

Coastal walking certainly has its own particularities: there is nothing so satisfying as looking back on a long series of headlands (which can actually be covered in a surprisingly short time) and feeling a sense of great achievement. On the other hand, a more negative psychological aspect can be the many estuaries, which whilst providing some of the most attractive walking to be found in this book, also by their very nature have the most frustrating aspect of all - realising that there are many kilometres to go up to the head of the estuary and back again to reach a point only a couple of hundred metres away across the water!

The weather is often a factor in a good day's walk by the sea, but it is not always bright sunshine that is most welcome on a route that is largely exposed. Walking in sunshine with a light breeze to take the edge off the heat is certainly very pleasant, but to see this remarkable coast in all its moods, it is worth enduring a few rainy days or a winter walk - in fact, December is one of my favourite times for walking in Brittany.

Walking close to the sea is possible for much of the way but diversions are necessary where private property intrudes or the terrain and tides do not permit easy passage. I have tried to give road alternatives in many places, but often it is possible and even pleasurable to do a bit of rock-scrambling and remain near to the water. I would emphasise, however, that care is needed at all times with regard not only to what is underfoot, but also to the tides and weather in general.

Overall my essential memories of this very rewarding experience will be the sea breeze on my face - with resultant salty skin and hair day after day - the scent of pine and heather, sea shades ranging from black to the lightest turquoise, the weird and wonderful shape of rock formations, the cries of a hundred different birds, the slithering dart of lizards, the chug of fishing boats and the silent progress of a yacht in full sail across a gentle bay. It is also hard to forget the utter difference of scene wrought by the level of the tide, so that even a single spot seems to change its very nature according to the time of day and year.

Finally, if this book gives you a taste for the great variety and richness of the landscape in this special part of Brittany, details of many other walks and places to visit in Finistere can be found in my books *Walking and other Activities in Finistere* and *Finistere: Things to see and do at the End of the World*. Happy walking!

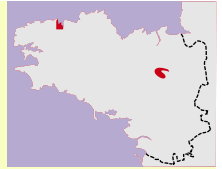
Wendy Mewes



## 1. MORLAIX to ROSCOFF

### Baie de Morlaix

41 kms



Our journey starts in the exceptional town of Morlaix, which warrants exploration of the medieval centre and stepped passageways before continuing up the river estuary. A coast road runs alongside the water much of the way here but it is not a very safe or comfortable walk and so an inland diversion via the very attractive little bourg of Locquénoël is recommended.

Carantec with its beaches and fish restaurants has all the appeal of a typical seaside resort and further good bathing opportunities follow around St-Pol-de-Leon. If religious architecture appeals, the cathedral and famous chapel here are also worth a short diversion into the town. Islands are a theme of this section with the memorable sight of the Château de Taureau at the entrance to the estuary, the causeway crossing to île Callot which is only accessible at low tide, and îlot Ste-Anne, the perfect spot for a relaxing pause.



## MORLAIX

The château on one of Morlaix's three hills has long since disappeared and the town today is dominated by a towering viaduct that carries the Brest-Paris railway. This was built in 1861-4, to a height of 60m, and shortened the journey time to the capital from 62 to 16 hours. During allied bombing in 1943 one arch was destroyed, as well as a school nearby, where a commemorative chapel now stands.

Historically the town is on the border of two episcopal districts, a fact reflected in the names of the Quai de Tréguier and Quai de Léon. Not exactly in the main stream of Breton history, it nevertheless saw action in the 14th century Wars of Succession and a siege during the religious Wars of the League. Morlaix also gave hospitality to important visitors such as Anne de Bretagne, who lodged in the Convent des Jacobins, as Mary Stuart (aged 6) did 43 years later, on her way to marry the Dauphin, later François II of France.

In 1522 Morlaix was sacked by the English whilst its soldiers and merchants were absent. The Comte de Laval led an avenging force which caught many stragglers who had lingered to drink to their success in the woods above the port. The Fontaine des Anglais on the Quai de Tréguier today is a reminder of when the stream ran red with English blood.

