



PROVENCE - CÔTE D'AZUR

BEST OF

2020

PROVENCE
ENJOY THE UNEXPECTED



CÔTE d'AZUR
FRANCE

SUNNY AND RADIANT, AUTHENTIC AND HERITAGE-PACKED, LIVELY, WARM AND CREATIVE...

It's all here! **Provence and the Côte d'Azur** are among the world's most-coveted travel destinations. Our stunning south-eastern corner of France, where Europe and Mediterranean meet, is home to 700 km of shores and breathtaking scenery. Provence and the Côte d'Azur literally overflow with authentic little villages, where ancient heritage rubs shoulders with landscapes carved by olive trees, vineyards and lavender fields.

Set at the gateway to 3 international airports – Marseille-Provence, Toulon-Hyères and Nice-Côte d'Azur - and numerous TGV (high-speed train) railway stations, these two exceptional destinations offer visitors a multitude of exciting travel experiences, whether gastronomy & wine tourism, history & heritage, art & culture, water sports & leisure, golfing, walking, cycling, arts & crafts, shopping, events, festivals and a great night life in every season. Or you can simply opt to relax and enjoy the warm weather and clear blue skies...

Did you know?

Our region's two mythical seaside cities - **Nice on the Côte d'Azur and Marseille in Provence** - are located just 190 km from each other, or around 2 hours by car.

Marseille and Nice were France's sunniest cities in 2017:

- **3 111 hours of sunshine in Marseille**
- **3 047 hours of sunshine in Nice**

How does it get any better?

The Côte d'Azur and Provence boast a myriad of preserved and easily-accessible natural sites promising you many unforgettable walks, excursions and forays into our exceptional biodiversity.

 **Media Library**

ABOUT THE PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR REGIONAL TOURISM BOARD

The number one tourist destination in France after Paris, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur welcomes **31 million visitors each year, with 6 million of them from overseas.**

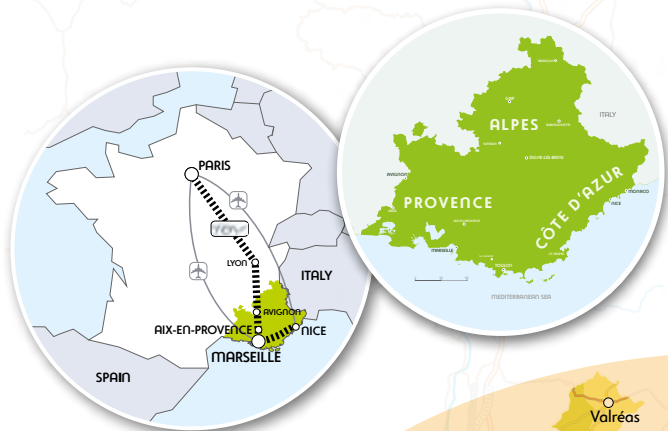
The tourist economy generates **18,6 billion euros** in the region - **13% of regional GDP** - and provides **141,000 jobs**.

The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Tourism Board takes care of promoting the region to visitors. We are a supporting partner and consultant, helping all the tourist institutions and professionals with support through promotional activities in the press, with tour operators and the general public. Our strategy for promotion and communication is mainly built around 3 "world-brand" destinations - Provence, the Alps and the Côte d'Azur France - on the European and international markets.

Key Figures for Tourism in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

- **31 million** visitors to Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, with 6 million from overseas.
- **The second biggest french** tourist region for international clientele
- At its annual peak (around 15 August) an estimated **2,7 million visitors**.
- Average amount spent per day and per person: **€64 (€53 for French visitors, €114 for the overseas clientele)**.
- **218 million** overnight stays (with 44 % of visitors in paid accommodation).
- **18,6 billion euros in annual revenues** linked to visitor spending. 13% of regional GDP.
- **35 million euros in revenues** for towns through the tourist tax.
- **25 000 companies** and over **141,000 jobs** - almost 10% of salaried employment in the region.
- **Over 2,000 hotels, 700 campsites, 420 tourist residences.**

PROVENCE - CÔTE D'AZUR DESTINATIONS



	High-speed railway line
	Regional Express Train network
	Highway
	Main link road
	Secondary link road
	Watercourse
	Airport
	Main harbour
	High-speed train station
	Large estate

	2400 - 4000 m
	1800 - 2400 m
	1200 - 1800 m
	600 - 1200 m
	0 - 600 m



MEDITERRANEAN SEA



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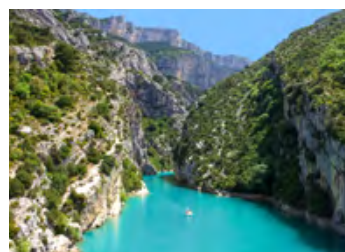
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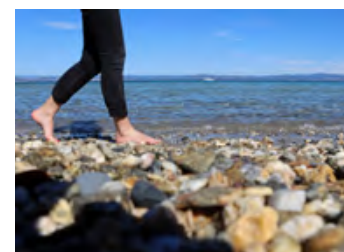
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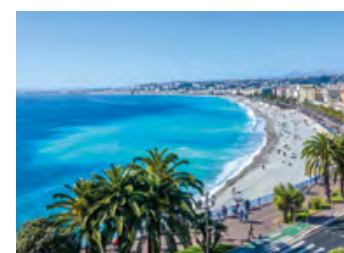
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MARSEILLE
BETWEEN CÔTE BLEUE
AND CASSIS

Marseille, Dancing with the Sea

Set overlooking a bay dotted with archipelagos, the white city of Marseille rises up against a backdrop of limestones hills. Its 111 quarters each have their own unique identity, which you can discover by visiting their parks, beaches or boules courts. The cosmopolitan shops of the Noailles quarter, steep streets of Le Panier and chic houses of Saint-Giniez are all worth the trip. Sporty, friendly and creative, France's oldest city is asserting its forward-looking mindset with a series of recent iconic buildings signed by Rudy Ricciotti, Zaha Hadid or Jean Nouvel. The city is bordered by its world-famed "Calanques" fjords and charming little ports, such as Cassis, La Ciotat, Carry-le-Rouet and Martigues, ideal for a dip. From sandy crescents to rocky coves, you can admire them from above from the Route des Crêtes running from Cassis to La Ciotat, or "Petit Train de la Côte Bleue" coastal train.

 **Marseille Tourist Office and Convention Bureau**



© P. Leroix - CRT

Marseille, on the buses!

For our first tour of Marseille, let's climb aboard bus number 83, departing from the Vieux-Port (Old Port), founded in 600 BC by Greek sailors. Old-fashioned "pointu" fishing boats and yachts sway on the water here, framed by the forts of Saint-Jean and Saint-Nicolas, the Genoese town hall and Saint-Victor Abbey. Above the city, Notre-Dame de la Garde Basilica (locally nicknamed "La Bonne Mère") stands watch. After the "Palais du Pharo", built under the reign of Napoleon III, the Corniche coast road links the city centre to the long beaches of Le Prado. Actually called the Corniche John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the road is also considered the world's longest bench, measuring 3 km, because it's guardrail allows you to sit down comfortably! The coast road runs past Plage des Catalans and Plage des Prophètes, over a viaduct above Vallon des Auffes and through the quarters of Malmousque and Endoume, where you are literally suspended over the sea. A second bus awaits at Pointe Rouge, whisking you off to Les Goudes and the first fjords at a pleasantly slow pace. And what's more, the city buses are environmentally-friendly!

Marseille Pass: A great way to explore Marseille at your own pace, this 24, 48 or 72-hour pass offers free access to the city's museums, Château d'If boat service and public transport.



© F. Rigal - CRT

A fast-changing urban landscape

After winning the "European Capital of Culture 2013" title, Marseille is still on the ball as they say in this football-crazy city. Set on the port's former jetty, the Mucem (Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations) has earned its spurs as a world-class museum thanks to its vast collections and seductive architecture. The Joliette quarter is the city's new shopping temple, home to Les Docks Village, Les Terrasses du Port and Les Voûtes de la Major, set under the ancient arcades of Cathédrale de la Major. In the Panier quarter – the "Montmartre of Marseille" – cultural venues include the Villa Méditerranée, Fondation Regards de Provence set inside a sanitary station designed by Fernand Pouillon and Kengo Kuma's building designed for the FRAC (Regional Contemporary Art Collection).



© F. Rigal - CRT

A plethora of museums

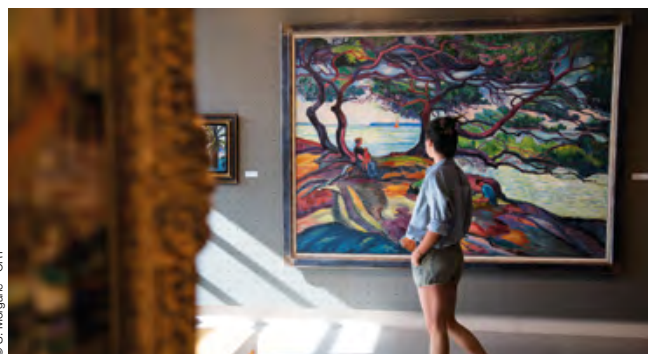
The latest in a long line of city museums, the “Musée des Arts Sacrés” features the finest ex votos from Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde Basilica

Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde Basilica

Marseille is home to 11 “Musées de France” national museums, hosting over 20 exhibitions and welcoming over a million visitors every year. The collections, covering all aspects of history and art from Antiquity to current day, are showcased in remarkable buildings. A spectacular walkway adorned with a Mediterranean garden links Fort Saint-Jean to Rudy Riccioti's contemporary creation. Château Borely, a listed monument, is home to the “Musée des Arts Décoratifs, de la Mode et de la Faïence” (Decorative Arts, Fashion & Earthenware Museum). Marseille's History Museum, set just next to the Vieux Port, invites you to roam 2,600 of history. The “Musée des Beaux Arts” (Fine Arts Museum), Marseille's oldest museum, is set inside the magnificent Palais Longchamp, while the “Musée des Arts Africains, Océaniens et Amérindiens” (African, Oceanian and Amerindian Art Museum) is found at La Vieille Charité, at the top of the Panier quarter. If you're a modern architecture fan, the prize for the best location goes to the MaMo. Set on the flat roof of Le Corbusier's “Cité Radieuse” housing complex, this design and contemporary arts centre was created by French designer Ora-Ito.

MaMo Art Center

Mucem

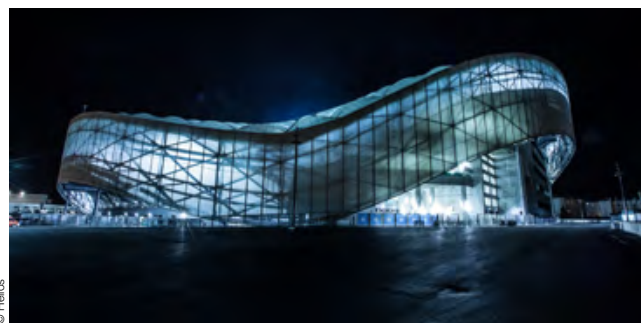


© S. Morgane - CRT

Boules and (foot)balls

Marseille's new-look stadium, now called the “Orange Vélodrome” celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2017. Refurbished and extended, it now sports a futuristic face. This is the den of the world's greatest football team (in the eyes of the locals): the famous “Olympique de Marseille”. Marseille is home to 63 boules clubs and at least three times more boules courts, some of which benefit from prestigious settings under Cathédrale de la Major, the Mucem or Le Corbusier's “Cité Radieuse”. Every year, over 12,000 players take part in the “Mondial de la Pétanque” in July, the world's biggest boules tournament.

Mondial la Marseillaise à Pétanque



© Helios

Islands at the end of your flippers

Several islands are dotted around the bay, namely the archipelagos of Frioul and Riou. Off the coast of the Vieux Port, the “Parc Maritime des Iles du Frioul” marine park harbours four islands, the most famous of which is If, home to the infamous Château d'If, built by order of King Francis I between 1527 and 1529. This fortress served as a prison for Edmond Dantès, the imaginary hero of The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas. You can discover these magnificent islands by boat, or treat yourself to a scuba-diving excursion - Marseille is a diving hotspot! The “Terre des Artistes” association hosts guided tours of Frioul.

Château d'If

Discover the islands by boat or scuba-diving

Guided tours of Frioul

Bouillabaisse: by the book!

Marseille might be in the midst of a facelift, but one thing never changes: its sacred Bouillabaisse recipe, consisting of a rock fish and green crab soup at the origin of the dish's original Provençal name “bouiabaïso” (“cook over a low heat”), followed by a dish of gurnard, weever fish, scorpionfish and John Dory, served on a bed of saffron-scented potatoes. This stew was formerly a poor man's dish, made with rock fish left over in the bottom of fishermen's nets. A Bouillabaisse Charter has now been drawn up by Marseille's top chefs to define its basic ingredients.

Bouillabaisse

Savon de Marseille, clean as a whistle

This cream or greenish-brown soap bar has brought Marseille's name to fame throughout the globe. It has often been imitated, but never equalled... Real-deal Savon de Marseille is made using an ancient local technique and contains 72% fatty acids produced from oil or oil extracts. Four historic factories still produce it: the Savonnerie du Midi, Savonnerie Fer à Cheval, Savonnerie du Séraïl and Marius Fabre in Salon-de-Provence. Genuine Savon de Marseille must be stamped on both sides.


Savon de Marseille



Savon Marius Fabre - © D. Lalont - CRT

Savon de Marseille museum

Opened in Spring 2018, the MuSaMa teaches you all about Savon de Marseille soap making and its thousand-year history... The museum was imagined by Marseille-born architect Richard Carta (co-creator of the Mucem), who even wrote a book about it (Le Jour du Safran, ed. Jeanne Laffitte). You can enjoy seeing how the soap is manufactured by opting for a guided tour of Marius Fabre, Rampal Latour, the Savonnerie du Midi or Savonnerie du Sérail.

 **MuSaMa: Savon de Marseille Museum**

Les Navettes de Marseille: 200 years old and still good enough to eat!


They have been bathing the Vieux Port in scents of orange flower water since 1781! This cylindrical biscuit weighing 50 grams, perfumed with orange flower water, is around 12 cm long and tapered at either end. Its recipe remains a closely-guarded family secret: made without butter or yeast, it can be kept for a long time. On February 2nd every year, to celebrate Candlemas, the Navettes are blessed after being paraded from the Quai de la Fraternité to Saint-Victor Abbey.

 **Four des Navettes**

 **Biscuiterie José Orsani**

Cassis, Provence in blue and white

Set on the outskirts of the Calanques National Park, the town of Cassis forms an amphitheatre set overlooking the sea. Plage de la Grande Mer, whose gentle slope makes it ideal for families, stretches out under a rocky outcrop holding up the ancient castle. The fishing port is home to the “Bateliers de Cassis”, offering guided boat tours of the “Calanques” fjords. You can also opt for a slow tourism version in a sea kayak or on a stand-up paddleboard, or hop on board Europe’s largest catamaran, “Le Levantin”, for a sunset dinner. Panning out behind the old quarter, vines planted on terraces produce Bandol’s world-acclaimed mineral and subtly-saline white wines, boasting an AOC label since 1936. Bandol is France’s oldest appellation. Winding its way between Cassis and La Ciotat, the little “Route des Crêtes” crosses the summit of one of Europe’s highest maritime cliffs, Cape Canaille, adorned with magnificent reds and ochres. The view is simply sublime.

 **Cassis Tourist Office**



© Fotolia

Cheers to the wines of Cassis!

Cassis was awarded the AOC label as far back as 1936. This pocket-sized wine growing area spans just 518 acres and is situated exclusively in the municipality of Cassis, under the shelter of Cape Canaille.

 **Cassis Vineyards**

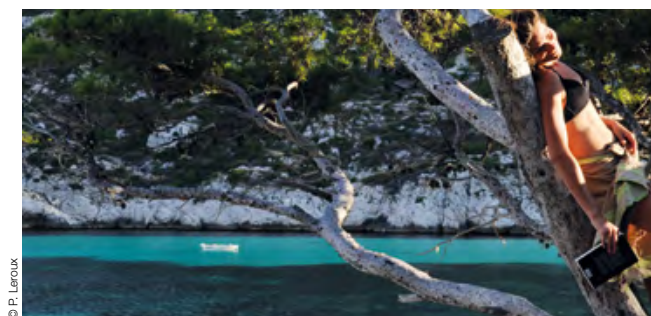
Les Calanques, a well-guarded treasure

Dizzy cliffs for rock climbing fans, caves suspended over the sea and limestone slabs where you can peacefully let go of fatigue and sometimes even your swimsuit... Formed 120 million years ago, the “Calanques” fjords became France’s 10th National Park in 2018. This suburban, terrestrial and maritime park spans 20,500 acres and over 20 km of coast. And according to divers, it is already benefiting the local marine life. You can reach the Calanques by boat, but the beauty of this environment is best appreciated on foot.



NEW
"Mes Calanques" app

 **Calanques National Park**



© P. Leroux

La Ciotat, the cradle of boules and cinema!

Incredible but true: two of France's favourite current leisure activities - boules and cinema - were both born in this little town home to 35,000 inhabitants! The cinematograph was presented to the public for the first time on September 21st, 1895 at the Palais Lumière, where the family of Louis Lumière, the inventor of moving pictures, was spending summer. The second screening was held in October 1895 at the Eden Theatre, which remains the only cinema from the era still open today. Fifteen years later, Jules Lenoir, a bowls player suffering from arthritis, invented Provence's favourite game "Pétanque" (boules) despite himself one afternoon, when he decided to keep both feet firmly planted on the ground ("pieds tanqués") while he was playing! La Ciotat's thirst for innovation has also led the town to instigate one of Europe's first non-smoking beaches; while another beach is reserved for doggies and their masters and mistresses... Various fellowships and shipowners have also left their mark on this historic cradle of shipbuilding: their legacy includes superb mansion houses such as "La Bastide Marin", owned by the Order of Malta. Its religious buildings include Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde Chapel, Chapel of the Blue Penitents and Chapel of the Black Penitents. Behind the shipyards, two charming pudding stone (red rock) fjords nestle in the shadow of Bec de l'Aigle mountain. "Calanque de Mugel" fjord is situated near the park of the same name, and Georges Braque found inspiration at "Calanque de Figuerolles". The final little treasure of this resourceful town is its green island measuring just 430 m x 260 m, where you can enjoy a picnic in the shade of two little coves. You can reach it by sea kayak or on the boat bus. Last but not least, La Ciotat has just been rated among the world's most beautiful bays!

 **Ile Verte - La Ciotat water shuttle**

 **Office de tourisme de La Ciotat**



© C. Chillo

The not-to-be-missed Côte Bleue coast

Divers, sun-worshippers, surfers and scenery-lovers: there's something for everyone on the Côte Bleue coast, stretching around 50 km from L'Estaque on the western side of Marseille to "Etang de Berre" lake and alternating little villages, fjords, fishing ports, pine woods, viaducts, coves, beaches and reputed surfing spots.

