

NORMANDY



*Normandy Tourist Board
Educational Resource Pack*

Part Two

NORMANDY The Birthplace of Impressionism

FirstNews
NEWS TO GET YOUNG PEOPLE TALKING

Brittany Ferries

Normandy
Destination
Impressionism

NORMANDY *The Home of Impressionism*

LOOK at the view around you for a split second, then close your eyes. What do you have in your mind? General shapes and colours? You won't remember every detail.

How would you paint that moment in time? This is what the ground-breaking artists known as the Impressionists were trying to do in France in the 1900s.



Impressionism's Birthplace

The word 'Impressionism' comes from a picture by Claude Monet called **Impression, Sunrise**. He painted it in 1872, in the French town of Le Havre, on the Normandy coast.

In the early 19th century, paintings were mostly about important people, historical events or myths. A group of painters, including Claude Monet, saw this type of art as old-fashioned.

They wanted to paint the world around them; they aimed to give a spontaneous impression, or a feeling, of what they saw.

In 1863 the artists put together an exhibition called the Salon of the Refused, but most of the public laughed at the paintings. Following this in 1868 another exhibition called The International Marine Exhibition was held in Le Havre to celebrate the young painters Monet, Manet, Courbet and Boudin.

In 1874, the artists exhibited their works, including **Impression, Sunrise**, in Paris and became known as the Impressionists. However they didn't choose to be called this – it was coined by a journalist, Louis Leroy, who was trying to mock the artists. Nevertheless, the name stuck.

In those days, 'impression' also meant 'sketch'. Some critics thought the Impressionists could not paint and just made rushed sketches or unfinished pieces. Look at **Impression, Sunrise**. Do you agree with the critics?



Claude Monet
Impression, Sunrise
Musée Marmottan Monet

Location, location, location!

Impressionism was born at the same time as railways began to cover France. Train travel opened up a new world for these painters. They could now break free of stuffy studios, stop off along the Seine River, and paint in natural light and *en plein air* (in the open air).



Gustave Caillebotte
La Seine à Argenteuil

Beautiful Normandy with its picturesque coastline and countryside was an ideal destination for the Impressionists. It was also easy to reach by steam train, as its historic capital, Rouen, is only 130km from Paris. A railway opened in 1843 linking these two cities.

The Impressionists wanted new subject-matter for their paintings. They believed that any scene was appropriate for a painting, even a sunrise or a boat on the water. They didn't want to be told what they should or shouldn't paint.

As well as the beauty of the old, Normandy had the energy of the new. Impressionists were attracted by the modernity of the railways, ports, and industry.

They also recorded the growth in leisure activities, with the rise of seaside holidays, watersports and horse racing in the region.

Artists such as Édouard Manet and Berthe Morisot painted these everyday scenes of modern life. This included Parisians enjoying the long, sandy beaches at Deauville and Trouville, along with Normandy's other fashionable resorts: Dieppe, Honfleur, and Le Havre.

Modern materials

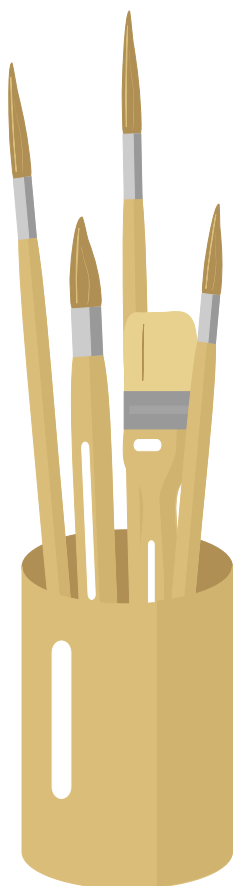
Advances in paint technology also helped the Impressionists to get closer to nature. Instead of the old powdered pigments which needed to be mixed first, paint colours now came ready-mixed in handy tubes. This wider availability increased demand, allowing new shades of colours to be developed.

Artist, Auguste Renoir said, "These tubes of paint, easily transportable, allow us to represent nature completely."

