

The magnificent abbey has been standing like a sentinel guarding France astride an isolated strip of sand on a Normandy bay since the Sixth Century. In addition to its permanent occupancy by cloistered monks, the abbey and nearby town have been the destination of Catholic pilgrims and tourists ever since.



The abbey is unique because the high tides totally isolate it from land for several hours a day, and at those times for many centuries, it could only be reached by boat. Brave and/or foolish hikers try to time the movement of the tides by dashing ahead of them, through the sticky mud, as they're threatened to be overwhelmed by the sea. If they can keep up the pace of about 15 miles an hour, they succeed. Otherwise, they make sure to carry life vests or inflatable boats. For those less adventurous, there's now a modern causeway for cars, bicycles and buses to make their way back and forth from the mainland.

Surrounding the abbey, Mont St. Michel is a small tourist town with a main street with shopping, restaurants and eight small hotels. There are about 50 permanent residents who run the shops, fishing boats, hotels, cafes and otherwise serve the tourists.

The abbey is the primary tourist destination, and its soaring spires are topped with a golden statue of its angelic patron, Saint Michael. The dark Gothic inside is full of religious icons and architecture that have changed little from when it was built in pre-Renaissance times. From the open cloisters and high outside ramparts of the abbey, tourists can view 360 degrees of ocean vistas and the magnificent Normandy coast, with the beginnings of Brittany just a few miles away.

For more information about visiting Mont St. Michel, check with your favorite online or neighborhood travel agency, or for local hotel information there, go to www.venere.com