 **Côte Bleue**

Côte Bleue Marine Park

Founded in 1983, the Côte Bleue Marine Park is committed to raising awareness of the region's natural marine heritage. The Côte Bleue snorkelling trail (equipment supplied on site), on Plage de Cap Rousset in Carry-le-Rouet, offers a fascinating insight into the coast's flora and fauna and gives you a chance to admire the beautiful little fish you often only get to see in a Bouillabaisse or at the fishmonger's swimming in their home environment.

 **Côte Bleue marine park**

Martigues, the Venice of Provence

Spanning the Mediterranean Sea and "Etang de Berre" lake, Martigues is criss-crossed with canals that have earned the town its nickname as the "Venice of Provence". Its picturesque Quai Brescon quayside, referred to as the "Miroir aux Oiseaux" (bird mirror), was coveted by painters such as Delacroix, Corot, Loubon, Ziem and Dufy from the late 19th century. Lined with colourful ancient fishermen's cottages, it invites visitors to explore the town's architectural heritage from the Gallo-Roman era to the 21st century, with highlights including Chapelle de l'Annonciade.

The Félix Ziem museum stages both permanent and temporary exhibitions of works by the artist of the same name. Ziem's portrayals of Constantinople, Venice and tartanes - Provence's typical old sailboats - are bathed in a unique and astonishing light.

 **Martigues Tourist Office**

Marignane with the accent of Raimu...

"Panisse, you break my heart!" Many of you will be familiar with César's famous line from the Marcel Pagnol trilogy and keen to learn more about the author's astonishing Toulon-born film director Raimu (46 talking pictures no less!) at the museum dedicated to him by his granddaughter Isabelle Nohain-Raimu, set inside a gorgeous bourgeois villa in the centre of Marignane.

 **Musée Raimu**

Train de la Côte Bleue

This little train (the number 7) departs from Gare Saint Charles in Marseille and runs to Martigues via the Côte Bleue, crossing 32 km of fjords and viaducts and offering glimpses of very hard-to-reach sites, even for walkers.

 **Train tickets**

Designer Outlet in Miramas

Open since April 2017, the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Provence offers an array of over 160 designer shops with discounts ranging from 30 to 70%. The mall also features restaurants, cafés and a playground, and is the venue for various events. Overseas visitors from outside Europe also benefit from a 175-euro tax refund.

 **McArthurGlen Provence**



AIX-EN-PROVENCE
AND ITS COUNTRYSIDE

Aix-en-Provence, under the Wing of Sainte-Victoire Mountain

Set under the white-hot spur of Sainte-Victoire mountain, Aix-en-Provence's carpet of pink tiles polished by the passage of time rolls out around the world-famed Cours Mirabeau thoroughfare. Sober and elegant, the town's churches, mansion houses and lanes evoke nearby Italy and 17th-century Grand Siècle Paris. The gentle bubbling sound of over a hundred fountains enlivens the many squares where students and influencers alike come to meet. This buzzing university town definitely prefers chatting on shaded terraces to the constant rush of city life. Bordered by vineyards - stunning odes to Provençal lifestyle - the town and its vicinity promise visitors a truly... Aix-ceptional experience!

 Aix-Pays d'Aix Tourist Office



© P. Leroix

Aix-en-Provence : a Lesson in Style

In Aix, a simple stroll becomes a voyage through time, paced by the discreet murmur of fountains and orderly line-up of its 17th and 18th-century frontages. The town's architectural harmony is rare in itself and comprises France's 3rd largest Baroque ensemble (after Paris and Versailles), offering a soothing impression of timelessness... Of course, that's not true of the whole town: with its young population, Aix's restaurants and galleries are genuine experimental hubs. Aix is constantly on the move: the Opera Festival and Easter Festival are just two of the year's highlights among dozens. The stage is set: noble frontages with sculpted gargoyles, Roman tiles worn to a patina by the passage of time, mossy fountains and delicate squares, such as the ravishing Place d'Albertas. And Cours Mirabeau sets the pace - that of a pleasant stroll along an ancient carriageway, shaded by plane trees and adorned with the magnificent "Fontaine de la Rotonde" fountain. If you fancy a taste of the genteel lifestyle handed down from the Grand Siècle, simply retreat to the French-style gardens of Pavillon de Vendôme, one of the seductive "follies" lying at the edge of the town. To the South of Cours Mirabeau, the Mazarin quarter was embellished with gorgeous mansion houses under the reign of Louis XIV and now occupies one-third of the historic quarter. In addition to their undeniable panache, some of these monuments are still instilled with pomp and splendour. And talking of pomp, the "Pompe à l'huile" is actually the name of one of Aix's typical culinary specialties: a simple flatbread made with olive oil, lesser-known than the town's acclaimed "Calisson" candy. There's no doubt about it: Aix is a place for people of taste...



© F. Rigal

In the Footsteps of Cézanne

"When you're born there it's hopeless, nothing else is good enough", said Paul Cézanne. Born in Aix-en-Provence on January 19th, 1839, Paul Cézanne died in his birthplace on October 23rd, 1906. He remained deeply attached to his homeland of Provence throughout his life. "When I was in Aix, it seemed to me that I would be better elsewhere, but now that I am here, I miss Aix", he confessed. This great observer ceaselessly roamed his beloved countryside, so following in his footsteps is the perfect way to discover the region and especially his muse, Sainte-Victoire mountain, to which he devoted 44 oil paintings and 43 watercolours.

 In the steps of Cézanne

A workshop and museum

The artist's presence remains tangible in the studio he occupied on Colline des Lauves from 1902 until his death in 1906. You can still see his easel there, together with his palettes and the models for several still lifes. He worked there every morning from 5 a.m., gazing at the view over Sainte-Victoire mountain from his large windows. The studio is also home to a shop-come-bookshop and hosts cultural events in summer.

 Atelier Cézanne



© C. Duranti

Musée Granet

Set in the Quartier Mazarin, Musée Granet houses many of the master's works among its remarkable collection ranging from the 14th to 20th century. The museum has joined hands with the neighbouring Chapel of the White Penitents to exhibit the splendid collection of Suzanne and Jean Planque.



Hôtel de Caumont Arts Centre

A listed monument, the Hôtel de Caumont is one of Aix's finest 18th-century mansion houses. It owes its name to the Marquess of Caumont. Sceptics claimed that by marrying Pauline de Bruny from La Tour-d'Aigues in 1795, he had deprived Provence of "Its prettiest girl, its most beautiful house, its finest castle and its biggest fortune". Managed by Culturespaces, the Hôtel de Caumont-Centre d'Art arts centre hosts international-level exhibitions.



Fondation Vasarely

Pierre Vasarely, the artist's grandson and universal heir, is committed to upholding his grandfather's moral legacy and respecting his will to facilitate understanding of his work through the "Association des Amis de la Fondation Vasarely". Set outside the town centre, the building, comprising 16 hexagonal structures, is a work of art erected in 1976 and inspired by Bauhaus architecture. The Foundation exhibits the 42 monumental installations created by Vasarely - the father of kinetic art - and also features a room dedicated to optical art, together with a variety of temporary shows.



Sainte-Victoire

The Sainte-Victoire is one of Provence's three sacred mountains, along with the Sainte-Baume and Ventoux. Its rocky spur stands out sharply against the azure-blue skies, making it a favourite subject for many artists. After Cézanne, Picasso also came to live in Vauvenargues to admire it. You can opt for a variety of footpaths leading to the summit, Bimont lake or Bibemus quarry, or winding their way around Plateau du Cengle, which forms the mountain's base.



© P. Carrese

L'Eau 808

The muse of artists and poets alike, Sainte-Victoire mountain is also the location of Europe's deepest natural spring, unaltered by any form of pollution. "808 Water" is drawn from a depth of 808 metres at Meyreuil, at the foot of the mountain.



5 "Protected Designation of Origin" (AOP) Wines!

Red, white or rosé, the Pays d'Aix area alone boasts five "Protected Designation of Origin" (AOP) wines, distinguished on three criteria: soil, grape varieties used for production and growing & wine making know-how. Awarded to 70 vineyards, the AOP terroir (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence, Côtes de Provence, Côtes de Provence Sainte-Victoire, Palette and Côtes du Luberon) spans 1,300 km² corresponding to the 36 towns forming the Pays d'Aix area and 8 towns forming the Sud Luberon area.



A Few Pearls for Wine Buffs

Vinothèque de la Sainte-Victoire

Showcasing wines from 31 vineyards producing AOC Côtes de Provence Sainte-Victoire wines, this vinothèque is currently located in Puylobier, but should be relocating to the "Maison de la Sainte Victoire de Saint Antonin le Baillon" in 2019.



A stroll on the Puylobier Wine Walk?

This signposted walk departing from the Mont Sainte-Victoire wine cooperative in Puylobier covers 13 km (you can also take the shorter, 5 km walk) and teaches you all about geological specificities, grape varieties, etc.



"Art & Vin" Walk

Launched in 2016, this "Art & Wine" walk crosses the vine plots of the Terre de Mistral vineyard to the banks of Rivière de l'Arc, at the foot of Sainte-Victoire mountain, in the town of Rousset. In addition to its 124 acres of vines, the estate is also home to an olive grove, oil mill and farmhouse inn. The Davico family hosts various events, together with wine tasting and games on the theme of its produce.



Château La Coste

Invites visitors on a relaxing wander through woods, olive groves and vines, dotted with works and installations by world-class artists such as Tadao Ando, Louise Bourgeois, Alexander Calder and Tom Shannon. The walk is set around a stunning winery designed by Jean Nouvel and concert pavilion resembling a glass hedgehog, signed by Frank Gehry.



© B. Bechet

SURPRISING

Capitaine Danjou in Puyloubier, the Legionnaire's Vineyard!

Set at the foot of Chapelle de Saint-Ser, against the last foothills of Sainte-Victoire mountain, these 100 acres of vines are cultivated by former Legionnaires – veterans who have come here to rest after serving France. The impressive silhouette of a 17th-century bastide dominates the vineyard's 544 acres. All funds raised on the 250,000 bottles produced annually are donated to the Foreign Legion. The site is also home to a uniform museum, together with ceramics and bookbinding workshops. The tour is free but please book ahead!

Domaine du Capitaine Danjou



Aix's Sweet Treat

The cheeky Calisson candy. In the early 20th century, Aix-en-Provence was the world's leading hub for the almond trade. Almonds were first introduced into Provence in the 15th century and the invention of the Calisson dates back to the same era. This story of this little, lozenge-shaped candy, made with ground almonds and candied fruit, is traditionally tied to that of the fight against the Great Plague. Another – more romantic – legend tells that it was a love note created by a cook for the austere Queen Jeanne. When she tasted it, she is said to have exclaimed “di calin soun” (these are like cuddles!). So, is the Calisson sacred or simply cheeky? Every year on September 2nd, Calissons are blessed at Cathédrale Saint Sauveur, before being borne by their makers to Eglise Saint-Jean-de-Malte.

Musée du calisson

Set inside the premises of Aix's world-famed confectioner Roy René (the company was founded in 1920), on Route de Puyricard, this museum offers a fascinating insight into the history of the almond in Provence and the birth of the town's applauded candy.

Must-do: workshops where you can make your own Calissons! Classes held at the shop in Aix's town centre



© LaFont

Roquefavour Aqueduct: the world's largest!

It's true to say that France's southerners are (a bit) prone to exaggeration... But we're sure of this one: the village of Ventabren is home to the world's largest stone aqueduct. Named the “Viaduc de Roquefavour”, this architectural gem, built between 1841 and 1847, spans Vallée de l'Arc and takes its water from the Durance river, to supply Marseille with drinking water. The aqueduct put an end to centuries of water shortages, deprivation and epidemics and even saved Marseille from a cholera outbreak in the 19th century.



Silvacane Abbey

This jewel of Cistercian art situated in La Roque d'Anthéron welcomes visitors under barrel vaults harking back to the heights of the Romanesque period. The church, whose foundations were laid from 1144 onwards, owes its existence to French abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, declared a “Doctor of the Church” in 1830.



Camp des Milles

From 1939 to 1942, France imprisoned its “undesirables, stateless and foreign Jews” at the ancient Milles tile factory. The only major French concentration and deportation camp that has remained intact and open to the public, the “Camp des Milles” now offers a testimony to these dark hours of French history, together with an innovative Human Sciences museum. In addition to its commemorative vocation, the “Camp des Milles” memorial offers multidisciplinary points of reference, together with questions and scientific keys to understanding - or attempting to understand - discrimination, racism, antisemitism and extremism.





ARLES

BETWEEN CAMARGUE AND ALPILLES

Arles-Camargue and Alpilles, Ancient and Mysterious Provence

Swept by every wind of change, Roman Arles is in a whirl, with hotel, exhibitions, restaurants and galleries opening on every street corner. Serene in the midst of this hive of creativity, Saint-Trophime church and cloister are quiet havens, where you can take a well-earned rest in the heart of town. Just next door, two very singular areas, the Alpilles and Camargue, proffer revitalizing scenery as far as the eye can see. Camargue - a curious territory between land and sea - rolls out large expanses of marshes, sand, water and wetlands, where galloping horses with salt-white coats kick up a splash. Just as singular, but intimate and delicate, the Massif des Alpilles mountain range hides many spellbinding secrets between its limestone rocks carved by nature, sweeping waves of olive trees and medieval Château des Baux. A genuine invitation to roam and lose yourself in ardent landscapes - the word also used to describe the local olive oils - portrayed to perfection by the great Vincent Van Gogh. And a place where the mind can breathe...



© Wégo Production

Buzzing Arles

Buzzing, inventive and joyful: it's time to pack your bags and head to Arles, where ancient heritage marries so beautifully with modernity. Today, hype events take centre stage at the town's Roman Arena and Amphitheatre. Swept by winds from the sea and plain of La Crau, Arles also harbours a history carved by the currents of the Rhône River. The fascinating Musée Arles Antique - where you can find the only known "portrait" of Jules Caesar - also exhibits a Roman barge, witnessing the town's former role as a major trading post. Eglise Saint-Trophime and its cloister form Provence's finest Romanesque ensemble; noticed long ago by Vincent Van Gogh and Pablo Picasso, the church's photogenic face also forms a magnificent backdrop for events such as the "Rencontres de la Photographie" international photo festival, or "Les Suds à Arles" music festival. Along the ancient Via Aurelia Roman Road, the romantic "Alyscamps" necropolis testifies to 15 centuries of funeral rites. Next door, the Fondation LUMA experimental contemporary art centre is lighting up the town with an exciting line-up of exhibitions and experiments, even before the opening of its iconic tower designed by Frank Gehry opening in late 2020. Paintings, sculptures and installations by eminent Korean artist Lee Ufan will be setting up home in Arles in summer 2020 in the beautiful 1,300 m² setting of Hôtel Vernon, near the Roman amphitheatre, also revisited by the great Japanese architect Tadao Ando.

 Arles Tourist Office



© F. Rigal - CRT

LUMA Arles, a regional benchmark

LUMA Arles is an experimental contemporary art centre, welcoming artists-in-residence and exhibitions alike and sporting a very distinctive, 36-metre metal tower designed by architect Frank Gehry. In addition to major shows, the Luma also steers and takes part in a packed cultural programme.



© Fondation Luma

Pink flamingos, black bulls, white horses, skies so blue you could drown in them and deserted beaches bordering sweeping marshlands: the stage is set. A flat country, dominated by the lookout tower of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer church and the mountains of salt rising next to vast rice fields, Camargue stretches out between the two arms of the Rhône Delta, at the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. From time immemorial, man has channelled floodwater from the Rhône River and upwells from the Mediterranean to form the blend of fresh and saltwater flows that lend Camargue its uniquely-fertile character. And although 85,000 people still live there today, what you'll see most - for your greatest viewing pleasure - are bulls, horses and birds, many of which are just passing by on their migration route... The local ranch owners, or "manadiers", round up their bulls on horseback to brand them, or for the local "abrivados", when they are herded to the bullring. Bulls are mainly raised for shows, such as the "Courses Camarguaises" and other traditional celebrations in which the bulls are unharmed. The Camargue National Park, home in particular to the stunning "Etang du Vaccarès" marsh, forms the beating heart of the Regional Nature Reserve bordering 72 km of Mediterranean shores.

The Camargue Regional Nature Park



Set inside an ancient sheepfold in Arles, the "Musée de la Camargue" retraces the evolution of human activity in the Rhône Delta since the 14th century and covers themes such as rice growing, breeding, hunting, salt production and damming of the Delta.

Marais du Vigueirat: a concentrate of Camargue



The "Conservatoire du Littoral" (French Coastal Conservancy) manages and protects this breathtaking nature reserve spanning 3,000 acres between the Rhône Delta and Plaine de la Crau and home to over 2,000 plant and animal species. Bulls and Camargue horses from five farms graze here. The "Marais du Vigueirat" marshes can be explored in a horse and carriage, on horseback, or on foot.



The Alpilles, Enchanted Provence

Crowned and protected by a regional nature reserve, this steep, rippling limestone mountain range offers a concentrate of everything we love about Provence. The Alpilles mountains stretch around 10 km from East to West and measure 30 km in length and 15 in width. Their little roads waltz between vineyards and olive groves undulating like waves. The Alpilles is home to a total of 220,000 olive trees, i.e. one thousand trees per square kilometre, produced a reputed oil. Many activities, such as donkey trekking and classic car tours, allow visitors to explore the relief, rising to an altitude of 493 metres at Opie. Superb panoramic views rub shoulders with bizarre and fascinating limestone formations carved by erosion.

Alpilles Regional Nature Reserve

Les Baux-de-Provence, simply beautiful!

The ancient "Seigneurs des Baux" - the lords of the Alpilles' most picturesque village - boasted that they were descendants of King Balthazar, one of the Three Wise Men. Standing on a limestone outcrop, at the end of a maze of winding lanes, their ruined castle arches proudly over the ancient remains of trebuchets and catapults. Ranked among France's Most Beautiful Villages, Les-Baux is surrounded by such spellbinding sites as the Val d'Enfer (Valley of Hell), strewn with mineral sculptures evoking gorgons, lions and witches. The Carrières de Lumières is an absolute must too. Jean Cocteau spotted this ancient limestone quarry in 1959 and shot his film, "Testament of Orpheus" there. The Carrières de Lumières is now

the breathtaking decor for ambitious multimedia art shows.

Les Baux-de-Provence Tourist Office

Carrières de Lumière multimedia exhibitions



Brousse du Rove cheese awarded the AOC label!

Just seven producers, including goat farmer Natascha Duverdier in Les Baux, make this unique Brousse cottage cheese using milk from the Rove goat, a rustic breed with a low yield. The texture of the creamy white "Brousse du Rove" is owed to flocculation without the use of rennet, teamed with slow, manual stirring. Les Baux now boasts an impressive 7 AOC's: three for its red, white and rosé wines, three for its olive oil, crushed olives and black olives from the Vallée des Baux olive grove, and now "Brousse du Rove" cheese.