Gone were the made-up backgrounds of traditional paintings. Instead artists painted the real landscapes of Normandy in front of them. And they tried to record the view as it looked *at that very moment* in the day.



Monet's *Cliff at Pourville*
The Art Institute of
Chicago



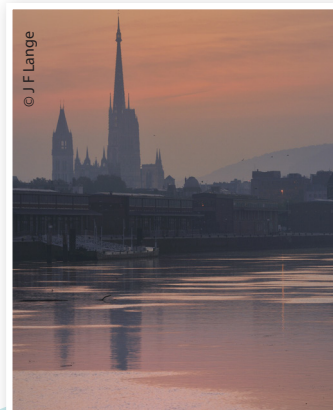
With their
paints in tin tubes,
Impressionists could
work quickly to
capture the
sensation of light.



Capturing the sensation of light

Impressionism is all about the instantaneous. Normandy's watery reflections caused by its changeable weather were so much more appealing to the Impressionists than the endless blue skies of southern France. Painters loved Normandy's ever-changing light and wanted to depict this *fugacité* (the fleeting changes) with colour.

The wonderful scenery of Normandy was also the perfect subject for experimentation with the new lighter, brighter paints available to the artists.



The River Seine at Rouen

It's all in the technique

What do you notice about the way the Impressionists painted?

It was very different to the style of traditional painters. They tended to blend their colours to produce a smoother finish. By applying colour to the canvas in looser, more distinct brushstrokes, the Impressionists could work more quickly and capture the essence of what they saw.

Artist, Camille Pissarro said: "The eye should not be fixed on one spot but take in everything, observing the reflections, which the colours produce on their surroundings."

The Impressionists' energetic brushstrokes also helped to show movement and action. Can you see this in Monet's seascape, **Fécamp, Bord de Mer**?



Claude Monet
Fécamp, Bord de Mer
MUMA, Le Havre

Challenges and breakthroughs

Painting outdoors was exciting and revolutionary. Normandy was like one giant outdoor studio for the Impressionists!

But it brought with it new challenges, as Monet noted when he tried to paint the Cathedral in Rouen: "At 9am there was hail. Then, in 10-minute intervals all day long, we had a procession of rain, sun and snow."

At one stage, Monet had 14 canvases of the Cathedral on the go at the same time. This was so he could keep switching between paintings to show how the changing light affected the building.

Monet said he wanted to paint, "The beauty of the air in which... objects are located."

To Monet, the subject of a painting was not the most important part. This was a huge break from the paintings of the past; Monet was leading the way for modern art.



Paintings in Claude Monet's series of Rouen Cathedral can be seen today in Rouen Fine Arts Museum.

What do you think was more important to Monet?
The Cathedral (the subject of the painting)
or the painting itself?

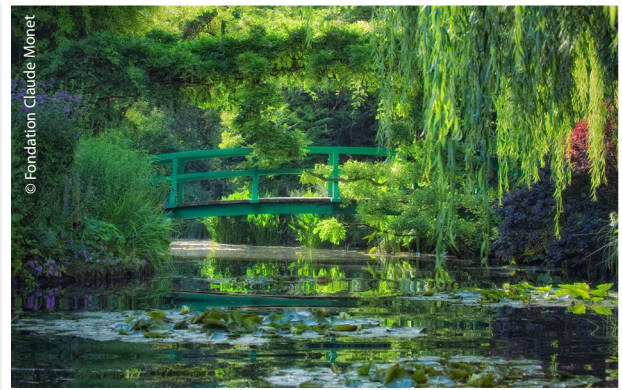


Claude Monet
Waterlilies

Monet took Impressionism to a new level with his use of brushstrokes filled with individual colours. We can see this in Monet's series of water-lily pictures, painted directly from the nature in his garden at **Giverny**.

Monet made his lily pond by diverting water from the River Epte. The pond water mirrored the sky, and Monet enjoyed the challenge of painting the light reflecting off the water.