As a result of this experience, the Château de Taureau was built on an island in the Bay of Morlaix to protect the river mouth. Another possible legacy was the punning motto adopted by the town much later - *S'ils te mordent, mords-les* (If they bite you, bite them back).

The medieval heart of the city with its cobbled streets and half-timbered houses is just behind the imposing Hôtel de Ville. No 9 Grand Rue is now part of the town museum and provides an exceptional exhibition of a unique architectural form - *la maison à pondalez*, from *pont + aller*, a reference to the wooden 'bridges' to front and back rooms from a central turning stair with a space between spanning all four storeys. Many ancient stepped alleyways (*venelles*) riddle the hillsides around the centre providing alluringly different perspectives.

On Saturdays an excellent market fills the town centre, with fresh local produce in the Place Allende and varied stalls by the viaduct.



## CHARLES CORNIC

Charles Cornic (1731-1809) was a famous corsair who achieved extraordinary exploits against the English. In 1752, for example, he managed to capture three ships, despite 120 cannon against his own 30. In the later part of his life, he made an equally valuable contribution to naval history by mapping the bay and estuary of Morlaix.



### DIRECTIONS (see map on next page)

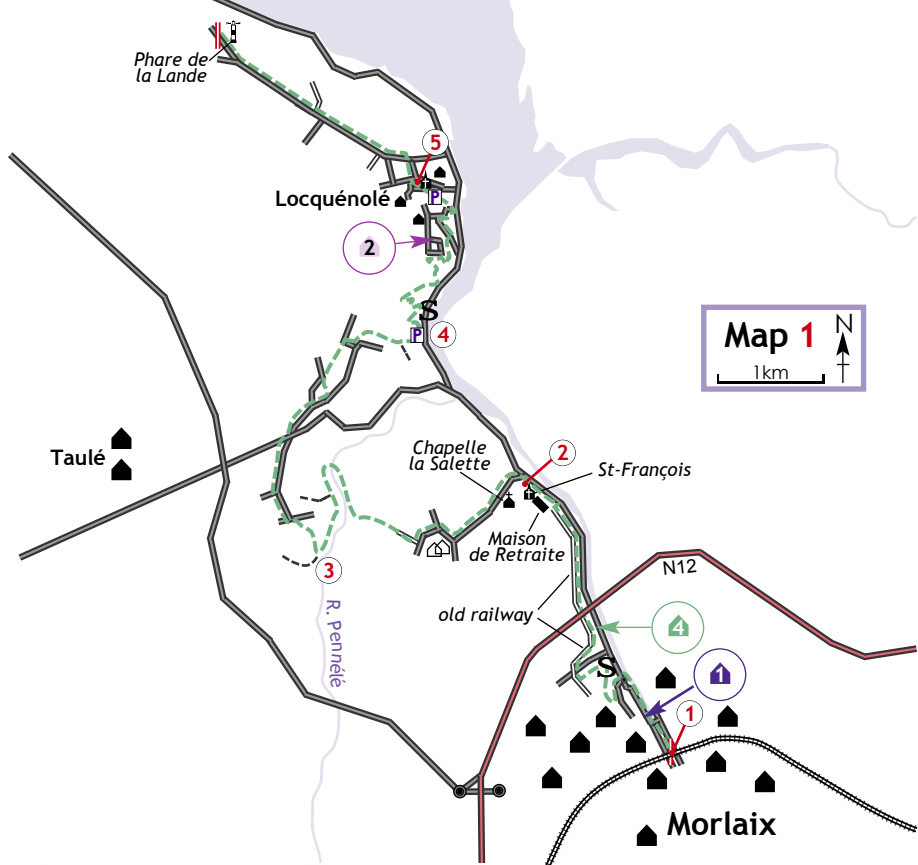
**1/1** From viaduct, approach river via Place de Cornic • **CA**, past bust of Charles Cornic, keep river on **R**. **This is the former port area; the old tobacco factory is on your left** • At mini-roundabout go **L** uphill (past new **Auberge de Jeunesse**) • 200m turn **R** on footpath into wood • At top of steps go **R** • **CA** past lavoir on **L** after 100m and another on **R** soon after • Climbing, at fork in path, **EITHER** go **R** for little loop with views of river **OR** go straight on to cut this out • **CA** at fork soon after, then **ahead** at junction of four paths further on • At track, turn **R** (former railway) and follow 1.5kms over bridge, through **☐** and under motorway • At end go down to road and bear **L** in front of **Maison de Retraite** • **The original 15th century convent here became an Augustine establishment in 1834. The ancient (1527) and tower-less church of St-François has a small museum of religious treasures and a cloister**