Saint-Rémy-de-Provence : Van Gogh's guiding star

The circular boulevard Le Cours wraps its way around the lanes of the historic quarter. The astrologer and physician Nostradamus was born here and Van Gogh spent the last year of his life in this typical Provencal village, boasting the South of France's largest concentration of artists' studios and art galleries. Head out of town to visit the "Les Antiques" archaeological site just 1 km down the road, home to the triumphal arch, Jules Mausoleum, Glanum site and, of course, Saint-Paul-de-Mausole monastery: the ancient priory where Van Gogh painted over 150 canvasses in the space of just one year, including his masterpiece "The Starry Night".

Saint-Rémy-de-Provence Tourist Office



INTERDICTION
D'AFFICHER
SOUS PEINE
DE
POURSUITES

INTERDICTION
D'AFFICHER
SOUS PEINE
DE
POURSUITES

AVIGNON
ON THE WAY TO
CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE
AND ORANGE

Avignon in the Spotlight!

Headlining around 1,500 performances, Europe's largest theatre festival invades the Papal city every year in July, spurring the Pont d'Avignon into a whirlwind dance over the waters of the Rhône River. But Avignon is also a place to be appreciated throughout the seasons. In this lively, open-air museum, café terraces lend themselves to an intimate chat, while the secret courtyards of mansion houses welcome high-flying eateries. The Popes had a feel for both words and wine: undeniable bons vivants, the Pontiffs were at the origin of the Côtes-du-Rhône wines and villages whose name alone - like Châteauneuf-du-Pape - is enough to make your mouth water. Science has a penchant for this region too, and the great naturalist Jean-Henri Fabre laid the foundations for modern-day ethology in Serignan-du-Comtat.



© Fatolia

Avignon, the bewitching City of Popes

Still encircled by 4 km of city walls, the ancient capital of Christianity still upholds its former legacy as the second Rome. In the 14th century, it became the residence of the Popes, who built the world's largest Gothic palace there: the "Palais des Papes" (Popes' Palace). Every season is punctuated with a packed cultural agenda, including "Cheval Passion", "Hivernales de la Danse", "Son & Lumière au Palais" and major exhibitions. Pont Saint-Bénézet – the famous Pont d'Avignon, of which four arches remain – stands over the Rhône River, offering a marvellous terrace for gazing out over this grandiose city, ranked a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1995. Next to the golden stone of Avignon lies a different, green Avignon, adorned with parks and plane trees. Set behind the Popes' palace, the "Jardin des Doms" pans out over Ile de la Barthelasse, France's largest river island. The locals love hopping on their bikes to buy farm-grown tomatoes there or party in the traditional "guinguette" street dances, while lapping up the stunning views over the Popes' Palace and bridge.

Palais des Papes



© Wege Production - CRT

Two new cycle paths for slow tourists

Measuring around 11 km, the "Chemin des Canaux" cycle path, reserved for pedestrians and cyclists, now links the city to Montfavet along the Vaucluse canal. The canal is also crossed by the ViaRhôna cycling route running from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean. You can also enjoy a 4,3 km slow tour of the city walls.

Avignon Tourist Office

ViaRhôna



© P. Leroux

The Popes' Palace, a combined fortress and luxury residence

No less than nine Popes came and went in Avignon in the 14th century. In less than a decade (1335 - 1352), Benedict XII and Clement VI erected the world's largest Gothic construction, combining an impressive fortress and luxurious palace.

☆ NEW

Thanks to Histopad, a tablet supplied free of charge with the entrance ticket to the Pope's Palace – visitors now enjoy a full immersion in spectacular historic reconstructions and get close enough to touch the frescoes thought to be the work of the great Matteo Giovannetti. The Histopad is available in 7 languages and also contains content suitable for reduced-mobility and visually-impaired visitors.

☆ NEW

Explore Avignon off-the-beaten-track! Offering a delicious dip into the city's more intimate facets, these new tours invite visitors to step into a magnificent, 17th-century mansion house, solve a series of riddles with all the family inside the Pope's Palace, or seek the keys to the city, lost by Guillaume, the minister of Pope Clement V...

🌐 Avignon Tourisme



© D. Faerens

Avignon, a festival of museums

A treat for art lovers! Around 10 museums boasting remarkable collections covering virtually every era, all set within easy walking distance and in sumptuous venues. New: Entry to Avignon's 12 municipal museums is now free!

🌐 Avignon City Pass



© V. Lucas

☆ NEW

Vaucluse Provence Pass

The Vaucluse Provence Pass offers free entry to over 30 museums and monuments in the Avignon, Luberon and Ventoux areas, as well as various free guided tours and discounts.

🌐 Vaucluse Provence Pass

Avignon, a town of taste, capital of the Côtes du Rhône wines

Vines were planted in the Rhône Valley as far back as Antiquity. The "Côtes du Rhône" appellation was born in 1937; its most famous wine remains Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

🌐 Rhone Wines

Le Carré du Palais, a fitting setting for the Côtes du Rhône wines

Set on the prestigious square harbouring the Popes' Palace, Le Carré du Palais is dedicated to Rhône Valley wines, gastronomy and wine & tourism. Featuring an "Ecole des Vins du Rhône" wine school, 100% Rhône Wine Bar, impressive cellar, exceptional lounges and terraces and a year-round events programme, this is a definite must-do while you're visiting Avignon.

🌐 Le Carré du Palais

Châteauneuf-du-Pape: the most complex wine of them all

The village of Châteauneuf - the former holiday home of the Popes of Avignon - is perched on the banks of the Rhône River. Dominated by the ruins of the ancient pontifical castle, it is surrounded by Châteauneuf-du-Pape AOC vineyards, also spanning the towns of Orange, Bédarrides, Sorgues and Courthézon. The village and its wine are world-famed because Châteauneuf-du-Pape is the only wine of its kind in France made with a blend of 13 grapes. A dash more Cinsault, a few drops of Grenache and a touch of Syrah? Several local vineyards offer wine buffs an opportunity to make their own wines. Cheers!

🌐 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Tourist Office



© B. Bechet

Orange, the Vox Romana

Built around Saint-Eutrope hill, at an altitude of 105 metres, the town of Orange is home to two major Roman monuments: a Triumphal Arch and Roman Theatre, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The Triumphal Arch evokes the Romans' victories on land and at sea, while the Roman Theatre is the only one of its kind in the Western world to have kept its original stage wall, measuring 103 metres in length and 37 metres in height - a particularity accounting for the theatre's exceptional acoustics coveted by the world's bel canto singers, who consider performing at the town's "Chorégies" festival as a career highlight.

 **Orange Tourist Office Office**



© Shutterstock

Two round trips for cyclists

 **Orange to Châteauneuf-du-Pape**

This 32.2-km itinerary departs from the Roman monuments of Orange, passes in front of the 12th-century city walls of Courthézon and the elegant Château Valseille, then leads to the remains of the Popes' Castle in Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

 **Orange to Sérignan-du-Comtat**

This 26-km tour through wheat fields and past the ancient country houses around Orange starts with Piolenc, crossed by the mythical Nationale 7 road and Provence's capital of garlic. Next, you'll come to Sérignan-du-Comtat, whose quarries were used to build the Roman Theatre, although it is especially famed as the home town of illustrious entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre.

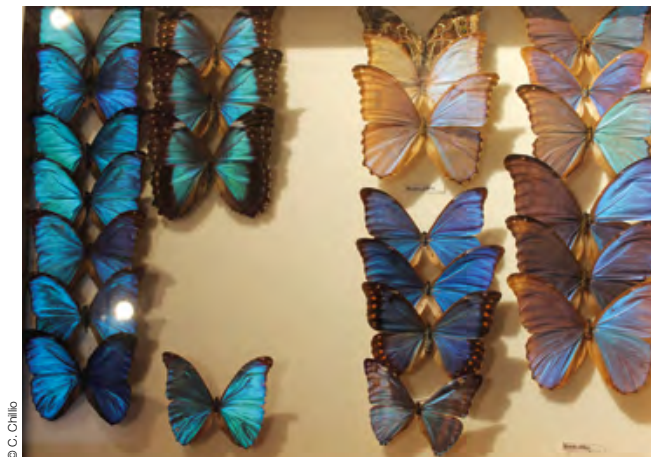


© T. Seray

The home of the "insect poet" in Sérignan-du-Comtat

The forerunner of modern-day ethology - the science of animal and human behaviour -, Jean-Henri Fabre was a professor, entomologist, writer, chemist, watercolour painter, poet, musician and father... Now the property of the National Museum of Natural History, ranked a listed monument and bearing the "Maison des Illustres" (literally meaning "House of the Illustrious) label, the "Harmas de Fabre", a laboratory and conservatory for the great naturalist's work, is open to the public. The cherry on the cake? You can also wander and wonder in the Mediterranean grounds, complete with kitchen garden, a pond, fountain and ancient washtub.

 **Harmas Jean-Henri Fabre**



© C. Chillo



MONT VENTOUX

BETWEEN CARPENTRAS
AND VAISON-LA-ROMAINE

Mont Ventoux
Canton de Vaison-la-Romaine
Canton de Carpentras

Mont Ventoux: The Country in the Sky

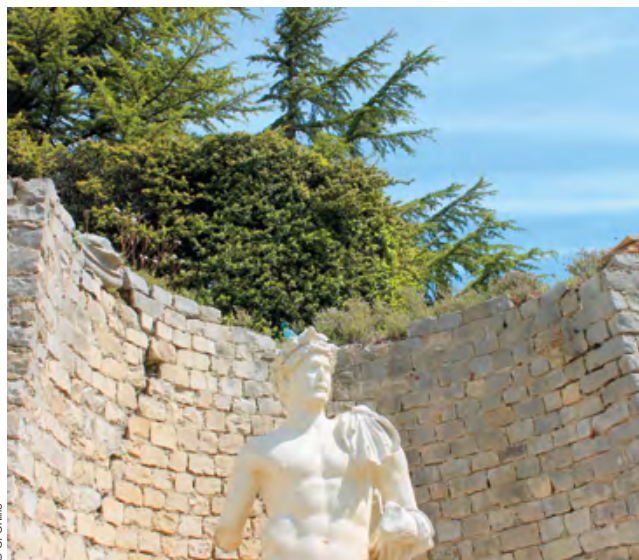
Visible from a hundred kilometres away, Mont Ventoux rises up from the lavender fields like a Provençal Fujiyama. Its 15% slopes challenge cyclists from the world over and make it one of the star heats of the Tour de France, while gourmets love to stroll around the ancient, dry stone sheepfolds of Plateau d'Albion, where acclaimed Banon goat's cheese is made. Muscatel vines, cherry trees and lavender thrive in the patchwork of landscapes forming the agricultural plain. Jean Giono referred to the Ventoux area as "the country in the sky". Now an official "Land of Art & History", it is home to Vaison-la-Romaine, nicknamed "Little Pompeii", boasting Roman baths, villas and a forum. It is also the proud home of France's oldest working synagogue, located in Carpentras. The Papal State of Comtat Venaissin remained an independent enclave throughout the 600-year Kingdom of France and the area harbours many unique treasures to be unearthed during your visit.



© CRT - DR

Vaison-la-Romaine: Little Pompeii

Perched on a rocky spur, the feudal castle overlooking this medieval village is the first monument you'll glimpse from afar. Underneath, on the other bank of the river Ouvèze, lies the largest Gallo-Roman site open to the public, sporting vast patricians' houses (2000 to 4000 m²), paved streets, Roman baths and a Roman theatre. The Celto-Ligurian people of Voconces established their capital here. A visit to Vaison immerses you in the secret life of Gauls living in one of the Provincia Romana's most prosperous towns. The archaeological museum offers truly fascinating everyday testimonials, topped with kitchen utensils, bathroom accessories and magnificent frescoes and statues of emperors. Linking the medieval and Roman quarters, the Roman bridge has been spanning the river Ouvèze for 2,000 years and is still in use.



© C. Chillo

Mont Ventoux: the giant of Provence

The "Bald Mountain" rises to a height of 1,911 metres and measures around 25 km in length and 14 km in width. Its stony, arid summit, crowned with an observatory, is easily recognizable from 100 km all around. Close up, its jagged, eroded peaks form a lacy relief, making it a paradise for hikers and reputed climbing site. An official biosphere reserve, it is subjected to every European climate: above 1,000 metres, the cold season lasts 8 to 10 months. In summer, the temperatures waver between 10 and 18°C - 10°C colder than the plain. These variations also explain its very varied animal life, featuring over 100 bird species, wild boar, deer, wild sheep, chamois, birds of prey, butterflies and the Orsini viper. In terms of flora, the "Bald Mountain" isn't quite as bald as its name suggests: it is actually home to 950 plant species, including a vast cedar forest with trees over 120 years old. Its vegetation is dense on the North face, while on the South face it cascades nonchalantly down into the Plain of Carpentras. You can enjoy a relaxed roam around the piedmont plain at its feet on foot, in a horse and cart or on an electrically-assisted bicycle or hybrid scooter. Here, rows of Grenache grapes alternate from time to time with trellised vines producing the delicious AOC Ventoux muscatel wine.

 **Vaison Ventoux Tourist Office**



© C. Chillo

Around the Mont Ventoux

This 100 km tour features no major difficulties and allows cyclists to explore the “Provence à Vélo” signposted cycle paths at their own pace.



Market days from Sault to Banon

Just 30 kilometres or so separate the lavender fields of Sault Plateau, dry stone sheepfolds of Contadour and ancient ramparts of the village of Banon. Despite that, the area’s resolutely horizontal relief and presence of the debonair Mont Ventoux in the distance offer an impression of vastness. Don’t miss the Wednesday market in Sault, when producers unravel their treasures of honey, nougat and peppery goat’s cheese. The village’s arched passageways, medieval houses and Saint-Sauveur Romanesque church are perched between two rivers. Footpaths lead to the lavender fields, painted in superb bright blues in July and August. You can learn everything there is to know about fine lavender and lavandin in Simiane-la-Rotonde, home to 300 growers supplying France’s largest aromatic plant cooperative.

 **Ventoux Sud Tourist Office**

20 minutes down the road, a machicolated gate form the entrance to the village of Banon. Still encircled by the ramparts of its ancient castle, this medieval village is the hub of a reputed AOC cheese, produced only in small quantities. Banon is made with ladle-moulded curds, then wrapped in brown chestnut leaves tied with a string of raffia. During the maturing process, the fermented curds are exposed to the tannins contained in the chestnut leaf, lending this goat’s cheese its unique aromas. One litre of milk is needed to make one, 100-gram cheese. Discovery of a wide range of fresh and ripened goat’s cheeses at the Banon Cheese Dairy.

 **AOC Banon**

Distil your own lavender

In summer, various producers offer visitors a chance to learn how to harvest lavender with a scythe, weigh it, take part in the distillation process and head home with their own lavender essence. The workshop is held at the Distillerie Aroma’plantes in Sault.

 **Aroma’plantes Distillery**



© F. Ecochard

Wine in the “Dentelles de Montmirail”

Dentelles de Montmirail

Forming spectacular limestone blades, the “Dentelles de Montmirail” rise to an altitude of 732 m at Saint-Amand. Vines and fallen rocks cascade down between their sharp tips, forming 8 km of climbing routes – a paradise for rock-climbers! You can leave your harness and snap hooks behind to enter the heart of the mountain range, harbouring magnificent vineyards encased in a limestone backdrop, producing wines with a unique, mineral taste.

 **Ventoux-Provence Tourisme**



© Serey

Beaumes-de-Venise

In the 14th century, during the Avignon papacy, “muscadieres” supplied the Popes’ cellars with their delicious muscatel wine. In addition to its fine wines, Beaumes-de-Venise possesses two other treasures: the Romanesque chapel of Notre-Dame d’Aubune and Paleochristian place of worship, Saint-Hilaire.

 **Beaumes-de-Venise Tourist Office**

Gigondas

The Romans named this village Jocunditas, meaning Joy - very probably in reference to the excellent wine produced by the forty or so local growers. The village also offers impressive views over the “Dentelles de Montmirail”.

 **Ventoux-Provence Tourisme**

Séguret

Encircled by vineyards and standing under the ruins of its Feudal castle, this little village, with its steep lanes and picturesque squares adorned with fountains, resembles a typical Provencal crib scene and fittingly bears the “France’s Most Beautiful Villages” label. The main street leads to “Fontaine des Mascarons” - a listed monument - and curious clock with novel hands, dating from 1680.



Rasteau

Village life revolves around Place de l'Apparent, in the shade of plane trees. Ancient city walls surround the village and church – the highest point of the village, proffering exceptional panoramic views. A new, 4-km footpath dotted with 12 information panels invites visitors to explore the Rasteau vineyards.



Elegant Carpentras

From 1320 to 1791, this heart-shaped town was the capital of the Papal State of Comtat Venaissin, an enclave independent from the Kingdom of France. It was therefore bequeathed a rich heritage by the religious orders and the mansion houses in Rue Moricelly still stand witness to the opulent lifestyle of shopkeepers at the time. Saint-Siffrein Cathedral offers a rare example of southern Gothic architecture. The 18th-century “Hôtel-Dieu” hospice is now home to a Library-Museum, L'Inguimbertaine, featuring Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur's third largest collection of ancient books, together with a fine collection of paintings. Carpentras is also home to France's oldest working Synagogue. In 1326, Jean XXII allowed Jews to reside in the Comtat Venaissin and in Avignon (after expulsing them in 1322). For several centuries, the Comtat Jews, along with the Jews of Alsace, comprised the only two Jewish communities authorized to live in what is now France – but on certain conditions. This exceptional synagogue is still a place of worship.



In the land of truffles

Carpentras is famed for its multi-coloured boiled sweets and magnificent black truffles... Two-thirds of French tuber melanosporum truffle production come from Vaucluse. Every winter, growers set out to hunt this Queen of Provence. The tuber brumale truffle also grows in the area. The truffle hunt, or “cavage” as it's referred to in Provence, is as exceptional an experience as the tasting itself. And when it comes to tasting, the motto “less is more” is definitely true: the locals like to eat their truffles prepared with a simple omelette or scrambled eggs – absolutely fabulous! Every Friday morning, from November to March, the local truffle growers sell their wares in the courtyard of the Hôtel-Dieu and on the forecourt in front of the Tourist Office.

The Papal Enclave is also a temple of the black diamond:

This singular area, comprising the towns of Grillon, Valréas, Visan and Richerenches, was a former property of the Popes seated in Avignon and part of the ancient state of Comtat Venaissin. Today, it becomes a focus of attention in November when the first truffles arrive. Every year, Richerenches – an ancient commandery of the Order of Saint Jean – welcomes Europe's largest truffle market and a Truffle Mass is held there on the 3rd Sunday of January.





