



EYEWITNESS TRAVEL

# Provence & The Côte d'Azur



The guides that show you what others only tell you





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# Provence & the Côte d'Azur

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Floors are referred to throughout in accordance with French usage; ie the "first floor" is the floor above ground level.



Boats lined up at the Port of Nice, located in the old town in Nice (see pp84–9)

## Introducing Provence

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Lavender fields surrounding the Abbaye de Sénanque (see pp168–9)

**The information in this  
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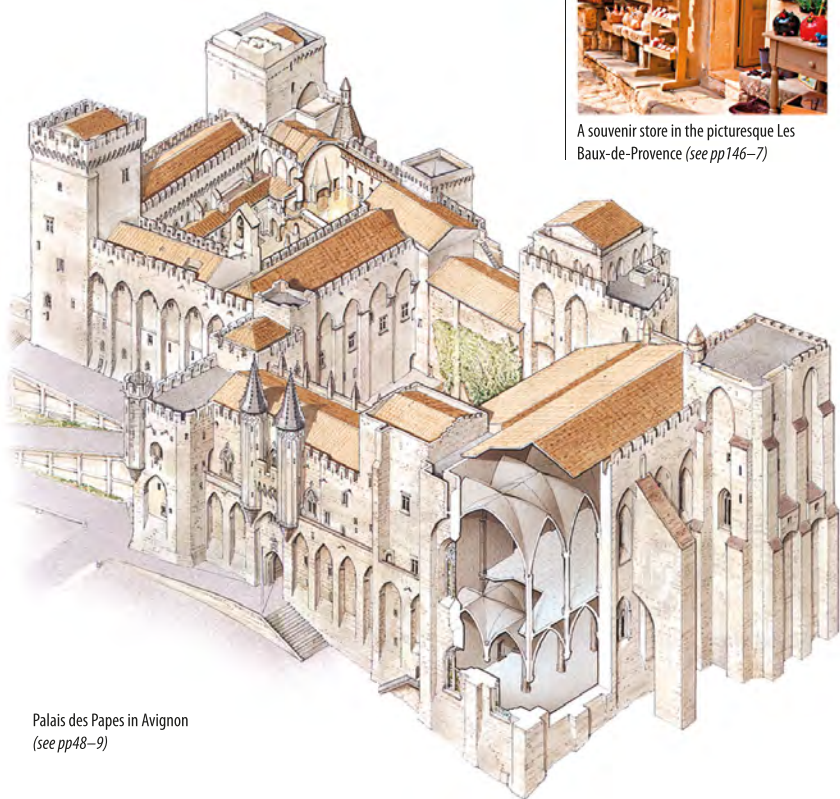
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A souvenir store in the picturesque  
Baux-de-Provence (see pp146–7)



Palais des Papes in Avignon  
(see pp48–9)

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide will help you get the most from your stay in Provence. It provides both expert recommendations and detailed practical information. *Introducing Provence* maps the region and sets it in its historical and cultural context. *Provence Area by Area* describes the important sights, with maps, photographs

and detailed illustrations. Suggestions for food, drink, accommodation, shopping and entertainment are in *Travellers' Needs*, and the *Survival Guide* has tips on everything from the French telephone system to getting to Provence and travelling around the region.

## Provence Area by Area

In this guide, Provence has been divided into five separate regions, each of which has its own chapter. A map of these regions can be found inside the front cover of the book. The most interesting places to visit in each region have been numbered and plotted on a *Regional Map*.

Each area of Provence can be quickly identified by its colour coding.

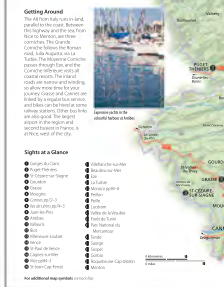


**1 Introduction**  
The landscape, history and character of each region is described here, showing how the area has developed over the centuries and what it has to offer the visitor today.

A **locator map** shows the region in relation to the whole of Provence.

## Exploring the Riviera and the Alpes Maritimes

The map highlights the most important sights, showing where to start and ending down in the Riviera. It also shows the location of the Alpes Maritimes and the Riviera. The map is color-coded to show the different regions of Provence.



**2 Regional Map**  
This gives an illustrated overview of the whole region. All the sights are numbered and there are also useful tips on getting around by car and public transport.

**Features and story boxes** highlight special or unique aspects of a particular sight.

## 3 Detailed information on each sight

All the important towns and other places to visit are described individually. They are listed in order, following the numbering on the Regional Map. Within each town or city, there is detailed information on important buildings and other major sights.

**14 Provence Area by Area**

**● Juan-les-Pins**  
This is the resort of Juan-les-Pins, a beautiful peninsula of white limestone, surrounded by blue sea and green hills. It is a popular destination for sun-seekers and those who enjoy a relaxing holiday.

**● Vallauris**  
This is the town of Vallauris, a beautiful coastal town with a rich history of pottery-making. It is a popular destination for those who enjoy a relaxing holiday.

**● Antibes**  
This is the town of Antibes, a beautiful coastal town with a rich history. It is a popular destination for those who enjoy a relaxing holiday.

**THE RIVIERA AND THE ALPES MARITIMES | 77**

**Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)**  
Picasso, the greatest 20th-century painter, spent most of his life in Provence, inspired by its landscape, light and vibrant colors. He came here to his summer home in Vallauris, and in 1919 he moved to Mougins, where he lived until his death in 1973. He is buried in the cemetery of Mougins.

**● Vallauris**  
This is the town of Vallauris, a beautiful coastal town with a rich history of pottery-making. It is a popular destination for those who enjoy a relaxing holiday.

**● Antibes**  
This is the town of Antibes, a beautiful coastal town with a rich history. It is a popular destination for those who enjoy a relaxing holiday.

### 4 Major Towns

An introduction covers the history, character and geography of the town. The main sights are described individually and plotted on a Town Map.

A **Visitors' Checklist** gives contact points for tourist and transport information, plus details of market days and local festival dates.

The **town map** shows all main through roads as well as minor streets of interest to visitors. All the sights are plotted, along with the bus and train stations, parking, tourist offices and churches.

72 PROVENCE AREA BY AREA THE RIVIERA AND THE ALPES MARITIMES | 74

**Cannes**  
 Located between the sea and the mountains, Cannes is a town of 100,000 people. It is famous for its film festival, the Cannes Film Festival, which is held in the town every year. The town is also famous for its beaches, its shopping, and its nightlife. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.

**Hyères**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.

**St-Tropez**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.

**Antibes**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.



**Visitors' Checklist**  
 Cannes: 04 93 99 00 00, Cannes Film Festival: 04 93 99 00 00, Hyères: 04 93 99 00 00, St-Tropez: 04 93 99 00 00, Antibes: 04 93 99 00 00.

### 5 Street-by-Street Map

Towns or districts of special interest to visitors are shown in detailed 3-D, with photographs of the most important sights. This gives a bird's-eye view of towns or districts of special interest.

A suggested route for a walk covers the most interesting streets in the area.

THE RIVIERA AND THE ALPES MARITIMES | 85

**Street-by-Street: Nice**  
 A detailed street-by-street map of Nice, showing the layout of the town and the location of the most important sights. The map includes a suggested route for a walk, and a list of the sights in the area. The map includes a suggested route for a walk, and a list of the sights in the area.

**Capitaine de Provence**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.

**Chapelle de la Vierge**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.

**Chapelle de la Vierge**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.



**Visitors' Checklist**  
 Capitaine de Provence: 04 93 99 00 00, Chapelle de la Vierge: 04 93 99 00 00.

For all the top sights, a **Visitors' Checklist** provides the practical information you will need to plan your visit.

### 6 The Top Sights

These are given two or more pages. Important buildings are dissected to reveal their interiors; museums have colour-coded floorplans to help you locate the most interesting exhibits.

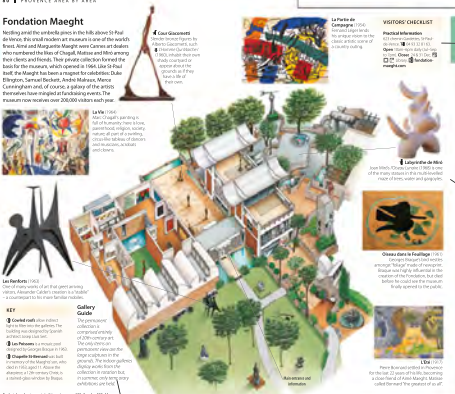
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**Fondation Maeght**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.

**Clear Government**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.

**Le Petit Palais**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.

**Gallery Guide**  
 A beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront. The town is a beautiful town, with its buildings, its parks, and its seafront.



**Visitors' Checklist**  
 Fondation Maeght: 04 93 99 00 00, Clear Government: 04 93 99 00 00, Le Petit Palais: 04 93 99 00 00.

The **gallery guide** explains the layout of the museum and gives details on the arrangement and display of the collection.









# INTRODUCING PROVENCE

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# DISCOVERING PROVENCE

The following tours have been designed to include as many of Provence's highlights as possible, with a minimum amount of travelling. First come a pair of two-day tours of the region's most popular cities, Nice and Avignon; either can be followed individually or as part of a week-long tour. These are followed by three seven-day tours of the region. The first covers the Côte d'Azur, with its beaches, dramatic scenery and exceptional art museums. The second takes in the major

sites along the banks of the River Rhône from Orange to the Camargue, including some of France's best-preserved Roman and medieval monuments. The third, designed specifically for drivers, covers many of the most iconic landscapes and villages of Provence. All have extra suggestions for extending trips to 10 days. Pick one or mix and match, but before setting out, be sure to check the listing of events (pp36–9) and perhaps adjust a tour so as not to miss any of the fun.



## Nice

Stylish umbrellas and sun loungers lined up along the shore at the promenade des Anglais Beach Club.

## A Week on the Côte d'Azur

- Wander through the morning market in **Nice**, and visit the delightful Musée Matisse.
- Tour the spectacular Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild at **St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat**, and watch the sun set over the Riviera from **Eze**.
- Marvel at the sea life in **Monaco's** Musée Océanographique; see the Roman "trophy" at **La Turbie**.
- Delve into contemporary art at **St-Paul de Vence**, and visit Renoir's home in **Cagnes-sur-Mer**.
- Discover the joyful Picassos in **Antibes**, and relax on the beach at fashionable **Juan-les-Pins**.
- Take in the glamour of **Cannes** and the tranquillity of the **Iles de Lérins**.



