

PLOËRMEL (TO 02 97 74 02 70)

There is plenty to fill a pleasant morning or afternoon in the centre of Ploërmel. See the remains of the 12th century ramparts and admire the old houses, including the 16th century **Maison des Marmousets** and opposite it the former house of the Dukes of Brittany, parts of which date from the 12th century.

In the courtyard of an abbey now partly used by the Lycée Lamennais, an extraordinary astronomical clock works away



Astronomical clock ©RDB

To the north of the town is the **Lac au Duc** the largest natural lake in Brittany. Here you can swim, hire boats, enjoy water sports, and walk. There is a 3km walk through the famous Hydrangea Arboretum where you can see 400 varieties of hydrangea (hortensia), as well as a 16km circuit of the lake.

QUESTEMBERT (TO 02 97 26 56 00)

This market town is 23kms east of Vannes, and a good stopping point to replenish supplies or have a meal. In the centre stands an impressive market hall built in 1552 and restored in 1675, a more compact example than that at La Faouët and hemmed in by fine granite houses and shops. It was near Questembert (at Coët-Bihan) that Alain The Great was victorious against the Vikings in 888.



inside a glass cage, and there is a small museum nearby.

The 16th century church displays a fine doorway with the apostles carved on the door panels and intricate stonework. Inside, the early stained glass includes a life of St-Armel, the 6th century founder of the town.

The 19th century **Blue Chapel of Holy Mary of the Carmelites** (now an exhibition centre) has a unique atmosphere due to the blue glass of its windows.

About 10 kms to the south east of Questembert on the road to La Roche-Bernard is a zoological park in the grounds of the château at Branféré, open every day in July and August but limited opening at other times (02 97 42 94 66).

◆ ROCHEFORT-EN-TERRE (TO 02 97 43 33 57)

Rochefort-en-Terre sits on a rocky spur between two valleys, a situation that gave rise to a castle in the 11th century and the town that followed. Little remains of the castle except a few walls and dungeons but part of it was converted into a manor (visitable, 02 97 43 31 56) in the early 20th century by the American painters Alfred and Trafford Klots, whose works are on display there.

The town is famous for its geraniums that decorate the streets and buildings, although these are exceptionally decorative even without the flowers. A mixture of architectural styles ranging from medieval to 18th century has created some beautiful street scenes with, apart from the occasional shop-front, few of the 20th century intrusions that are so common elsewhere. The church, Notre-Dames-de-la-Tronchaye, is tucked away down the southern slope of the hill, and consequently seems a little detached from the town centre. In high season the cobbled streets are likely to be very crowded with visitors, but this is a place worth seeing nevertheless.



ROHAN

Rohan (from the Breton for little rock) gave its name to one of the most famous families of the Breton aristocracy. Geoffroi, count of Porhoët, whose seat was at Josselin, gave land to his brother Alain, who, having first based himself at Castennec (See Walk No.9, page 107), then built a castle here at Rohan, - hence the name



Mural ©RDB

Alain de Rohan. The castle has since disappeared and is represented by an elaborate mural on the end of a house near the canalised river Oust.