

A Nice Island in the Bay of Biscay

There is a small island off the western coast of France called Belle Isle en Mer. It is a beautiful rocky island where the weather is cool. As I describe it to you, you are going to get cozy and comfy in your bed, and allow yourself to drift off to sleep. So, make sure you have your favorite pillow and snuggle up in just the position you like.

You are riding the ferry from the mainland, its only about a 25-minute ride. You've decided to take a seat on the bow of the boat, so that you can watch the island you are traveling to slowly become larger as the ferry grows closer. The weather is cool, but not too cold, and there is a steady headwind on the bow of the boat, as it skims across the sea.

There are some metal benches for people to sit in, but you decide to stand at the railing of the boat so that you can see the water rushing past below. You look down at the water and hear the sounds of the ocean lapping at the side of the ferry boat. The wind is slightly salty and refreshing, catching your clothes and making them dance on your body.

The hum of the engines is loud, yet calming. There are people sitting on the benches, talking in French as they watch the very same scene as you. A few kids are enjoying the ride more than anyone else, pointing and smiling during the entire ride.

The ferry engines slow because it is coming in to port. The captain maneuvers the boat perfectly, docking with precision. Several workers get off the boat before it even comes to a full stop, grabbing all sorts of ropes to tie it securely and buoys to act as a buffer between the dock and the ferry.

A small bridge extends off the side of the boat to allow for passengers to exit, and a large ramp on the end of the boat slowly lowers to allow for the cars it carried across the bay to drive off. The whole process of unloading everything goes so smoothly and there is no rushing, and no waiting in line.

You can hear some seabirds flying overhead as you enter the beautiful village. Four-story buildings line the sea side, colored in whites and creams, with some painted light pink and yellow. The rooftops are a matching gray and you can see each building has a few chimneys for when the weather turns cold.

Some buildings have very small balconies, only big enough to hold a few potted plants, and the shutters on the windows vary from mint green to leaf green, and some are shades of dark pink. This is a beautiful little town, bustling with the energy of its people.

This village is situated in a cove, so that it is protected from the sea. You turn to look out into the turquoise water, and across the marina full of small boats you see the sprawling nature of the island. Golden and green hues of tall grasses stretch across the rocky shore.

You can make out some old wartime buildings that have turned to ruins, and see small windows that the soldiers could peek out to see enemy ships approaching. The buildings protected the soldiers, yet allowed enough access to fire their weapons out of the small rectangle windows.

Nature has since taken over these structures, grasses growing high around them and vines clinging to the walls.

Strong cedar trees thrive on this island, as well as a few other varieties of shorter trees. The trees cannot grow very tall here because of the high winds coming off the bay.

You begin to walk through the village and there are bicycles lining the streets, along with some scooters and small motorcycles.

There are various places to dine that have large awnings to seat many people outside. The tables and chairs at these establishments are placed as closely together as they can get, allowing for a maximum number of customers.

Some shops you pass by are filled to the brim with one of a kind paintings, flashing their beauty through the windows, enticing people to enter the gallery and buy one to take home.

You are enjoying the simple geometric shapes of the architecture and how so many windows are open letting the fresh air in. Some of the open windows have white curtains dancing in the wind.

As you pass by a busy crepe shop you can smell the aroma of chocolate and the batter of the crepes cooking on the skillet. People are delightfully eating their crepes, and you can see them stuffed with various kind of delicious ingredients.

You will stop by later to have a crepe, or two, but for now you want to walk along the nature footpaths nearby to begin exploring this beautiful island. As you walk away from the village, there are several footpaths through the tall grasses that lead to various nature areas, ruins, or beautiful secluded coves with turquoise waters and sandy beaches.

You decide to take the path that leads to the cliffside, to see the beautiful sights of the windswept offshore jagged rock formations towering from sea below that Claude Monet painted many years ago.

You walk along the beige colored footpath that so many footsteps before you have walked and notice the low growing plant life surrounding you are colors of sage greens. Smoothed rocks aid as steps taking you up the cliffside, and as you climb, you can see the cobalt blue horizon of the bay peeks over the hillside in front of you. You are careful with your step because a fall from this cliff to the sea below would surely be the end of you.

