

Green Ways of Brittany (Voies Vertes)

Brittany has many hundreds of kilometres of Green Ways available for walking, cycling and horse-riding. Most of these routes are former railway lines, now surfaced and waymarked for slower forms of movement. Whilst these do not always provide great views, often being enclosed by trees or banks, they do present a means of travelling extensively in Brittany without walking along main roads. The Green Ways also make for easy and relaxing exercise without much in the way of sharp changes of gradient. In addition, canal tow-paths form key linking stages of these routes, giving remarkably good coverage of varied areas, and passing near to many sites of historical or natural interest. New sections to broaden the jigsaw puzzle of green ways are constantly in progress.



If you are looking for a not-too-challenging walk or simply some good solid exercise, these paths are a great resource. Many signed circular walks leave and return to the main route so that you can incorporate a few surprises and ups-and-downs in a generally easy-going day of walking.

The main central axis from Carhaix to Saint-Méen-le-Grand (126kms) provides a good variety of scenery and places of interest, such as the Abbey of Bon Repos and Lac de Guerlédan with all its leisure facilities, in the heart of Brittany.



In the west, the Morlaix to Rosporden (101kms) route (north-south) passes near Huelgoat with its famous granite Chaos, through Carhaix and after a brief flirtation with Morbihan via Gourin, reaches the southern parts of Finistere. For a less well-known option, there is also an old railway track linking the fabulous city of Quimper and a lively port at Douarnenez. At 18kms this is suitable for a day out with a bus or taxi to return.

In the east, the 105km route north-south from St-Malo to Rennes passes through the historic town of Dinan with its well-preserved medieval centre and some beautiful stretches of canal near Hédé. Once a central section is completed a diversion from this route will make it possible to go on all the way to the Gulf of Morbihan via Ploërmel and Questembert.

For the Nantes-Brest canal, which runs right across Brittany, see separate article in this section of the site.

Planning a journey

A map of all these routes is available from tourist offices, and the website of Randonnées et loisirs nature en Bretagne (www.randobreizh.com) has regularly updated information about the routes (see Voies Vertes) and what to see/where to stay if you want to make a short (or long) break of your trip.

NB Cyclists and canoeists should check the relevant pages on the same site for long-distance options.

A forthcoming Red Dog guide to the green ways is due in July 2010