes**, the capital of Brittany. France's *trains à grande vitesse* (or TGV) cover the 220 miles in a mere two hours from Paris's Montparnasse station. This leaves plenty of time to pick up your rental car and enjoy the town's medieval half-timbered buildings, so common throughout the region. On the outskirts of the city, a visit to the **Ecomusée du Pays de Rennes** is a great activity for families and provides a first exposure to the connection between Breton culture and food. For further proof, stop next at the **Marchés des Lices** in the 19th-century Halles Martenot, home of the third largest Saturday morning market in France.

Now it's time to hit the road. Start in **Vannes**, 65 miles to the southwest and a short hop from the Golfe de Morbihan, a shallow inland sea and native home of the incomparable Bélon, or flat oyster (*huître plate*). South of town, in the village of **Surzur**, embark on the **Route de l'huître** (Oyster Route) to learn how 4,000 tons a year are pulled from 1,200 acres of oyster beds. Back in Vannes, indulge in a cooking class offered through the **Cercle Culinaire**.

To the west, pause at **Riec-sur-Bélon**, France's oyster capital, celebrated in late July at its aptly named *Fête de l'huître*. **Concarneau**, an important base for trawlers, is your next port of call. Tuna is the primary haul, but an amazing variety of fish comes in, as is clearly explained by the excellent fishing museum **Musée de la Pêche**. A rare operating cannery, **Maison Courtin**, offers tours. Concarneau is also a good place to try a *cotriade*, Brittany's own version of *bouillabaisse* (fish stew).

End your tour in **Quimper**, where you can return your rental car and catch the TGV back to Paris. Best known for its *faïence* (hand-painted ceramic earthenware), Quimper is also a great spot to sample Brittany's other iconic foods: a *crêpe* or *galette* (what we think of as a savory crêpe), complemented with hard cider, *chouchen* (mead) or local beer and followed by a *kouign-amann* (butter cake). ■

For everything about Brittany's foods, visit www.bretagneacroquer.com (in French)

FLEXING YOUR WORD MUSSELS

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| araignée | spider crab |
| bigorneaux | winkles |
| bulots | whelks |
| coques | cockles |
| crabes | crab |
| crevettes | shrimp, prawns |
| homard | lobster |
| huîtres | oysters |
| langoustines | Dublin Bay prawns or Norway Lobsters |
| moules | mussels |
| palourdes | clams |

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