

Visit Avranches



Crédit photo : ©OTMSMN_Jimmy-Perrotte



Wheelchair-friendly circuit



Starting point : Place Valhubert



Distance : 1 km



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Office de Tourisme Mont Saint-Michel - Normandie
Bureau d'Avranches
2 rue du Général de Gaulle
50300 Avranches

Welcome to Avranches



Starting point: Place Valhubert



Tourist office



Dedicated parking places close to the starting point: Place Valhubert



Accessible public toilets

1 The statue of General Valhubert

General Valhubert was born in Avranches in 1764. French general during the French Revolution and later under Napoleon Bonaparte, he died in 1805 after his leg was shattered by a cannonball fragment during the Battle of Austerlitz.



Wishing to honor ten generals who died in combat, Napoleon Bonaparte commissioned Pierre Cartellier, a renowned sculptor of the time, to create a statue of General Valhubert to adorn a Parisian square. However, King Louis XVIII, his successor, rejected the project and gave the statue to the town of Avranches, where it was inaugurated on July 16, 1832.

The statue depicts General Valhubert standing in his general's uniform. In his right hand, he holds the sabre of honor he received in 1803. At his feet is the cannonball that wounded him. A Parisian square bears his name. It is located at the end of the Pont d'Austerlitz.

His name is also inscribed on the eastern pillar of the Arc de Triomphe among those who distinguished themselves in combat.



Walk past the Tourist Office, then take Rue du Pot d'Étain followed by Rue des 3 Rois.

2 Saint-Gervais Basilica

The interior of the church is accessible to wheelchair users via the secondary entrance located on the left side of the church (on Rue Saint Anselme).

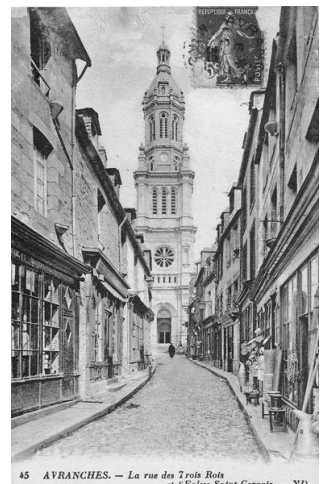
Entrance door width: 80 cm

The Saint-Gervais district is a semi-pedestrian area (shared space between cars and pedestrians).

The Saint-Gervais district is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city. At its center, Saint-Gervais Square occupies the site of the former Gallo-Roman forum, which was the economic center of the ancient city.

It is overlooked by the Basilica of Saint-Gervais, where the legendary skull of Saint Aubert — pierced by a hole — is kept. Saint Aubert was the founder of the first sanctuary of Mont Saint-Michel. The Church of Saint-Gervais was rebuilt between 1843 and 1897. The previous church had been reconstructed in the second half of the 17th century, replacing a much older structure that may date back to the Carolingian era.

Saint-Gervais Church has 32 bells, including 'Marie d'Avranches', which comes from the former cathedral, and the great bell 'Saint-Aubert', which weighs nearly 7 tons. The 23-bell carillon is renowned for its excellent sound quality.





The Legend of Saint Aubert's Pierced Skull

In the year 708, the Archangel Michael appeared in dreams to Saint Aubert, Bishop of Avranches, and asked him to build a sanctuary in his name. Bishop Aubert believed it was merely a dream and did not act. The Archangel appeared to him three times. On the third occasion, he placed his finger on Aubert's skull to show that it was not a dream. This is said to have left a hole in his skull. The bishop then undertook the construction of a sanctuary dedicated to Saint Michael.



Take rue des Chapeliers.

3

The Market Square and the House of the Mermaid

The Market Hall and the Market Square

The market hall was built in 1844 to replace old buildings that had become dilapidated. It served as a barracks during World War I, first for a Belgian regiment and later for the 5th Artillery Regiment from Verdun. The buildings were later converted into public baths and a communal washhouse.

The House of the Mermaid

Located on Market Square, you'll notice a timber-framed house dating back to the 15th century. The history of this house is not well known. It is also referred to as the 'House of the Three Merchants'.



Another timber-framed house can be found at 32 Rue Maurice Chevrel. This one is also among the last remaining examples of 16th-century façades in Avranches. In fact, in 1607, a royal edict banned the construction of timber-framed houses to reduce the risk of fire. This regulation was particularly well respected in Avranches.



Take Rue Boudrie to reach Place d'Estouteville.

4 The Scriptorial museum

The Scriptorial is a museum dedicated to the history of Mont Saint-Michel. Through its secret manuscripts, it offers a must-see experience for visitors of all ages.

Calligraphy, illumination, bookbinding, and the art of writing... these are the secrets revealed by the Scriptorial. Its unique selection of manuscripts, dating from the 8th to the 15th century, is displayed in the "Treasure Room" and is renewed every three months.

Practical information for visitors with disabilities:

- The museum pathway is sloped (gradient of 4% to 5%).
- A wheelchair and cane seats are available upon request at the museum reception.
- A tactile replica of the medieval statue of Saint Michael slaying the dragon is available.

5 The remains of the keep



At the beginning of the 11th century, the Duke of Normandy, Richard I, placed the town under the authority of a count named Robert, who served as both political and military leader. Aware of the nearby Breton threat, Richard I encouraged the construction of a keep, which would become the residence of the Count of Avranches.

This vast structure, measuring 35 by 25 meters, must have been particularly impressive to people accustomed to more modest buildings. The keep was gradually abandoned and downgraded in the 18th century. The opening of Rue de la Belle Andrine in 1848 split it apart, and it collapsed again in 1883 and during the bombings of June 1944. Only sections of the walls remain on either side of the road, allowing visitors to appreciate the scale of this military construction.

