



Le Mont-Saint-Michel is an island commune in **Normandy**, France. It is located about one kilometer off the country's northwestern coast, at the mouth of the **Couesnon River**. As of 2009, the island has a population of **44 inhabitants**. The island has held strategic fortifications since ancient times and since the **8th century CE** has been the seat of the **monastery** from which it draws its name.

The structure of the town well represents the **feudal society** that constructed it: on top, God, the abbey and monastery; below, the great halls; then stores and housing; and at the bottom, outside the walls, houses for fishermen and farmers. The commune's position was ideal insofar as it proved accessible at **low tide** to the many pilgrims to its abbey, but defensible as an incoming tide would strand, drive off, or drown would-be assailants. Accordingly, the Mont remained unconquered during the **Hundred Years' War (1337-1453)**, and a small garrison fended off a full attack by the English in 1433. **Louis XI** later turned the Mont into a **prison** for analogous reasons. One of France's most recognizable landmarks, visited by more than 3 million people each year, Mont Saint-Michel and its bay are on the **UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites**.

Mont Saint-Michel has a Cornish counterpart, **St. Michael's Mount**, a similarly-shaped island off the coast of **Cornwall** which was bestowed upon to the Benedictine religious order of Mont Saint-Michel by Edward the Confessor in the **11th century**.