Giverny is situated in the Normandy countryside, about half-way between Paris and Rouen. Monet lived there for 43 years, from 1883 until his death in 1926. It is now open to the public.



Monet's House
and Gardens



A Revolutionary Movement

The Impressionists, or the 'Independents', as they liked to call themselves, created a revolution in the art world: but what made them such ground-breakers?

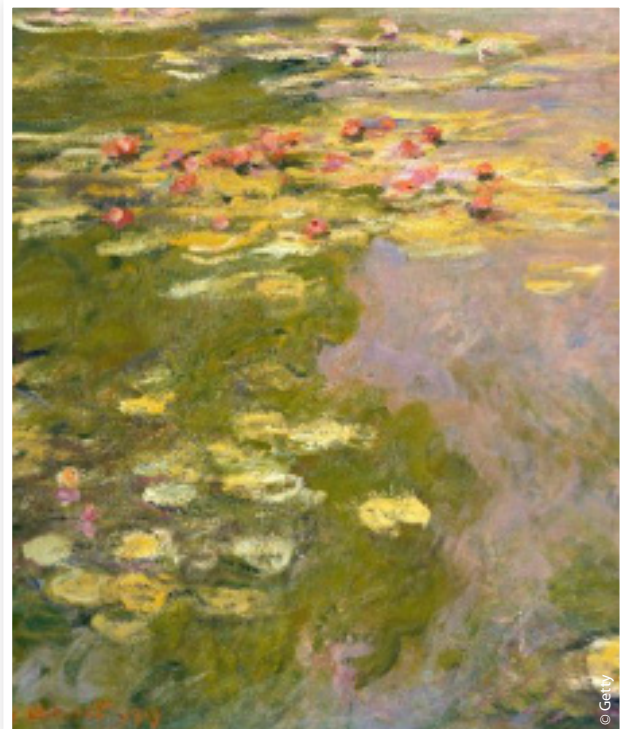
Well, for a start, their subject matter was fresh and different to what had come before. They loved to paint modern urban and country life: from city folk enjoying a day at the beach, to light reflecting on a rippling pond. The introduction of oil paint in tubes, invented in 1841, helped the Impressionists to get out 'en plein air' and capture individual moments in time, in a way that hadn't been done before.

Traditionally, paintings had been symmetrical, and the lines, shapes, and colours were arranged to lead your eye to a central focal point (the most important part of the picture). The Impressionists broke these rules of composition in order to be more spontaneous and shift the viewer's attention to the mood of the painting. They often chose very close-up viewpoints, leading their paintings to look cropped in a similar style to photographic images. You can also see how the Impressionists were inspired by Japanese artists through the techniques they used to play with the picture plane (the surface of the canvas). For example, everything in an Impressionist painting would seem to come to the foreground and the edges of the canvas. This was a technique popular in Japan.



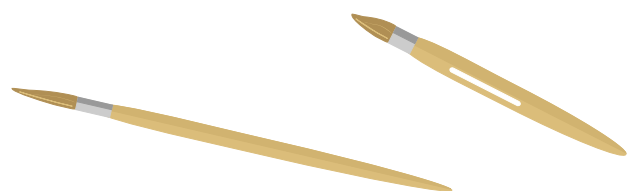
As photography could recreate reality better than paintings, the Impressionists used bold, flat areas of colour to emphasise the fact you were looking at a two-dimensional image. What's more, they mixed colour directly onto the canvas to add energy. They also separated their colours (this was known as broken colour), rather than blending them. This showed how the human eye brings colours together from a distance.

The Impressionists were also influenced by scientific colour theories developed in the 19th century. Ideas of complementary colours such as red and green, blue and orange, and yellow and violet gave them a greater awareness of colour and light in nature.



The Impressionistic style of painting was also trailblazing: they painted with looser and more energetic brushstrokes of thick paint. This emphasised the transience of the scenes they were painting. Simplified and blurred forms could suggest everything from buildings to the movement of people.

The public grew to love the vitality of the Impressionist technique and, in time, Impressionism grew to become the most popular movement in the history of art.