**Vaison-la-Romaine**

Sitting on the river Ouvèze, this attractive stone-and-red-roof town has fascinating Roman remains including a theatre still used for the town's summer festival, a hilltop Haute Ville and some of Provence's most chic pavement cafés for relaxing in after a day of sightseeing.

**Key**

- A Week Along the Rhône
- A Week in Classic Provence
- A Week on the Côte d'Azur

**A Week Along the Rhône**

- Enjoy **Marseille's** iconic *bouillabaisse* in the scenic Vieux Port.
- Test the acoustics in **Orange's** ancient theatre, and the wines at **Châteauneuf-du-Pape**.
- Tour the medieval Palais des Papes in **Avignon**.
- Marvel at the **Pont du Gard**, and the Roman monuments in **Nîmes**.
- Visit the places Van Gogh painted in **St-Rémy**; enjoy breathtaking views from the citadel of **Les Baux-de-Provence**.
- Explore the walled city of **Aigues-Mortes** on the edge of the **Camargue**.
- Discover the ancient and medieval masterpieces of **Arles**, France's "Little Rome".

**A Week in Classic Provence**

- Take in the arty charms of **Aix**, the former capital of Provence and birthplace of Paul Cézanne.
- Tour through the beautiful Provençal villages and landscapes of the **Petit Luberon**.
- Shop for antiques in **L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue**, and wonder at the mysterious **Fontaine-de-Vaucluse**.
- Discover the vine-clad landscapes and wines grown under the **Dentelles de Montmirail**; seek out the Roman relics of chic **Vaison-la-Romaine**.
- Visit the striking *village perché* of **Gordes**; inhale the lavender at the 12th-century **Abbaye de Sénanque**; and stroll through **Roussillon's** dramatic ochre quarries.



## 2 Days in Nice

*Nice has a fascinating historic centre, a wealth of museums and a stunning waterfront.*

- **Arriving** Nice Airport is 7 km (4.5 miles) from the city. Buses link it with the centre.
- **Moving on** The journey from Nice to Avignon on a TGV train is just under 3 hours.

See pp84–9 for information on sights in Nice.

### Day 1

**Morning** Start with a stroll through Nice's bustling Italianate Old Town: don't miss the **Cathédrale Ste-Réparate** with its glazed tile dome and the art-filled **Chapelle du la Miséricorde**. Take in the heady colours and fragrances of the market in the **cours Saleya**, then make your way up to the summit of the **Colline du Château** gardens for the best view over the Baie des Anges.

**Afternoon** Visit the elegant district of Cimiez to discover the life and work of one-time Nice resident Henri Matisse at the **Musée Matisse**. Stop by the serene **Monastery of Notre-Dame**, where the artist is buried, then see the **Musée Chagall**, filled with colourful paintings of biblical themes.

### Day 2

**Morning** Explore two different aspects of Nice: start in the 17th century (when the city was part of Italy) at the ornate Baroque **Palais Lascaris**, with its prize collection of antique musical instruments. Then leap ahead four centuries at the striking **Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain**, set amid an outdoor sculpture garden.

**Afternoon** Stroll along the famous **promenade des Anglais** and consider lunch and a swim at one of the seaside bathing establishments. Or pay a visit to Nice's history museum, the **Villa Masséna** next door



Blue lounge chairs lined up along the promenade in Nice

to the famed **Hotel Négresco**. In the evening, enjoy a drink or dinner in the lively **cours Saleya**.

#### To extend your trip...

Take a scenic day trip on the **Train des Pignes** (p185) and visit **Entrevaux** (p191).

## 2 Days in Avignon

*A lively city on the Rhône river, Avignon is home to the Palais des Papes and excellent museums.*

- **Arriving** The Avignon and Nîmes airports are only operational in summer. For the rest of the year, Marseille has the nearest international airport (88 km/54 miles); direct TGV trains run from the airport to Avignon in only 54 minutes.

See pp170–72 for information on sights in Avignon.



Dining affresco on rue des Teinturiers alongside the river Sorgue, Avignon

### Day 1

**Morning** Plunge straight into Avignon's glory days on a tour of the **Palais des Papes**, the biggest medieval palace in the world. Afterwards, visit the nearby **Cathédrale Notre-Dame-des-Doms**, with the tombs of two popes and the hilltop gardens of the **Rocher des Doms**.

**Afternoon** Discover the rich Gothic art patronized by the papal court at the **Musée du Petit Palais**, then walk along the famous **Pont St-Bénézet** bridge. Afterwards stroll the atmospheric medieval lanes of rue du Roi-René and rue des Teinturiers.

### Day 2

**Morning** Visit the city's two outstanding art museums, the **Musée Calvet** and **Musée Angladon**, then relax at a café in bustling **place de l'Horloge**.

**Afternoon** Take the bus over the Rhône to **Villeneuve-lès-Avignon** (p134). Climb one of its towers (**Fort St-André** or the **Tour de Philippe le Bel**) for wonderful views over Avignon. See the masterpiece of the Avignon School of painting, Enguerrand Quarton's *Coronation of the Virgin*, in the **Musée Pierre de Luxembourg**, then visit the monastery it was painted for: the vast **Chartreuse du Val-de-Bénédiction**.

#### To extend your trip...

Make a day trip to **Nîmes** (pp136–7) and the majestic **Pont du Gard** (p135).





The Jardin Botanique Exotique at 19th-century Villa Val Rahmeh, Menton

### A Week on the Côte d'Azur

- **Duration** 7 days – with suggestions for extending it to a 10-day tour.
- **Airport** Arrive and depart from Nice Côte d'Azur airport.
- **Transport** Lignes d'Azur buses go everywhere; trains serve coastal towns. Hire a car in Cannes to head inland.

#### Day 1: Nice

Pick a day from the city itinerary on p12.

#### Day 2: St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, Villefranche-sur-Mer, Eze

Take the tour of the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild and its spectacular gardens (p90) at **St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat** (p89), then follow the beautiful path that starts just east of the port of St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat. Relax on the free beach at **Villefranche-sur-Mer** (p92); wander through the town's skein of medieval lanes and sit in one of its buzzing waterfront cafés. Then head up to **Eze** (p92), a stunning *village perché* to watch the sun set over the Riviera.

#### Day 3: Monaco, La Turbie and Menton

Discover the astonishing sea creatures in the Musée Océanographique in **Monaco** (pp94–8), and visit its Palais Princier, for a peek into the lives

of the Grimaldis, Europe's oldest ruling family. Head up the slopes above Monaco to **La Turbie** (p93), famous for its ancient Trophée d'Auguste, erected in honour of Augustus. Descend to **Menton** (pp102–3) for a walk through its tropical gardens and a look at the Musée Jean Cocteau. In the evening, head back to Monaco and stop for a drink in **Monte-Carlo's** (pp96–7) glamorous Café de Paris and perhaps try your luck in Europe's most famous casino.

#### Day 4: St-Paul de Vence and Cagnes-sur-Mer

Contemporary art reigns at charming **St-Paul de Vence** (p79), in the exquisite **Fondation Maeght** (pp80–81), in the town's many galleries and the Colombe d'Or *auberge*. Next, aim for **Cagnes-sur-Mer** (p82), for the eclectic Château Musée Grimaldi and the moving Musée Renoir, the Impressionist's last home.

#### Day 5: Antibes and Juan-les-Pins

Wander through the streets of old **Antibes** (p76), ogle the billionaires' yachts in the marina and take in the excellent Musée Picasso housed in a waterfront castle. Stroll past the glamorous villas of Cap d'Antibes, and spend a lazy afternoon on the beach in **Juan-les-Pins** (p76).

#### Day 6: Cannes and the Iles de Lérins

Discover the two sides of **Cannes** (pp72–3): the swanky

Croisette, with its world-famous hotels and the Palais des Festivals, and the old town, with its bustling Marché Forville. The market is a great place to pick up a picnic for a trip to one of the **Iles de Lérins** (pp74–8); choose between peaceful, monastic St-Honorat or larger Ste-Marguerite, with its links to the Man in the Iron Mask.

#### To extend your trip...

Visit the Roman ruins of **Fréjus** (p129) 36 km (22 miles) west of Cannes and the chic resort of **St-Tropez** (pp122–6); the following day head to **Hyères** (p119) 51 km (32 miles) from Cannes to sail to the car-free island of **Porquerolles** (p118).



Roman statuary at the Musée d'Art Classique de Mougins

#### Day 7: Mougins, Grasse, Gorges du Loup, Gourdon, Vence

Start in **Mougins** (p70), famed for its great restaurants. Admire the works of former resident Picasso in the Musée de la Photographie and visit the captivating Musée d'Art Classique. Discover how perfume is made in **Grasse** (p70) at the Musée International de la Parfumerie, then drive the dramatic **Gorges du Loup** (p69), stopping off at the breathtaking village of **Gourdon** (p69) and the delightful town of **Vence** (p78) before returning to Nice.

#### To extend your trip...

Go north from Grasse 64 km (40 miles) to **Castellane** (p190) to explore the even more spectacular **Gorges du Verdon** (pp188–9).

## A Week Along the Rhône

- **Duration** 7 days – with additional suggestions to extend it to 10 days.
- **Airports** Arrive at and depart from Marseille Provence Airport.
- **Transport** This tour can be made using a combination of trains and buses, although hiring a car would allow more flexibility.

### Day 1: Marseille

A day is just enough to scratch the surface of **Marseille** (pp154–6). Start in the picturesque Vieux Port, with its morning fish market and the Abbaye de St-Victor. Enjoy the spectacular views from Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde, and visit the Palais Longchamp, with its fine arts collection. Stroll the Canebière before tucking into *bouillabaisse* for dinner.



Diners enjoying *bouillabaisse* at the Miramar Restaurant, Marseille's Vieux Port

#### To extend your trip...

Take a boat trip and swim in Marseille's dramatic **Les Calanques** (p157). Visit the wine town of **Cassis** (p157).

### Day 2: Orange and Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Take the train to **Orange** (pp165–7) to visit its incomparable Roman Théâtre Antique, scene of summer theatre and dance festivals, and the well-preserved Arc de Triomphe. In the afternoon, head south to **Châteauneuf-du-Pape** (p168) for a tasting of the famous wines before dinner.

