



## The Guide

**SHOP**  
**Cave Normande** 13 Rue de la Ville, Honfleur; +33 231 893 827; [cave-normande.com](http://cave-normande.com). This seafront shop stocks the finest ciders and calvados.

**VISIT**  
**Christian Drouin** Route de Trouville, Coudray-Rabut; +33 231 643 005; [calvados-drouin.com](http://calvados-drouin.com). Known for its single cask-aged vintage bottles.  
**Domaine Dupont La Vigannerie**, Victot-Pontfol; +33 231 632 424; [calvados-dupont.com](http://calvados-dupont.com). Stunning calvados and cider, produced in small quantities through timeless methods.  
**Le Clos Cerisey** 12 Rue de Reuilly, Gauciel; +33 632 894 174; [lecloscerisey.com](http://lecloscerisey.com). Red-apple cider, jams and chutneys at this quaint farm.  
**On Rue Tatin** 1 Rue Tatin, Louviers; +33 232 250 398; [onruetatin.com](http://onruetatin.com). Join a cooking course led by local writer Susan Herrmann Loomis.

**STAY**  
**Le Manoir des Impressionistes** Route de Trouville, Honfleur; +33 231 816 300; [en-manoirdeimpressionistes.com](http://en-manoirdeimpressionistes.com). Boutique 18th-century manor house.  
**Manoir Le Fresnay** 2630 Route d'Englesqueville, Cambremer; +33 689 829 540. Italian owner Signore Fabra greets you with a glass of calvados and some amusing tales.

**EAT & DRINK**  
**Le Pavé d'Auge Le Bourg**, Beuvron-en-Auge; +33 231 792 671; [pavedauge.com](http://pavedauge.com). Lovely regional dishes that change with the seasons.  
**Café Forges** Main square, Beuvron-en-Auge; +33 231 740 178; [cafeforges.fr](http://cafeforges.fr). Top bistro-style plats du jour with a notable onion soup and grilled steaks.

**GETTING THERE**  
Sawday's special 'Tours Normands' offer cider and calvados itineraries; [sawdays.co.uk](http://sawdays.co.uk). Go by car with P&O Ferries ([pofferries.com](http://pofferries.com)) so you have room to stock up on local goodies. For details, see [normandy-tourism.org](http://normandy-tourism.org).

arly autumn, and the apple harvest is in full swing. Among the orchards of gnarly trees that populate the countryside, tractors snarl along narrow roads, their windows brimming with ruby-red or golden fruits off to be processed, fermented and bottled at the many cider farms and calvados distilleries peppering the sleepy landscape of the rural area of northern France. Honfleur is where I learned to love apples. It's one of the most gastronomic regions, and I've taken many a trip across the Channel to browse the farmers' markets in Caudebec, Rouen, Lisieux and Honfleur, stocking up on freshly baked bread, beurre de baratte, thick curd-ish crème fraîche and soft-ripened cheeses such as the famously stinky livarot, camembert and pont l'évêque. But I'd always make time to tuck into lunch at one of the restaurants clustered around Honfleur's picturesque port – and not just because of the fabulous fresh seafood. Here, the mighty apple, the dominant ingredient in Normandy's earthy and hearty cuisine, shines through. Briny fruits de mer piled high with oysters, whelks and winkles are served up by just-landed raie (skate), barbue (brill) or slip soles d'anguille with butter, herbs and a generous splash of local cider. No meal is complete without an obligatory tarted 'un trou normand', a glass of fiery calvados – the signature apple brandy – to settle the digestion.

### In Normandy, there's a popular local saying, 'La vie est trop courte pour boire du mauvais cidre,' which means, 'Life's too short to drink bad cider!'

Following the pastoral roads of the 40-kilometre Route du Cidre, or 'Cider Route', is a great way to take in Normandy's golden-hued orchards, but it's worth taking a detour to Le Clos Cerisey, a quaint farm famed for its red-fleshed apples. The Van Tornhout family reintroduced this ancient variety to France when they brought it back from Quebec in 1929, and they now have some 28,000 trees in their orchards. "During a good harvest, we can produce 800 tonnes of apples," says owner Stéphane. "We create a dramatic red-coloured cider and, because the apples are full of pectin, we also make jams and chutneys. This variety has become very fashionable with French chefs, so I take a lot in my van to sell at Paris markets." Locals celebrate the region's bounty at an annual cider festival, this year falling on Sunday 23 October, hosted by the tiny commune of Beuvron-en-Auge – often cited as one of the most beautiful villages in France, with its half-timbered 17th-century houses. The local cafés and farmhouses open

their doors so you can sample all the different types of cider (look for the stamp of Cru de Cambremer, an AOC Pays d'Auge appellation that indicates quality and provenance) or simply browse the stalls where villagers sell local delicacies such as andouillettes (blood sausages), honey and apple cakes. Come lunchtime, amble over to Le Pavé d'Auge, located in the middle of the village. Affable Michelin-starred chef-owner Jérôme Bansard offers a special apple dégustation meal accompanied by cider pairings, the perfect way to sample regional recipes. "There are said to be more than 800 varieties of apples grown in Normandy," says Bansard. "Many of them have a special place in our cuisine and in our version of wine – the lovely bouché [light], doux [sweet], demi-sec [fruity] and brut [dry] sparkling ciders. There is a popular local saying, 'La vie est trop courte pour boire du mauvais cidre,' which means, 'Life's too short to drink bad cider!'" If you want try your hand at traditional dishes that pay homage to Normandy's fruit of plenty, book a place on one of American food writer Susan Herrmann Loomis' cookery courses. The author of *On Rue Tatin* – an account of her life in Louviers – conducts classes in her charming 12th-century house. "I focus on technique and align [the courses] with the seasons," she says. "During the autumn, we visit the local market, do cider and calvados tastings with producers, and cook all kinds of apple dishes, including my tarte tatin."

Clockwise from top left: Jérôme Bansard, chef-owner of Le Pavé d'Auge; growers prepare for the apple festival in Beuvron-en-Auge; apples ripe for the picking at a local orchard; tasting a tippie of Dupont's Calvados Pays D'Auge; calvados ageing in barrels; a friendly welcome from Susan Herrmann Loomis at her French cooking school.