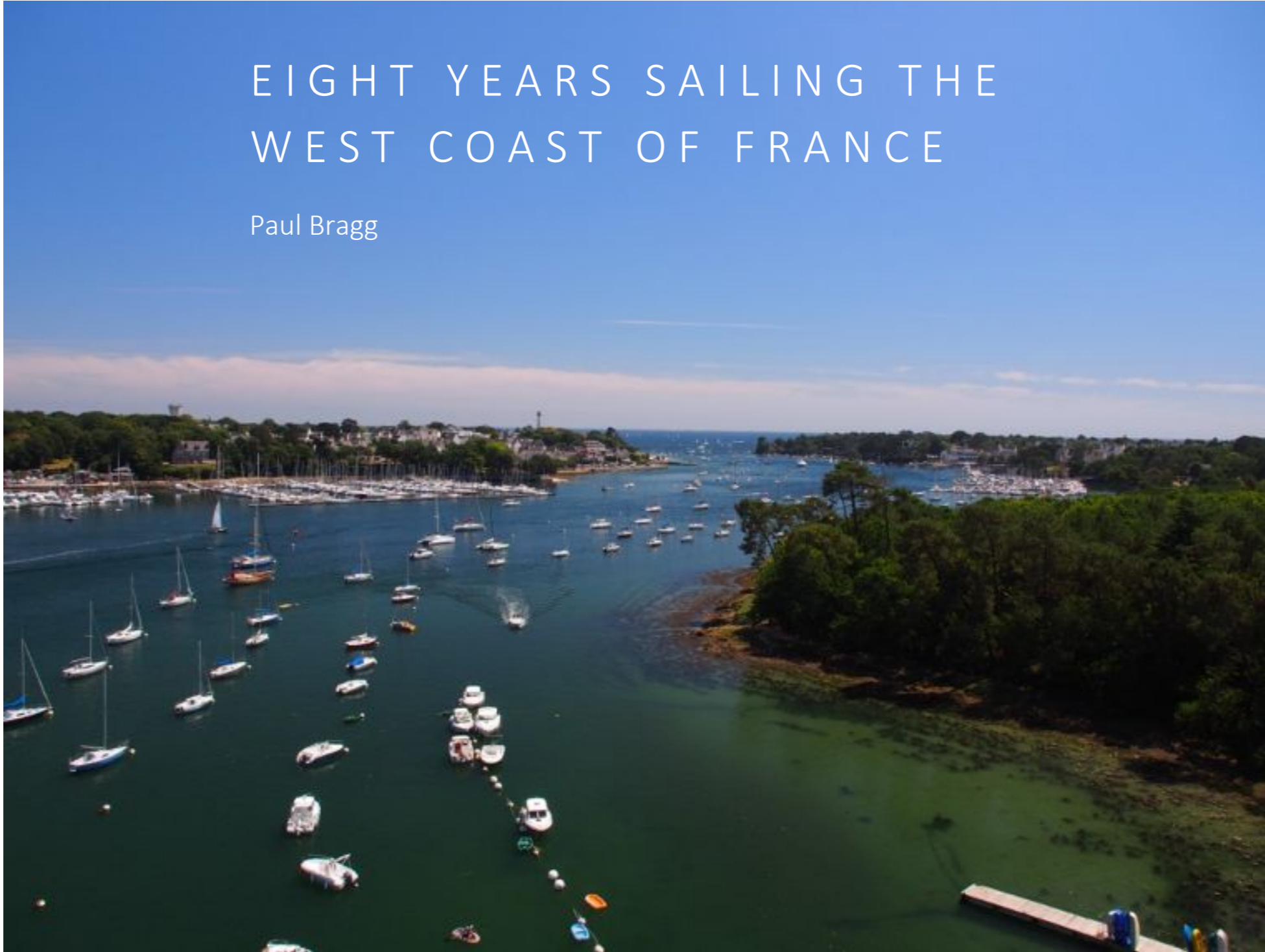


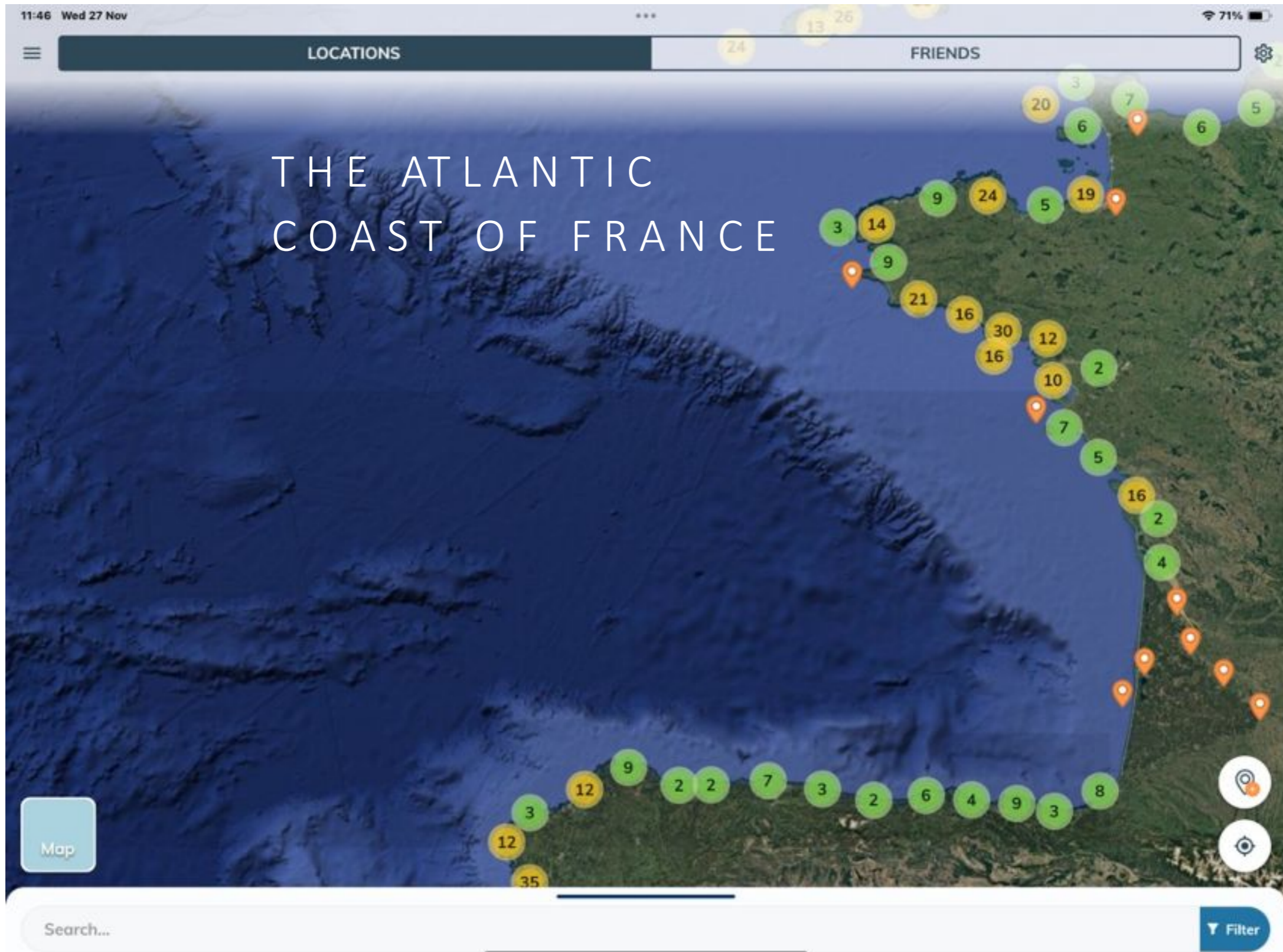
EIGHT YEARS SAILING THE WEST COAST OF FRANCE

Paul Bragg



Eight years ago my wife Elaine and I moved our boat to the west coast of France. At the time we thought we might keep her there for a year or perhaps two. Perhaps explore a little of the coast... see what it was like... and then move on somewhere else. Eight years later, we're still there. And the reason is simple — it's one of the most enjoyable cruising grounds we've ever sailed in. Tonight I'd like to show you why. I'm going to take you on a journey down the coast... show you some of the islands, the harbours and the sailing... and hopefully explain why so many people who discover this coast find it very difficult to leave

Photo shows entrance to River Odet. Two marinas and lots of anchoring places



From the North Coast of France down to the Gironde Estuary there are many ports and anchorages to explore all within an easy day sail or less of each other.

Going any further South it's probably an overnight passage.

I'm going to focus on 4 areas on this coast with ports that have good transport links.

Full details of all ports are also in the Atlantic France Pilot Guide and of course the Almanac

JENNIE B
ISLAND
PACKET 380



This is Jennie B our 23 year old Island Packet 380 12 metre cutter rigged yacht.

We've sailed round Britain and Ireland (it took us 5 years). We have sailed to the Baltic, St Petersburg and back.

We have also kept our boat in the Solent and on the East Coast. We moved our boat to France in 2017 and now keep her on the River Vilaine at Folleux.

PAIMPOL CHANNEL
WHY GO WEST?



In 2015 we sailed from Woodbridge to the north Brittany Coast and visited many places despite the big tides and challenging pilotage.

We visited Paimpol and we loved it, chatting with a fellow sailor he said if you think Paimpol is good you should try Vannes on the west coast of France.

That put the seed in our minds to make the voyage from our berth on the East Coast.

AUDIERNE



So in 2017 we set sail from Woodbridge heading west and South.

This is our first port after rounding the corner and going through the Chanel du Four and the Raz de Seine.

When we got here we felt like we'd really made it!.

Lovely little town with everything you'd want. A very friendly harbour master. A market, good cafes and bars - life felt good

VANNES



We arrived in Vannes in July 2017 and it is everything our sailor friend promised and more.