SNAP! Photography and Impressionism

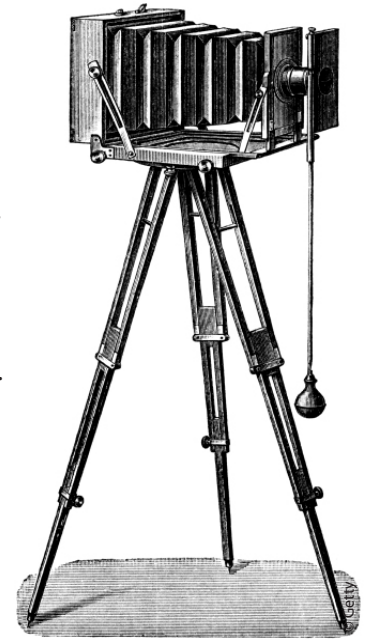
Photography was in the early stages of its development at the same time as Impressionism, so it is no wonder that the Impressionists were influenced by this new technology. But Impressionist paintings don't look like photographs, so how are they similar?

Like photography, Impressionism was very scientific in its observation of light and the optical world (how the eye sees in relation to light). It paid close attention to light, colour, and movement in the natural world, rather than in the studio.

As there was often a difference between what the photographer saw in the viewfinder of the camera and what appeared on the negative, photographers would crop their pictures to improve their composition. Some Impressionists liked the asymmetrical effects of cropping and used this style of composition in their paintings.

Early photographs mainly used natural light as light bulbs were a new invention that was not widely available. The Impressionists also often used natural light. Monet would sit in one spot outdoors and study the effects of light at all hours of the day as he painted.

In those days, in order to get proper exposure, the shutter speed on a camera needed to be very long, which often took several minutes. This created motion blur – a snapshot of movement. As the Impressionists were painting a society that was moving more and more quickly, blurred movement in their paintings helped to suggest steam trains and other aspects of rapid modern life.



Women and Impressionism

In the 19th century, women artists were at a disadvantage to their male counterparts. Society wanted women to stay at home and be wives and mothers. A professional career, such as an artist, was not considered appropriate for a woman because it took her away from the home.

Additionally, women couldn't study to be artists because art schools involved life drawing of the naked figure – something deemed too shocking for women at the time. It wasn't until 1897 when female art students were finally accepted at the École des Beaux-Arts (The School of Fine Arts) in Paris!

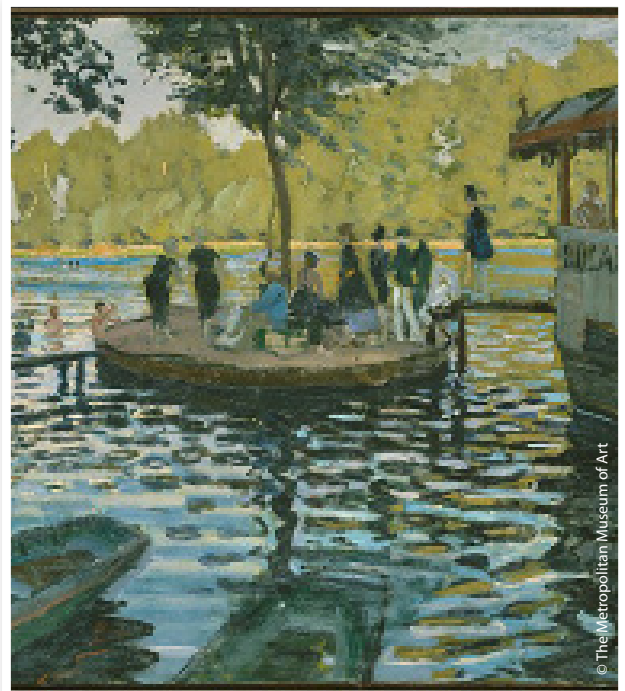
Men dominated the public sphere. As a result, male Impressionists had much more freedom to paint people out and about in their everyday lives. That's why you are more likely to see paintings of domestic scenes from female Impressionists.

