

The Normans, a people of Europe.

Between past epics and new adventures – A collective, original, and ambitious project for 2027

The millennium of the birth of William the Conqueror in 2027 marks the beginning of a year of widespread celebrations of the "Normans, people of Europe," whose history has profoundly shaped the continent. In 2027, people from all backgrounds—British, Irish, Channel Islanders, Italians, Danes, Flemish, Norwegians, French, and beyond—will be invited to discover this exceptional heritage with its many facets and influences across various territories.

Initiated by the Normandy Regional Council, this year-long event marks the start of an innovative and sustainable European cooperation project which will cement our historical ties and create legacies for future cooperation and partnership.

A Shared History Across Europe

In the 9th century, the Vikings, warriors from the North, regularly attacked territories along the Seine and the English Channel. To address this threat, in exchange for peace, King Charles the Simple granted their leader, Rollo, the territory that would become Normandy, the "land of the men from the North." The merger between Viking culture and local traditions began. Bold navigators, the descendants of Rollo reached England, where William the Conqueror and Matilda of Flanders established their reign starting in 1066. The Normans then continued their epic journey to Ireland, where Richard de Clare, known as Strongbow, played a key role. Meanwhile, Robert Guiscard and Roger I had already ventured earlier towards Southern Italy and the Mediterranean.

Wherever the Normans settled, new political, social, and legal orders emerged; landscapes were transformed, and fortresses and abbeys rose.

Having established new routes across Europe, language and culture spread, along with technology, traditions and trade.

An Overlooked Heritage and Contrasting Perspectives

From the Palace of the Normans in Palermo to the Tower of London, from the castle of Melfi to that of Ferns, passing through the cathedrals of Bari or Dublin, and the Ladies' Abbey in Caen, the Normans left a monumental mark across Europe. The Normans bequeathing an impressive material and intangible heritage, landscapes, monuments, architecture, and iconic works such as the Bayeux Tapestry, the Domesday Book and the Tree of Life mosaic in Otranto.

This expansive Norman legacy is viewed in various ways today across Europe: by some at times as a culture of conquest, and by some as heroic builders. Amid these various views, it may be that the impact and of Norman influence in building cultural ties across Europe that survive to this day is not fully understood or appreciated.

Bringing Light and Movement to a Plural History

This rich and complex history must be understood through the necessary diversity of narratives and shared by all the territories involved.

By collectively leading a review of this history in relation to challenges we face today, which echo those of the past - climate challenges, social and political challenges, and the challenges of a rapidly changing world - a collective memory will be built and new connections between the modern day territories of historic Norman influence will be forged.

A New European Gathering, Starting from the Territories

With this in mind, an ambitious programme of events and activities is being prepared for 2027 and beyond. The shared goals are to enhance knowledge of this aspect of European history and geography, while mobilising institutions, cultural, academic, economic and tourism stakeholders, and all citizens, particularly the youth. The aim is to bring this heritage to life by inviting artists to engage with it through original, accessible, and shared proposals.

Designed and created collectively across the relevant territories, 2027 will combine key collective moments resonating with local proposals. Major celebrations, festive and popular events, multidisciplinary artistic creations, academic conferences, educational projects, new itineraries, and ecologically sustainable tourist offerings: it will be a major European event with many sustainable perspectives.

It is with a focus on the future and contemporary challenges - inviting "new or strengthened cooperation" - that this project is being built. It is a project of the Normans; a project full of meaning and wonder, serving a Europe that promotes interculturality as a vehicle for peace.