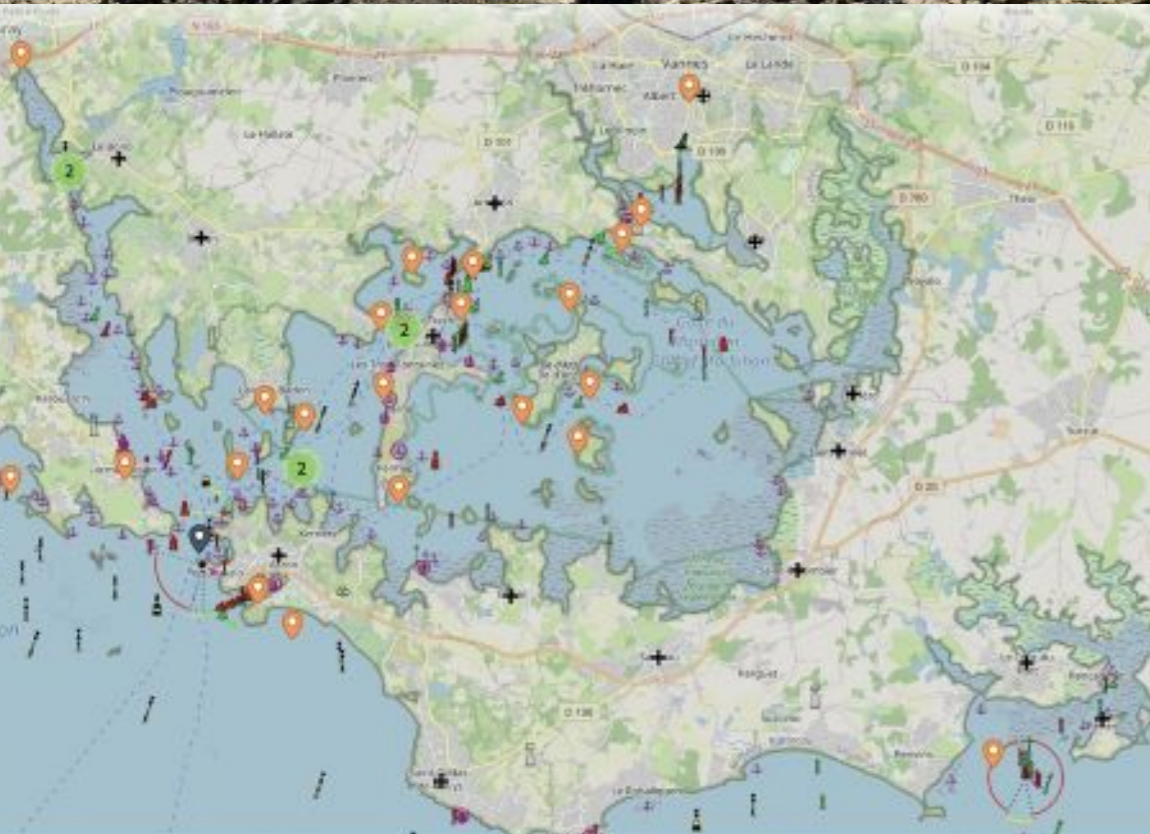
The photos were taken in January 2018. The summer weather is usually much better.

Vannes is one the reasons we stayed in France.

When we arrived we did not have a permanent berth anywhere, we popped into the harbour masters office and they had a berth for the winter at a cost of €800



THE MORBIHAN



We thought we'd probably stay for a year or two but the temptations of staying in this area are strong.

Easy sailing, great weather, good food and drink and it's easy to travel to.

The Morbihan is just one example of a wonderful cruising area, not too big, not too small, just right.

If the weather does get very inclement it's easy to nip into the shelter of Vannes and enjoy it's delights.



Our normal cruising area is from around Concarneau in the north to around La Rochelle in the south.

A coastal distance of about 170 miles with a lot of anchorages, small marinas and some huge ones.

