

Holiday to Normandy June 2014

Review by Sue Sillence

Sitting in the sunshine at Monet's garden in Giverny, surrounded by beautiful flowers, eating delicious French food . . . just one of the highlights of the holiday in France. Our group of 37 were based in Lisieux in Normandy for four nights and were able to have a taste of the surrounding countryside and towns; Phil our driver pointed out many local places of interest and enabled us to see as much as possible of the area. We visited Bayeux on the first day of the stay; the Bayeux Tapestry is so much visited that we were ushered round very quickly – it was not quite what I was expecting, but extraordinary and intriguing and one of the most famous and precious 'manuscripts' in France, intended to explain how William conquered England to a mostly illiterate population. On a more sombre note the nearby (immaculate) War Memorial and Memorial Centre reminded us of the recent 70th anniversary of the Normandy landings, and the Memorial Museum in Caen presented a graphic and harrowing account of the events leading up to and during the Second World War. We also toured the Flower Coast, stopping at Deauville and Honfleur (good seafood cafes there). Giverny was probably the most popular of the visits – popular too with the rest of the world, as we were surrounded by a cosmopolitan multitude. From the lower water garden, with its iconic green bridge at the centre, filled with delightful flowers, trees and bamboos, we went up to the (green and pink) house and its beautiful garden. Monet's house was full of Japanese prints; the dining room was a bright yellow; the kitchen had most attractive blue tiles and a huge oven range. The large windows opened out on to the huge rose archways and paths, giving a wonderful feeling of space and colour. I think most of us also enjoyed the local cider and other drinks, as well as the mouthwatering patisseries.

Our thanks to Wendy and Richard for their usual kindness, humour and efficiency and to Phil our driver for his skill and calmness in dealing with the French roads and drivers(!)

Wendy and Richard are planning a final holiday next June to Norfolk and based in Norwich. This will include a visit to Hyde Hall, Cambridge Botanic Garden, a 3-hour river trip, Sandringham, Yarmouth, East Rushton Old Vicarage and Beth Chatto's garden.