### Day 3: Avignon

Pick a day from the city itinerary on p12.

#### To extend your trip...

Hire a car and take a day trip to **Fontaine-de-Vaucluse** (p169) 33 km (20 miles) east of Avignon; the hill town of **Gordes** (p173), **Abbaye de Sénanque** (p168) and **Roussillon** (p173) are nearby.

### Day 4: Pont du Gard, Nîmes, Beaucaire and Tarascon

Cross the Rhône to visit antiquity's most beautiful aqueduct – the majestic **Pont du Gard** (p135), before moving on to the city it served, **Nîmes** (pp136–7). Don't miss the amphitheatre, Les Arènes, the Maison Carrée – a well-preserved Roman temple – and the Castellum, where the aqueduct's water was distributed. Head back to the Rhône, where the medieval castles of **Beaucaire** (p143) (famous for its bullfights) and **Tarascon** (p144) (known for its Tarasque and Souleïado fabrics) face each other across the river.

### Day 5: St-Rémy-de-Provence and Les Baux-de-Provence

**St-Rémy-de-Provence** (p144) is one of Provence's most attractive towns, and was frequently painted by Van Gogh. Take a walk out to the Clinique St-Paul to see some views painted by Van Gogh, and the nearby ruins of Greco-Roman Glanum. Next, head into

the mini-mountain chain of **Les Alpilles** (p145) and the citadel of **Les Baux-de-Provence** (p146), once the medieval setting of the troubadour Court of Love; the views are wonderful.

### Day 6: St-Gilles-du-Gard and Aigues Mortes

Along with its iconic white horses, black bulls and pink flamingoes, the **Camargue** (pp140–43) has several fascinating historic sites. Begin at **St-Gilles-du-Gard** (p143) and the magnificent Romanesque façade of the Abbaye de St-Gilles, then head south to explore the unique 13th-century walled crusader town of **Aigues-Mortes** (pp138–9).

### Day 7: Arles

France's "Little Rome", **Arles** (pp148–9) boasts both an ancient theatre and amphitheatre, the Thermes de Constantin and the intriguing Musée de l'Arles Antique. Also visit the cloisters of the church of St-Trophime, Les Alychamps cemetery and the Espace Van Gogh, with exhibits relating to the painter's sojourn in Arles.

#### To extend your trip...

Uncover the history of the Camargue in the **Musée de la Camargue** (p143); spot birds at the **Parc Ornithologique du Pont-de-Gau** (p142) and visit the Roman pilgrimage church at lively **Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer** (p142).



Roman sarcophagus or tombs showing boar hunters, Musée de l'Arles Antique, Arles

## A Week in Classic Provence

- **Duration** 7 days – or 10 with the additional trips.
- **Airports** Arrive and depart from Marseille Provence Airport.
- **Transport** Hiring a car is the best option. Although much of this itinerary is technically possible by bus, infrequent connections will make getting around difficult.

### Day 1: Aix-en-Provence

Today a cosmopolitan university city and venue of a famous music festival, **Aix** (pp152–3) was once the capital of Provence. Stroll through the historic centre, with its elegant 17th- and 18th-century hôtels and fountains. Don't miss the Cathédrale St-Sauveur, with its triptych of *The Burning Bush*, the adjacent Musée du Palais de l'Archevêché, with a unique collection of secular Beauvais tapestries, and the luxurious 17th-century villa, the Pavillon de Vendôme.

### Day 2: More Aix and the Montagne Ste-Victoire

Aix is also synonymous with Paul Cézanne: see his paintings in the Musée Granet, and visit his evocative studio, which has been left unchanged. Take a scenic drive around Cézanne's beloved Montagne Ste-Victoire, which he painted many times, and have a drink at his favourite Café des Deux Garçons.

### Day 3: Abbaye de Silvacane, Petit Luberon, Cavailon

Some of Provence's most beautiful landscapes and villages are in the Petit Luberon, north of Aix. Stop at the 12th-century Cistercian **Abbaye de Silvacane** (p151), then take the driving tour (pp174–5), starting in **Lourmarin** and continuing through the delightful villages of **Bonnieux**, **Lacoste**, **Ménerbes** and **Oppède-le-Vieux**. End up in **Cavaillon** (p174), famous for melons; stay overnight to visit its exceptional morning market.



Brantes and Mont Ventoux, north Luberon Mountains

### Day 4: L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, Fontaine-de-Vaucluse and Carpentras

Wander through pretty **L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue** (p169), with its canals and weekend antiques market. Just upriver, visit the source of the Sorgue at the **Fontaine-de-Vaucluse** (p169), along with its paper mill and Musée d'Histoire 1939–45. Continue on to **Carpentras** (p168), which has a 14th-century synagogue and a cathedral.

### Day 5: The Dentelles de Montmirail and Vaison-la-Romaine

The Dentelles de Montmirail mountains are among Provence's most beautiful landscapes. Take the scenic drive (p163), starting in **Beaumes-de-Venise**, famous for its dessert wine, and carrying on to **Vacqueyras** and **Gigondas**, home to a famous



A weekend antiques fair in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, the "Venice of Provence"

red wine. In chic **Vaison-la-Romaine** (p162), visit the boutiques of the Haute Ville.

#### To extend your trip...

Spend a day exploring **Mont Ventoux** (p164), 32 km (20 miles) from Vaison – by car, bicycle or on foot.

### Day 6: Gordes, Abbaye de Sénanque and Roussillon

Head back south through the **Dentelles** (p163), pausing in the old Huguenot village of **Malacène**, and **Le Barroux**, for the views from its château. Next comes the striking **Gordes** (p173), a *village perché*. Visit the nearby 12th-century **Abbaye de Sénanque** (pp168–9) and finish in **Roussillon** (p173), taking a stroll through its ochre quarries.

### Day 7: Apt, La Tour d'Aigues and Pertuis

Charming **Apt** (p176) has a fascinating cathedral; learn about Apt's famous crystallized fruits at the Musée de l'Aventure Industrielle. Go through the Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon; stop at **La Tour d'Aigues** (p177) for the Renaissance château and ceramics museum, then at **Pertuis** (p177) to see its Gothic Eglise St-Nicolas before heading back to Marseille.

#### To extend your trip...

Head 42 km (26 miles) east from Apt to **Forcalquier** (p186). Spend two days in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence.



## Putting Provence on the Map

Provence is situated in the sun-blessed southeast corner of France, edged to the south by the Mediterranean. Its most illustrious stretch of coastline, roughly from Menton to Bandol, is also known as the Côte d'Azur, although the nearer to Italy it gets the more likely it is to be referred to as the Riviera. To the east are Italy and the Alps, to the west, the Rhône river. The region covers an area of over 30,000 sq km (18,650 sq miles) with a population of about 4.9 million.











# A PORTRAIT OF PROVENCE

In a comparatively short time, Provence has changed its face. A few generations ago it was, to the French, a place of indolent southern bumpkins. To foreigners, it was an idyllic spot, but one reserved, it seemed to many, for the rich or artistic. Now Provence, more than any other region, is where the French would choose to live and work, and its holiday routes buzz with both local and international traffic all year round.

The high-tech industry based here can attract top-flight staff, not just from France but from all over the world.

Still, Provence remains an essentially rural region. At its edges, it has a lively Latin beat: almost Spanish among the *gardians* of the Camargue in the west, Italian in Nice to the east. The rest of the region is mostly traditional and conservative. Only in games of *pétanque* or discussions about European bureaucracy does the talk become animated. But, once engaged in conversation, Provençals are the most generous and warmest of hosts. There is an all-pervading Frenchness, of course, which means that people are polite and punctilious.

Shopkeepers always greet you as you enter, but open and close on the dot. Lunch, in Provence, is sacrosanct.

Traditions are important to the people of Provence. Local crafts are not quaint revivals, but respected, time-honoured occupations. Festivals, such as La Bravade in St-Tropez, have been taking place for the last 450 years. Artists who came here for the light and the scenery found other inspirations, too. Picasso himself learned the potter's art at the wheel of a Provençal craftsman. Homes will have hand-turned local chestnut or oak furniture, *terre rouge* clay pots, Moustiers *faïence*, Biot glassware and furnishings using the traditional *indiennes* patterns of Arles and Nîmes.



Locals enjoying a leisurely game of *pétanque* at Châteauneuf-du-Pape





A traditional bakery in Ville-sur-Auzon, in Vacluse

The home is run as it has been for generations. Provençal kitchens, at the heart of family life, are famous. Combining simplicity with bounty, they mix the aroma of herbs with the generosity of wine. In the envious and admiring eyes of visitors, they are the epitome of taste.

### Tradition and Customs

Good taste is inbred. In rural communities, the familiarity of the weather, the seasons and the harvests are sources of constant discussion. Gardens, full of fruit trees, vegetables and flowers, are a matter of pride. Even city-dwellers know how the best produce should be grown, and may well have access to a country relation's plot. Market stalls are beautifully laid out and carefully scrutinized and, no matter how abundant the fruit, the vegetables or the wine, they are all grist for debate.

There are still heated discussions fuelled by the latest developments imposed by the European Union, whose legislation, farmers say, has in the past had a detrimental effect on productive Provençal land, when for example ancient vineyards were grubbed up and landowners' wealth sent into rapid decline.

The harvest cycle is close to the gods, whose beneficence can affect the crops as surely as any EU bureaucrat. As Catholic as the rest of France, the people of Provence are also touched with a mystic sense that has been influenced by Mithraism and

Islam, as well as by pagan gods. Religious beliefs are so well mixed that it is often difficult to separate them. Carnival and Corpus Christi extend Easter, which has more importance here than in many other parts of Europe. Christmas, too, is an elaborate affair. The rituals begin as early as 4 December, St Barb's day, with the planting of grains of wheat, a pagan symbol of renewal and rebirth.

Superstitions linger in the countryside. An egg, salt, bread and matches, humble representations of elemental concepts, may be given to a newborn baby, while carline thistles may be seen nailed to front doors for good luck.