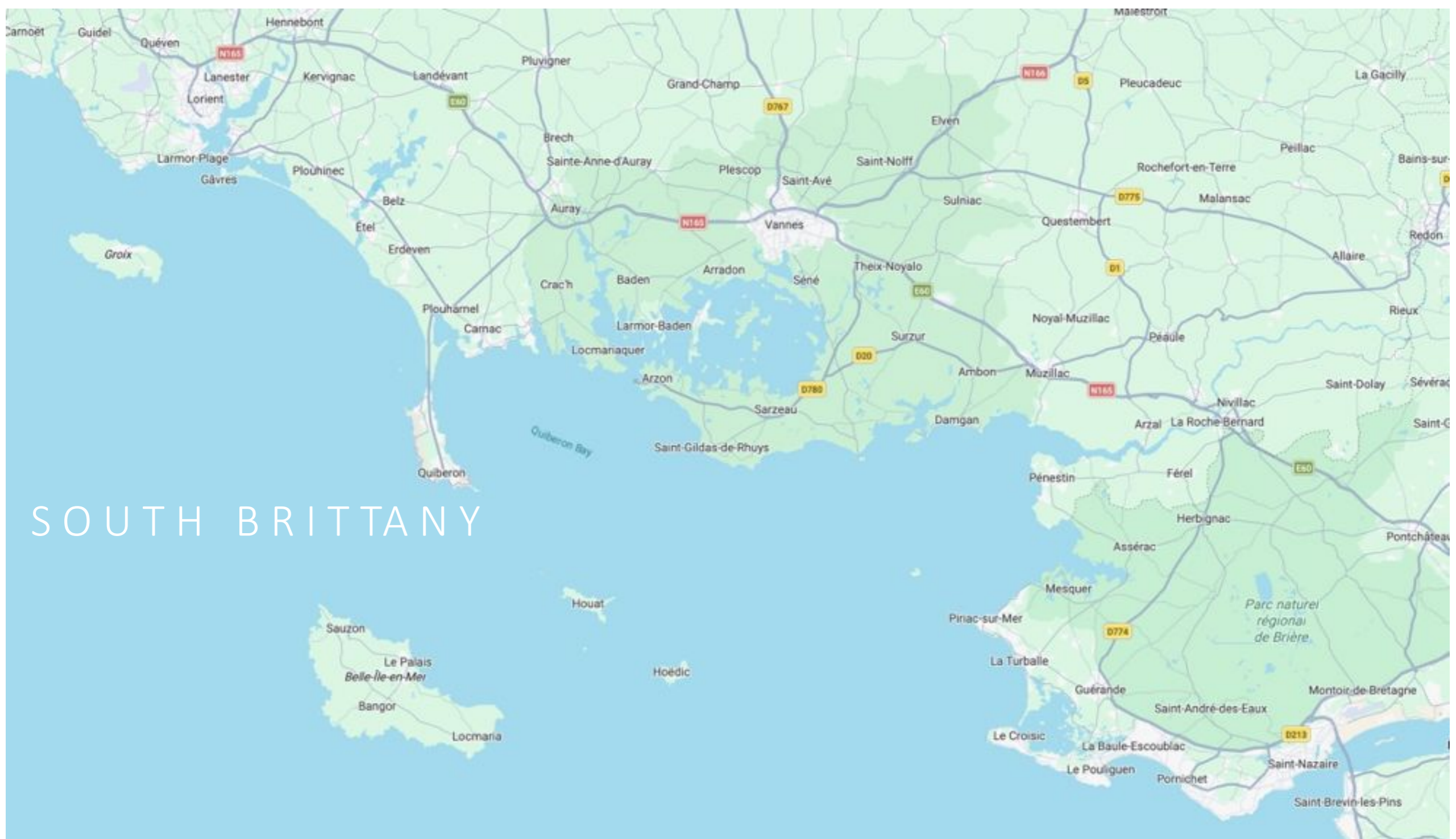
This information is from the CA shows how many places there are to visit all within easy day sailing or less of each other.

THE GLENANS



This is a great place to visit in good weather. A lovely archipelago of seven sandy islands.

It's also where the famous Glenan sailing school was founded in 1947 - each year it teaches about 14000 students 70% of them on yachting courses



It's got islands, it's got the Morbihan, it's got Rivers, it's got Quiberon Bay. Great sailing area, sea sheltered by islands and Quiberon Peninsula.

TREACHER GOURHED



There are so many great places to explore. Here we are anchored off the big beach on the West Side of the island of Houat.

PENERF



Here we are in Penderf famed for it's for it's seafood, oh and they have wine too.
No better of way of ending a hot mornings exploration than having a late lunch at an Oyster Shack



Here we are in Carnac. Brittany is littered with prehistoric remains. Yes I do mean littered.

These stones at Carnac are just part of an exceptionally dense collection of megalithic sites very near La Trinite Sur Mer on the south coast of Brittany.

Great place to visit with a good museum.

VALE DE LOIRE, VENDEE, CHARENTE



A bit further south we leave Brittany, transit the Vale de Loire and reach the Charente.

The buildings get their characteristic red tile roofs and it gets even warmer.

More lovely islands to visit or famous ports like Les Sables d'Olonne

ILE D'YEU



Probably our favourite island. Has a great sheltered harbour at Port Joinville and with a bike you can get everywhere including to La Croix, this great spot at the SW corner of the island

PORT JOINVILLE
ILE D'YEU



White walls, red roofs

LA ROCHELLE



The chain gate towers marking the entrance to the old port at La Rochelle.
Obviously there to provide the protection from the marauding English navy

BERTHING COSTS

WEYMOUTH

- £8424

FOLLEUX

- €2491
- £2153



Why do we stay - it's very cost effective! Important if you are a Yorkshireman with a Scottish wife.

Here are the recent comparative berthing costs for our boat in the UK and in Southern Brittany.

In 2025 we enquired about marina costs in the UK, not the Solent somewhere cheaper like Weymouth.