Berthe Morisot and her sister were lucky enough to have a supportive mother who encouraged their artistic talents. This helped Morisot to become the first woman to exhibit with the Impressionists. She was described as one of, "les trois grandes dames" of Impressionism, alongside Marie Bracquemond and Mary Cassatt.



Friendships

The Impressionists were a close-knit group who chose to exhibit and socialise together. They mounted eight shows from 1874 to 1886 and continued to support one another late into their careers.



Like many Parisians in the 1800s, they loved to meet up at the little bars called guingettes that sprung up outside Paris where state taxes didn't apply. This resulted in the alcohol being cheaper. Guingettes were a place to drink, eat, dance and enjoy leisure time – another new aspect of modern 19th century life.

An artistic legacy

Impressionism's innovative style and new vision of how painting should be freed art from the past. Its popularity means that works by Monet and other key Impressionists can now fetch millions of pounds at auction.

Every year, millions of visitors come to Normandy to follow in the footsteps of the Impressionists and visit the beautiful landscapes that inspired a new art movement.



Impressionist Art in Normandy

MUSEUMS

Musée André Malraux, Le Havre (Musée MuMa) has the second biggest collection of Impressionist art outside of Paris: <http://www.muma-lehavre.fr/en>

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, <http://rouen-musees.com/en>

Musée Eugène Boudin, <http://www.musees-honfleur.fr/musee-eugene-boudin.html>

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen, <http://www.mba.caen.fr>

Musée des Impressionismes, Giverny, <http://giverny.org/museums/impressionism/>

General information on Impressionism, <http://www.impressionism-normandy.com>

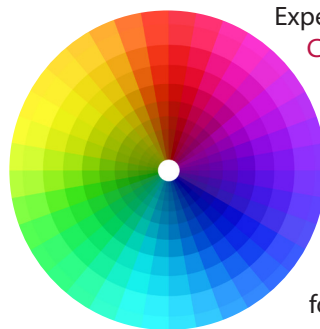
Online video: Impressions of Normandy, <http://www.normandie-tourisme.fr/articles/the-film-normandy-birthplace-of-impressionism-865-2.html>

Travelling to Normandy: Brittany ferries, www.brittanyferries.co.uk

ACTIVITY: Paint like an Impressionist

Feeling inspired – why not paint in the style of the Impressionists?

- **CONTENT AND SUBJECT-MATTER:** paint a scene or activity from your everyday life. Have a go at painting outside!
- **TECHNIQUE:** Paint in a rapid, sketchy way. Remember: you are painting 'a quick glance', so get across the spontaneous feeling, or the atmosphere of what you see. Don't worry about detail.
- **COLOUR:** Try bright colours and don't mix them. Instead, use brushstrokes of individual colour.
- **TONE = THE LIGHT OR DARKNESS IN A PAINTING:** Use colour to capture the light and shade, but no black!
- **FORM = SHAPES AND OBJECTS:** With your sketchy brushstrokes, the forms in your painting will not look clear, but more like they are disappearing or dissolving into each other.



Experiment with **COMPLEMENTARY COLOURS** to create tone. This is when you use a primary colour for an object and its opposite colour on the colour wheel to make its shadow. Monet often used red as shadow for green.

Renoir said, "No shadow is black. It always has a colour. Nature knows only colours..."



Impressionism – Timeline of Key Events

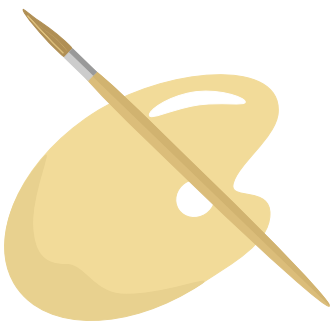
ACTIVITY A: UNDERSTANDING CHRONOLOGY

The Development of the Impressionist Art Movement

Can you work out the order of these key events that allowed impressionism to blossom as an art style?

i) Using your detective skills, can you work out the order in which these key events took place?

ii) Add them to the timeline to find out the date the event took place. You could cut and stick them, or write them on the timeline.