A colourful fruit and vegetable market

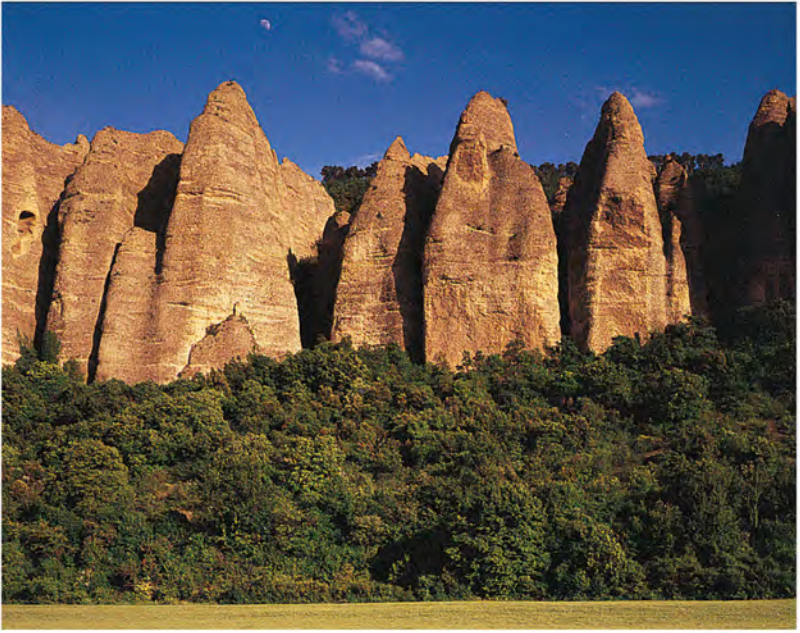
### Landscape and People

Provence has a typically Mediterranean landscape: the mountains drop down to the sea; communities perch on crags or cling to remote hillsides. It is little wonder that traditions live on here. For centuries, too, it was a

place for outlaws from France, who could assume new identities here and carry on with their lives. Perhaps as a result, strangers



Harvesting linden blossoms to make *tilleul* infusion



The dramatic, isolated crags of Les Pénitents des Mées, in Alpes-de-Haute-Provence

were not to be trusted, and remained outsiders forever. A seemingly trivial slight might spark a feud which could last for generations. There are still villages today where one family does not speak to another, even though each has long forgotten why. This attitude, and its tragic implications, was finely portrayed by Yves Montand, with Gérard Depardieu as the shunned outsider, in Claud Berri's films of Marcel Pagnol's *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*. The more cosmopolitan coast is the territory of *film noir*. Here, the tradition of silence and family ties has not always been beneficial. Jean-Paul Belmondo and Alain Delon romanticized it in *Borsalino*; Gene Hackman revealed its dark underside in *The French Connection*.

In 1982, the Antibes-based English novelist Graham Greene published an exposé of corruption in Nice. In 1994, Yann Piat, anti-drugs campaigner and member of parliament, was assassinated in Hyères.

The fact that Piat was a woman made no difference to her enemies, ironic in a region where women have not been treated as equals. Alphonse Daudet noted the Provençal male's "incurable contempt" for women, however, the Queen of Arles is elected for her virtues as an upholder of the traditional Provençal values. It was also this region that nurtured the 20th century's icon of French womanhood, Brigitte Bardot. Furthermore, the town of Aix-en-Provence has had a female mayor since 2001.

There are great rewards for the visitor who can appreciate the many facets of Provence – its traditions as well as its beauty and glamour. But, the more often you return, the more you will realize, as have some of the world's greatest artists and writers, that part of the endless allure of Provence lies within the very secrets that it refuses to surrender.



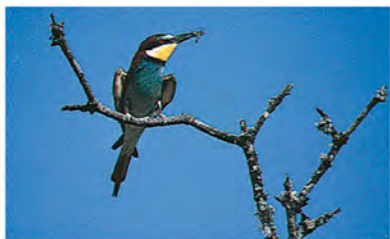
Peillon, a perched village in Provence

## The Natural History of Provence

A fascinating array of insects, birds, animals and flowers flourish in the varied habitats available in Provence, from the Mediterranean to coastal wetlands, rocky gorges and the remote peaks of the Alpes Maritimes. The area has the mildest climate in France: hot, mainly dry summers, and warm, mild winters near the coast. In early spring the myriad flowers are at their best, while numbers of unusual birds are at their highest in late spring. Many of the wilder areas have been made into reserves, often with routes marked out for exploration.



**The Luberon** (see pp174–6) is a huge limestone range, rich in orchids, such as this military orchid. It is also a hunting ground for birds of prey.

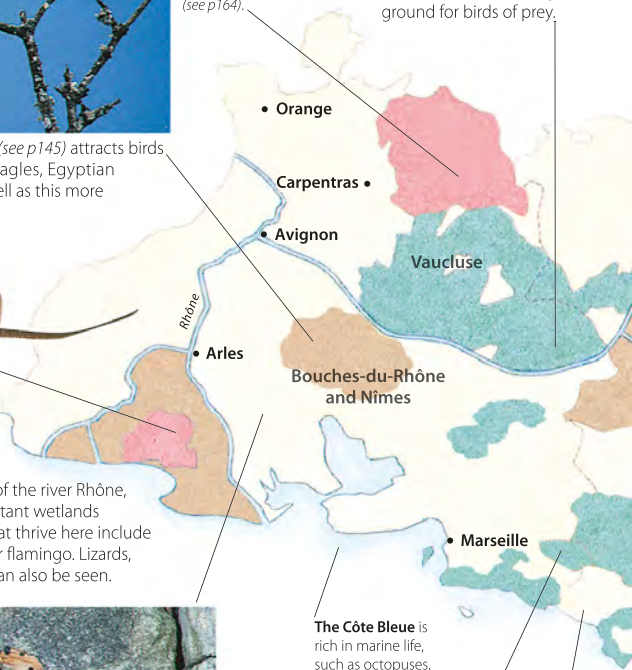


**Les Alpilles'** limestone ridge (see p145) attracts birds of prey, including Bonelli's eagles, Egyptian vultures and eagle owls, as well as this more mild-mannered bee-eater.

**Mont Ventoux's** lower slopes are flower-covered in the spring (see p164).



**The Camargue**, at the delta of the river Rhône, is one of Europe's most important wetlands (see pp140–41). Water birds that thrive here include purple herons and the greater flamingo. Lizards, such as this ocellated lizard, can also be seen.



**The Côte Bleue** is rich in marine life, such as octopuses, in the deeper waters.

**The Montagne Ste-Victoire** is a limestone range that attracts walkers and climbers. It was one of Cézanne's favourite subjects.



**The Plaine de la Crau** is 50,000 ha (193 sq miles) of stony plains and steppe-like grasslands southeast of Arles, home to birds like this hoopoe, and the rare pin-tailed sandgrouse.

**Les Calanques** (see p157) are narrow inlets bounded by cliffs. The rocky slopes are home to woodland birds such as owls.





The **Parc National du Mercantour** is one of the finest Alpine reserves (see p101), containing wildlife such as these marmots, and chamois, ibex and mouflon (wild sheep). It is also good walking country.

The **Haute Provence Geological Reserve** near Digne (see p184) has a spectacular collection of giant ammonites embedded in rock.

The **Cime de la Bonette** (see p183) is a lofty pass where chamois roam.



The **Gorges du Verdon** area, between the Alps and the Mediterranean, is a beautiful nature reserve with a dramatic canyon at its centre (see pp188–9). A footpath along the canyon floor allows detailed examination of the rock formations, rare plants and birds.

The **Gorges de la Vésubie** (see p99) has viewpoints from which to spot migrating birds such as swallows.

The **Préalpes de Grasse**, known for their dramatic gorges, lie to the east of the Alpes Maritimes.



The **Riviera and the Alpes Maritimes**



The **Massif de l'Estérel's** (see p128) high rocky coves and scrubland are home to various species of snakes.

In the **Massif des Maures** (see pp120–21), dense woods contain bee-eaters, woodchat shrikes and hoopoes. They also provide sanctuary for the rare Hermann's tortoise.

The **Massif de la Ste-Baume** has many broadleaved trees that are vividly coloured in autumn.

The **Iles d'Hyères** (see pp118–19), scattered a ferry ride away from the most southerly point of Provence, are best known for their abundant sea life, including fish such as wrasse. Geckos and rare birds like the great spotted cuckoo can be seen.



#### Key

- National park
- Regional natural park
- Protected site
- Reserve



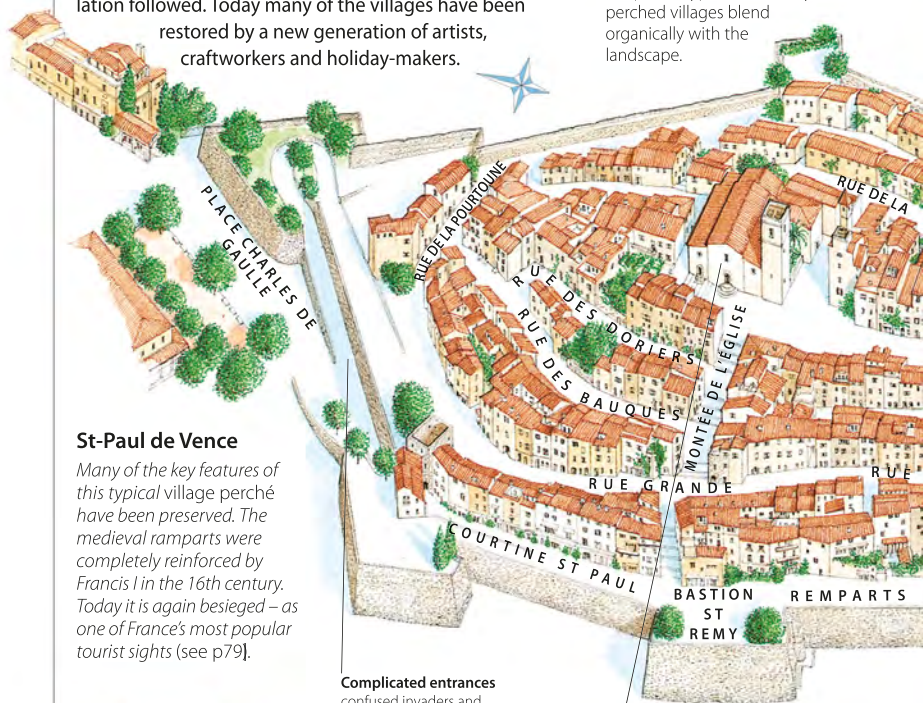
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## Perched Villages

Some of the most attractive architectural features of Provence are the *villages perchés*, or perched villages. They rise like jagged summits on the hilltops where they were built for safety in the political turmoil of the Middle Ages. From their lofty heights they kept vigil over the hinterland as well as the coast. They were built around castle keeps and wrapped in thick ramparts, a huddle of cobbled streets, steps, alleys and archways. Few were able to sustain their peasant communities beyond the 19th-century agrarian reforms, and a century of poverty and depopulation followed. Today many of the villages have been restored by a new generation of artists, craftworkers and holiday-makers.