Weymouth - The cost of a rolling annual contract starting at 6 metres from 1st April 2025 is £702 per metre.

So for your 12m boat "Jennie B" the cost is £8,424.

Folleux € 2491 inc VAT €. Annual. For 2026

A map of Europe with numerous blue anchor icons placed along the coastlines, primarily in Western Europe, indicating berthing locations for the 'Passeport Escales' scheme. The map shows countries like the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and Italy, with various cities and regions labeled. The text 'BERTHING COSTS' and 'PASSEPORT ESCALES' is overlaid on the left side of the map.

BERTHING COSTS
PASSEPORT ESCALES

You can visit other ports in the scheme for 2 nights free of charge - any longer it's normal rates.

It works for the ports as it lets them know when you are coming and the majority of marinas on the west coast of France are part of Passeport Escales.

If you have a berth it should come with PE which means when you declare a cruise going and it works for us as it saves a LOT of money.

MDL marinas part of PE

TRANSPORT HOME?

If you get down here and want to leave your boat, how do you get home?

Nearly everywhere (except Folleux) is well served by public transport.

Also if you decide to charter down here it's easy to get to charter bases.



Brittany and the areas further south all have a good train network.

If there isn't a local station where you plan to leave your boat you can nearly always get a local bus to take you to the nearest station.

If we are flying in and out we usually go from Nantes.