The artists organise and exhibit their paintings at an exhibition in Paris as none of the galleries will show them. They become widely known as the Impressionists.

Impressionism is one of the most loved art movements in the world and Impressionist paintings sell for millions of pounds at auctions.

Seaside bathing becomes fashionable in both France and Britain. Seaside resort towns begin to develop on both sides of the Channel.

The International Marine Exhibition is held in Le Havre to celebrate the young painters Monet, Manet, Courbet and Boudin, along with other young artists who were trying to capture the impression of Normandy landscapes and architecture on canvas.

The steam railway line from Paris to Rouen in Normandy is opened. Lines are extended to Le Havre and Dieppe by the end of the decade. The journey from the capital to seaside towns is now much faster than it used to be by stage coach or steam boat.

Impressionist paintings gradually become more accepted. Monet begins to make money from his paintings.

Monet paints a picture called 'Impression, Sunrise' in the town of Le Havre on the Normandy coast. An art critic, Louis Leroy, mocked the painting when it was exhibited in Paris. He called it an 'impression' rather than a painting.

Emperor Napoleon III says the artists' new painting style is not fit to be seen in the official galleries in Paris. But he says the public should judge for themselves. An exhibition called the 'salon des refuses' (Salon of the Refused) is put together but most visitors laugh at the paintings.

John G. Rand invents the paint tube. Paint can now be produced in bulk in tin tubes with a cap. More colours are available and they last longer. This makes painting 'en plein air' (outside) much easier. Artists soon begin experimenting painting outdoors.

Impressionism – Timeline of Key Events

Date**Event**

Early 1800s

1841

1843

1863

1868

1872

1874

1880s

End of the 20th
Century**NORMANDY**

Impressionism – Map of Key Places

ACTIVITY B: LOCATING SITES WHERE HISTORICAL EVENTS TOOK PLACE

Can you locate the sites where the artists painted and developed the Impressionist art movement?

- i) Use the text provided and an atlas to find the names of the places marked on the map of Normandy. Write them in the map's key.
- ii) Find out why these places were important to the Impressionist artists.

NEED SOME HELP? The following place names and event clues will help you to create your map.

PLACES

Can you locate these places on the map of Normandy?

Le Havre

Etretat

Honfleur

Rouen

Giverny

Dieppe

River Seine

Fécamp

EVENTS

Can you work out what happened where?

A port on the southern side of the mouth of the Seine estuary. It inspired many of the painters who were to become known as the Impressionists as there was so much to paint here: the estuary, the quays, the churches, and the old streets. This town escaped the bombings in the Second World War and nearly all the locations painted by the Impressionists can be found here today.

This fashionable seaside resort is known as a 'ville d'art et d'histoire' (town of art and history). The impressionist painters enjoyed painting marine scenes on the beaches here.

This became a fashionable seaside resort in the early 1830s. The artists painted the dramatic white chalk cliffs found here.

Monet lived in this small village for 43 years until his death in 1926. He created a beautiful garden with lily ponds and a Japanese bridge. His famous water-lily pictures were painted in this garden. Many artists came to visit and work with Monet over the decades he lived here. His house is now open to the public.