The mountainous site of Peillon (see p99) is typical of the way perched villages blend organically with the landscape.



### St-Paul de Vence

Many of the key features of this typical village perché have been preserved. The medieval ramparts were completely reinforced by Francis I in the 16th century. Today it is again besieged – as one of France's most popular tourist sights (see p79).

**Complicated entrances** confused invaders and provided extra security against attack.

**The church** was always the focal point of the village.



**Side entrances** were never obtrusive or elaborate, but were usually small and, as in Eze (see p92), opened onto narrow, winding lanes. Sometimes there were more gates or abrupt turns within the walls to confuse attacking soldiers, making the town easier to defend.



**Castles and keeps** (*donjons*), and sometimes fortified churches, were always sited with the best viewpoint in the village, and provided sanctuary in times of crisis. Many, like the castle at Eze (see p92), were often attacked and are now in ruins.



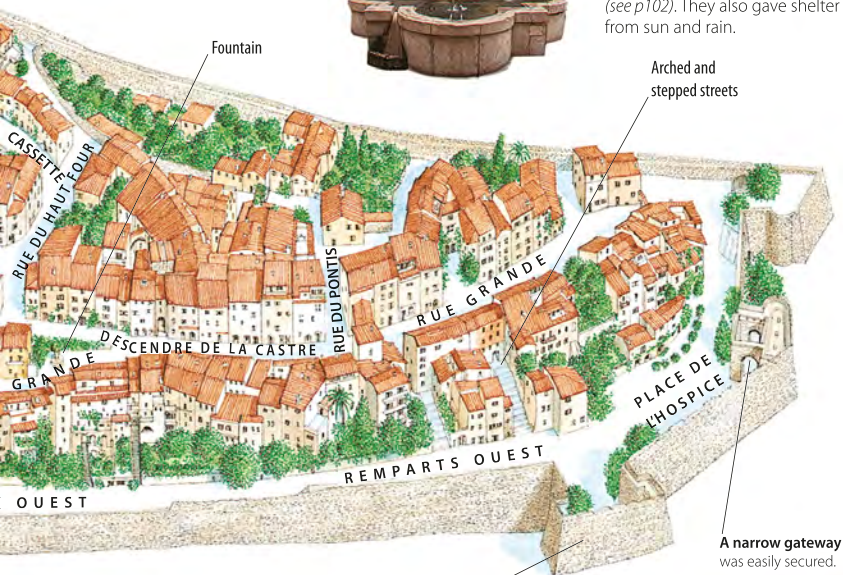


**The church** sustained the religious life of the community. As in Les Baux (see p146), it was usually built near the keep of the castle, part of a central core of communal buildings, and was often fortified. The bell would be rung to warn of impending attack.

**Fountains** were essential to the village, often being the sole source of water. Many, like this one in Vence (see p78), were elaborately embellished.



**The arcades** lent support to the buildings in the narrow, winding streets, as here in Roquebrune (see p102). They also gave shelter from sun and rain.



**The ramparts** surrounded the entire village with thick stone walls, often with houses built into them. The defences, like those of St-Paul de Vence (see p79), were strengthened in the 16th century under Francis I and by Vauban, Louis XIV's military architect. Today they offer superb views.

**Ramparts and bastions** provided solid defences.

**Main gates** were always narrow so they could be closed off and defended in times of attack. Some gates had the additional protection of portcullises. Peille (see p99) in the Alpes Maritimes is a typical Medieval village, full of narrow, cobbled streets, which also helped defend the village.





## Rural Architecture in Provence

Traditional architectural features are reminders of how influential the weather is on living conditions in rural Provence. Great efforts are made to ease the biting gusts of the Mistral and the relentless heat of the summer sun. Thick stone walls, small windows and reinforced doors are all recognizable characteristics. Traditional farmhouses were built entirely from wood, clay, stone and soil, all locally found materials. Rows of hardy cypress trees were planted to act as a windbreak on the north side; plane and lotus trees provided shade to the south.



**Bories** (see p173) are drystone huts built using techniques dating back to 2,000 BC.

### The Provençal Mas

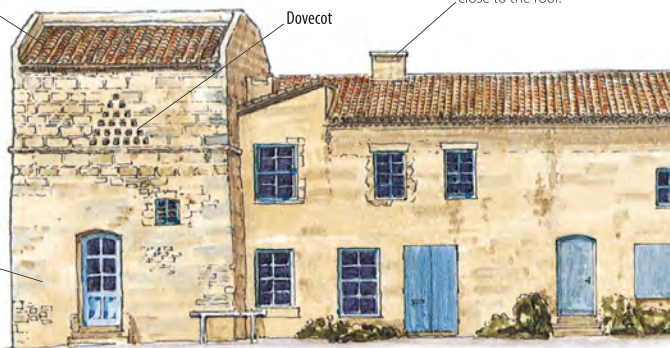
Found across rural Provence, the mas is a low, squat stone farmhouse. Protection and strength are vital to its construction – walls are made of compact stone blocks and the wooden doors and shutters are thick and reinforced. Outbuildings often included a cellar, stables, a bread oven and dovecote.



**Canal roof tiling**, or *tuiles romaines*, is typical of the south.



**Roughly cut** stone bricks are used to make the walls.



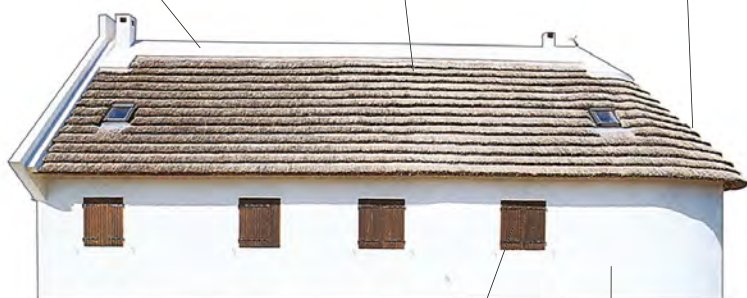
**Chimneys** are stone-built, low and squat, and lie close to the roof.

**Dovecot**

**The most exposed** part of the roof is unthatched.

**The roof** is gently sloping and thatched with marsh reeds.

**The north wall** is rounded for protection against the Mistral.



**The guardian's cabin** was the original dwelling place of the bull herdsman or *gardian* of the Camargue. It is a small, narrow structure, consisting of a dining room and bedroom, divided by a reed screen and furnished simply.

**The windows** are small and reinforced.

**Walls** are made of compressed clay and straw, known as cob.



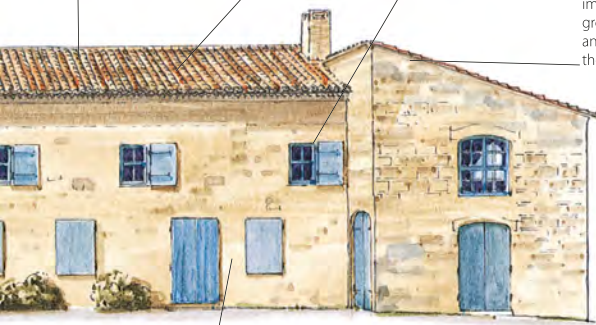
**The tiled roofs** are gently sloping and are influenced by Roman design, with a decorative frieze (*génoise*) under the eaves. The tiles are made of thick, red terracotta and curved in shape – a double or triple layer of tiles are set in mortar and protrude beyond the wall.



**Windows are built** on three sides of the *mas* but none on the north to avoid the Mistral's full blast. They are kept small to prevent the winter winds coming in, but large enough to let light in.

**Interlocking clay tiles** form canals, allowing rainwater to run down and drain off the roof.

**The Mistral winds** blow so fiercely that the *mas* was often built facing the southeast to minimize the wind's impact. Roofs are built low to the ground, covering the living quarters and annexes. The gentle slope prevents the tiles blowing and sliding off.



**The walls** are rendered smooth with plaster.

**Stone ice houses** were built near the *mas* and used for storage during the winter months. Blocks of ice were cut and put in the huts, insulated with hay.



### Ironwork Bell Towers

Wrought-iron bell towers have been a speciality in Provence since the 16th century. Their light, open framework allows strong winds to blow through and the sound of the bells to carry for miles. The design and complexity depends on the size and purpose of the building. These examples illustrate the skills of local craftsmen across the region.



Highly ornate bell tower in Aix



The bell tower of St-Jérôme in Digne-les-Bains



The Hôtel de Ville bell tower in Orange



Notre-Dame's bell tower in Sisteron

## Architectural Styles in Provence

From the imperial grandeur of Roman constructions to the modern domestic designs of Le Corbusier, Provence has a magnificent array of architectural styles. The Middle Ages saw a flourishing of great Romanesque abbeys and churches and from the 16th to the 18th centuries, as prosperity increased, châteaux and town houses were built. With the expansion of towns in the 19th century came an increase in apartment blocks and public buildings to accommodate the fast-growing population. Today, successful restoration has taken place, but often in haste. The demands of tourism have taken their toll, particularly on the coast, resulting in some ugly developments.



An 18th-century fountain in Pernes-les-Fontaines

### Roman Architecture (20 BC–AD 400)

The quality of Roman architecture is illustrated by the many extant amphitheatres, triumphal arches and thermal baths found across the region, all built with large blocks of local limestone.

Ornate high-relief



**The triumphal arch of Glanum** (see pp 144–5) is the original entrance to the oldest Roman city in Provence. Carvings on the outer arch show Caesar's victory over the Gauls and Greeks.

Doric columns on second storey

Both storeys have 60 arcades



Nîmes Arènes, built in the 1st century AD (see p 136)



Nîmes' well-preserved Maison Carrée (see p 136)

### Roman Architecture (11th–12th Centuries)

The high point of Provençal architecture came after the Dark Ages. It was a combination of Classical order and perfection, inspired by Roman design and new styles from northern and southern Europe. This style is characterized especially in religious buildings by elegant symmetry and simplicity.