La Trinité-sur-Mer, France

Nantes Station, France




3 ways to travel from La Trinité-sur-Mer to Nantes Station

Line 619 bus, train BEST
 2h 54min £29-63 >

Bus CHEAPEST
 3h 35min £13-19 >

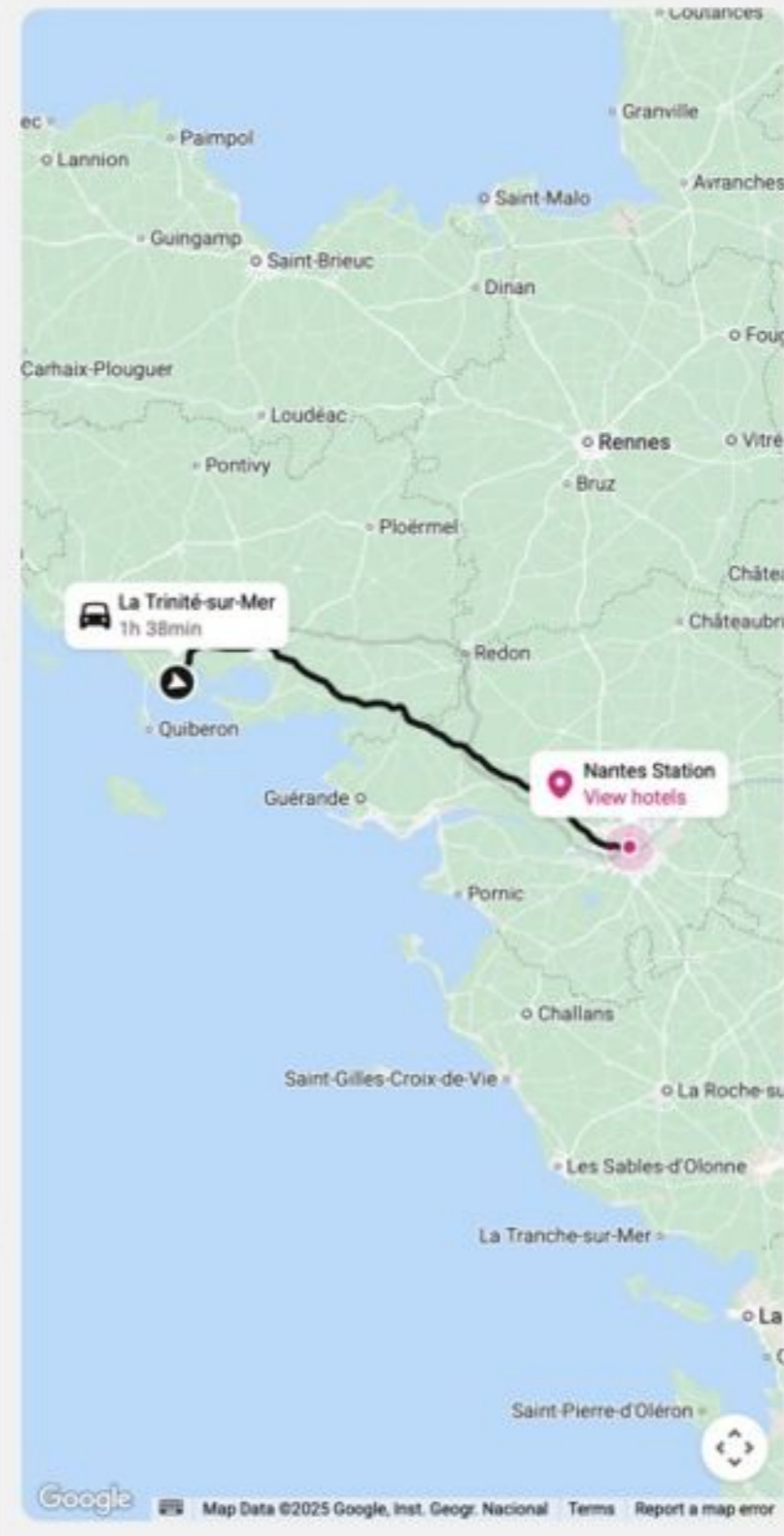
Drive 88 miles
 1h 38min £20-28 >

Hotels near Nantes Station

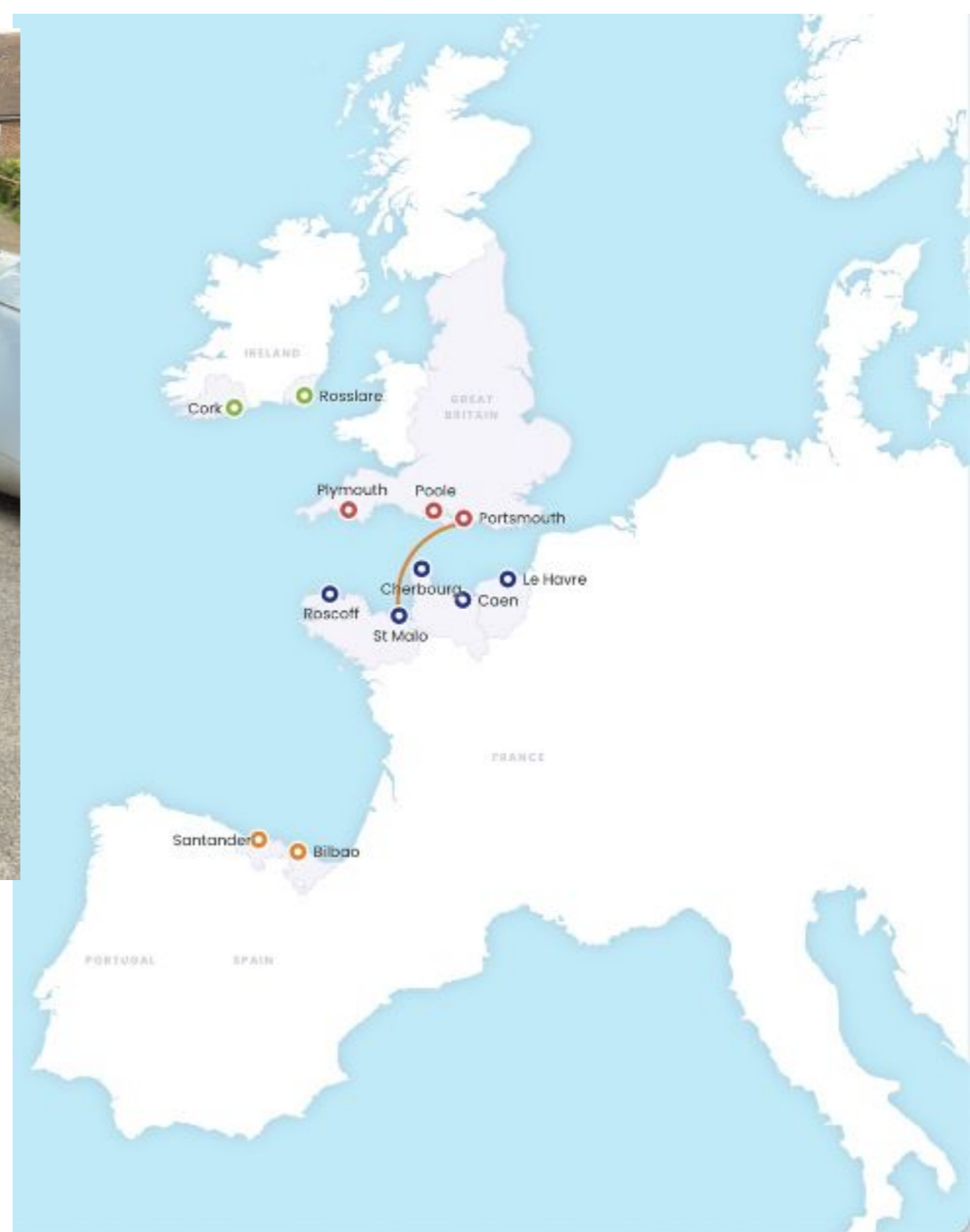
| | | |
|--|--|---|
|  ★ 7.9 (346) |  ★ 8.3 (3279) |  ★ 7.7 (1541) |
| Séjours & Affaire... 2.8 miles to station | Appart'Hotel... 3,400 feet to station | Appart'City Classi... 5,100 feet to station |

[View more](#)

Rental cars near La Trinité-sur-Mer



There are lots of apps or websites you can use to find the easiest, quickest or cheapest way to get to Nantes airport for example.