## THE PORT

The heyday of Morlaix's international commerce was the 15th-18th centuries, when the river gave access to three-masted ships. Linen, tobacco, leather, paper and butter were exported to markets in England, Portugal, Spain, Holland and Hamburg. This was also a stage on the Bordeaux wine route. Ship building was another thriving industry - in 1500 the famous 700 tonnes *Cordelière* (see p.88) was constructed here by Nicolas de Coetanlem, commissioned by Anne de Bretagne.

The production of tobacco began in Morlaix in the 17th century at a nearby manoir and moved here to the quai de Léon in 1736. Up to 1000 people were employed at the height of its success, but the monopoly was lost after the French Revolution and production declined.





**1/2** Between end of those buildings and a house, take steep ascent to L signed Chapelle la Salette • Follow Stations of the Cross up path • CA past chapel (1860) up road • At top, bear R and CA to hamlet • At fork go R • CA 350m, following left 90° • Turn R turn onto track opposite oak trees • CA on chemin creux down into river valley • Cross River Pennelé and turn L up valley • 150m follow main path L

**1/3** At junction of paths, turn R • Follow up out of wood and along edge of fields • After 100m, at little road go L, then bear R/ahead at junction just

after • At next junction, go R • Go ahead between huge glasshouses • At main road go R 50m then L • 300m, fork R • On left bend, take narrow footpath L • At road, go R then immediately R again on path across middle of fields • At next road, go R 100m then L on narrow footpath • Follow downhill into woodland, cross stream, then bear R downhill at junction of paths • At fork go L down to P on main road

**1/4** Turn L through P, then L up into trees by wooden sign • At top of steps go R • At look-out point, follow path sharp L up hill, to double back high above estuary • Continue up broad path, ignoring others • At top, go R at TJ of paths • 300m where track divides turn R downhill • At bottom of steps, go R then L before exit to road • Continue up steps into wood again • Keep ahead uphill, ignoring other paths (Ignore R turn sign on tree) • Follow L then turn R towards road • Go R on road • 120m at left bend, go R down chemin vert • 30m turn L on footpath • Follow 350m, at end follow R to road • Turn L along road • 250m at TJ turn R downhill • Follow road round to left, then bear R immediately down to shore • At main road, bear L before playground • Follow past playground, through P, towards Locquénolé church • The name Locquénolé means 'sacred place of St-Guénolé (see p.111). The attractive 17th century church here retains elements of an earlier foundation.

#### L'ARBRE DE LA LIBERTÉ

'Liberty' trees were planted all over France at the time of the Revolution. This one, the last surviving in Finistère, was planted on January 14th 1794, an occasion of celebration and dancing around the tree.

**1/5** Keep church on right and go across paved area past L'Arbre de la Liberté • Bear L up path, bearing R to road at top • Cross over to follow road opposite (to R of cross) • CA to roundabout, bear L • CA on road 1.8km • Fork



Chapelle la Salette



Tree of Liberty






Îlot Ste-Anne

along coast behind seawall • CA to end of beach

**DETOUR:** Turn R on road out to Îlot Ste-Anne (There are excellent views from the huge rock at the end of this promontory, which also retains evidence of fortifications from the 16th century onwards.)