After the conquest of England in 1066 by William the Conqueror, the Norman model represented by the keeps of Avranches and Ivry-la-Bataille (in the Eure department) served as inspiration for the Tower of London and many other keeps, helping the Normans establish their dominance in England.

6 The Arsenal Tower



Built by royal order in the 13th century, it was intended to strengthen the castle's defenses. As decorative elements, stone cannonballs dating from the siege by the Catholic League during the Wars of Religion (16th century) were later added.

The Catholic League, also known as the Holy League or the Holy Union, was a party of Catholics during the Wars of Religion whose aim was to defend the Catholic faith against Protestantism.



Continue along Iceland Street.

7 The Town Hall

The Town Hall houses the Heritage Library, whose collection includes 203 manuscripts and over 31,000 early printed books originating from the abbey of Mont Saint-Michel and various religious institutions within the former diocese of Avranches.

Continue your visit...

As the town of Avranches is located on a steep site, some places may be difficult to access by wheelchair from the town center. If you wish to continue exploring the town, we invite you to go directly to the locations listed below.



Download the map of Avranches on our website: [Map of Avranches](#)



• Place Patton

Where to park: Place Patton (2 parking spaces reserved for people with disabilities)

This square is one of the most important commemorative sites in the town. At its center stands an obelisk in honor of General Patton, who liberated the town of Avranches on July 31, 1944. The monument was erected in 1954 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the town's liberation. In the 1980s, an American Sherman tank was installed, and in 2004, a bust of General Patton was added to pay tribute to him.

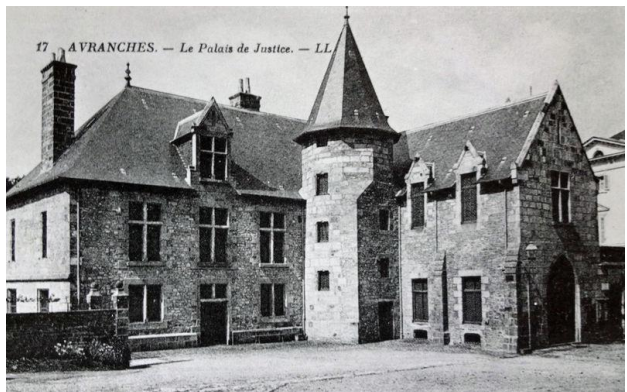


• The Episcopal Palace and Thomas Beckett Square

Where to park: Place Daniel Huet (1 parking space reserved for people with disabilities. The parking area is sloped).

The episcopal palace

This courtyard, formed by a group of buildings, is named after Bishop Jean de Saint-Avit, a native of Avranches, who was one of the few bishops to defend Joan of Arc during her trial in 1431.

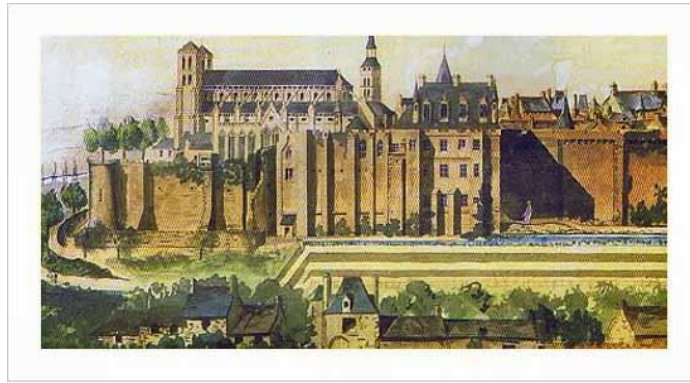


The original bishop's residence, also known as the old episcopal palace, is considered to have been the home of the bishops of Avranches in the 12th century. It may have been built on the site of even older buildings dating back to the time of Bishop Aubert, founder of the first sanctuary on the rock of Mont Saint-Michel. It can therefore be said that the history of Mont Saint-Michel began here. The building was turned into a prison during the French Revolution and remained so until 1960. Today, it houses the courthouse.

Thomas Beckett Square

Next to the episcopal enclosure lies Thomas Beckett Square. Several religious buildings once stood on this esplanade, with the earliest dating back to the 5th and 9th centuries.

Between 1025 and 1121, the Romanesque-style Saint-André Cathedral was built. Also known as "La Belle Andrine," it was a source of pride for the town's inhabitants.



Saint-André cathedral

In very poor condition by the 18th century, it collapsed one night in April 1794 due to unfortunate construction work. There was no choice but to level the cathedral.

Today, the outline of the building is represented by a grass-covered esplanade, and its towers are symbolized by a contemporary structure resembling candles, each standing 33 meters tall.



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A slab engraved with a chalice commemorates a tragic event.



© OTMSMN

In 1172, King Henry II Plantagenet of England, found guilty of having ordered the assassination of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, came here to seek God's forgiveness in the presence of two ambassadors sent by the Holy See for the occasion, for having incited his companions to murder the bishop. This episode took place at the location marked by the funerary slab engraved with a chalice.

• Notre-Dame church

Where to park: Place Carnot (2 parking spaces reserved for people with disabilities)



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Notre-Dame Church was rebuilt at the end of the 19th century. The former church had become too small, so around 1855, it was decided to build a new one. The foundation stone was laid in 1863. However, due to the scale of the project, the resources of the town and parish quickly became insufficient. In 1865, the Mayor and the archpriest travelled to Paris to request financial assistance from the State. This aid did not arrive until 1876.

The First World War delayed the construction work. The two towers were completed between 1926 and 1937. In June 1944, the church was severely damaged by a fire following the bombing of the town. Restoration work continued for several years, and the church was reopened for worship in February 1962.