LUBERON
CAVAILLON
ISLE-SUR-LA-SORGUE

Luberon, in the heart of Provence

On the horizon, the Massif du Luberon arches its limestone back laden with veteran cedar trees. The setting sun sets alight Roussillon and its rocky perch. Venerable abbeys, hilltop villages, shepherds' huts and dry stone walls dance in a ring around the massif's two sections: the Grand and Petit Luberon. Life in this part of Provence revolves around a blend of simplicity and generous fruit of the land: lavender, wines, melons, truffles and candied fruit. The river Sorgue – one of Europe's most beautiful and mysterious rivers - springs from Fontaine-de-Vaucluse. This encounter of white-water and dry stone has given birth to a very singular town, L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, a world-famed hub of bric-a-brac and antiques.

 **Luberon Coeur de Provence Tourist Office**



© V. Lucas

Cavaillon, a place to admire from above too...

Just like its Hôtel d'Agar - a mansion house with a Renaissance ceiling built on Roman baths -, the town boasts a very rich history: founded by the Greeks, it was also inhabited by Romans and later became the episcopal city of the Papal state of Comtat Venaissin from 1274 to 1791. Its Provençal-style synagogue is world-unique. Climbing fans will love its Via Ferrata climbing route, offering spectacular views.

 **Via Ferrata**

Melon, the plump king of Cavaillon

Thirty pounds for a single melon - but it's a Cavaillon melon! Novelist Alexandre Dumas negotiated an astonishing deal in 1864. He offered the town his entire published works, i.e. over 300 volumes, in exchange for 12 melons a year. The local library was enriched with the author's books and in return, he received his yearly share of melons until his death in 1870. This delicious fruit has pride of place in the local cake shops, restaurants - Jean-Jacques Prévot has even concocted an all-melon menu from appetizer to dessert, served inside an ancient melon trading post -, and, of course, out in the countryside. In peak season, the Tourist Office hosts visits to local farmers, so you can see the sugary king of Cavaillon growing in the fields.

 **Maison Prévôt**

The sweet story of Apt candied fruit

In 1365, Apt's farming syndicates offered candied fruit to Pope Urban V during his pilgrimage to the town. The Pope was impressed and the town went on to make this fruit cooked in honey, then sugar, its speciality; in the 17th century, Madame de Sevigné qualified Apt as a "jam pot". In 1868, the Bigarreau Napoleon cherry became the official glacé cherry used in English fruit cakes! Two industrialists and 3 artisans continue to produce candied apricots, melons, tangerines and even flowers. The "Confrérie du fruit confit du Pays d'Apt" society - awarded the French "Remarkable Taste Site" label - hosts various ceremonies, tastings and activities.

Not to be missed: the flavourful little "Musée du fruit confit" candied fruit museum, also featuring a shop.

 **Les Fleurons d'Apt**



© C. Durant

Luberon wines on the up and up

Vines were first planted in the Luberon when the Romans settled in the region in 120 AD. The “Côtes du Luberon” Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée (AOC) relates to vineyards to the South of the RN 100 road (those set to the North bear the “Ventoux” AOC label). The vineyards of Luberon Monts de Vaucluse form part of the Vallée du Rhône wine family. The area’s light, chalky and sandy soil lends these red, white and rosé wines their unique expression. The Mediterranean climate is perfect for optimal grape ripening, while the terroir’s slight altitude provides cooler air at night. Luberon wines are increasingly appreciated by connoisseurs and investors, as witnessed by the recent opening of the Domaine de la Cavale cellar, signed by the famous architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte.

La Maison de la Truffe et du Vin du Luberon

In Ménerbes, the Hôtel d’Astier de Montfaucon welcomes truffle and wine lovers in its 17th-century lounges and French-style garden. Its cellar harbours the Parc Régional du Luberon wine shop, featuring producers of AOC wines from the Luberon, Ventoux and Pierrevet sold at ex-cellar prices. You can enjoy simply sampling a glass or opt for a full meal at the restaurant.

La Maison de la Truffe et du Vin

Cave de la Cavale: a beautiful backdrop for the Luberon wines

Located near Cucuron, La Cavale wine cellar is set behind an 80 metre-long dry stone wall, standing out among a sea of green vines. This architectural work, courtesy of Jean-Michel Wilmotte - the “Luberon’s most beautiful cellar” according to Paul Dubrule - attests to the Accor group founder’s ambitions for his wines and the Luberon appellation as a whole.

Domaine La Cavale

Not to be missed too: the “Cave Coopérative des Vins de Sylla”

Located at the exit to the town, this wine cooperative offers Luberon wine tasting sessions paired with cheeses and delicious bread. Dinner-concerts, exhibitions and shops.

Sylla

The must-have Herbes de Provence

The Luberon Regional Nature Reserve is a hotspot for the herbs that lend their typical, delicious perfume to Provençal cuisine. Provence’s thyme now benefits from an AOP (Protected Designation of Origin) label. Herbes de Provence are made from a blend of rosemary, oregano (or marjoram), savory and thyme, to which basil and bay leaf are often added.

La Ferme aux Herbes

Paula Marti teaches visitors about the properties and differences between the various Herbes de Provence at her Gerbaud farm in Lourmarin.

Gerbaud farm



© F. Ecochard



© Meponi

Everything about lavender at the “Musée de la Lavande” in Coustellet

The Lincélé family has been producing and distilling fine lavender for over a century and opened the “Musée de la Lavande” in Coustellet in 1991. The family-run farm, Château du Bois, is located in Lagarde d’Apt at an altitude of 1,100 m on Plateau de Sault. Situated far from any pollution, the farm’s 220 acres of *Lavandula Augustifolia* P. Miller, or fine lavender, account for 10% of total French production. The museum-conservatory is committed to preserving the art of “Made in Provence” lavender and features a superb collection of ancient stills and heritage objects, inviting visitors to discover lavender’s privileged status in high perfumery and aromatherapy. You’ll also find organic cosmetics made with AOP lavender essential oil at the shop. Four times a week, an excursion departs from the museum to visit the farm on Plateau de Sault. The tour (in French and English) includes minibus transport, a tour of the lavender fields, distillery and museum, a Provençal brunch with champagne and photo call at Sénanque Abbey.

Lavender Museum

Luberon Regional Nature Reserve

The Massif du Luberon is a low-altitude range stretching from East to West, comprising two “mountains”: Le Petit Luberon to the West, rising to 800 m and Le Grand Luberon to the East, peaking at over 1,000 m. The two mounts are separated by Lourmarin valley, crossed by Aiguebrun river. Locals refer more commonly to the southern or northern Luberon. The southern face, bordering the Durance river, is home to Lourmarin, Lauris, Pertuis, Ansouis and Apt, the Luberon’s self-appointed capital, while Roussillon, Bonnieux, Gordes and Ménerbes are the jewels of the North... The Regional Nature Reserve spans 457,500 acres and is the proud holder of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and Geopark labels. More than just a mountain range, the very name of the Luberon conjures up images of refined Provencal lifestyle, where beauty is found in simple pleasures: a cosy wood fire, rustic winter truffle, vivacious basil or glass of elegant rosé in summer. Ranging from traditional “bories” - shepherds’ huts built in dry stone - to aristocratic bastides standing amid vines, the area’s beautiful and varied architecture seduces artists and celebrities alike. The super hilltop villages of Gordes, Ménerbes, Oppède, Bonnieux and Lacoste harbour secret terraces and confidential gardens, the venue for prestigious summer festivals, while the sublime abbeys of Sénanque and Silvacane are odes to contemplation. Pine and cedar woods alternate with dry garrigue and flood plains home to 1,800 plant varieties, including 70 rare species, and 2,300 butterfly species.

 Luberon Regional Nature Park

 The Citadelle Botanical Garden



© V. Lucas

Ochres: Roussillon and the Colorado of Provence

Among its 50 or so geosites, the Geopark is home to spectacular ochre quarries. This ferruginous rock has been used as a natural pigment since Roman times. The village of Roussillon, perched on a rocky outcrop, and Colorado of Provence in Rustrel, offer the most flamboyant examples: their fairytale chimney stacks and crimson house frontages are particularly spectacular at sundown. The “Ochres à Vélo” (Ochres by Bike) app created by the Luberon reserve guides you along peaceful little lanes to discover the ochre sites and quarries, still in operation in Gargas.

 Ôkhra



© C. Chillo

Lessons in transparency in Gordes

Gordes is an artists' village. A very talented stained-glass maker, Frédérique Duran welcomes visitors at his studio out in the countryside. The setting – the ancient Moulin des Bouillons – is just as exceptional as his collection. 7,000 years of glass making are assembled here, from Egyptian glazes to medieval windows and tiles made for space shuttles. The artist's glass creations can be admired throughout, especially in the charming grounds.

 Musée du Verre et du Vitrail

L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, antiques and bric-a-brac

This little piece of land cradled between the two arms of the Sorgue (the river remains at a constant temperature of 13°C throughout the year) is home to Notre-Dame-des-Anges church, towers, ancient mansion houses and former spinning mills. Crossed by canals still used to operate waterwheels, L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue is nicknamed the “Venice Comtadine”. The town owes its past glory to its pure and somewhat mysterious waters springing from Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, offering a limitless source of power. Some of the local mills shut down over 40 years ago, leaving behind abandoned buildings where antique dealers and bric-a-brac sellers set up shop in the Eighties, creating the first “Antique Villages”: no less than 7 villages exist today, with 250 in-house bric-a-brac and antique dealers offering everything you need to customize and embellish your interior, from paintings by masters to vintage ceramics. Europe’s second-largest Capital of Antiques & Bric-a-Brac, L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue’s major fairs at Easter and on August 15th attract thousands of visitors, while continuing to innovate every year. Set at the entrance to the town, the “Fondation Villa Datris” is dedicated to contemporary art and kinetic (moving) sculptures. With its writhing mobiles, giant screens and neon lights flashing in the 19th-century lounges and garden crossed by a little stream, it is a must-do excursion!

 Pays des Sorgues - Monts de Vaucluse Tourist Office

 Fondation Villa Datris



© C. Chillo

☆ new

Musée Sensoriel des Fibres Nobles Brun de Vian-Tiran

Built two centuries ago in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, the Brun de Vian-Tiran factory specializes in wool and noble fibres, which it transforms into silky scarves and shimmering plaids. Filaventure is an immersive museum, inaugurated in 2018, in the town centre, on the banks of the river Sorgue.



© CRT - DR

In the land of mysterious fountains...

Fontaine de Vaucluse

The Sorgue is a beautiful river, bubbling just a few hundred metres from this picturesque village. The site is truly superb: a fertile gorge, cliff carved by erosion and waters shrouded in mystery, for this is one of Europe's only exurgences. Fontaine de Vaucluse has stirred many illustrious writers, from Petrarch to Chateaubriand, Frédéric Mistral and René Char. Dotted with mills, it is also a genuine ode to stone and water.

Pernes-les-Fontaines

The pearl of the ancient Papal state of Comtat harbours no less than 40 fountains fed with water from Carpentras canal. You can have fun and games trying to hunt them all down. Some, like Fontaine du Cormoran, Fontaine du Gigot, or Fontaine de l'Ange, are easy to spot, while others, such as Font de la Lune, are good at playing hide-and-seek...

Saumane-de-Vaucluse

Saumane-de-Vaucluse castle, owned for over four centuries and until 1868 by the family of the infamous Marquis de Sade, stands overlooking Vallée de la Sorgue. The charming lanes of this village are also dotted with pretty fountains, gorgeous stone houses, ruined ramparts and a 12th-century keep.

Château de la Tour d'Aigues

With its gate inspired by Orange's triumphal arch, this is Provence's most sumptuous Renaissance abode. Its cellars are now home to a gorgeous pottery museum.

Château de Lourmarin

Built in the 15th century on the ruins of a 12th-century fortress and later embellished with a Renaissance wing, the castle was salvaged in extremis in the Twenties by Robert Laurent Vibert, who introduced Albert Camus to the village. The Aix-en-Provence Science Academy - the current heir to the site - opened the Robert Laurent Vibert foundation there, dedicated to welcoming young artists.



© Fotolia

Château d'Ansois

A stunning blend of medieval severity and Age of Enlightenment lifestyle, this castle stands overlooking the village of the same name. The property of the Sabran family, its arms room, Renaissance kitchen and terraces adorned with French-style gardens are open to the public.

Château de Lauris

Standing proudly over the river Durance, this castle offers magnificent vistas. Its terraces are crowned with a "White Garden" and "Dye Plant Garden" unique in Europe.



GORGES DU VERDON

**PAYS DE FORCALQUIER
DIGNE-LES-BAINS**

Verdon

Here in the Verdon, Provence makes your head spin... The mint-coloured waters of Europe's Grand Canyon attract both adrenalin addicts and gentle souls. Stretching all the way to the River Durance, the Canyon unveils wild, magnificent scenery saturated with colour, mountains laden with sweet-smelling essences, plateaux weighed down by a carpet of blue lavender and medieval villages with a taste for liberty, such as Manosque and Forcalquier. From bare soil, exposing fossils and the fractures of its youth, spring health-giving natural springs. This corner of Provence is a place to breathe, feel and live. Its passionate inhabitants know every inch of it and are delighted to introduce visitors to what author Jean Giono described as "true riches".



© Fotolia

Gréoux-les-Bains, water everywhere

"I do not know if any place that rids you of boredom more than Gréoux [...] this blessed place heals rheumatism with the old remedies of one of the most ancient baths in the world", wrote author Jean Giono. Set amid beautiful scenery, Gréoux-les-Bains is France's third largest spa town, attracting 35,000 guests every year. It owes its success to its waters, of course, but also its 12th-century castle, city walls, church crowned with a bell tower and the proximity of the Verdon Canyon. Dating back to the Troglodytes, Gréoux-les-Bains's baths have been used since Gallo-Roman times, as witnessed by their neo-classical frontage. Moreover, the town's name comes from Grésilium, meaning "water of pain". An efficient treatment for arthritis, respiratory difficulties and ear, nose and throat problems, the establishment is also perfect for a relaxing and rejuvenating break.


 Gréoux-les-Bains Tourist Office



© iStock

Digne-les-Bains

Set along the Bléone river and encircled by mountains, the peaceful town of Digne is instilled with a delicious lifestyle. It is home to two cathedrals, including Notre-Dame-du-Bourg. In the crypt of this medieval masterpiece, remains of the town's foundations dating from 1 AD peek above the surface. Located in the centre of Digne, the Musée Gassendi marries contemporary art, geology and ancient paintings. At the town's exit, you will find its reputed thermal baths and the former home of the great explorer Alexandra David-Néel, restored in 2019. Standing amid mossy fountains and criss-crossed with footpaths where 139 species of butterfly flutter, the "musée-promenade" museum walk is a must during your visit. Focusing on geology and palaeontology, it also features aquariums and fascinating insights into the age of dinosaurs.

 Digne-les-Bains - Val de Durance Tourist Office



© C. Chillo

UNESCO Haute-Provence Geopark: a geological patchwork

The Haute-Provence Geopark - the world's first Geopark recognized by the UNESCO - has served as a model for the creation of today's 127 Global Geoparks. The area around Digne-les-Bains harbours a digest of the Alps' history in the space of 2,000 km², from the dawn of the Jurassic period to the Tertiary Period. Its stone slabs adorned with ammonites and bird footprints, together with the stunning fossils of the "Vallée des Sirènes" and 50-metre "Lame de Facibelle" rock resembling a blade, tell a 300 million year-old story. Just a stone's throw from the spectacular Verdon Canyon, discreet mineral treasures such as the "Clues de Chabrières", "Rochers des Mourres" or "Pénitents des Mées", many of them fossil-bearing, are definite must-sees.

UNESCO Geopark of Haute Provence



© CRT - DR

Art Refuges in Haute-Provence

Spurred by a reaction to art consumerism, Land Art relates to humble, personal works, created on-site in the countryside using soil, bark and stone. Although the movement originated in America's wide-open spaces, the world's only long-distance Land Art walk is located in France, inside the Haute-Provence Geological Reserve. Jointly designed by artist Andy Goldsworthy and Musée Gassendi in Digne-les-Bains, this 150-km itinerary crosses breathtaking mineral landscapes and is interspersed with three egg-shaped cairns (stacks of stones) and seven Refuges, set inside restored ruins. The entire walk takes around 10 days, but certain stretches can be done in just a day.

Refuges d'Art



© C. Chillo

Train des Pignes: your slow tourism friend

Legend tells that this train is so slow, it gives you time to pick up passing pine cones! That's a bit of an exaggeration: the Train des Pignes "only" takes 3 hours and 25 minutes to cover the 150 kilometres separating Digne-les-Bains from Nice. And it's been going for the last 100 years! Imagined by a Digne-born inventor after Nice was attached to France in 1860, the railway line was built to link the Mediterranean and Alps. The ride offers peaceful views over exceptional scenery, from Vallée de l'Asse to the hinterland of Nice, via the Haut Verdon area. But this charming little slow train is also perfect for a short hop, as it stops off in such charming local villages as Barrême, Annot, Entrevaux and Touët-sur-Var, to name but a

few... Serving many little stations, it also allows students to reach their university and golfers to get to their course. Four trains leave "Gare des Chemins de Fer de Provence de Digne les Bains" every day. From May to October, a special Train des Pignes steam train complete with ancient carriages runs between Puget-Théniers and Annot.

Le Train des Pignes

Lavender: in the land of blue gold and other fragrances...

This luminous blue plant with its bewitching perfume has been celebrated for its medicinal and aphrodisiac properties since Antiquity. In addition to wild lavender, around 30 lavender varieties exist, the most commonly-found being fine lavender and lavandin: a hybrid of lavender officinalis and spike lavender. One hectare of fine lavender produces 15 to 20 kilos of essential oil, while one hectare of lavandin produces 60 to 150 kilos. Since 1981, "fine lavender" benefits from an "Huile Essentielle de Lavande de Haute-Provence" Protected Designation of Origin label. Lavender farming employs around 9,000 people and is mainly concentrated along the crescent stretching from Crest-en-Drôme to Grasse in the Alpes-Maritimes area. It blooms for around two months, from end of June to mid-August. If you fancy immersing yourself in a little sea of scents adorned with orderly tufts of blue waves, head to Sault, near Forcalquier, or Plateau de Valensole, where the chimney stacks of the local distilleries fill the air with the sweet smell of lavender from mid-June to late July.



© F. Ecochard - CRT

Digne and its vicinity, a blue history

Musée de la Lavande in Digne

Lavender is distilled in the museum's ancient courtyard in summer.

Corso de la Lavande

The lavender harvest is celebrated in style for five days in early August every year, with decorated floats, fireworks, a funfair and host of other events filling the air with good humour and irresistible fragrances...

Distillerie de Barrême

Located 30 km from Digne, this impressive factory was used to distil lavender 110 years ago. The ancient machine room and garden now offer a feast of essential oils, together with various games and activities.

Ferme de Vauvènière in Saint-Jurs

Set amid fields in Vallée de l'Asse, this farm offers an insight into the various varieties of lavender, together with self-catering accommodation and local produce.