Multiple arches

Elaborate religious carvings



**This church entrance in Seyne** (see p 182) is an example of 13th-century Romanesque architecture. The slight point of the multiple arches hints at a move away from strict Romanesque purity.

Clustered pillar

Decorated capital with interlaced leaves



Capital from the Abbaye du Thoronet (see p 172)



The Abbaye de Sénanque, founded in 1148 (see pp 168–9)



## Late Middle Ages (13th–16th Centuries)

Feuding and religious wars led to people withdrawing to towns, protected by fortified walls and gates. Communication between houses was often by underground passages. Streets were roughly paved and water and sewage were carried away by a central gutter.



Tour de la Campana in the Palais des Papes (see pp48–9)



Street in St-Martin-Vésubie (see p99) showing central gutter

Crenellation or battlements

Portcullis used against invaders



## Aigues-Mortes (see pp138–9)

was built by Louis IX in the 13th century, according to a strict grid pattern. This strategically placed fort overlooks both sea and land.

## Classical Architecture (17th–18th Centuries)

The severity and order of the Classical style was relieved by elaborate carvings on doorways and windows. Gardens became more formal and symmetrical.



The 17th-century Barbetante château, fronted by formal gardens (see p134)

Tablet with symbol of authority

Carved Regency doorway



Refined stone

Neo-Classical pillar



The Musée du Palais de l'Archevêché in Aix (see p152) has elaborately carved wooden entrance doors.

Pavillon de Vendôme detail, Aix-en-Provence (see p153)

## Modern Architecture (1890–Present Day)

The magnificent hotels and villas of the *belle époque* have given way to more utilitarian housing and public buildings. But the numerous modern art galleries represent the highest standards of 20th-century architecture.



Le Corbusier's Cité Radieuse (see p156)

Rounded pavilion

Cupola above a round corner tower



The palatial Négresco hotel in Nice (see p88)



The Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain in Nice (see p89) is made up of square towers, linked by glass passageways.

## Artists of Provence

Provence inspired many of the most original 19th- and 20th-century painters. They were attracted by the luminescent quality of the light here, and the consequent brilliance of the colours. Cézanne, who was a native, and Van Gogh, a convert, were both fired by the vibrant shades of the landscape. The Impressionists Monet and Renoir came early, and followers included Bonnard, Signac and Dufy. The two giants of 20th-century painting, Matisse and Picasso, both settled here. The artistic tradition is kept alive by small galleries in almost every town, as well as major museums throughout the region.



**Jean Cocteau** (1889–1963) spent many years on the coast and created his museum in Menton (see p103). *Noce imaginaire* (1957) is one of his murals from the Salle des Mariages.

**Victor Vasarely** (1906–97) restored the château in Gordes. His Kinetic and Op Art can be seen in Aix-en-Provence (see p153).



**Vincent Van Gogh** (1853–90) painted Van Gogh's Chair (1888) in Arles (see pp148–50). His two years here and in St-Rémy (see pp144–5) were his most prolific.

### Regions of Provence



**Paul Cézanne** (1839–1906), in his desire to scour the 'depth of reality', often painted his native Aix (see pp152–3).

**Paul Signac** (1863–1935) came to St-Tropez in 1892, painting it in his palette of rainbow dots (see pp122–6).



**Félix Ziem** (1821–1911), born in Burgundy, was a great traveller. He adored Venice, and found the same romantic inspiration by the canals of Martigues (see p151), where he painted *La Camargue, Coucher de Soleil*.



**Pablo Picasso** (1881–1973) created this goat-like jug, Cabri (1947), while in Vallauris, where he learned the potter's craft. It is now in the Musée Picasso, Antibes (see p77).



**Marc Chagall** (1887–1985), Russian painter of light-hearted and biblically inspired works, lived in the Vence area from 1949 (see p78).

**Pierre Auguste Renoir** (1841–1919) sought relief from his rheumatism at Cagnes in 1905 and found new inspiration (see p82).

**Raoul Dufy** (1877–1953) appreciated the pleasures of the coast. A twilight stroll beneath the palm trees is evoked in Nice, *Le Casino de la Jetée* (1928).



**Hans Van Meegeren** (1889–1947), the Dutch master-forger of Vermeer, was living in Roquebrune when he was found out. (see p102)

**Fernand Léger** (1881–1955) is celebrated for his vivid Cubist and industrial works in oils and ceramics, on show in Biot (see p78).

**Henri Matisse** (1869–1954) captured the Riviera's light and colour even in homely settings such as *Intérieur au Phonographe* (1924) (see pp86–7).



**Nicolas de Staël** (1914–55) was born in Russia. When successful, he bought a house in the Luberon for his wife, but chose to live with his mistress in Antibes (see p76). His *Paysage Méditerranéen* was painted in 1953.



## Artists in Provençal History

Provence was home to great artists long before the advent of modern art. In the Middle Ages, the Schools of Avignon and Nice flourished. The latter was dominated by the Bréa family, whose works can be seen in churches throughout the region. Sculptor Pierre Puget (1620–94) is called the "Michelangelo of Provence". His birthplace, Marseille, has several of his works (see pp154–6). But Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) is most Provençal of them all – his Romantic paintings are filled with Grasse flowers (see p70).

**Crucifixion** (1512) by Louis Bréa, monastery of Notre-Dame, Cimiez (see p88)





## Writers in Provence

The Nobel Laureate Frédéric Mistral (1830–1914) was the champion of the Provençal language, but better known are the local writers who have captured the Provençal character: Alphonse Daudet, Jean Giono, Emile Zola and Marcel Pagnol. French writers such as Dumas and Hugo used Provençal backdrops for their fiction; foreign writers also found inspiration in the region.

Alphonse Daudet



An early edition of *The Count of Monte Cristo*

**1844** Alexander Dumas publishes *The Count of Monte Cristo*, set in the Château d'If, Marseille (see p156).

**1892** The last part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by German Friedrich Nietzsche is published. He devised it after traversing the path in Eze (see p92) which was later named after him.

**1869** Alphonse Daudet publishes *Collected Letters from my Windmill*, set in a windmill at Fontvieille (see p147).

**1870** Death in Cannes of Prosper Mérimée, author of *Carmen*, Bizet's opera.

**1920** Consumptive New Zealand short story writer Katherine Mansfield recuperates in Menton (see pp102–3) and writes *Miss Bulland Passion* among other pieces.

**1895** Jean Giono is born in Manosque (see p186). Work like *The Man who Planted Trees* evokes the region.

Frédéric Mistral



**1904** Poet Frédéric Mistral declared joint winner of the Nobel Prize.

1840 1855 1870 1885 1900 1915

1840 1855 1870 1885 1900 1915

**1862** *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo is published. The early chapters are set in Digne-les-Bains (see p184).

**1868** Edmond Rostand, author of *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897) is born in Marseille (see pp154–6).

**1887** Journalist Stéphen Liégeard introduces the term, *Côte d'Azur*.

**1907** Provençal poet, René Char, is born in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue.

**1919** Edith Wharton, American author of *The Age of Innocence*, visits Hyères (see p119). A street is named after her.

### Early Writers

For centuries, troubadour ballads and religious poems, or *Noels*, formed the core of literature in Provence. While certain unique individuals stand out, it was not until 1854, with Mistral's help, that Provençal writers found their own "voice".

**1327** Petrarch (see p49) falls in unrequited love with Laura de Noves in Avignon, inspiring his *Canzonière* poems.

**1555** Nostradamus, from St-Rémy, publishes *The Prophecies*, which are outlawed by the Vatican.

**1764** Tobias Smollett "discovers" Nice. (He published his book, *Travels through France and Italy*, in 1766.)

**1791** Marquis de Sade, the original sadist, publishes *Justine*, written while imprisoned in the Bastille.



Petrarch's Laura de Noves



Edith Wharton

Somerset Maugham



**1926** British author W Somerset Maugham buys the Villa Mauresque, Cap Ferrat, and writes *Cakes and Ale* (1930).

**1885** *Germinal* published by Emile Zola, boyhood friend of Cézanne, as part of his 20-novel cycle, *The Rougon-Macquarts* (1871–93), set partly round Aix.



Emile Zola

**1931** Briton Aldous Huxley writes *Brave New World* in Sanary-sur-Mer (see p 116), the setting for *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936).

**1933** Thomas Mann, who wrote *Death in Venice* (1913), flees Germany for Sanary (see p 116) with his two sons and his brother Heinrich.



St-Exupéry's poignant fable, *Le Petit Prince*

**1944** Antoine de St-Exupéry, aviator and author of *Vol de Nuit* (1931) and *Le Petit Prince* (1943), goes missing. His last flight passed his sister's house at Agay.



Marcel Pagnol

**1974** Death of film director and writer Marcel Pagnol, whose *Marseille Trilogy* explored his Provençal childhood.

**1980** British actor Dirk Bogarde, having moved to Provence in the early 1970s, publishes his first novel, *A Gentle Occupation*.



Lawrence Durrell

**1985** The last volume of Briton Lawrence Durrell's *Avignon Quintet* is published.

**1989** Briton Peter Mayle's book *A Year in Provence* generates interest in the Luberon.

1930	1945	1960	1975	1990	2005
1930	1945	1960	1975	1990	2005

**1954** Françoise Sagan, aged 18, writes *Bonjour Tristesse* (1954) about the Esterel coast.

**1978** Marseille-born Sébastien Japrisot publishes the award-winning *L'Été Meurtrier*, set in a Provençal village.



Albert Camus

**1957** Albert Camus buys a house in Lourmarin (see p 175), where he writes an autobiographical novel, not published until 1994.



Le Clézio

**1994** Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio (born 1940 in Nice) is voted Best Living French Writer by the readers of *Lire* magazine.

**1993** Briton Anthony Burgess, the author of *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), writes his final work, *Dead Man in Deptford*, in Monaco.

**1985** Patrick Süskind's novel *Perfume*, in which much of the action takes place in Grasse, is published.



Graham Greene

**1982** Britain's Graham Greene writes *J'Accuse – The Dark Side of Nice*.



The Fitzgeralds

**1934** American author F Scott Fitzgerald's South of France-based *Tender is the Night* is published. Scott and his wife Zelda stay in a villa at Juan-Les-Pins in 1926.

