



# Fair winds to Fécamp



Cameron Snell guides us into Fécamp, a delightful and historic old port in Upper Normandy which makes an ideal destination for a short Channel hop

**F**écamp, a once-thriving fishing port with an attractive harbour, dramatic cliffs and a long monastic history, is best known for producing a 'medicinal elixir' to a secret recipe said to have been concocted by a residential Venetian monk in 1510. It is claimed that the monks of the Benedictine abbey of Fécamp developed this aromatic herbal beverage and produced it until the abbey's devastation during the French Revolution.

However, a more credible account

suggests that the merchant Alexandre Le Grand invented the recipe himself, helped by a local chemist, and told this story to connect the liqueur with the city history so as to promote sales. Production began under the trade name Bénédictine, using a much-copied bottle with a distinct shape and label.

Being the westernmost port on the French coast, Fécamp is very popular with British visitors from the Solent and along the East Sussex coast who can take full advantage of its 800-berth marina and reasonable tidal access.



Looking towards the 800-berth Avant Port Marina



**1** From a distance off, Fécamp is disguised from view, nestling between white chalk cliffs that could fool you into thinking you were nearer to Dover than France.



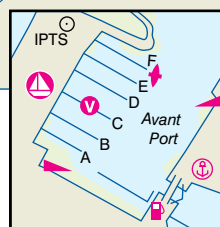
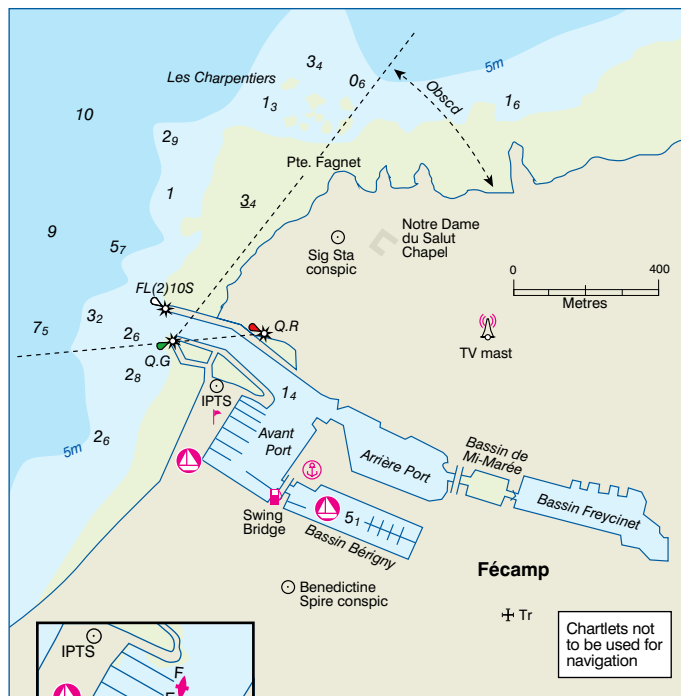
**2** In good visibility, the modern-day landmark of a wind farm indicates the location of the harbour entrance, which lies to the west of the turbines as you approach.



**3** Behind the turbines, and further inland, is a radio mast, 130m above mean sea level. This lines up on approximately 086°T for a deep-water approach. At night, a pair of leading lights showing a quick red behind and below the quick green on the east pier give a transit of 082°T. This approach is designed to counter the set of the tide until you are in the lee of the west jetty.



**4** The entrance is a little over 70m wide. The radio mast on the hill serves as a good line through the centre of the approach by day, although it is not registered as a navigational transit. Fécamp's relatively close location to the UK provides for a deep-water port with a locked inner harbour and secure all-weather protection. However, in a north-westerly blow the narrow entrance can become very untidy. It is unanimously considered foolhardy to attempt an entry in anything more than a north-westerly Force 5.



Shelter is excellent in Fécamp's basins, but it's best to bear in mind that a considerable surf runs off the entrance even in quite moderate westerly or north-westerly winds.



**5** The lighthouse on the eastern jetty displays a white flashing light FL (2)10S at night despite its red-coloured top, which may confuse you into looking for a red light. The first and only red (QR) is located on the end of the first house further in the entrance, so be careful not to be drawn toward it. By day, a round red circle can be seen.





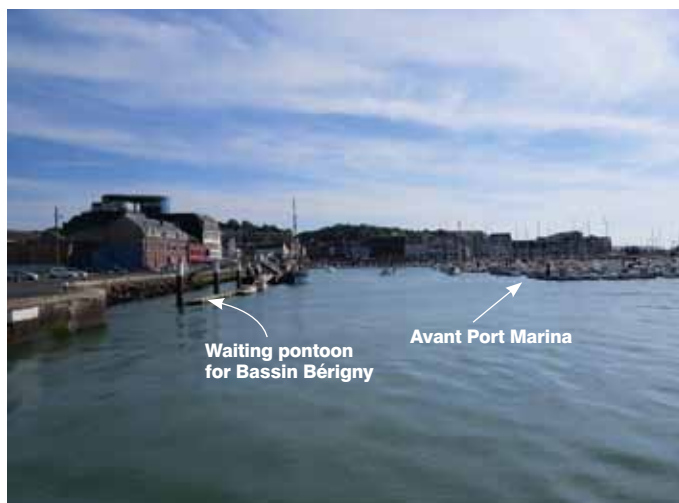
**6** Line up the inner red on the building, with the green on the western jetty on 082°T. From this position, the eastern jetty creates a lee from the tidal set.