- CA on road (Camping Ar Kleguer here and another 400m further on)
- At long shingly beach of Kersaliou, CA along road (View of ferry port at Roscoff ahead) • Where road turns inland, go up steps on R along path behind hedge • Cross little bridge, then open grassy area, before turning inland • At road go R towards water • Turn L along beach 40m, then up road past sitting area, bearing R along it

**3/4** At left bend, bear R along Chemin de Kerfissiec • At fork, bear R downhill to water • Follow through  then take little road to L at very end of  • 150m turn R between houses on narrow road • Follow beside railway, then downhill and round to left • Over bridge, go R at junction • 150m at junction go R again • Bear L before railway bridge • Continue alongside railway 150m, then R under bridge • Pass entrance to exotic gardens on left, bear R to continue on coast path

- Go L at picnic area, following boundary of exotic garden • 100m after path turns inland along fence, go R at fork of paths • Another 100m, go L on grassy track • 80m to TJ, go R alongside railway • At main road go R, then immediately R again to walk down to ferry port • Cross  to main terminal, go to L of it to pick up path again



#### LE JARDIN EXOTIQUE

This garden of sub-tropical and exotic plants has over 3000 specimens and a spectacular rocky look-out point over the bay. Outside the winter months, it is open for part of most days.

## 1. PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### SHOPS & SERVICES

- Morlaix TO open all year 02 98 62 14 94 [www.morlaixtourisme.fr](http://www.morlaixtourisme.fr) Mkt Sat
- Carantec TO open all year 02 98 67 00 43 [www.ville-carantec.com](http://www.ville-carantec.com) Mkt Thurs
- St-Pol-de-Léon TO 02 98 69 05 69 [www.saintpoldeleon.fr](http://www.saintpoldeleon.fr) Mkt Tue
- Roscoff TO 02 98 61 12 13 [www.roscoff-tourisme.com](http://www.roscoff-tourisme.com) Mkt Wed

### ACCOMMODATION

#### Hotels

1. Hôtel du Port (on route) Quai de Léon, 29600 Morlaix 02 98 88 07 54 [www.lhotelduport.com](http://www.lhotelduport.com)

#### Chambres d'hôte

2. Mme Pailler (200m) 23 Rubalan, 29670 Locquéholé 02 98 72 24 83 [jouenpailler@yahoo.fr](mailto:jouenpailler@yahoo.fr)
3. Ti' Case (300m) Danielle Mugnier, 9 rue Maréchal Foch, 29660 Carantec 06 62 13 60 67 [www.chambre-ticase.com](http://www.chambre-ticase.com)

#### Gîte d'étape

4. Le Logis des Ecluses (500m) 28 allée Saint-François, 29600 Saint-Martin-des-Champs 02 98 62 66 80 [www.lelogisdesecluses.com](http://www.lelogisdesecluses.com)

#### Camping

5. Village les Mouettes (150m) 29660 Carantec 02 98 67 02 46 [www.les-mouettes.com](http://www.les-mouettes.com) May-Sept.
6. Camping Ar Kleguer (on route) Plage Ste-Anne, 29250 St-Pol-de-Leon 02 98 69 18 81 [www.camping-ar-kleguer.com](http://www.camping-ar-kleguer.com) April-Sept

### TRANSPORT

Train services: Morlaix station (02 98 15 20 05) on Paris/Brest main line. Branch line to Roscoff (30 mins) [www.sncf.com](http://www.sncf.com)

Bus services: Morlaix/Roscoff [www.viaoo29.fr](http://www.viaoo29.fr)

Taxi: Guy Laviec 02 98 88 35 43 Morlaix

Laurent Le Pors 02 98 67 00 00 Roscoff

Boat to Château de Taureau from Carantec: booking 02 98 62 29 73 [www.chateaudutaureau.com](http://www.chateaudutaureau.com)

Ferry port at Roscoff (Bloscon) - Brittany Ferries to Plymouth or Cork  
Ferry to Île de Batz from Roscoff harbour - various times daily

### OTHER WALKS

For a town walk around the stepped passageways and medieval centre of Morlaix, see *Walking and other Activities in Finistere*.

A 10km circuit of the Île de Batz explores all sections of the island.