Valensole, lavender on a plateau

Spanning 31,400 acres, Plateau de Valensole is the only wide-open space you'll find in the Verdon area, offering a spectacular show in every season: in spring when the almond trees blossom under the snowy peaks of the Alps, in July when blue lavender and golden wheat sway in the wind, and in November, when the ploughed ochre-soil offers striking contrasts with the azure winter skies.



© F. Ecochard

Lavande Angelvin

Lavender field tours, shop and accommodation.



© F. Ecochard

"Musée Vivant de l'abeille" in Valensole

Lavender honey is one of the most reputed of them all. Slip into a beekeeper's hat and veil for a tour of the hives.

La Boutique Provençale

Forcalquier, in the land of perfume

In the 12th century, Forcalquier was the capital of an independent state that printed its own currency. Today, the town's citadel and cathedral stand witness to this golden age. Forcalquier was attached to the Kingdom of France, along with Provence, in 1481. Renowned for its books and writing traditions, it is also a hub of perfumes and aromas. The town's Monday market attracts market gardeners and producers from all over the region and Forcalquier was at the origin of the "Bistrot de Pays" label, awarded to country bistros committed to authenticity and a particularly warm and helpful welcome.

Haute-Provence Tourist Office

Bistrot de Pays

Artemisia in Forcalquier

The European University of Scents & Flavours (UESS) opened in 2018 in the breathtaking setting of the "Couvent des Cordeliers". The Artemisia Museum is dedicated to local plants, in particular from Lure mountain, together with pickers, pedlars and the associated industrial and craft know-how.

European University of Scents & Flavours

Salagon Priory and Ground in Mane: six exceptional gardens

A 12th-century Romanesque church and Renaissance priory form the stage for these six ethnobotanical gardens: a medieval garden, popular & village plants garden, garden of fragrances, modern garden, white oak garden and Noria garden.

Salagon Museum



© C. Chillo

Rose Walk at Abbaye de Valsaintes

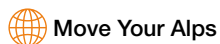
This chronological walk retracing the history of the rose features 500 rose varieties planted in a dry garden created in 2013, in the magnificent setting of Simiane-la-Rotonde.



Valsaintes Abbey

Lavender Routes: in the land of colourful meadows

There are several lavender routes in the area. This route, running from the Ventoux to the Luberon, from Ferrassières to Forcalquier, is around 200 km long: a genuine artist's haven, where the ochres of the medieval lanes in Simiane-la-Rotonde and Rustrel quarry offer striking contrasts to the garnet dawn setting alight the castles of Mane and Ansois and stark white "bories" - little stone hives nestling at the foot of Lure mountain and all around Gordes.



Move Your Alps

Manosque

Situated around 100 km from Digne (to the North) and Marseille (to the South), the town of Manosque, encircled by ancient city walls, developed from the 11th century onwards. Notre-Dame-de-Romigier church harbours a highly-revered wooden statue of the Virgin Mary, while the chapel of the ancient Couvent de la Présentation de Notre-Dame features murals by Armenian artist Jean Carzou, born in 1907 in Syria. The town's many bookshops would definitely delight local-born author Jean Giono, who bought a house named "Lou Parais" (Paradise) on the southern slopes of Mont d'Or in 1929.



Manosque Tourist Office

L'Occitane en Provence: beauty for all

Founded in 1976 by Olivier Baussan, this firm specializing in beauty products and treatments has brought the beneficial properties of plants from Provence and elsewhere to fame throughout the globe. Their Manosque-based factory - the first cosmetics factory to open to the public -, offers visitors a truly enlightening insight into cosmetics production, while respecting the strictest safety and hygiene rules.

A museum set inside the factory retraces the firm's rise to fame, while perfume diffusers, testimonials by producers and a Mediterranean garden present the brand's most emblematic plants: verbena, everlasting, peony and lavender.

On request, you can top your museum tour with a "perfume exploration": a sensory experience designed to reveal the secrets of perfume creation while training your nose. Factory shop open Monday to Saturday all year round, plus weekends from June to September, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Free guided tours - please register in advance.



L'Occitane en Provence



© Wago Productions

Verdon Regional Nature Reserve

Covering 465,000 acres, this Regional Nature Reserve pans out around the Verdon, forming a natural barrier between the Var and Alpes de Haute-Provence areas. According to the altitude, it offers no less than 7 different but equally head-spinning landscapes.



Verdon Regional Nature Reserve



© J. Brunot

Europe's Grand Canyon

Interspersed with waterfalls and limpid pools, the Verdon river whooshes 175 kilometres down from the Massif du Mercantour to the Durance. Downstream from Castellane, this intrepid waterway has scored out Europe's largest canyon, second only to Colorado's Grand Canyon on a world scale. Its mint-green waters have carved out the rock to a depth of 700 metres along a 21-km fault, only explored since the early 20th century.

A road - the "Route des Crêtes" - was built on its Provençal right bank 40 years ago for the greatest viewing pleasure of tourists. This 23-km, one-way road is so narrow that the midway section literally hugs a bend in the river. Its viewpoints, such as Trescayre, offer beautiful scenic vistas, topped with hovering griffon vultures and the acrobatic dance of climbers clinging to the rock face – a truly enthralling show. With its 933 climbing routes, including the vertical cliff face of Escalès rising to 300 metres, the Verdon is an international hot-spot for rock climbers. Adrenalin addicts can also opt for white-water rafting on the pre-canyon river section and rapids of Barre Saint-Jean, or bungee jumping from Europe's highest bridge, Pont d'Artuby.

 **Alpes de Haute Provence Tourisme**




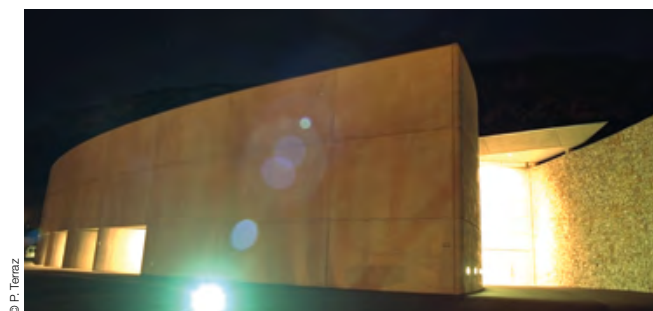
© iStock

Basses Gorges du Verdon: a bath in Prehistory

Set between Sainte-Croix lake and the Durance river, the so-called "basses gorges" (lower gorge) of the Verdon is interspersed with a series of reservoirs (Montpezat, Quinson and Esparron) supplying drinking water, in particular to Aix-en-Provence. Man has inhabited the caves bordering the river since Prehistoric times. Set inside a building designed by architect Norman Foster, the "Musée de la Préhistoire" in Quinson exhibits items unearthed during archaeological digs in the region. Bordered by pine woods and forests, the reservoirs are an ideal choice for an invigorating holiday. Measuring 10 km, Sainte-Croix lake features a plethora of little beaches.

Not-to-be-missed: a climb up to Sainte-Croix-du-Verdon: a medieval village set overhanging the lake's turquoise waters.

 **Quinson - prehistory museum**



© P. Terraz



TOULON - HYÈRES
FROM THE SAINTE-BAUME MOUNTAIN
TO THE PROVENCE VERTE

Toulon, where Provence and Côte d'Azur Meet

This blue and green destination is home to both the Mediterranean Sea and the Estérel, Maures and Sainte-Baume hill ranges. Its legendary ancient forests harbour very spiritual sites, such as the grotto where Mary Magdalene spent her latter years in the Sainte-Baume hills – a place of worship since 5 AD - and beautiful Thoronet Abbey. Its shores are lined with 230 beaches and coves, panning out around Toulon's admirable bay. This is where modern scuba diving was invented, courtesy of Jean-Michel Cousteau. Last but not least, it is here that patrons such as Paul Ricard launched the first marine conservation efforts, later followed by Europe's first marine park around the island of Port-Cros. May the future be blue and green.



© CRT - DR

Toulon, art-on-sea

Set at the foot of Mount Faron, Toulon nestles inside a vast and beautiful bay, sheltered to the South by the peninsula of Saint-Mandrier and to the North by the mountainous barrier of Mount Faron, rising to an altitude of 530 metres. The mountain owes its names to the lookout posts or “faros” erected by the city to protect it from pirate invasions. A newly-refurbished cable car climbs up to the Provence Landings and Liberation Memorial at the summit, recently embellished with a modernized layout. Set inside a 19th-century fort, it offers stunning, panoramic views over the Mediterranean. For many years, the beauty of the bay outshone the city centre, whose historic quarter is now undergoing a rebirth from Place d'Armes to Porte d'Italie, with a plethora of boutiques dedicated to lifestyle and decoration, together with art galleries and studios. Set to the south-east of the city, the Mourillon quarter is a genuine seaside village within the town, while Toulon's picturesque coves of Méjean and Magaud, lined with colourful fishermen's cottages, are set on the “Sentier des Douaniers” coastal footpath.

 **Toulon Tourist Office**

 **new**

Archistoire app

This bilingual app focusing on architecture and enriched with augmented reality, is a great resource for discovering Toulon's heritage.

Hyères-les-Palmiers, sea and palm trees

The Côte d'Azur's oldest seaside resort overflows with attractions. Hyères is first and foremost the gateway to the spectacular Giens peninsula and mythical Almanarre beach - a 4-km nirvana for surfers and funboarders. The French Windsurfing team has a permanent training centre here. It was here too that the Greeks founded Olbia in 4 BC: a trading post on the road to Marseille. Let's leave the peninsula for a stroll around the town centre. Its picturesque streets, now coveted by artists and craftspeople, harbour a myriad of ancient fortified gates, passageways and stairways: the remains of the medieval town's three successive city walls. The streets are shaded by no less than 7,000 palm trees, in particular the majestic phoenix canariensis, to which the town owes its name.



© Fotolia



Villa Noailles

built by architect Robert Mallet-Stevens between 1924 and 1930, is still instilled with the innovative and daring spirit of its founders, the Noailles spouses. This dynamic venue, now a hub of art and especially fashion and design, hosts various festivals.



© C. Chillo

Iles d'Or islands

Often referred to as the Golden Islands, these three magical islands are anchored offshore of Giens peninsula. You can reach them by taking the boat bus from La Tour Fondue in Giens, or from Le Lavandou in peak season.



Porquerolles, the artists' island

What if paradise was 7 km long and 3 km wide? The largest of the Golden Islands harbours unique collections of fruit trees, oleander and other Mediterranean varieties, managed by the Port-cros National Park. Between its beaches, vineyards and forts, on the edge of the pine wood covering most of the island, you will come across an impressive 200 varieties of peach tree, around 50 varieties of mulberry and 154 varieties of olive, all growing on open land. This resourceful island is also home to a seed library.



© M. Doma (M. Baroel)



Fondation Carmignac

"I don't like the idea of having a collection. My works are more like pieces of me placed on a wall. Traces of life experiences, thoughts and emotions...". Edouard Carmignac. This site is exceptional: an ancient farm standing amid trees at the edge of Porquerolles forest, exactly 680 steps from the landing stage. On arrival, visitors slip out of their shoes and are offered a refreshing cup of herbal tea. The tour is a genuine ritual: around 50 visitors are admitted every half hour, so that everyone can enjoy a face-to-face with the works on show. The exhibition area is as astonishing as the rest, with an area of 2,000 m² lit with natural light filtered by a water ceiling set under the floor, where you can gaze at the works of outstanding artists. The farm is surrounded by 37 acres of terraces and pine woods redesigned by landscape artist Louis Benech, dotted with around 15 monumental sculptures. You can also enjoy the on-site bookshop and snack bar before the next and final phase of the ritual: "After the tour, it is recommended to walk 200 steps and slide into the sea"...

Port-Cros, the wild isle

Laden with Aleppo pines and evergreen oaks, the archipelago's smallest island, measuring just 4.2 by 2.4 metres, is also the steepest: it owes its names to the hollow shape of its port ("creux" in French). Thanks to two women, its owners and guardians Madame Desmarais and Madame Henry, Port-Cros National Park – Europe's oldest marine park – was founded here in 1963, making it an ideal spot for bathing, snorkelling and diving. Its beautiful Port-Man fort has now been lovingly restored by photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

Le Levant, the island of opposites

A world-unique coexistence: Le Levant is occupied by both the French Army – which possesses 95% of it – and naturalists. Hammocks, tikis carved into tree trunks, not a single car and plenty of bicycles lend the island a bohemian atmosphere, far removed from the hustle and bustle of city life.



© CRT-DR

From Les Lecques to Toulon

This section of the coast is still Provençal, but already evokes the Côte d'Azur with its dazzling simplicity and typical lifestyle, spiked with a touch of glamour. Saint-Cyr-sur-Mer reflects this dual face to perfection: Les Lecques' 2 kilometres of golden sandy beaches are an ode to carefree outdoor fun, while the secretive cove of Port d'Alon, lined with swaying umbrella pines, offers a secret hideaway. The ragged coast continues to play a double game all the way to Toulon. On Place Portalis, locals enjoy a game of boules under the eye of the Statue of Liberty: a smaller replica - 2.5 metres high - of its New York peer. Just 9 km down the road, Bandol is one of the Var area's oldest and most coveted seaside resorts: its wines, exported since Antiquity, are one of the region's economic flagships. To be sampled in moderation, even if the refreshing waters of Sanary-sur-Mer are just 6 km away... Sheltered from the gusting Mistral wind by Gros Cerveau mountain, bathers tan on the beaches while old-fashioned "pointu" fishing boats bob in the port. The town's ornate fountains, benches and street lamps are reminiscent of the Belle Époque. Set on the port, Sanary's ancient tower is home to a fascinating little scuba diving museum, perfect for a tour before emerging onto a sunny terrace, just 20 metres away, cradled by the soothing sounds of rigging jangling in the wind.

 **Saint-Cyr-sur-Mer Tourist Office**



© Fotolia - Sanary-sur-Mer

Sanary, the cradle of scuba diving

Modern scuba diving was born in Sanary thanks to its three founding fathers, Frédéric Dumas, Philippe Tailleux and, the best-known of them all, Jacques-Yves Cousteau. This oceanographer, ecologist, diver and inventor of deep sea exploratory devices lived at the villa "Le Baobab", now inhabited by his son Jean-Michel Cousteau.

 **Sanary-sur-Mer Tourist Office**



© CRT - DR

Paul Ricard, Bendor and Les Embiez islands

Les Embiez, the seahorse island

The largest of the islands forming the little Embiez archipelago is curved like a 7-km seahorse, whose forehead nearly touches the little port of Le Brusuc. Paul Ricard bought up this 240-acre island in 1958 when the former saltmarshes founded by the monks of Saint-Victor Abbey in Marseille shut down. He built a marina there, together with two hotels - L'Hélios and Le Canoubié - and an arena for the summer feria. His drawing of the "Garlaban" sailboat is

exhibited there. A market set between pine trees, vines and juniper, interspersed with seven beaches, leads to the highest point of the island, where Paul Ricard is now buried. The Paul Ricard Oceanographic Institute and Marine Biology Laboratory are dedicated to marine conservation and specialize in the protection and breeding of seahorses.



© Fotolia

Bendor, a floating artists' village

From Bandol port, a boat bus whisks you away in 4 minutes to the Mediterranean's smallest port, home to just 9 berths. In 1950, Paul Ricard built the magnificent Hôtel Delos, together with a theatre and craft workshops, on this little rock. The neat gardens of its colourfully-painted houses are dotted with statues. The studio where Paul Ricard used to paint has now been reconstructed, while a novel museum exhibits 6,000 bottles of wine and spirits, showcased under frescoes. You can tour the island on foot in around 40 minutes. Bendor was a coveted hideaway in the Sixties, when holidays were synonymous with art and culture and the world's beauty seemingly had no bounds...

 **Paul Ricard Islands**

Bandol wines

Sheltered by the Sainte-Baume hills and encircled by an amphitheatre of wooded slopes, the vineyards of Bandol cascade down in terraces to the bay. The town's excellent wines, reputed for centuries, prompted the construction of Bandol's deep water port. The reds are traditionally aged in oak casks and their distinctive tannins come from the Mourvèdre grape. The Bandol wine cooperative (Caveau de Vente des Vignerons de Bandol) sells a wide range of wines at producer prices.

Bandol wines



© Vins de Bandol

Villages with views

Château d'Evenos. Perched on a volcanic outcrop, Château d'Evenos offers gorgeous views over the Bay of Toulon and gorges of Destel and Ollioules.

Beausset Vieux chapel, home to around 100 ex votos (now listed monuments), offers sweeping views over the bay of La Ciotat and Sainte-Baume hills.

Le Castellet, set inside in the natural amphitheatre formed by the Bandol vineyards, is home to a curious site called the "Trou de Madame" (Madame's Hole), boasting gorgeous views.



© Cernese

The Batterie du Cap Nègre is a military fort built in 1846. The view from its summit embraces the bay of Six-Fours-les-Plages and Sanary.

La Cadière d'Azur overlooks the Sainte-Baume hills. Home to many artists, it is also the geographic capital of the AOP Bandol wine growing terroir.

Sainte-Baume Regional Nature Park

In the footsteps of Paul Ricard

Paul Ricard's name is an intrinsic part of this section of the coast and there are many legends associated with him. It is said that when he was just a small boy, he came up with the idea of Pastis after drinking well water spiked with a few drops of home-made aniseed liqueur to disinfect it. Another story tells that one day, when he went to buy wine from the Beausset cooperative, he came across "a former hairdresser... who made his own pastis with home-made alcohol, fennel and other herbs". Wherever the truth lies, this businessman and inventor of the world's leading brand of aniseed drinks was fired with a passion for creation. He invented corporate sponsoring by backing sailors Alain Colas and Éric Tabarly and creating exhibition spaces to promote young artists, for example on the islands of Embiez and Bendor, which he purchased in the Fifties in the aim of launching an innovative tourism concept. In 1960, he bought up 2,470 acres of land on Plateau du Camp, near Le Castellet, where he built an airfield and racetrack, now a motor sports mecca. The racetrack (which no longer belongs to the Ricard family) is set to host the return of the French Formula 1 Grand Prix in 2018. Last but not least, Paul Ricard was elected mayor of Signes, in the Var's "Provence Verte" area, in 1972.

Circuit Paul Ricard



© P. Cernese - CRT

Sainte-Baume regional nature park

The highest point of the Sainte-Baume hills is located at Pic de Bertagne. Legend tells that Jesus's disciple Mary Magdalene spent the last 33 years of her life in a grotto ("baumo" in Provençal dialect) hidden away on the slopes, and that angels carried her from the grotto to the peak seven times a day to pray. Saint-Pilon chapel was subsequently erected at the site, at an altitude of 994 metres, and the grotto and chapel have been places of pilgrimage since 5 AD. Monks from Saint-Victor Abbey in Marseille, followed by Dominicans, founded a priory there, then a monastery. Its success earned the priory a special environmental status as a retreat and its trees have remained untouched. The southern slopes of the hills sport dry, bushy "garrigue" vegetation, while its steep, limestone northern face is home to a veteran beech and yew national forest. No less than eight natural springs emerge from the Sainte-Baume hills, supplying water to the Basse Provence area. Situated 40 km to the East of Marseille, 22 km from the Mediterranean coast and 30 km from Aix, this regional nature reserve provides a greenbelt for local inhabitants.

