

THE SAVVY TRAVELER

Art and Beauty Abound in Colorful Honfleur

By Barbara Diggs

Whenever I visit Honfleur, one of the prettiest harbor towns in Normandy, France, I'm gripped by a desperate desire to learn to paint. I blame the light.

On clear mornings, Honfleur's light is soft and rosy, bathing the slate-fronted houses surrounding the old port in a golden-pink glow. Later it turns white and crisp, making you blink in wonder as the town's charms—the pleasure boats rocking in the harbor, the glinting water—are thrown into sharp relief. At sunset, it grows warmer, streaking the sky with brilliant fire colors until it finally fades into darkness.

Honfleur's extraordinary light has beckoned artists for centuries, including 19th-century impressionist masters like Monet, Manet, and Honfleur's own Eugène Boudin. Just a two-hour drive north of



Just two hours north of Paris, Honfleur has inspired artists for centuries.

Paris, Honfleur is a can't-miss stop on any tour of the lower Normandy coast.

Dating from the 11th century, the town is a wonderful medieval throwback, full of storybook, half-timbered houses and shops lining a tangle of cobblestone streets. You can just wander, feasting your eyes

on the weathered architecture or the buzzing activity of the harbor.

Art enthusiasts are spoiled for choice in Honfleur, as the town has over 90 art galleries. Pop into the *Galleries Bartoux*, which offers a fascinating collection of contemporary works that make a pleasant break from the seascape paintings in many other galleries. Honfleur also has several museums, most notably the eccentric home of native son Erik Satie, composer of the idyllic *Gymnopédie*.

Given Honfleur's small size, you only need a day or two to explore it. Naturally, many local hotels are available, but the nearby beach resort town of Trouville makes a better base for discovering the region. From Trouville, it's only a 20-minute bus ride (\$2.75) to Honfleur.

Then again, by staying overnight in Honfleur, you get to witness the exceptional colors of sunset, as you dine on just-caught seafood on a restaurant terrace. Try the quay-side L'Osteria, where you can gorge on a pot of *moules marinières* (mussels in white wine) for just \$12. ■

In the two years since I was last in the Cayo, amenities in and around the main town of San Ignacio have really improved. Gyms and yoga studios have opened, and there's now a wine bar and a broader range of restaurant options. And yet the cost of living is still half of what most expats spend elsewhere in Belize.

Stay tuned for Ann's full report on the Cayo in your July issue.

number of savvy expat who prefer the Cayo is growing. It's a place of abundant fruit trees and blooming flowers.

The Cayo offers outstanding value for people seeking an affordable, established expat community. Couples can live comfortably for \$1,600 a month. The value and selection of real estate caught my eye. You can still buy a two- or three-bedroom home with a nice yard for well under \$200,000.

The Best of Low-Cost Belize in the Cayo

By Ann Kuffner, IL Belize Correspondent

Every time I visit Belize's Cayo District in the country's interior, I'm delighted by the lush, wild jungles, languidly flowing rivers, and the remnants of the ancient Maya civilization scattered throughout the region.

The cayes (islands) and coastline of Belize get most of the attention. But the

HOT PICKS

BEST MARKETS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

"Phnom Penh's Central Market is an art deco masterpiece made up of four large halls covered by a vast domed roof with a bright yellow exterior," says IL Cambodia Correspondent Steven King. "There really is something here for everybody, whether you are in the market for souvenirs, brand-name clothing, fresh flowers, food, electronics, handcrafted pure gold necklaces, or fine jewelry dripping with emeralds and jade."

Penang, Malaysia

"Throughout Penang, Malaysia, there are markets of all kinds: fresh and prepared foods, handicrafts, souvenirs, day and night markets," says IL Southeast Asia Correspondent Kirsten Raccuia. "But my favorite is the Little Penang Market. On the last Sunday of each month from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., funky little stalls line Upper Penang Road. But instead of the usual fruits, vegetables, and fish, this market has paintings, cards, jewelry, batik, and all things handmade being sold by the artists who crafted them."

Bắc Hà, Vietnam

"One of the most unusual, colorful markets in Vietnam is in Bắc Hà, a small mountain town near the Chinese border," says IL Vietnam Correspondent Wendy Justice. "The women, resplendent in their intricately embroidered skirts and rainbow-hued headdresses, sell exquisite, hand-stitched textiles, silver jewelry, jungle products, and potent moonshine, while the men sell firewood, water buffalo, goats, and other livestock."



BOOTS ON THE GROUND