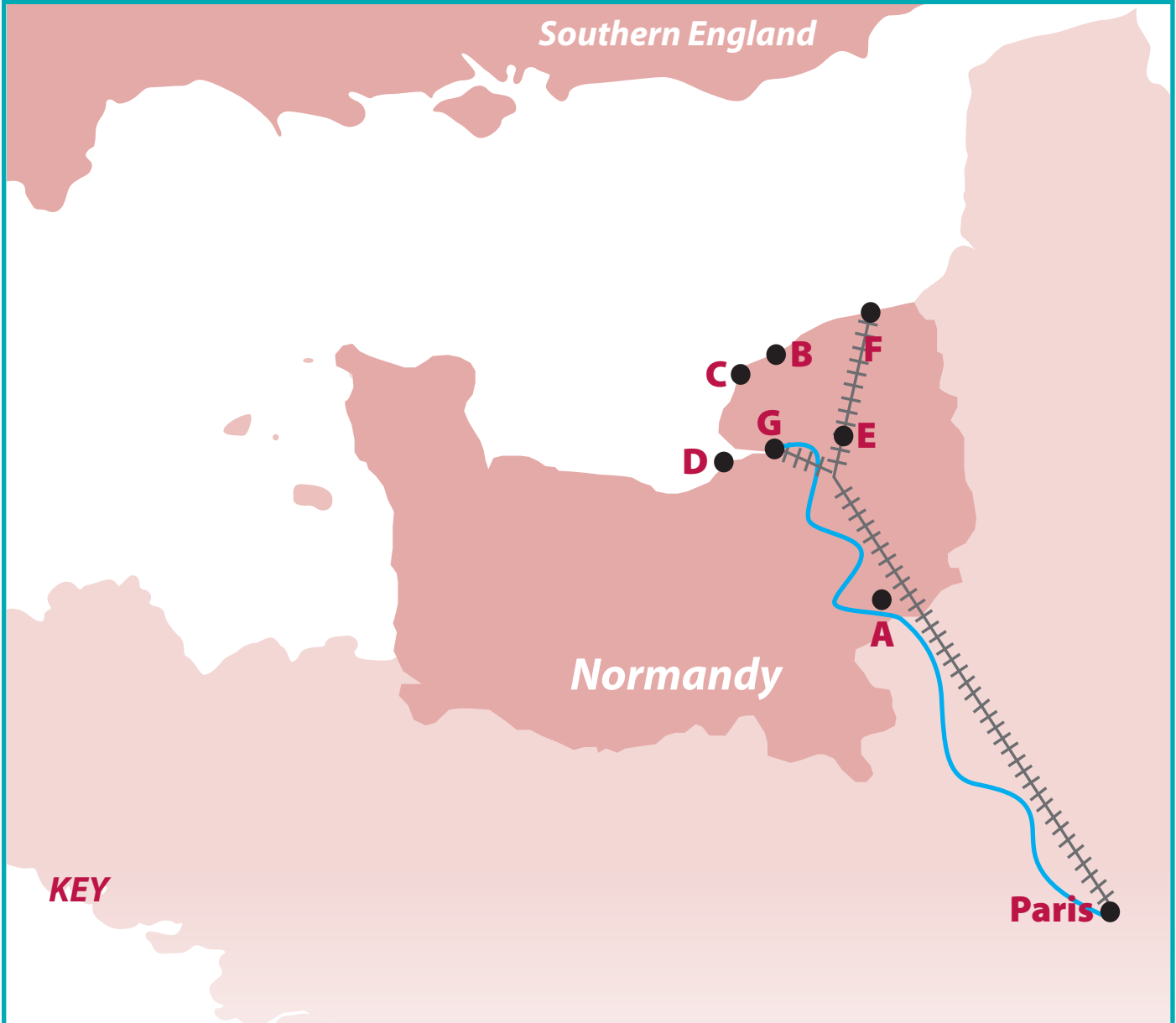
This seaside port to the north of the Seine Estuary played a very important role in the evolution of Impressionism. The International Marine Exhibition was held here in 1868 to celebrate the young painters Monet, Manet, Courbet and Boudin. Monet painted his picture 'Impressionism, Sunrise' here a few years later which gave the art movement its name.

This city sits on a bend on the River Seine. In 1892, Monet painted the Cathedral here. At one stage he was working on 14 paintings of the cathedral at the same time, and he switched between them to try to paint precisely the different light and shadows on the building at different times.

Artists set up their easels in the fields along this river, particularly in the villages of La Bouille and Sahurs. They painted views of the sharp bends in this river, sailing boats, and the surrounding hills. They were fascinated by the how the light changed quickly along here.

A fishing port hidden in a gap in the high white cliffs. Monet spent winters painting here. It is famous for its iconic natural cliff arch and needle structures.

Impressionism – Map of Key Events

**KEY**

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NORMANDY