## The Beaches of Provence

From the untamed expanses of the Rhône delta to the hot spots of the Riviera, via the cliffs and coves of the Var, the coastline of Provence is extremely varied. Resort beaches around the towns of the Riviera, such as Menton, Nice and Monte-Carlo, are crowded and noisy in the height of summer. They often charge a fee, but are usually well-kept and offer good watersports facilities. It is, however, possible to seek out quieter corners away from the crowds if you know where to look.



**The Camargue beaches** (see pp140–42) at the mouth of the Rhône delta, are often deserted. The long, flat sands are ideal for horse riding, but there is a shortage of amenities.



**The Côte d'Azur beaches** offer warmth and sunshine all year long, making towns such as Villefranche-sur-Mer (see p92) very popular with tourists.

**The Côte Bleue** is dotted with fishing ports and elegant summer residences. Pine trees line the beaches.



**Les Calanques** (see p157) are beautiful and dramatic fjord-like inlets situated east of Marseille. The sheer white cliffs, some 400 m (1,312 ft) high, drop vertically into the tempting, blue water.



**Cap Sicié** is a small peninsula that juts out from the Var mainland. It is famed for its strong winds and waves, ideal for experienced windsurfers.



## Provence's Ten Best Beaches

### ① Best sandy beach

Plage de Piémanson, east of the Camargue, is remote enough for nudist bathing.

### ② Best deep-sea diving

The deep Calanques waters are ideal for exploring.

### ③ Best sea fishing

Bandol and Sanary-sur-Mer are charming resorts, where the tuna boats make their daily catch.

### ④ Best small resort beach

Le Lavandou offers all amenities on a small scale.

### ⑤ Best trendy beach

Tahiti-Plage in St-Tropez is the coast's showcase for fun, sun, fashion and glamour.

### ⑥ Best family beaches

Fréjus-Plage and the beach of St-Raphaël are clean, safe and have excellent facilities for families.

### ⑦ Best star-spotter's beach

Cannes' beautiful setting, with its scenic harbour, casino and stylish beaches, attracts the rich and famous.

### ⑧ Best teen and twenties beach

The all-night bars, cafés and nightclubs of Juan-les-Pins make this a lively resort.

### ⑨ Best activity beach

Watersports fanatics gather at the Ruhl-Plage in Nice for the jet-skiing and parasailing.

### ⑩ Best winter beach

Menton is the warmest resort on the Riviera and the sun shines all year round, ideal for relaxing winter holidays.



The Riviera is the most popular destination for sun-worshippers, with its big, traditional resorts and private golden beaches.



The Côte Varoise has a beach to suit all tastes, offering popular family resorts, small fishing ports and excellent snorkelling.



The Esterel coast stretches from Cannes to St-Raphaël. Its most striking features are the red cliffs and rocks, deep ravines and secluded coves.

# PROVENCE THROUGH THE YEAR

Provence is at its prettiest in spring, when flowers bring livelihoods to perfume-makers and pleasure to passers-by. It can also be surprisingly cold as this is when the Mistral blows its strongest.

Summer fruit and vegetables are both abundant and beautiful, filling the local markets. The midsummer heat is added to by the fires of St Jean and the Valensole plains are striped with lavender, the indelible colour of

the region. To entertain the thousands of holidaymakers, July and August are filled with music festivals. Come autumn, vineyards turn to copper and the grapes are harvested. Snows blanket the mountains from December and skiers take to the slopes. Throughout the year, every town and village celebrates with a *fête*, often with traditional costume and lively activities. For information, contact the local tourist office (see p237).



Women in traditional costume at the Fête de Paques in Arles

## Spring

By the time March begins, lemons have already been harvested and the almond blossom has faded. Pear, plum and apricot blossom brightens the landscape and the first vegetables of spring are ready for the markets: asparagus, beans and green artichokes known as *mourre de gats*. By May, fruit markets are coloured with the first ripe cherries and strawberries of the year.

Southern mountain slopes warm to the sunshine and come alive with alpine flowers but the northern slopes remain wintery. Broom turns hillsides deep yellow and bees start to make honey from the sweet-smelling rosemary flowers. Flocks of sheep begin the journey of transhumance up to the summer pastures, and on the vast plains maize, wheat and rape push their way up through the softening earth.

## March

**Festin des Courgourdons** (*last Sun*), Nice (see pp88–9). Folklore and sculpted gourd *fête*.

## April

**Procession aux Limaces** (*Good Friday*), Roquebrune-Cap-Martin (see p102). The streets are lit with shell lamps and a parade of locals dressed as disciples and legionnaires recreate the entombment of Christ.

**Printemps de Châteauneuf-du-Pape – Salon des Vins** (*early April*), Châteauneuf-du-Pape (see p168).

Spring wine festival displaying products of local wine growers.

**Fête de la St-Marc** (*end April*), Châteauneuf-du-Pape (see p168). Wine contest. (The year's vintage is blessed on the 1st weekend in August.)

**Feria de Paques** (*Easter*), Arles (see pp148–50). Arletans turn out in their traditional costume for a *feria*. The *farandole* is danced to the accompaniment of the *tambourin* drum and *galoubet* flute to mark the beginning of the famous bullfighting season.

## May

**Fête des Gardians** (*1 May*), Arles (see pp148–50). The town is taken over by the *gardians* or cowboys who look after the Camargue cattle herds.

**Pèlerinage des Gitans avec Procession à la Mer de Sainte Sarah** (*24–25 May*), Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer (see pp228–9).

**Festival International du Film** (*two weeks in May*), Cannes (see pp72–3). The most prestigious annual film festival.

**La Bravade** (*16–18 May*), St-Tropez (see p228).

**Fête de la Transhumance** (*late May–early June*), St-Rémy (see p144). Celebrates the ancient custom of moving sheep to higher ground for the summer.

**Grand Prix Automobile de Formule 1** (*weekend after Ascension*), Monaco (see p98).

The only Grand Prix raced on public roads laps up an impressive 3,145 km (1,954 miles).

**Feria** (*Pentecost*), Nîmes (see pp136–7). The first major bullfighting event of the year takes place at Les Arènes.



Thousands of sheep parade through St-Rémy during the Fête de la Transhumance

## Average Daily Hours of Sunshine



## Sunshine Chart

The summer months are guaranteed to be hot, with the intensity climaxing in July. Even in the winter, coastal towns can have up to 150 hours of sunshine a month, but be warned: it is often the icy Mistral that blows the clouds away in early spring.

## Summer

The Côte d'Azur is essentially a playground in summer, particularly in August when the French take their holidays. Rafters take to the rivers and scuba divers explore the varied sealife. For laid-on entertainment, there are music festivals throughout the region.

Three national celebrations are also manifest: fireworks and bonfires brighten the skies on the **Fête de St-Jean** (June 24), **Bastille Day** (July 14) is celebrated with fireworks while **Assumption Day** (August 15) is a time for great feasting.

## June

**Fête de la Tarasque** (*last w/e*), Tarascon (*see p144*). According to local legend, the Tarasque monster once terrorized the region. An effigy of the monster is paraded through the town.

**Festival International d'Art Lyrique** (*June & July*), Aix-en-Provence (*see pp152-3*). Extensive programme of classical music concerts and opera is staged in the courtyard theatre of the Archbishop's Palace.



The legendary Tarasque

## July

**Festival de la Sorgue** (*weekends in July*), Fontaine-de-Vaucluse & l'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue (*see p169*). Concerts, boat races and floating markets on the river Sorgue.

**Festival d'Avignon** (*mid- to late July*), Avignon (*see p229*).

**Chorégies d'Orange** (*all month*), Orange. This long-established



Celebrating the Fête de St-Jean with fireworks over Marseille harbour

opera season is held in the acoustically perfect Roman theatre (*see pp166-7*).

**Jazz à Juan** (*mid- to late July*), Juan-les-Pins (*see p76*). One of the area's top jazz festivals.

**Jazz à Toulon** (*mid-July-early Aug*), Toulon (*see p116-17*). Free concerts in different squares every day throughout the town.

**Recontres Internationales de la Photographie** (*Jul-Sep*), Arles (*see pp148-50*).

The National School of Photography was set up in 1982 as a result of this festival, and each year the town is transformed into a photographic arena.

## August

**Corso de la Lavande** (*first weekend*), Digne-les-Bains (*see p229*).

**Véraison Festival – A Medieval Celebration** (*early Aug*), Châteauneuf-du-Pape (*see p168*). A medieval market comes alive with 200 actors, music,

dancing, jousting and wine wagons open for tasting.

**Fête du Jasmin** (*first week-end*), Grasse (*see pp70-71*). Floats, music and dancing in the town.

**Procession de la Passion** (*5 Aug*), Roquebrune-Cap-Martin (*see p102*). Over 500 locals take part in staging Christ's passion, enacted since the Virgin saved the town from plague in 1467.

**Le Festival de Musique** (*all month*), Menton (*see pp102-3*). Chamber music in the square.



Holiday-makers on the crowded beaches of the Côte d'Azur



## Average Monthly Rainfall



## Rainfall Chart

Spring and autumn are the wettest times, with the amount of rainfall increasing as you head inland. November rain is the most violent, often with storms and flooding. Summer is virtually rain-free, causing drought in some forest areas.

## Autumn

When summer is over, it is time for the *vendange*, the grape harvest. In the Camargue, rice is ready to be brought in. Walnuts are picked and, in the Maures, sweet chestnuts are collected. The woods also yield rewards for mushroom hunters, while in Vaucluse and the Var truffles are harvested from oak woods and sold on the market stalls, notably at Richerenches.

The hunting season begins in November. Small birds, such as thrushes, and ducks fall from flight into the pot and wild boar are bagged, their feet kept as talismans. Sheep are brought down to their winter pastures.



On the hunt for truffles in the woods of Haute Provence

## September

## Fête des Prémices du Riz

(early Sep), Arles (see pp148–50). This festival of the rice harvest coincides with the last Spanish-style bullfights of the year.



A grape picker at work during the autumn harvest

**Féria des Vendanges** (second week), Nîmes (see pp136–7).

An enjoyable combination of wine, dancing and bullfights.

**Festival de la Navigation de Plaisance** (mid-Sep), Cannes (see pp72–3). Yachts from around the world meet in the harbour. **Fête du Vent** (mid-Sep), Marseille (see pp154–6). Kites from all over the world decorate the sky for two days on the Plages du Prado.