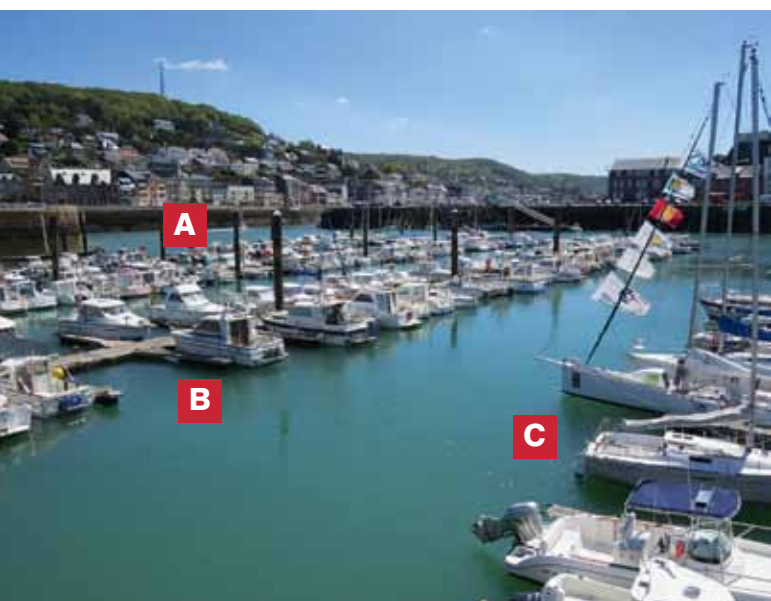
**7** The recommended time of approach is HW -30m. The entrance is claimed to be dredged to 1.5m, which explains how this local yacht can enter at half tide. Despite this, many yachtsmen claim to have touched the mud while attempting an entry at anything less than HW -30m.



**8** Follow the fairway inbound. The entrance to the Avant Port Marina will be found on the starboard side. There are no tidal restrictions, and the outer harbour and entrance is regularly dredged to 1.5m.



**9** At the entrance to the outer harbour, turn sharply to starboard. To port is the waiting pontoon for Bassin Bérygny, while the Avant Port Marina is to starboard.



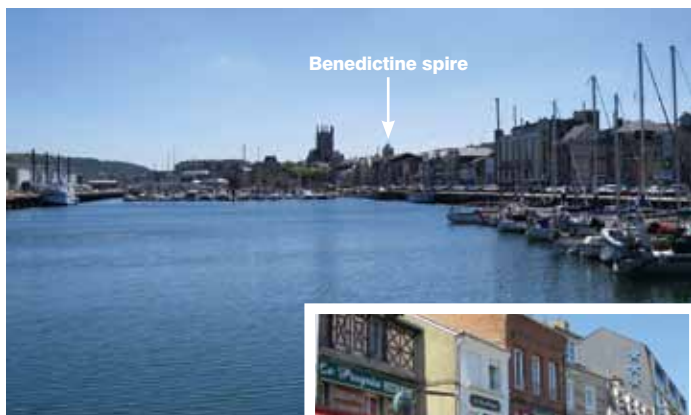
**10** Avant Port Marina has 510 berths in the outer harbour, of which 75 are allocated for visitors on pontoon C, the third pontoon in.



**11** The fuel berth is located in the far corner of the outer harbour, beyond the lock gates for Bassin Bérygny. The unmanned fuel pumps are accessible 24/7 (diesel and petrol), and payment is by credit card at the pumps. Effluent pumps are self-service and free, allowing users to dispose of bilge water, toilet water and engine oils.



**12** Beyond the waiting pontoon and before the fuel berth are the lock gates to Bassin Béringy. Access to the 230-berth marina is two hours either side of HW. There are no visitors' berths inside, so it is unlikely that you would get invited unless you required the services of the 20-tonne crane.



**13** You may however negotiate a berth along the quay wall, which could prove enjoyable as it places you closer to the delightful restaurants found along the quays circling the Bassin Béringy. A supermarket of modest size is located along Quai Béringy, open seven days a week (half-day opening on Sundays).



## Avant Port Marina capitainerie



Visitors to the Avant Port Marina will find the capitainerie at the top of the pontoon bridge. Opening hours are Monday to Friday from 0800 to 1200 and 1330 to 1700 off-season: longer (and variable) schedules are arranged during peak periods. The building also houses extensive sanitary and laundry facilities with 24-hour access on the ground floor: waste disposal facilities are located along the quay. Avant Port Marina and Bassin Béringy are run by CCI Bolbec, which operates the entire port.

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 VHF Ch9

Above the capitainerie is the Société des Régates de Fécamp, or SRF for short (Fécamp Yacht Club). The modern, friendly bar offers panoramic views out to sea, plus an interesting video weather station installation. During May, the SRF plays host to the annual Royal Escape Race from Brighton. [www.royalescaperace.co.uk](http://www.royalescaperace.co.uk)



**14** It may be unlikely that visitors will need to venture further than the outer harbour or Bassin Béringy. However, Fécamp does have a commercial area which extends beyond the swinging bridge at the end of the fairway. Access is via a locked basin, controlled by a traffic light system.

