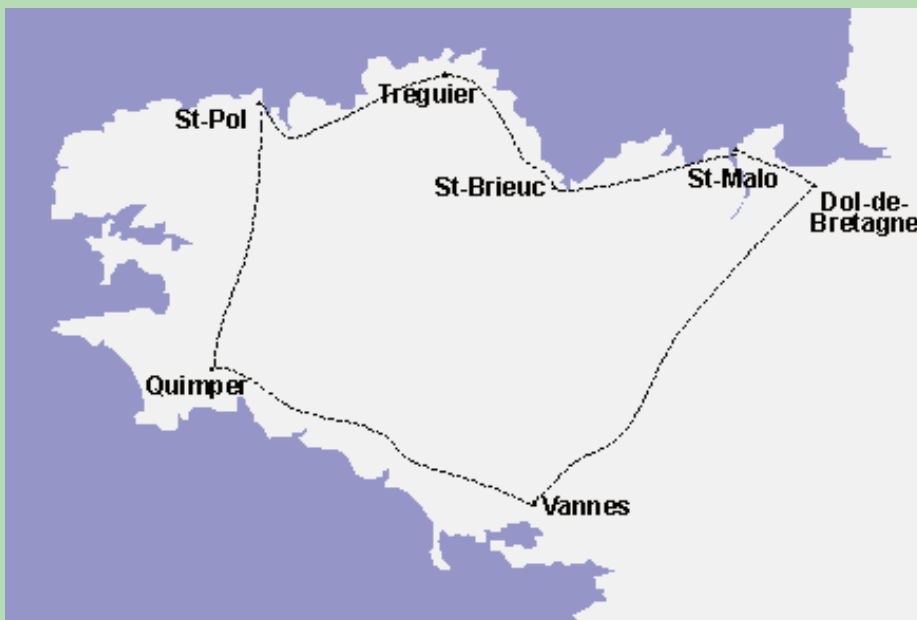


Tro Breiz

(Tour of Brittany) (600+kms)

The cult of the Seven Saints, 'founders' of Brittany, is at least as old as the 11th century. The seven were bishops of the early celtic church, five of them arrivals from Wales in the 5-6th centuries. The seven saints is a common theme of sculptural decoration in churches and at fontaines - for example, at Bulat Pestivien and in the cathedral at Rennes. (But not to be confused with the seven saints, brothers martyred in the 3rd century, commemorated by a chapel near Vieux-Marché.)

Each founding saint is honoured in their cathedral towns: Corentin at Quimper, Paul Aurélien at St-Pol-de-Léon, Tugdual at Tréguier, Briec at St-Brieuc, Malo at St-Malo, Samson at Dol-de-Bretagne and Patern at Vannes. A tour of these seven centres became a noted pilgrimage in the middle ages, requiring a journey of over 600kms. An old Breton dictum says that it must be completed once in a man's lifetime to ensure entry to paradise. Interest in the Tro Breiz was revived at the end of the 19th century with the general resurgence of enthusiasm for Breton legend and cultural practice: a hundred years later the route again became the focus of attention of various groups, with organisation and waymarking appearing to aid modern spiritual pilgrims or those committed to long-distance walking (another form of religion). A book in French - Tro Breiz, les chemins du Paradis - was published last year on this theme. It tells the story of the long journey undertaken from St-Pol-de-Léon by Gaelle de la Brosse with her two companions, two young children and two donkeys wending their gentle way along the quiet paths of rural Brittany.



See also www.tro-breiz.com