Sainte-Baume mountain



© CRT - DR

Provence verte: organic produce and bubbling brooks

The Provence Verte area starts to the West of Sainte-Victoire mountain and follows the bank of Argens river. As its name suggests, it is a green and fertile place, home to many rivers, fountains and pools, where you can enjoy a refreshing dip in summer. It is also a very nature-focused area: Correns was France's first official all-organic village and its 80 producers have been using organic farming techniques since 1997. The village also encourages eco-friendly building techniques and high environmental quality: its school serves organic meals partly made with produce from the municipal kitchen garden.

Correns

The hilltop village route

Bargème: it rises up in the distance, perched on top of a rocky spur, under the towers of a medieval castle. This is the Provence Verte area's highest village (1,096 m), open only to pedestrians. The hilltop village route also includes the villages of Bargemont, Ampus, Châteaudouble and Comps, on the way to the Verdon Canyon. Another must, ranked among France's "Most Beautiful Villages", Tourtour overlooks the Maures Hills and a genuine sea of green pine and oak forests. This was the last haunt of artist Bernard Buffet and his sculptures now adorn the little village.

Provence Verte Tourist Office

Thoronet Abbey

A Cistercian marvel, built between 1160 and 1230, Thoronet Abbey forms one of Provence's three Cistercian abbeys, along with its peers Silvacane and Sénanque. It is also a fabulous example of early contemporary architecture: its pure, simple volumes, essentially designed to cater to the needs of communal life, have inspired generations of architects.

Thoronet Abbey



© Fotolia - CRT



**GOLFE
DE SAINT-TROPEZ**
FROM THE MAURES CORNICHE
TO THE ESTÉREL MASSIF

Saint-Tropez, the Dazzling Star


Even if you're in deepest Patagonia, we're willing to bet the name of this flowering gulf and its vibrant star town conjures up visions of beaches, still blue waters and colourful houses. A game of boules under plane trees and the sound of the wind whistling in rigging could also be added to the postcard. The little port of Saint-Tropez - where God, aided and abetted by a few mermaids, is said to have invented the art of doing nothing - needs no introductions. Neither do its red rocky shores, secret little coves and intrepid capes, which associations such as the French Coastal Conservancy have managed to partially protect from property developers... This dazzling coast is dotted with beautiful little islands: Port-Cros, Le Levant and Porquerolles, where the Carmignac foundation opened in 2018. What's more, the Dracénie area - Saint-Tropez's little-known hinterland, overflowing with natural springs and waterfalls -, is well worth the trip; it's here that you can climb to the very top of the Var area.



© C. Duranti


Saint-Tropez, unbridled charm teamed with culture

You'll undoubtedly succumb to the charm of this little port "suspended, stretching over the sea" in the words of Colette. Off-season, it is simply exquisite, but you'll also appreciate it in summer, early in the morning, when the alleys lined with tall, colourful houses are calm after the night's chenanigans and the first boules players arrive on Place des Lices. Saint-Tropez isn't just a resort coveted by celebrities, but its "Les Nouvelles Etoiles du Cinéma" film festival launched in early 2018 pays a fitting tribute to them. In the 18th century, Saint-Tropez was the Mediterranean's third-largest port, as witnessed by the Maritime History museum found inside the Citadel towering 60 metres over the sea - the perfect place for a long-distance voyage into the town's past. "Musée de l'Annonciade", set on the quayside, is also an exceptional museum, exhibiting works by Paul Signac, Albert Marquet and Henri Manguin on the white walls of this ancient chapel. A 2-metre sculpture of Brigitte Bardot, signed by Milo Manara, now adorns the entrance to the town's most recent museum: the "Musée de la Gendarmerie et du Cinéma". This famous silhouette pays tribute to both the star of "And God Created Woman" and this free-speaking woman and fervent defender of animal rights. Coincidence: one of its first ever exhibitions was dedicated to celebrities and their pets... The little-known "Musée des Papillons" (Butterfly Museum), created by painter and entomologist Dany Lartigues, is well worth a visit: "Butterflies are like happiness, they thrive on treats and love" said the artist. What a fitting symbol for Saint-Tropez.

 Saint-Tropez Tourist Office

La tarte tropézienne

In 1955, pastry chef Alexandre Micka sandwiched two delicious creams between a soft brioche generously sprinkled with sugar grains. Now patented, his unique invention has also fostered an emblematic shop set on three floors, together with a resaurant and online sales network.

 La tarte tropézienne



© Fondia

JEWELS OF THE GULF OF SAINT-TROPEZ

Grimaud-Port Grimaud

An ancient ruined castle stands over the intertwined lanes of Grimaud, where the Corniche des Maures coast road meets the Gulf of Saint-Tropez. The village has rediscovered its maritime vocation thanks to Port-Grimaud: a waterside town designed and built in 1966 by architect François Spoerry. Nicknamed the "Venice of Provence", it became a 20th Century Heritage site in 2002. It is mainly private, but the heart of the town is open to pedestrians. The town also features two hotels.



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Le Massif des Maures, a haven for tortoises... and runners!

Separated from the neighbouring Massif de l'Estérel by the Argens river, the Massif des Maures hill range features one sunny side - the Corniche des Maures - and a shaded side, covered with green vegetation. Its forest was planted by man and comprises cork oaks on the sunny slopes and chestnut trees in the moist areas. In the 19th century, sweet chestnuts from the Maures were sold throughout France and exported to Europe. The capital of the Maures is Collobrières: a delightful, character-filled village crossed by the Real Collobrier. It has remained a hub of chestnut growing and chestnuts are celebrated there and in the surrounding towns of Gonfaron, La Garde-Freinet, Les Mayons and Pignans every autumn. The fortified silhouette of Chartreuse de la Verne emerges from a dense chestnut grove: the construction of this Carthusian Monastery founded in 1170, featuring door and window frames built in hard, green serpentine stone from the Maures hills, mainly dates back to the late 17th and 18th centuries. Since 1983, the ancient monastery has sheltered a community of around 30 nuns from the Order of Our Lady of Bethlehem - you can visit one of their "show cells". The endemic Hermann tortoise is another discreet inhabitant of the Massif des Maures and the "Tortoise Village" in Carnoules is dedicated to protecting and increasing awareness of this endemic species. Paradoxically, the Maures hills - the tortoise paradise - is also a haven for joggers and trail runners, with around 10 different itineraries.

The Tortoise Village

Le Lavandou and Corniche des Maures

Set at the start of the Corniche des Maures coast road leading to Saint-Tropez's peninsula, Le Lavandou is nicknamed the "resort of twelve sands", because its 12 beaches are all different colours, ranging from dark brown to bright white. Twenty kilometres of shores link Le Lavandou to Cavalaire, sometimes rubbing shoulders with vineyards such as Domaine de l'Anglade.



© iStock

The Gateway to the Maures Hills

Set at the start of the Corniche des Maures coast road leading to Saint-Tropez's peninsula, Le Lavandou is nicknamed the "resort of twelve sands", because its 12 beaches are all different colours, ranging from dark brown to bright white. Twenty kilometres of shores link Le Lavandou to Cavalaire, sometimes rubbing shoulders with vineyards such as Domaine de l'Anglade. At the foot of the Massif des Maures hill range, bordering the Bay of Hyères, La **Londe-les-Maures** seduces many visitors with its golf course, sea-facing vineyards, marina and 3 kilometres of golden beaches accessible on foot via Chemin des Annamites, lapped by Mediterranean waters. Set between sea and hills, this corner of paradise invites walkers to climb to the highest point of the Maures at Col des Fourches, stroll through chestnut groves to Chartreuse de la Verne abbey, explore the historic quarter of **Cuers**, the **Pierrefeu-du-Var** arboretum or Pinède du Bastidon pine wood near the ancient saltmarshes of Hyères, now owned by the French Coastal Conservancy.

Méditerranée Porte des Maures Tourist Office

Domaine du Rayol : a showcase for every Mediterranean climate

What a paradise! Set on the Corniche des Maures coast road, facing the islands of Hyères, a hill planted with fragrant plants and harbouring three beautiful old villas slopes gently down to a rocky fjord... Thanks to the French Coastal Conservancy, this millionaire's paradise can now be visited by all. Its monumental pergola offers picture-postcard views over the Mediterranean Sea, framed with umbrella pine and eucalyptus branches. The sweeping stairway leads to a plethora of different atmospheres: a cactus garden, moist underwoods and Australian forest... Landscape artist Gilles Clément has brought together species from so-called "Mediterranean" climates throughout the globe, including South Africa, Chilli, Mexico and the Canary Islands. You can also opt for a range of activities from tree-climbing to a snorkelling trail in Crique du Figuier cove.

Domaine du Rayol



© CRT - DR

Dracénie

Set to the North of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez, the Dracénie area owes its name to its largest town, Draguignan. This pretty hinterland, bearing the "Vineyard & Discovery" label, unveils a myriad of very-different villages and landscapes reaching all the way to the summit of Mount Lachens, at 1,715 metres. The area stretches from the Maures chestnut groves to the flaming red cliffs of Rouët, on the foothills of the Estérel hills, then over the hills to the Artuby and Verdon rivers, scored into limestone. Water has carved the shape of this landscape and forged the gorges of Pennafort, Nartuby and Artuby. The "Cascade de Sillans" waterfall and St-Barthélémy site in Salernes offer refreshing oases at the peak of summer. This geological diversity has created unique wine growing terroirs, on which the Côtes de Provence and Côteaux Varois vineyards (including 5 grand cru classé wines) form a green smiley shape. Culture buffs won't want to miss the **Fondation Bernar Venet** (by appointment)



Terra Rossa architectural ceramics museum in Salernes



Or "**Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires**" folk museum in Draguignan, a charming town currently undergoing a facelift with its newly-refurbished Boulevard Clemenceau. Its American cemetery, the Mémorial du Rhône, dedicated to the soldiers who fell during WWII, is unique in the South of France.



Dracénie Provence Verdon Tourist Office

Exceptional vineyards



Domaine Sainte Roseline

Founded by Pope John XXII, this vineyard is home to the world-famed Sainte-Roseline chapel, harbouring the Saint's body in a crystal shrine since 1329. Marc Chagall adorned the chapel with a mosaic and Diego Giacometti with a bas-relief and bronze lectern.



Château Mentone

This vineyard has been planted with 79 acres of organically-grown vines since 2003. A former farm, located in Saint-Antonin-du-Var, it has now been converted into a farmhouse inn and guest rooms designed by Jean-Michel Willmotte.



Château d'Esclans

Located in La Motte, Sacha Lichine produces the "world's most expensive rosé". Definitely different!



Château du Rouet

Set in Le Muy, this vineyard is still the property of the family of the captain of "La Belle Poule", the boat that brought Napoleon's ashes back to France.



Château de Saint Martin

Located in Taradeau, this vineyard has been handed down from mother to daughter since the French Revolution.

Côtes de Provence wines

The AOC Côtes de Provence is one of three Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée found in Provence. France's oldest wine growing area measures around 200 km in length and is the historic birthplace of rosé wine production. The AOC Côtes de Provence territory spans a total of over 49,000 acres and is home to 40 wine cooperatives and 800 producers.



© H. Fabre - CVP

NOT-TO-BE-MISSED TOO

Maison des Vins Côtes de Provence wine institute in Les Arcs-sur-Argens

Introduction to the local terroir, wines, gastronomy, vineyards and wine cooperatives, with over 800 references sold at producer prices.

Saint-Raphaël and Corniche de l'Estérel, dressed in red and gold

Saint-Raphaël offers a spectacular gateway to the Massif de l'Estérel, just a few kilometres down the road. Its Notre-Dame de la Victoire basilica – a Roman Byzantine-style Belle Époque monument - lacks neither colour nor originality. Climb to the top of tower crowning the Prehistory and Underwater Archaeology museum in the old quarter, tucked under the medieval church - it offers breathtaking views over the landscapes around Saint-Raphaël, further enhanced with a digital app. The old port and its Promenade des Bains herald the start of 50 kilometres of awe-inspiring beaches lined with crimson rocks and crystalline creeks, nestling at the end of discreet little stairways. The coves of Boulouris and Le Dramont are set facing the little Ile d'Or island, whose tower was erected in the 19th century by the island's self-proclaimed king! Even fish find the site irresistible: fishing of any kind is prohibited in the Cape Roux marine protected area, part of mainland France's largest fishing zone.

Saint-Raphaël Tourist Office



© P. Leroux

 **new**

A Louis de Funès tribute museum in Saint-Raphaël

Saint-Raphaël, which was the filming location for various scenes from the French film "The Sucker" (Le Corniaud), has been chosen by Julia de Funès as the showcase for 1,500 objects portraying the life of her father, the much-loved actor Louis de Funès, including movie props, letters and posters set around his uniform from the famous "Troops of Saint-Tropez" and beard from "The Mad Adventures of Rabbi Jacob"... We can't wait to visit!

CÔTE D'AZUR



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ANTIBES
JUAN-LES-PINS
AND VICINITY

Antibes: the Côte d'Azur in music

Ancient ramparts lining the bay, waves lapping against yachts, refreshing little streets and Cap d'Antibes, where roses, billionaires, walkers and birds alike come to perch... Antibes is a truly seductive town. Its neighbour, Juan-les-Pins, has been adding sultry notes of saxophone, uplifting guitar riffs and sweeping sounds of piano to the picture for nearly a century. The surrounding villages have all welcomed painters who have revolutionized the art world: Matisse in Vence, Picasso in Antibes and Vallauris, Fernand Léger in Biot, and many more in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, where the Fondation Maeght continues to set the pace of the Côte d'Azur's artistic life.

Did you know? Jazz à Juan will be celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2020.



© G. Lefrançois - OT Antibes

Antibes, Joie de Vivre

For many years, Antibes (Antipolis) was France's last port before the border with the County of Nice. Fort Carré on Saint-Roch peninsula still stands witness to that long-gone era and now offers a delightful walk if you want to drink in the stunning views over the coast. If you head down to Port Vauban - Europe's largest marina - you'll come across "La Grande Nomade": this giant sculpture by Jaume Plensa, made up of cast iron letters, rises 8 metres over the Quai des Milliardaires (Billionaires' Quay), while magnificent yachts sway gently at its feet. A few hundred metres from the sea, Château Grimaldi is now the venue for the Musée Picasso. In 1946, Pablo Picasso set up his studio in one of its rooms and painted there for 6 months. He donated virtually all of the works created there to the castle, in particular his famous "Joie de Vivre", hence giving birth to the very first museum dedicated to him during his lifetime. The upper rooms are dedicated to Nicolas de Staël, who lived on Promenade Amiral de Grasse. Works by Hans Hartung - also a local resident -, Fernand Léger who lived in Biot and many more artists who painted in the vicinity are exhibited there too. "Joie de Vivre" has become the motto of Antibes. It is found everywhere: in the local gastronomy, the sunny fruit and vegetables piled high on the market stalls on Cours Masséna, and the laughter resonating inside the museum dedicated to comedian Raymond Peynet.



© Mairie Antibes

Antibes, a bohemian feel

As you wander through the shaded streets of the historic quarter, you will come across many beautiful monuments, such as Place du Révély, the chapels of Saint-Bernardin and Saint-Esprit, the cathedral and Saracen towers. Below Bastion Saint-André, the "Commune Libre du Safranier" - an ancient "free commune" founded in 1966 - is still redolent with its former bohemian atmosphere. Just a few hundred metres away, the seaside resort of Juan-les-Pins is a hub of music and holiday vibes. The town rose to fame from 1925 thanks to American billionaire Frank-Jay Gould; you can still see his villa "La Vigie". Set in the shade of "Pinède Gould" pine wood (the site of the annual "Jazz à Juan" Festival) the promenade is a delightful strolling venue lined with a walk-of-fame dotted with the handprints of many famous jazz musicians. A few steps more and you'll come to the ancient Villa Saint-Louis, now Hôtel le Belles-Rives, where Scott Fitzgerald wrote "Tender is the Night" and waterskiing was born...

 **Antibes Juan-les-Pins Tourist Office**



© Istock

Cap d'Antibes: a "Billionaires' Bay" open to the public

Crowned with a powerful lighthouse, this peninsula offers an impressive show of luxury villas offering striking contrasts with humble sanctuaries. It is lined with beaches, such a Plage de la Garoupe, where Colette marvelled at the "sand, sometimes cool, sometimes warm under useless feet". A Way of the Cross leads to Sanctuaire de la Garoupe adorned with ex votos, and the charming oratory of Notre-Dame des Amoureux. The coastal footpath ("Tire-Poil") runs alongside a multitude of little coves, where fishermen and walkers rub shoulders with prestigious properties, many of which are open to the public. "Eilenroc", designed by Charles Garnier, stands in 27 acres of gardens and rose beds. The Baccara and Sonia rose varieties, created here by the firm Meilland, are particularly sweet-smelling. Carved into the rock and set overhanging the sea, the pool of Hôtel du Cap Eden-Roc is one of the world's most-photographed pools! Rita Hayworth, Marlène Dietrich, Charles de Gaulle, Alain Delon, Sharon Stone, Clint Eastwood, Georges Clooney and Brad Pitt have all taken a dip here. The restaurant and bar overlooking the pool are open to all, except during special events – all you have to do is order something, even a coffee. .



© Fotolia

The Villa Thuret botanical garden

In her "Letters of a Traveller", George Sand refers to it as the "loveliest garden I have ever seen". This plant cathedral, boasting the "Jardin Remarquable" label, was created in 1856 by botanist Gustave Thuret: its arboretum features 1,600 species, mostly exotic, and a total of 2,500 trees and shrubs. Every year, it is embellished with 200 new varieties grown from seeds.

Did you know? The Côte d'Azur celebrates its plant heritage every 2 years at the "Festival des Jardins de la Côte d'Azur". On the programme: pop-up gardens in all the main towns, activities, and tours of the Alpes-Maritimes area's 75 or so parks and gardens.

The Côte d'Azur of artists

Pierre-Auguste Renoir in Cagnes-sur-Mer, Fernand Léger in Biot, Matisse in Vence and Picasso in Antibes and Vallauris... Many of the world's greatest masters have been inspired by the inimitable light of the Côte d'Azur's coast and hinterland. And because upcoming artists need patrons, the Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul-de-Vence also welcomes the new generation.