We usually travel to Portsmouth by car and get the overnight ferry to St Malo.

From St Malo it's a couple of hours on empty toll free roads to get to places like Vannes, the Vilaine etc.

On the way back we get an afternoon ferry from Caen.

We've only gone via the Tunnel once as it's a long drive in France from Calais.

Of course the advantage of the car is you can take a lot of stuff with you.

WEATHER

- Better than the south coast of England, but not the Mediterranean.
- Expect 2 or 3 degrees hotter on average and less rain than Devon/Cornwall.
- Time zone change; French summer time means sunrise later than UK and happily sunset later too, so longer evenings in the sun.
- Waves and swell. Despite being in Biscay, the ocean swell is rarely a big problem for passage making, but it can be in an anchorage.
- Wind; usually force 1 to 5, but the local winds can alternate noon to night (vent solaire), so anchorages need to be chosen carefully.

We wear shorts and light clothing nearly all the time while we are there.

When we left our boat on the West Coast of Scotland for 5 years I wore shorts twice.



The sailing is great, distances between ports don't need to be long so you can enjoy both the sailing and exploring ashore.

It can get very warm but you're never far from a great beach and a swim. This beach is on the Ile d'Orléon south of Ile de Re.

LANGUAGE

- Pas de Francais, Pas de probleme!
- Start the interaction with “Parlez vous Anglais, s’il vous plait?” Usually the reply is “Un peu.” If not, then resort to Google translate.
- Many Marine businesses have staff who have worked in UK and speak good English and also know the English words for boat spares and fittings.

It helps if you can speak even a tiny bit of French but Google is your friend if you don't.

Generally people on the west coast of France really like Brits (much more than they like Parisians)

WHY WE LOVE IT HERE

THE ISLANDS
HOEDIC



You might visit little islands like Hoedic car free and peaceful but still has bars and restaurants ready to serve thirsty sailors



Or visit bigger islands like Belle Ile with its Vauban fort and memory of being occupied by the British from 1761 to 1763.

It has been the home of many famous artists including Monet and Matisse.

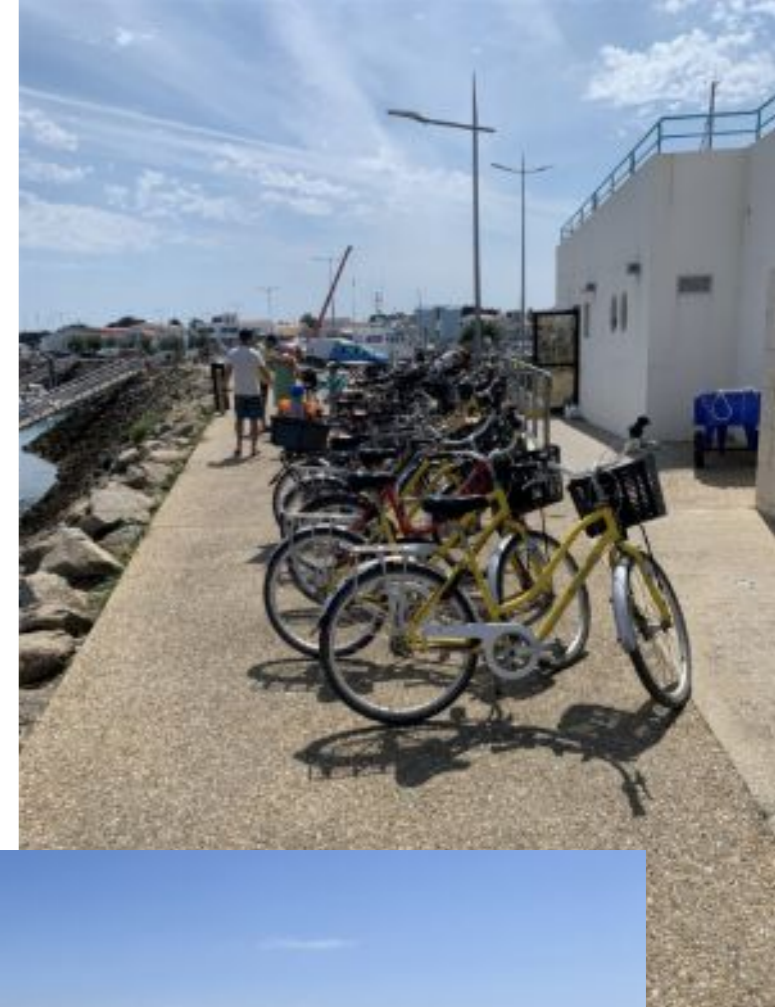
The pinnacles on the NW side of the island are a popular subject



This is the marina in Ars en Re at the north end of Ile de Re. In the summer it has great daily market.

It also has a multitude of bike tracks that take you safely around this mostly flat island. Oh and it has good beer too!

THE ISLANDS
ILE D'YEU



My favourite island. Great sheltered marina at Port Joinville with easy access to the main town and the bike hire shops. Bikes rule here. You can cycle all over the island to any of its amazing beaches



No shorts - it was April! The Marina is really in the centre of this ancient university town.

