

## St Malo, Brittany Trip



From 8th to 12th of February, a group of Year 9, 10, 11 and Sixth Form travelled to the walled up, port city of St Malo, in Brittany, France as an opportunity to learn and experience authentic French conversation and lifestyle with our host families and learn about the Bretons' detailed history.

We had to arrive at 5:30am, to travel from the school to Dover and board a ferry, to Calais. Standing on the upper deck gave us plenty of picture opportunities and (cold wind). From Calais then on, the coach drove to St Malo, from 1:30pm to 7:30pm, with a short break for food, fresh air, gifts for our host families, and a brief snowball fight. At 7:30pm, we were distributed to our houses from our meet up spot, in a car park, and drove off to our host's houses, for dinner.

After arriving at our houses, greeting the host families, and unpacking what we desired, dinner commenced, we were fed a 3 course meal, very different to a typical English evening meal. There was a vegetable soup, the main course and fruit with mousse or a cheese platter, with Camembert, my personal favourite, and many more. Over the course of the evening, as our family spoke no English we had to speak in French, or broken French with actions if necessary. Our French skills were tested a lot but we managed and it was quite funny, as we had to use exaggerated actions to help us explain our words. We learnt a lot of grammatical and pronunciation techniques, which will be used in future French lessons.

The next day, we had a tour of the city and were given a little time to visit tourist shops and to eat. There is one chocolate shop which sells handcrafted pastries and opposite there is a shop that sells salted caramel in a jar. It tastes like Werthers Originals but in liquid caramel form. Next, we visited le Grand Aquarium, with a walk in a circular tank of sharks rays and many other sea creatures. The last event of the day was a visit to the beach, which had emerald water. Afterwards we went to a crêperie and had either plain, caramel or chocolate crêpes, which we didn't have to pay for with our spending money!

In the morning we travelled to Rennes, the capital of Brittany. The architecture has so much detail, the town hall and opera house made to 'fit' one another like a jigsaw puzzle. We then visited a crêperie where we were taught how to make 'les galettes' which are savoury crepes with black flour. Some of us made our own attempts and failed, but they were still delicious. Afterwards we went to a chocolatier and ate caramel artisan chocolates and we then really appreciated the free time we were given to explore the town square which is tightly packed together similar to the buildings of home. As the rain started as we took the coach to Bourbonsais Zoological Park. The zoo was too big to explore in one day and the cold showers that left our feet drenched ended our day early. Funnily our host family made us galettes again when we got home - they were delicious.



Our last 'activity' day was on the 11th, where we visited Mont St Michel. It was quite a journey in the cold rain but the landmark looked like Disney Castle and many pictures were taken. We had a tour of the Abbey, a Roman architectural inspiration to us Latin students. We were given time to explore the area and if anyone likes vintage shops there are many in Mont St Michel to satisfy.

Later that afternoon we went to the Cinema St Malo le Vauban to watch 'The Greatest Showman' dubbed in French. As someone from England, it felt really bizarre to see the words not match the mouth movements and the actors' natural voices but regardless the movie was amazing, especially the soundtrack. The storyline is very moving for those who like dramatic musicals.

Our St Malo journey was coming to an end. We went back to our host families for dinner – I sang a French song for them and played my ukulele, which was quite nerve wrecking. I was very sad as I had enjoyed my time with them but in the morning we said au revoir after breakfast then met the coach and departed St Malo for Calais and the return to Dover.

The whole trip was a perfect opportunity to learn about French culture and experience something you can't do in a classroom. I am grateful for the opportunity and look forward to future trips.