© DR

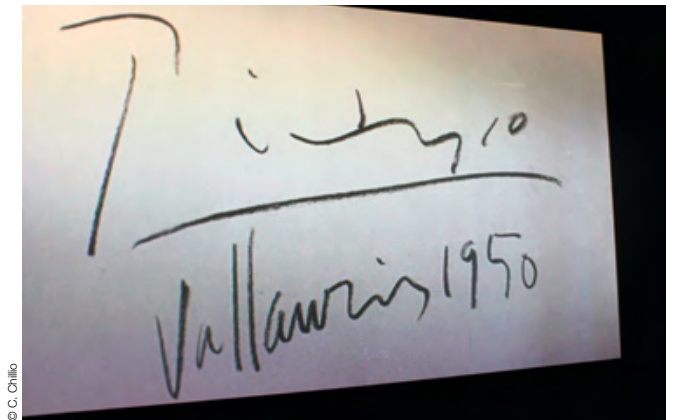
Pierre Bonnard and Le Cannet

Pierre Bonnard discovered the Côte d'Azur around 1904 and adopted the town of Le Cannet around 1920. Fleeing the urban world, he chose to set up home on the heights of the Bosquet quarter, in a modest abode resembling a chalet. His only luxury was a bathtub, which his wife Marthe insisted on having installed. Now a museum, the villa is dedicated to the artist's work, his love for Marthe, colour, and the hills and landscapes of the Bay of Cannes. The museum also invites visitors to enjoy an interactive walk in the footsteps of Bonnard.

 **Musée Bonnard**

Picasso, Vallauris and pottery...

Matisse and Chagall largely contributed to the renown of Vallauris, now an international capital of ceramics. Ceramic artists and potters continue to work clay in the studios of this official "Ville et Métiers d'Art" arts & crafts town. Picasso hoisted Vallauris to fame by donating his monumental "Man with a Lamb" sculpture to the town, set a few metres from the chapel sheltering his masterpiece "War and Peace".



© C. Chillo

Fernand Léger and Biot

Originally a private museum, founded by the artist's wife Nadia Léger, the Musée National Fernand Léger is home to the world's largest collection by the artist. Featuring paintings, drawings, ceramics, bronzes and tapestries, it retraces Léger's various creative phases and exhibits such major works as "July 14" (1914), "The Builders" (1950) and "Grand Parade with Red Background" (1954).

 **Biot Tourist Office**



© iStock

Fondation Maeght and Saint-Paul-de-Vence

With its magnificent crown of ramparts forming a walkway, this little village built in yellow stone and closed to cars appears to have escaped the passage of time. A favourite meeting place for many movie stars and the stuff dreams are made of, this is where Yves Montand met Simone Signoret at the mythical Hôtel Colombe d'Or. You can often see celebrities enjoying a game of boules in front of Café de la Place. But above all, Saint-Paul remains a hub of contemporary art and the stage for around 100 galleries. Signac, Pissarro, Braque, Chagall and Calder all came here to paint. Fondation Maeght has played a central role as a meeting place for artists since its inauguration in 1964, and Léger, Braque, Giacometti and many more continue to stand guard over the founding spirit of the site, inviting visitors to enjoy a stroll through the foundation's rooms and gardens dotted with sculptures, including Miró's famous Labyrinth.

 **Maeght Fondation**



© Fotolia

Biot, Mouratoglou Tennis Academy

After spending 20 years in the Paris area, Serena Williams' coach Patrick Mouratoglou has opened the Muratoglou Tennis Academy - a top-level tennis training centre located in Sophia Antipolis, 15 minutes from Cannes and 20 minutes from Nice, featuring 33 courts, 25 coaches and trainers, and welcoming 1,500 trainees per year, plus 130 players at its Sports/Tennis section. Even the pool is shaped like a tennis racket!

 **Patrick Mouratoglou**



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CANNES
AND LÉRINS ISLANDS

Cannes, sport in the Limelight

Strollers on Cannes' famous Croisette enjoy ringside seats for one of the world's finest shows: a golden, sandy beach lining azure waters, from which emerge two islands seemingly within arm's reach, set in front of grandiose hotels. The picture postcard is now crowned with sportsmen and women too. Although the town's traditional carefree atmosphere, parties and glitter are still alive and kicking, sneakers have now joined the battalion of bathing suits. Famed worldwide for its Film Festival, Cannes is also a capital of outdoor sports. The celebrity hub offers a myriad of itineraries for joggers, trail runners and hikers, a bay no sailor could explore to the full in a single lifetime and even lagoons offshore of the islands, which you can reach on a stand-up paddleboard. Big adventures on a big screen!

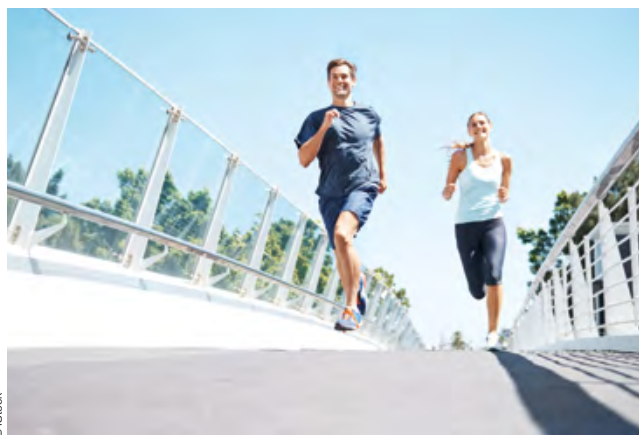
 Cannes Tourist Office



© iStock

Cannes, capital of sport and film

There's no time for freeze-frames in Cannes, the outdoor sports capital! The town has forged such talents as footballer Zinedine Zidane, the Racing Club de Cannes women's volleyball team which swept up the European championship for over a decade and golfer Victor Dubuisson. Four connected platforms allow fitness fans to enjoy their favourite activity, whether yoga, step or qi gong. The 200-acre Croix-des-Gardes nature reserve set over the town offers gently-sloping forests with stunning views and is now fitted with 11 fitness modules set among the Aleppo pines, cork oaks and mimosa. Throughout the town, you'll find around 15 trails for runners and walkers signposted with colour codes according to their difficulty. Fervent sports buffs and walkers alike can now choose their itinerary from the 60 kilometres or so on offer, just like in Sydney, Rio or Miami...



© iStock

The Croisette gets a facelift

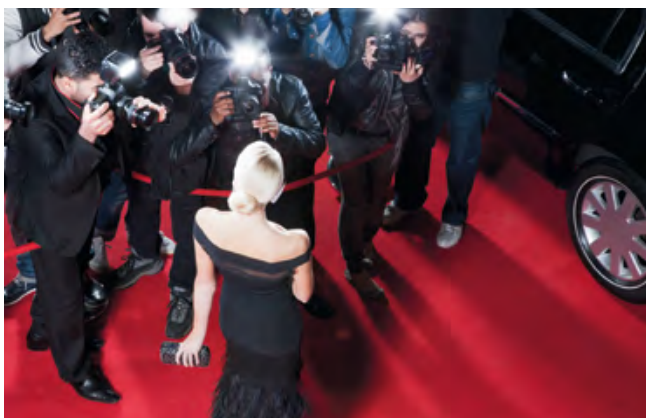
If you fancy an invigorating jog by the sea, opt for track 1 "Long Beach", which runs along the Croisette. 365 days a year, beach volleyball fans battle for victory on the permanent courts, by kiosk number 16. A mixed path welcomes bicycles too. And for the greatest pleasure of bathers, the beaches of the Croisette, enhanced with extra sand, are being extended from 25 to 40 metres in width. The town's hotels, from the Carlton built in 1911 to the Majestic, Martinez and Palm Beach erected in the Twenties and Thirties, are enjoying a major beauty treatment too.



© iStock

Cannes on the big screen

Every year, the month of May heralds the start of the much-awaited Cannes Film Festival. More than just a global film market, this glamorous festival is a genuine movie showcase: its celebrities, lavish outfits, brand names and ground-breaking movies make it the world's most hype film meeting. The first edition was scheduled to take place in 1939 but was postponed until peace had returned in 1946. Cannes has also launched the "Canneseries" International Series Festival as part of the MIPTV Global TV & Digital Content Market. But everyone can make their own film in Cannes throughout the year... How? Simply by sitting in one of the blue chairs facing the Majestic, Martinez or Carlton Hotel, taking a selfie on the stairs of the Festival Palace, visiting the wings, placing their hands in the 400 celebrity imprints on the town's "Walk of Fame" and admiring the murals of Marilyn and Charlie Chaplin. Visitors get to play stars in Cannes too!



© istock

Le Suquet, art galore

The Suquet quarter pans out on the slopes of Mount Chevalier, overlooking the bay. This artists' quarter is home to an artist residency, "Le Suquet des Artistes" and museum, set inside the square tower. "Musée de la Castre" celebrates the diversity of the 5 continents with its collections from the Himalayas and Tibet, Mediterranean antiques, pre-Columbian ceramics, world music instruments and 19th-century paintings... At the foot of Le Suquet, the old port welcomes ancient "pointu" fishing boats: you can admire the day's catch on the stalls of Forville market.

Sporting highlights

Cannes is the stage for over 250 exciting sporting events, ranging from the "Jumping International de Cannes" showjumping competition to the Alpes-Maritimes Nice - Cannes marathon. Optimist mini catamarans, Hobie Cats, kayaks and funboards from the Florence Arthaud and Mouré Rouge water sports centres criss-cross the bay. The stand-up paddleboard zone stretches all the way to Ile Sainte-Marguerite: you can leave your board at the water sports centre and head off for a picnic in the pine wood at the foot of Fort Royal.

Iles de Lérins: a Golden Palm for novelty



© F. Ecochard

Ile Sainte-Marguerite, eucalyptus and iron mask

Where can you find Europe's finest eucalyptus trees? Off the coast of Cannes of course! Just 3.2 km long and 900 metres wide, Ile de Marguerite attracts botanists from the world over, come to roam its shaded alleyways leading to Fort Royal, now the "Musée de la Mer". This maritime museum harbours a fascinating underwater and terrestrial archaeological collection, together with the cell where the Man in the Iron Mask was held captive... This anonymous prisoner, jailed under the reign of Louis XIV, was forced to hide his face behind an iron mask for 30 years. The doubts surrounding his identity have fuelled heated debates for many years. A not-to-be-missed chapter of history, just a stone's throw from the Croisette...

Ile Saint-Honorat, lagoons and wine made by monks

It's difficult to believe today, but the first monastic rule of Gaul was pronounced in Cannes, in 410 AD. Saint-Honorat erected the first fortified monastery on this little island, crowned with a keep. Today, around 20 Cistercian monks live there and continue to nurture 20 acres of vines, producing 35,000 bottles of wine served, among other places, at the Elysée! You can visit the winery and the island also offers a restaurant and snack bar. Bathers will adore the translucent lagoon, nicknamed the swimming pool. Regular boat services run to the island from Quai Max Laubeuf.

Lérins Islands



© F. Eocheard

Massif de l'Estérel: flaming red rock

A geological jewel formed out of rare stones (red rhyolite and blue porphyry), the flamboyant rocks and cliffs of the Estérel hill range, rising to an altitude of 614 metres at Mount Vinaigre, tumble all the way down to the Mediterranean Sea. For many years, this 79,000-acre volcanic range, 35,000 of which are now protected, was completely impenetrable. It was even a smugglers' lair! Today, it is criss-crossed with picturesque footpaths leading walkers to Rastel d'Agay, Saint-Barthélémy rock and Pic de l'Ours.



© iStock

Estérel Massif, the aptly-named "Golden Coast Road"

Inaugurated in 1903, the "Corniche de l'Estérel" or "Corniche d'Or", interspersed with viewpoints and coves, partially follows the route of the ancient Via Aurelia Roman Road. This splendid road, at the foot of the Massif de l'Estérel hill range, runs from Mandelieu-la-Napoule to Saint-Raphaël via the coast. It begins in Mandelieu, where Château de La Napoule and its grounds have been converted into the Henry Clew foundation and museum. The foray into red rocks begins 5 kilometres further on: Théoule-sur-Mer offers glimpses over the Palais Bulles built by architect Antti Lovag, now the property of Pierre Cardin. Even fish find this site irresistible and they're no fools: fishing of any kind is prohibited in the Cape Roux marine protected area, part of mainland France's largest fishing zone. With its beaches lined with crimson rocks and crystalline waters tucked away at the end of discreet little stairways – in Agay for example – this flamboyant landscape is a paradise for photographers. The coves of Boulouris and Le Dramont are set facing the little Ile d'Or island, whose tower was erected in the 19th century by the island's self-proclaimed king! Home to Notre-Dame de la Victoire basilica - a Roman Byzantine-style Belle Époque monument - Saint-Raphaël offers a spectacular gateway to the Massif de l'Estérel.

Estérel Massif

Mandelieu-la-Napoule

Just like neighbouring Cannes, Mandelieu-la-Napoule is rapidly becoming a must-do outdoor sports destination. A golfer's haven, home to the internationally-famed Old Course, the Mimosa Capital offers an enticing combination of sea, rivers and hills. Wellness and fitness fans enjoy rowing and kayaking on Siagne river, sea wading, coastal diving and over 400 km of spectacular running and cycling itineraries in the Estérel hills. Don't miss the hidden treasures of Mandelieu too, such as the beaches next to Château de la Napoule and Port de la Rague with their mesmerizing views over the Lérins islands.

Mandelieu la Napoule



© DR



GRASSE
PAYS DE GRASSE

Grasse, flowers and perfumes

Built on the first foothills of the Southern Alps, Grasse, the perfumery capital, stands gazing over the Mediterranean Sea sparkling at its feet. Its sloping historic quarter, lined with old mansion houses and museums, bathes in an exceptional microclimate. It is surrounded by a bouquet of villages, including Cabris, Auribeau-sur-Siagne, Mouans-Sartoux and the gourmet capital Mougins. In December 2018, the unrivalled expertise of the Grasse's perfumery professionals earned the town its place on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

 **Grasse Tourist Office**

Perfumery know-how recognized by the UNESCO

The ancient perfumery heritage of Grasse has been marvellously preserved since the Middle Ages. And it covers the entire creation process, from plant growing to scent extraction and blending of the precious raw materials from the world over. Today, 65 firms are dedicated to perfumery and aromas and their top "noses" – the most highly-acclaimed perfumers – all have a foot in the town. Fragrance is celebrated here more than anywhere else in the world. Jasmine, May rose, sweet iris, tuberose and geranium flourish on 100 acres of land around Grasse; these exceptional raw materials are selected by top houses such as Chanel or Hermès. Local growers have been supplying perfumers since the 17th century and the creation of the "Corporation of perfumed glovemakers". Today, the perfume makers of Grasse tour the world to find plants and plant-based raw materials to perfume their creations. Using a "perfume library" of several hundred natural scents, their compositions are blended on a "perfume organ" according to their inspiration and the requirements of buyers. The UNESCO has now listed the perfumery expertise of Grasse on its Intangible Cultural Heritage list, in recognition of its unique know-how and the continuing dedication of the entire area to this ancient art.

A sweet-scented historic quarter

The scent of orange blossom, used to perfume the local speciality "fougasse" (a kind of brioche), bathes these ancient lanes lined with gorgeous 17th, 18th and 19th-century houses. The town's perfumers – including Maison Fragonard – have installed elegant museums inside these noble old buildings. After the craft and perfumery shops on the steep Rue de l'Oratoire, Notre-Dame-du-Puy du XIII cathedral is redolent with simple charms. Its arches and discreet decor show Lombard and Ligurian influences. In addition to works by Rubens, the cathedral also harbours a rare religious work by Jean-Honoré Fragonard entitled "Christ Washing the Feet of the Apostles".



© A. & M. Komopika

Do it Yourself: make your own perfume!

Grasse's three main perfumery houses, Molinard, Fragonard and Galimard, all host fascinating tours, followed by a stop-off at their shop. They also offer visitors a chance to slip into the skin of an apprentice and create their own perfume – a great way to approach the secret world of high perfumery at an affordable cost, as the raw materials are literally worth a fortune (€4,000 for a litre of neroli essence for example). A professional "nose" helps budding perfumers assemble the base, heart and top notes and bring their very own perfume to life. What's more, participants head back home with their creation!

Fragonard is a continually-expanding firm, whose historic factory is located in Grasse. Their 1½-hour workshop focuses on the creation of a fragrance with notes of citrus fruit and neroli. After an introduction to the olfactory pyramid forming a perfume's architecture (head, heart and base notes), participants enjoy creating their own Eau de Cologne with a choice of 9 essences. The workshop includes a guided tour.

 **Fragonard**



© C. Barbiero

Galimard launched its first "Studio des Fragrances" in 1997, allowing participants to create their own perfume from a selection of 127 notes, using a traditional perfume organ. The formula is memorized and you can even create a matching shower gel or beauty cream...

 **Galimard**

Molinard

Hyacinthe Molinard opened a little boutique selling her flower waters in 1849. Queen Victoria became one of her loyal customers. In 1921, the house created the perfume Habanita, a huge success made with over 600 essences! Awarded the "Living Heritage Company" label, the firm is now run by the fifth generation of perfumers. Visitors can now create their own perfume from six essences – and you don't need to book ahead!

 **Molinard - Créateur Parfumeur**

Sweet-smelling gardens

 **Bastide Isnard**

Patrick, Nancy and Alexane Isnard welcome guests at their beautiful old bastide in the chic Saint-Christophe quarter, 20 minutes from the town centre, where they sell extracts of Grasse May rose and jasmine. They also host guided tours of their olive grove and violet, rose, jasmine and tuberose fields. And to guarantee an even more fragrant experience, the tours take place in late afternoon! The domain is also home to curious underground galleries used to channel spring water.

All you need to know about perfume: the Museum and its garden.

The 5-acre grounds of the International Perfumery Museum abound with fragrant and aromatic plants, together with various perfume plants grown in the Grasse area.

Set at the entrance to the town, encompassing an entire 14th-century rampart and Pontevès mansion house, the MIP (Musée International de la Parfumerie) is dedicated to scents, aromas and perfumes, and exhibits objects from the five continents covering every aspect of perfumery, from raw materials to trade and uses... In 2018, the museum will be celebrating its 10th anniversary with a packed programme of talks, encounters and exhibitions.

 **Museums of Grasse**



© A. ISSOCK

Pays de Grasse


Forming a natural frontier between the Pays de Fayence and Pays de Grasse, the area around the Siagne gorge is dotted with pretty villages such as Cabris, located 6 km to the North of Grasse. Perched on a rocky outcrop, Place Mirabeau next to Eglise Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption, offers magnificent vistas over the coast. This village has been home to various celebrities, such as actor Jean Marais. Many writers have also stayed in Cabris, including André Gide, Albert Camus, Roger Martin du Gard, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir... The village was also the last home of Marie de Saint-Exupéry, who was often visited by her son Antoine. **In the village of Saint-Cézaire-sur-Siagne**, overlooking Siagne gorge, a grotto featuring interesting rock formations peeks above the surface in the middle of an ancient oak grove.

"Parc Accrobranche": Featuring 51 treetop adventure courses (you can also spend the night and eat on site), opened in Spring 2018 at the Grottes de Saint-Cézaire-sur-Siagne.