Turn round through the gates and you are soon exploring old streets like this.

THE TOWNS
LA ROCHELLE



There are several marinas in La Rochelle. The huge one is at La Minimes but we prefer to lock in to the Bassin des Chalutiers.

It's near the town centre but not too close to noisy bars. La Rochelle has some great museums, this is the maritime museum on a wet day.

Joshua was Bernard Moitissiers round the world boat. There is also a fantastic aquarium.

THE RIVERS



The River Vilaine is where we keep our boat. There is a barrage and lock about 5nm from the entrance and after this you are in freshwater. Great for killing off the barnacles etc. About 30% of boats in the Vilaine are British. It's a lovely place to be in the Marinas at Arzal or La Roche Bernard or Folleux (the port in the country where we are). Or you can anchor just about anywhere as long as you don't block the channel.

THE RIVERS



An art installation or two. Sharing the river with big ships too. But then you get to tie up on a pontoon in the middle of Nantes

THE WILDLIFE
AT SEA



Normally dolphins dive as you press the camera shutter but I managed to get these.



When walking through the Brittany countryside we see lots of lizards and butterflies and if I put my hearing aids in I hear birds too.

THE HISTORY
SUBMARINE PENS



These are the pens at Lorient. They are still there because the walls are 6 metres thick . Too expensive to knock down. Now used as a bases for various marine businesses including Plastimo. Similar pens at Brest, Saint Nazaire, Bordeaux and La Rochelle.

THE HISTORY
ROPE WORKS



The rope works and many other buildings at Rochefort on the Charente. Its the French equivalent of Chatham.

**SEAFOOD
MEGA
PLATTER**



One of many fish restaurants in La Rochelle serving up a lot of every sort of crustacean.

THE FOOD
SARDINES



St Gilles Croix de Ville is still an important fishing port especially for sardines. Delicious freshly BBQ'd at a shack by the side of the port

THE EVENTS
LA SEMAINE DU GOLFE



Gulf of Morbihan week. A festival of boating held every two years, usually has about 1000 boats of all shapes and sizes.
Next one in 2027. It's exciting to watch all these boats go by desperately trying not to hit each other!

THE MARKETS
VANNES



It seems like every town or village has one or more market days every week - especially over the summer.

Very good places to buy fresh seasonal local produce.



THE EVENTS
TOUR DE FRANCE

The Tour sometimes swings by our part of the world and it's just as mad as it looks in this photo. Thousands of people watching the bikes race by. Blink and you miss them! But the caravan comes through before the bikes with dozens of sponsors throwing small cheap things into the crowds.

THE EVENTS

INTERCELTIC FESTIVAL



Held every year in Lorient, a must see if you like Celtic influenced music.

THE EVENTS
FIREWORKS



If there is a festival or a holiday there will almost definitely be a firework display.

SAILING TIME



Of course we have lots of time for great sailing too. This is us heading south from Ile d'Yeu towards Spain. We use Windy and the ECMWF models to get our wind and wave forecasts and we can pick days when we can enjoy sailing rather than survive the conditions

EVENING IN PIRIAC SUR MER

EIGHT YEARS LATER
AND WE STILL
HAVEN'T LEFT....

Jennie B



MORNING ON THE VILAINE

PERHAPS WE WILL
SEE YOU HERE?



Nautilus Yachting

https://www.nautilusyachting.com · brittany-yacht-charter

Brittany Yacht Charter

Sailing Holidays in Brittany. Excellent choice of yachts for bareboat charter in South Brittany from La Trinite sur Mer.



Le Boat

https://www.leboat.com · ... · Boating Holidays · France

Hire a Canal Boat in Brittany: Boating Holidays

Our canal boat hire in Brittany allows you to cruise along the peaceful waterways while taking in the picturesque countryside and forests filled with wildlife. [Read more](#)

4.9 ★★★★★ (11)

Places



If you wanted to visit without sailing down there are many options for chartering of yachts or of boats for exploring the canals and rivers too.

ANY
QUESTIONS?



Anchored in the Glenans

LEGALITIES



Passport, EHIC or GHIC card, CA card for discounts

GHIC card will only cover part of any treatment, you need travel insurance as well. We get travel insurance with out Nationwide account.

We also have a Halifax account which we mostly use for contactless payments in France.



Great area to explore, Lovely anchorages, great food, good beaches, Great festivals, Amazing fireworks

FINDING A BERTH



- Visit in person
- Winter Berthing
- Summer Buoys
- Emails often not answered

Visit in person and talk to the Capitainerie about berths they may have available.

If you don't have PE it would be good to get a cheap berth somewhere that offers it. Buoy at Folleux very cost effective.

Vannes winter berth also good value. We arrived in Vannes in September 2017 and asked the Capitainerie what berthing they might have.

They had winter berths so we booked in.

Then we went home and came back by car and visited several places and ended up booking a summer buoy at Folleux for the next year.