The sound of the mighty ocean presents itself as a deep roar and low hissing and splashing sounds. Waves have been crashing and carving this landscape for thousands of years.

You make it to the exact view that Monet once perched his canvas.

It is spectacular.

A dozen jagged rocks are congregating in the sea, growing from large at the base to more treacherous and narrower at their tops. No two are the same. They almost look like dancers striking a pose in the bay. From your vantage point, you are so high above sea level, that you are somewhat looking down on these magnificent structures. Their tops do not even cross the horizon line where the ocean meets the sky. The only plant life that can grow on these rocks

acts as a dark green blanket covering the lower half, because the sea below is frothing with energy and the winds are demanding.

This is not an ocean that you can swim in. The waves are viciously splashing against the cliffs and rocks, turning the turquoise water white with bubbles.

You watch the sunset turn the ocean pink and the sky violet.

Find a soft place to sit and soak up this moment into your memories forever.

The sunset is growing to darkness and its time for you to make your way to your hotel.

You give one last glance to this beautiful scene and thank it for blessing your mind.

As you walk back along the footpath you came in on, the sounds of the ocean gently fade away, until all you can hear are your eager footsteps taking you to where you will get a good night's sleep. The sky is turning light orange where the sun is escaping and dark blue as night draws in.

The footpath winds and turns leading to a narrow road, that is also a beige and gray color. It's a gravel road, that can only fit one car at a time. You pass by houses in the countryside, and they are all white with gray rooftops. There are large protective white doors that cover over the doors and windows of these summer homes to protect them from any strong winds that hit the island. Most of these houses are closed up, but you see some are lived in by locals.

As you walk down this road, magnificent cedar trees line your path. There are grapes growing in rows behind someone's home. You see roses blooming in all sorts of colors. The scenery in the distance is rolling hills dotted with white houses that are all closed up and protected, awaiting their families' return.

You're making your way back to the marina and the streets become paved. The small cars on this island park paralleled so closely to one another, it's hard to figure out how they get that way, or how they can even pull out.

There are a few more blocks to go before your hotel and you are enjoying every moment of this walk. The sky is dark, but the moon is almost full, illuminating everything with its cool glow.

You begin to pass by a tall rock wall on your left that looks like it was hand built many years ago. It's about 10 feet high and you can't tell what's on the other side, but you can see that a little further in front of you the wall becomes shorter. As you make it to the point where the wall dips to your height, you can see that this wall surrounds a large graveyard, and all you can see is hundreds of white crosses filling your vision. Only a few of the crosses are stone colored. You come to the closed wrought iron gate to this graveyard and peer through to the other side. You take in the stillness of this sight, and see the moonlight blanketing the tombs.

It's time to keep moving towards your hotel, you haven't been there yet, so you don't know exactly what to expect. A warm glow emits from a building that is drawing closer and there are red awnings over the windows and a small sign that reads L'hotel de Belle. This is your hotel, and you are so ready to rest after this long and beautiful day. The old door is painted creamy green, the windows panes in the door are old and look like the surface of water. You grasp the brass handle and it is cool in your hand.

The door opens effortlessly, welcoming you, like it has welcomed many others.

There is a French man who greets you with 'bonjour' and gets your information. He hands you a gold key and tells you that your room is on the third floor, facing the ocean. You don't have anything but your backpack with you, so you make your way up the stairs that seem like they were built for a very small person. Three flights up and you come to your room, number 11. The old key slides into the lock and you open the door to a beautifully made bed with crisp white sheets and more pillows than anyone could need. There is no television, just two ornate lamps with shades that match the green of the front door sitting atop matching bedside tables hand built from wood.

You put your things down and make your way to the small restroom, it's perfectly clean and is only big enough to fit you. The shower is welcoming, but you would rather save it for the morning. Gaze into the mirror before getting into bed to see your happy face and how grateful you are to be here.

Make your way to the bed and turn the covers back. The sheets are softer than you imagined they would be, and this bed is very comfortable. Laying down and completely relaxing your body, you are surrounded by white pillows. You gaze out the windows of your room and you can see the moonlight glimmering on the surface of the ocean like the way diamonds shimmer in the light.

Allow your eyes to gently close now, looking forward to the day ahead.

Goodnight and sleep wonderfully.