 **Cave of Saint-Cézaire**

Mougins, a village of artists and gourmets

Set on a green hill, 6 km to the North of Cannes, Mougins is an adorable village coveted by fine food lovers. Its spiralled alleyways are dotted with little squares, stairways and vaulted boutiques, where fashion designers, cabinetmakers, painters and gourmet eateries alike have set down their bags. The view over the distant sea from the 14th-century Saracen gate is truly spectacular. Dotted with works of art, statues and paintings, the village is often transformed into an open-air gallery. At its MACM Classical Art Museum, contemporary works rub shoulders with ancient objects such as Roman helmets.

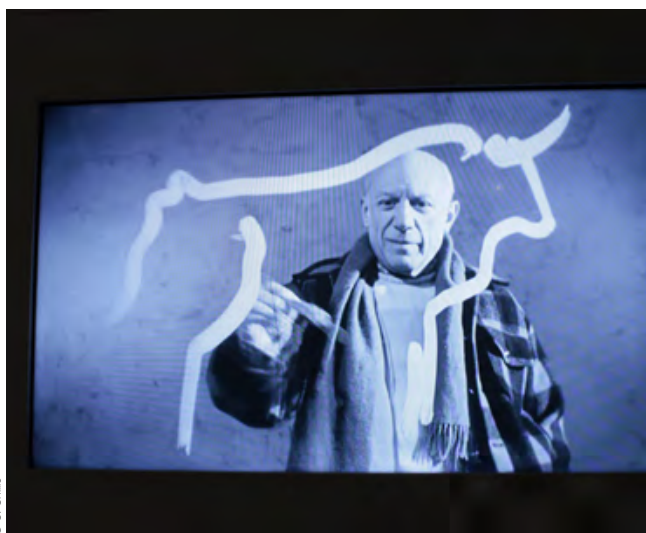
 **Mougins Tourist Office**



© CRT - DR

Picasso in Mougins

A monumental statue of Picasso has adorned the entrance to Mougins since Spring 2018, commemorating the 45th anniversary of the artist's death at this very site. Pablo Ruiz Picasso died on April 8th, 1973, aged 91 years, at his country home and last studio, Notre-Dame-de-Vie, where he lived for 12 years. The artist frequented the village between 1936 and 1939 in the company of Dora Maar and regularly met up with his friends Paul Eluard, Man Ray, René Char and Lee Miller there. In 1961, he bequeathed Notre-Dame-de-Vie, adjoining the chapel of the same name, to his last wife Jacqueline Roque. The period from 1961 to 1973 was prolific, with the creation of painted sheet metal sculptures such as "Chair", "Woman with Outstretched Arms" and "Woman and Child". In November 1962, he painted "The Rape of the Sabines". Mougins is also home to the "Musée de la Photographie André Villers", named after Picasso's official photographer, where you can admire photos by Lucien Clergue and André Villers showing the artist at his Mougins home.



© C. Chilo

Mougins, bon appétit

Acclaimed for his talent, sunny cuisine, kindness and that of his wife, Roger Vergé's "Moulin de Mougins" is a meeting place for the Côte d'Azur's gourmets. Mougins is home to many eateries, ranging from Michelin 2-star temples to friendly terraces facing the elm on the main square. The town has been celebrating its gastronomy, regional produce and inimitable Côte d'Azur lifestyle every year in June for the last 13 years with the "Étoiles de Mougins" festival held in the medieval village. Welcoming around 130 chefs and featuring a gastronomy walk, a dozen or so workshops, 5 contests, and a Provençal market held by small local producers and wine growers, this major Chefs' meeting attracts huge crowds. The 2018 edition on the theme of "Gastronomy, Sport and Well-Being" will be proving that delicious food and health really do go together!



© CRT - DR

Route du Mimosa, when the Riviera dons a golden coat

Stretching from Grasse to Bormes-les-Mimosas, the "Route du Mimosa" invites you to enjoy a fragrant voyage on Mediterranean shores... This 130-km signposted itinerary offers a genuine firework display of yellows from January to late March, while in Grasse, the bewitching scent of acacia dealbata fills the air in every season. Originating from Australia, the acacia dealbata is said to have arrived on the Côte d'Azur in the tilbury of Lord Henry Brougham, the founder of modern-day Cannes. Set 112 km along the Mimosa Route, the village of Tanneron stands 418 metres over Europe's largest mimosa forest. During the flowering season, bouquets weighing 150 grams are exported throughout the world. Every 20th February, Mandelieu-la-Napoule, the "mimosa capital", celebrates the "Fête du Mimosa" at Notre Dame des Mimosas chapel, while in Bormes-les-Mimosas – the last stage of this sweet-smelling itinerary - the Cavatore nursery is home to France's only specialist mimosa collection. You can have fun spotting the various varieties as you stroll around the "Venelle des Amoureux", "Draille des Bredouilles" (a lane formerly taken by luckless hunters!) and other medieval streets of the historic quarter.

The Mimosa Route



© Shutterstock



NICE
CÔTE D'AZUR

Nice, the Bay of Angels

Baroque, Belle-Epoque and contemporary: Nice benefits from a truly breathtaking environment spanning the Bay of Angels and 7.5 km of shingle beaches bordering the Promenade des Anglais. France's 5th-largest town has never ceased to reinvent itself and has evolved today into a smart, green city, with projects marrying art and environmental awareness springing up everywhere, especially to the West, towards the Eco-Valley of the Var plain and Allianz Riviera Stadium. The capital of the Nice Côte d'Azur metropolis encompasses 49 towns stretching from the beach to Mercantour National Park. Last but not least, this beautiful city - the Côte d'Azur's largest - extends all the way to the Italian border.

Nissa la Bella

"When I understood that I would see this light every morning I couldn't believe my good fortune". Henri Matisse

 Nice Tourist Office



© F. Ecochard - CRT

A 5-step guide to the Promenade des Anglais

Pergolas & Palms

Along with the blue chairs, they are the emblem of the Promenade.

Beaches

Most of the beaches lining the 7.5-km Promenade des Anglais are public. Centenaire and Carras benefit from reduced-mobility amenities, Carras is also fitted with Audioplage devices for visually-impaired bathers. 5 beaches are non-smoking.

Cycle path

Running from the port to Cagnes-sur-Mer, the "Littorale" is a family-friendly cycle path measuring 14 km.



Pilou & Pan-Bagnat

Every Friday evening at 6.30 p.m. you can enjoy an introduction to Nice's traditional sport "pilou", followed by a casual "pan-bagnat" (a roll made with tuna, egg, salad, olives and olive oil) on Plage du Voilier by Avenue Gambetta. sitedepilou.free.fr/le_pilou.htm



Pan-Bagnat recipe



© F. Ecochard

At the heart of Old Nice flowers and a view

France's best-known flower market with its stunning array of mimosa, carnations, roses, violets and anemones has been held on Cours Saleya at the entrance to Nice's historic quarter every Monday since 1861. Garibaldi, Romain Gary, Simone Veil and Le Clézio all grew up in these narrow lanes harbouring such treasures of Baroque architecture as Cathédrale Sainte-Réparate, Chapelle de la Miséricorde and Eglise du Gesù - the church is so ornately decorated that legend tells boisterous children used to be taken there to count the angels... Under the painted ceilings of Palais Lascaris lies an extraordinary collection of musical instruments from the 17th and 18th centuries. The castle standing proudly over this buzzing and gourmet quarter offers truly breathtaking views over the Promenade des Anglais, Mediterranean Sea and Southern Alps.



© C. Chillo - CRT

Palais Lascaris revisited

An exhibition of various works at Palais Lascaris, by 18 artists with ties to the city, including paintings, photos, graphic works, objets d'art, installations and videos.

Promenade du Paillon, great art in the great outdoors

When night falls, sculptor Jaume Plensa's 7 Buddhas change colour amid the red-ochre frontages of Place Masséna. Promenade du Paillon is set above the coastal river supplying water to the town and is home to the Mamac contemporary art museum where artist Benjamin Vautier, better known as Ben, asks visitors "Is everything art?" in addition to Ben, the museum pays tribute to many Nice-born artists such as Arman, Yves Klein, Nikki de Saint-Phalle and César. Further on, the Louis Nucera library nestles inside the giant head of Sacha Sosno. Dotted around the town, other remarkable buildings stand witness to the prominent place of contemporary art and architecture: Other remarkable monuments include the "brutalist" Villa Arson, now a 20th-Century Heritage Site, Nice National Theatre, Kenzo Tange's Asian Arts Museum and the more recent Allianz Riviera Stadium by Jean-Michel Wilmotte.



© A. Issocq - OT Nice

Nice Carnival

Every February, over a million spectators celebrate Nice Carnival on Place Masséna - the traditional flower battle is a sight to behold. Although the tradition dates back to the Middle Ages, it is well-anchored in the 21st century: both modern and spectacular, it gives centre stage to music. Did you know? The Nice Carnival was the first large-scale public meeting filmed by the inventors of cinema, none other than the Lumière brothers!

Nice Carnival



The two stars of Cimiez

Matisse at the top, Chagall at the bottom, both surrounded by olive trees, are the kings of the chic Cimiez hill, where wealthy travellers from England and Russia came to escape the cold northern winter at the turn of the 20th century. Its Belle-Époque buildings, such as the Hôtel Excelsior Régina, rub shoulders with Roman baths and monastery grounds. The Musée Matisse exhibits a magnificent collection of canvasses, together with most of the master's sculptures. The layout of the Musée Chagall was designed by the artist himself and features the famous "Song of Songs" dedicated to Vava, "my joy and my delight".

Home port

Port Lympia is carved into the red ochres of Place de l'Île de Beauté, one of the city's listed squares. Just nearby, you can see one of the world's oldest human settlements, Terra Amata.

Terra Amata refurbishment

The "Musée de Terra Amata" features the remains of a human settlement dating back 400,000 years. Its inhabitants hunted elephants, rhinoceroses, stags and rabbits in the marshes of Fleuve Paillon. They set up fireplaces in their huts on the beach and their settlement is one of the oldest ever found in the world. The new museum layout includes the latest scientific findings. New door, you can visit the famous "Grotte du Lazaret": a prehistoric cave inhabited between 190,000 and 120,000 years ago.

Culinary specialities

Everyone has heard of Mesclun these days - a mix of herbs and salad. It actually originates from the Franciscan tradition of picking every other sprig from plants... Nice's cuisine is a true fruit of the land, concocted with vegetables, herbs, olive oil and onions. Don't miss the local "pissaladière à l'oignon" onion tart, "socca" (chickpea flatbread cooked on a hotplate), chard pie, "trucchia" (chard and pine nut omelette) and "merda di can" – delicious gnocchi with chard despite its off-putting name..! 26 local restaurateurs sport the "Cuisine Nissarde" quality label.

An agricultural town too, Nice is home to 2 AOP (Protected Designation of Origin) products: olives - AOP Nice olives, oil and paste, and wine - AOP Vin de Bellet red, white and rosé.



Bellet top addresses

Home to 10 vineyards, this tiny wine growing area is France's oldest and the only one set in the heart of a city. The "Vins de Bellet" wines are both rare and highly sought-after. Make the most of your visit to buy some.



Château de Crémat

This building, crowned with battlements, resembles a genuine fairytale. Legend tells that Coco Chanel's logo, comprising two intertwined Cs, was inspired by her visit to the castle's very wealthy American owner.



Château de Bellet

This famous vineyard pans out around a chapel harbouring a semi-buried cellar. Wine tasting sessions are held in its secret crypt.



Domaine de la Source

The 3rd generation of the Dalmasso family nurtures the vineyard and also produces Nice extra-virgin organic olive oil made with Cailletier olives (a variety from Nice).

Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat : luxury and exuberance

This verdant peninsula stretching towards the Bay of Angels, bordered by the natural harbours of Villefranche and Beaulieu, resembles a genuine paradise on Earth. Its Grand Hôtel welcomed a wealthy, cosmopolitan clientele from 1908. The Belgian King Léopold II gradually bought up the cape's western face, from Passable to the lighthouse. But its most original inhabitant was undoubtedly Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild, who built Villa Ephrussi in 1905, where she organized a wedding for her poodle... The thematic gardens, cradled by the tinkling sound of fountains, are set overlooking the bays of Villefranche-sur-Mer and Beaulieu-sur-Mer. The "Sentier des Douaniers" coastal footpath allows you to enjoy a free tour of the peninsula with a stop-off at another mythical villa, Villa Kerylos, poised over the sea and adorned with neoclassical Greek decors.



Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau



© P. Behar

Villefranche-sur-Mer

Founded in 1295 by Charles II d'Anjou, bordering a magnificent bay, this town offers one of the Côte d'Azur's most beautifully-preserved decors, with its pretty harbour, Cocteau chapel and Citadel. This impressive stone fortress, built between 1554 and 1557 by order of the Duke of Savoie, now harbours several museums, together with sculptures and hematites by Volti, drawings by masters at Musée Goetz and the Roux ceramics collection. The port is also a privileged mooring place for the world's most prestigious liners and France's largest cruise port.



Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau

Renoir and Cagnes-sur-Mer

Pierre-Auguste Renoir lived at Domaine des Collettes, planted with veteran olive trees, from 1908 until his death in 1919. His prestigious guests included Chaim Soutine and André Derain. His studio, still containing his easel, palettes and wheelchair, offer a lesson in optimism: despite his declining health, Renoir never lost his taste for joy and beauty. His son, film director Jean Renoir, also sought refuge at the domain. Set above the racecourse, famed for its night races, and the 5-km shingle beach, the shaded streets of Haut-de-Cagnes are closed to cars and form a village apart, set around the ancient castle.


 **Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau**

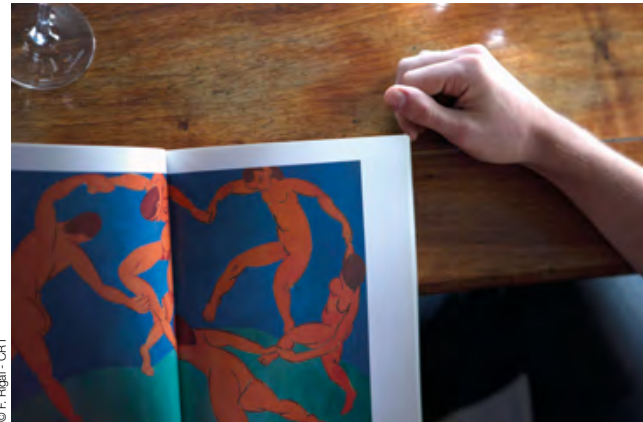


© Isotick

Matisse and Vence

Vence, with its spiral of little lanes panning out around the ancient keep of Château de Villeneuve, is best admired from the slopes of Baou des Blancs mountain, set overlooking the village. Out of affection for his former nurse, who became a Dominican nun, Henri Matisse dedicated 3 years of his life to building Notre-Dame du Rosaire chapel there between 1947 and 1949. Its blue, yellow and green stained-glass windows in the shape of Polynesian leaves, Virgin and Child painted in sweeping black brushstrokes on white ceramic and even the white linen cloth designed specially by the master, are all radiantly beautiful.


 **Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau**



© F. Rigal - CRT

Eze, an eyrie over the Mediterranean

Eze is a genuine Olympus set clinging to the hillside between Mediterranean Sea and skies. In the footsteps of the philosopher Nietzsche, its gateway opens onto a genuine paradise, where scents of jasmine, bougainvillea and rose bushes guide visitors through steep, shaded lanes and along paths sloping sharply down to the sea.

 **Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau**



© C. Moiranc - CRT Côte d'Azur

La Turbie, the Trophy of Augustus

Inaugurated in 6 BC to commemorate the victory of Augustus over the Alpine people, this trophy, now largely destroyed, marks the start of one of the Côte d'Azur's most beautiful roads, set overhanging the Mediterranean.



MENTON
AND ITS COUNTRYSIDE

Menton, the green alleyways of the Côte d'Azur

Winter in Menton is redolent with the delicate scent of citrus fruit... Honoured in February at the traditional - and very popular - "Fête des Citrons". Menton benefits from a subtropical climate unique in France. This garden town overflows with secret oases, such as the Maria Serena palm grove, conservatories such as the Jardin du Val Rahmeh, the citrus fruit collection found at Palais Carnolès and meeting places for green-fingered collectors, such as Clos du Peyronnet. The town itself, from the seaside to the Vieux Menton historic quarter with its ochre houses set around the bell tower and Saint-Michel basilica, also harbours various remarkable trees.

 **Menton Tourist Office**



© Ville de Menton

The delicious Menton lemon


The proud holder of the IGP (Protected Geographical Indication) label, it is the northernmost lemon of them all. Curiously, it is the cool air combined with a high rate of sunshine that makes the Menton lemon so tasty: the fruit is packed with essential oils and sugar to help it resist the winter climate. Production is low, just 10 metric tons per year, as the lemon trees grow on terraces and access is difficult. It takes almost 10 months for the flowers to evolve into ripe lemons. The Menton lemon is also referred to as a "four seasons lemon", as flowers, green lemons and ripe fruit can co-exist on the same tree. It has been the star of the town's "Fête des Citrons" (lemon fair) since 1928.



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Riviera Palace Beausoleil : a well-hidden jewel The seductive Belle Époque era

Built in Beausoleil near Monaco, for the ancient "Compagnie des wagons-lits" Belgian railway company, the Riviera Palace is a jewel of Belle Époque architecture. Its blue majolica railings harbour a stunning winter garden. The 20 metre-high glass roof was designed and manufactured by the firm of Gustave Eiffel. Colette, Churchill and Leopold II have all strolled amid its subtropical plants... Free guided tours all years round subject to prior booking.

 **Beausoleil**

The Cocteau's Wedding Room

Menton's guardian angel is a poet: Jean Cocteau. A fervent lover of the town, he painted the "Wedding Room" there in 1958. This magnificent work has just been restored and is open to the public during town hall opening hours. Cocteau also adorned a little, 14th-century fort on the pier – now the Musée Cocteau - with mosaics. A magnificent white building signed by architect Rudy Ricciotti, set near the covered market, is home to the Séverin Wunderman collection, featuring 1,800 works, 990 of which are signed by the Prince of Poets himself. The works are exhibited in rotation.

 **Musée Jean Cocteau**

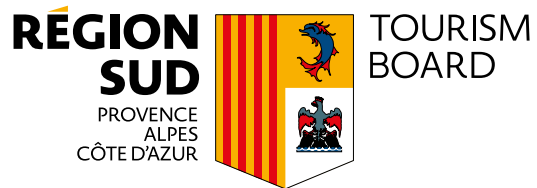
A modern odyssey in Roquebrune Cap-Martin

If you're looking for a truly unique cultural and artistic experience, this town is a treasure trove of modernist architecture. The Le Corbusier walk unveils the famous architect's "Cabanon" and "Camping Units", "Villa E-1027" by Irish designer Eileen Gray and architect Jean Badovici and "Restaurant de l'Etoile de Mer" by Thomas Rabutato. The view is simply magnificent, as is the full immersion in the world of these ground-breaking artists. The site has been beautifully restored and maintained by the French Coastal Conservancy since 2015.

 **Advance booking recommended: CAP MODERNE**



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