## October

## Fête de Sainte Marie Salomé

(Sunday nearest 22 Oct), Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer. A similar festival to the Gypsy Pilgrimage held in May (see pp228–9) with a procession through the town's streets to the beach and the ritual blessing of the sea.

## Foire Internationale de

## Marseille

(end of Sep–early Oct), Marseille (see pp154–6). Thousands of visitors pour into the city to enjoy the annual fair. Various activities and sports are organized with crafts, music and folklore entertainment from over 40 different countries.

## November

## Fête du Prince (Fete Nationale)

(19 Nov), Monaco (see pp94–8).

The second smallest independent state in Europe celebrates its national day with a fireworks display over the harbour.

## Festival International de la

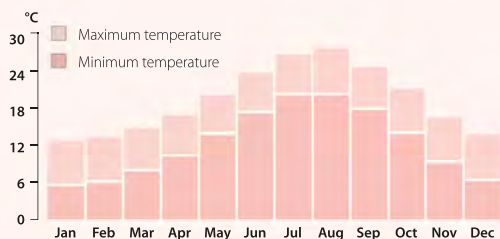
## Danse

(biennial, late-Nov or early Dec), Cannes (see pp72–3). A festival of contemporary dance and ballet with an impressive programme of international performances.



Performers at the Festival International de la Danse in Cannes

## Average Monthly Temperature



## Temperature Chart

The Mistral has a substantial effect on the temperature. During the winter and early spring, it can drop 10°C (18°F) in only a few hours. The summer heat can be uncomfortable, but the evenings cool down and are perfect for sitting outside.

## Winter

There is an old saying in Provence used to describe winter: "*l'hiver a ges d'ouïro*," "winter has no hours". It is a time to open the jams of the summer, to make the geese and duck *confits* and to turn the olive harvest into oil.

Snow soon cuts off mountain passes and, at weekends, locals and visitors take to the many ski resorts, warmed by juniper or wild strawberry liqueurs.

Christmas is heralded by the sale of *santons*, the figurines used to decorate Provence's distinctive cribs. Epiphany is another important festival, when the Three Kings are féted with crown-shaped pastries.

## December

**Foire aux Santons** (*all month*), Marseille (*see pp154–6*). The largest fair honouring the symbolic clay figures that are an integral part of Christmas.

**Fête du Millesime – Vin de Bandol** (*early December*), Bandol (*see p116*). Every wine-grower in the town has their own stand and there is free wine-tasting. A different theme is chosen every year with activities and much merriment.

**Noël and midnight mass** (*24 Dec*), Les Baux-de-Provence (*see pp146–7*). A traditional festive feast of the shepherds before mass.

## January

**Rallye de Monte-Carlo** (*late Jan*, *pp96–7*). A major event in the motor sporting calendar.

**Festival du Cirque** (*end of month*), Monaco (*see p98*). Circus shows from around the globe.



Relaxing in the winter sun in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence

## February

**Fête du Citron**, (*late Feb–early Mar*), Menton (*see pp102–3*).

Floats and music fill the town during the lemon festival.

**Fête du Mimosa** (*third Sunday*), Bormes-les-Mimosas (*see pp120–21*).

The annual festival in celebration of the medieval perched village's favourite flower.

**Carnava de Nice**, (*all month*), Nice. France's largest pre-Lent festival (*see p228*).

## Public Holidays

**New Year's Day** (1 Jan)

**Easter Sunday and Monday**

after Easter (sixth Thursday after Easter)

**Whit Monday** (second Monday after Ascension)

**Labour Day** (1 May)

**VE Day** (8 May)

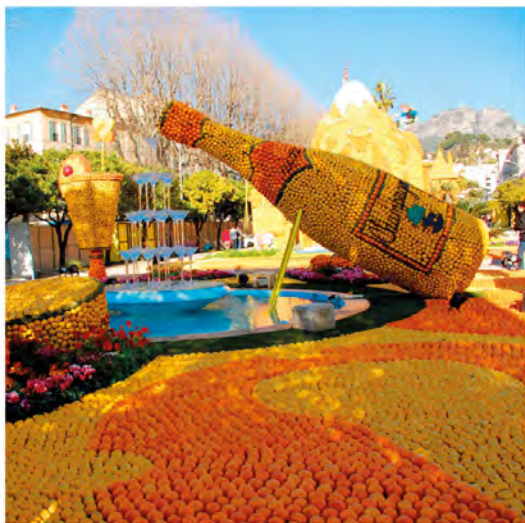
**Bastille Day** (14 Jul)

**Assumption Day** (15 Aug)

**All Saints' Day** (1 Nov)

**Remembrance Day** (11 Nov)

**Christmas Day** (25 Dec)



A colourful creation at the Fête du Citron in Menton







# THE HISTORY OF PROVENCE

Few regions of France have experienced such a varied and turbulent history as Provence. There is evidence, in the form of carvings, tools and weapons, of nomadic tribes and human settlements from 300,000 BC. The introduction of the vine, so important today, can be credited to the Phoenicians and Greeks who traded along the coast. Perhaps more crucially, Provence was the Romans' "Province" and few regions of their vast empire have retained such dramatic buildings; the theatre at Orange, the arenas of Arles and Nîmes, the Pont du Gard and the imposing trophy of La Turbie are all testimony to past Roman power.

The Middle Ages proved a stormy period of feuding warlords and invasions; the many fortified hilltop villages that

characterize the region were a desperate attempt at defence. The papacy dominated the 14th century, and the magnificent palace the popes built in Avignon remains today. The arts flourished too, especially under King René in his capital of Aix. After his death in 1480, Provence lost its independence and its history became enmeshed with that of France. Religious war took its toll and the Great Plague of Marseille killed tens of thousands in 1720.

A beguiling climate and improved transport in the 19th century began to attract artists and foreign nobility. Tiny fishing villages grew into glamorous Riviera resorts. The allure remains for millions of tourists, while economic investment means it is also a boom area for the technology industry.



A 16th-century map of Marseille and its harbour

◀ Detail of an illuminated 13th-century manuscript showing a troubadour playing to a royal audience

## Ancient Provence

Rock carvings, fragments of paintings and remains from primitive settlements suggest that Provence was first inhabited a million years ago. Carvings in the Grotte de l'Observatoire in Monaco and the decorated Grotte Cosquer near Marseille are among the oldest of their kind in the world. Nomadic tribes roamed the land for centuries, notably the Celts from the north and the Ligurians from the east. Not until the arrival of the Phoenicians and the Greeks did trade flourish in a more structured way and Provençal society become more stable.



**"Double Head" Carving**  
This stone figure (3rd century BC) probably decorated a Celtic sanctuary.



**Celtic Doorway**  
(3rd century BC) The niches in the pillars held the embalmers' heads of Celtic heroes.

**The bories** at Gordes date back to 3,500 BC.



**The Grotte des Fées** at Mont de Cordes contain prehistoric carvings often associated with modern astrological symbols.



**St-Blaise**, once a heavily fortified Greek trading centre, has only minimal remains.

**The Grotte Cosquer**, with paintings dating to 30,000 BC, is accessible only from the sea.

### The Foundation of Marseille

When Greek traders arrived in 600 BC, their captain, Protis, attended a feast in honour of the local chief's daughter, Gyptis. She chose Protis as her husband. The chief's dowry to Protis and Gyptis was the strip of land on which Marseille grew.



**Wine jars**, bound for Greece from 1,000 BC onwards, were found in Les Calanques near Marseille.

**1,000,000 BC** Earliest human presence in Provence at Grotte de l'Observatoire in Monaco; use of bone as a tool

**400,000 BC**  
Fire first used in Nice

**60,000 BC** Neanderthal hunters on the Riviera

**1,000,000 BC**

**5000**

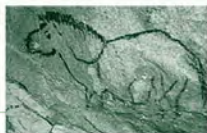
**4500**

**4000**

**3500**

**30,000 BC** Appearance of *Homo sapiens* (modern man); cave painting at Grotte Cosquer

**3,500 BC** First borie villages



Cave painting from Grotte Cosquer

**Vallée des Merveilles**

About 36,000 carvings date from 2,000 BC. Among them are strange, witch-like figures known as orants.



The Vallée des Merveilles carvings suggest that nearby Mont Bégo was a focus for worship.



The "Fairy Stone", *Péiro de la fado* in Provençal, is the only true pre-historic dolmen in Provence.



The Grotte de l'Observatoire in Monaco yielded evidence of symbolic human burials from prehistoric times.

**Where to See Ancient Provence**

Many museums, such as the Musée Archéologique, Nîmes (see p136), have excellent collections of ancient artifacts. The well-preserved *bories* in the Luberon (see p173) illustrate early village communities; the Grotte de l'Observatoire in Monaco (see p98) is an example of an even more primitive settlement.



**Borie Village at Gordes**

These dry-stone dwellings (see p173) have for centuries been used by nomadic shepherds.



**Grotte de l'Observatoire**

Skeletons uncovered here have characteristics linking them with southern African tribes.

**Ancient Sites of Provence**

Most sites lie along the coast, but there are some pockets of settlement inland near Tende, in the Luberon, and in the Vallée des Merveilles (see p101), which stands at about 2,500 m (8,200 ft).



**Standing Stone**

Prehistoric stela, like this carved stone from the Luberon, are scattered throughout Provence.



Hannibal crossing the Alps

2,500–2,000 BC Carvings at Vallée des Merveilles

380 BC Celtic invasions of Provence

3000

2500

2000

1500

1000

500 BC

2,000 BC Tombs carved at Cordes

600 BC Greek traders settle at St-Blaise. Founding of Marseille

218 BC Hannibal passes through region to reach Italy



## Gallo-Roman Provence

The Romans extended their empire into Provence towards the end of the 2nd century BC. They enjoyed good relations with the local people and within 100 years created a wealthy province. Nîmes and Arles became two of the most significant Roman towns outside Italy; colonies at the Site Archéologique de Glanum and Vaison-la-Romaine flourished. Many fine monuments remain and museums, for instance at Vaison-la-Romaine, display smaller Roman treasures.

Christ's followers are reputed to have brought Christianity to the region when they landed at Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in AD 40.



**Pont Julien** (3 BC)  
This magnificently preserved triple-arched bridge stands 8 km (5 miles) west of Apt.

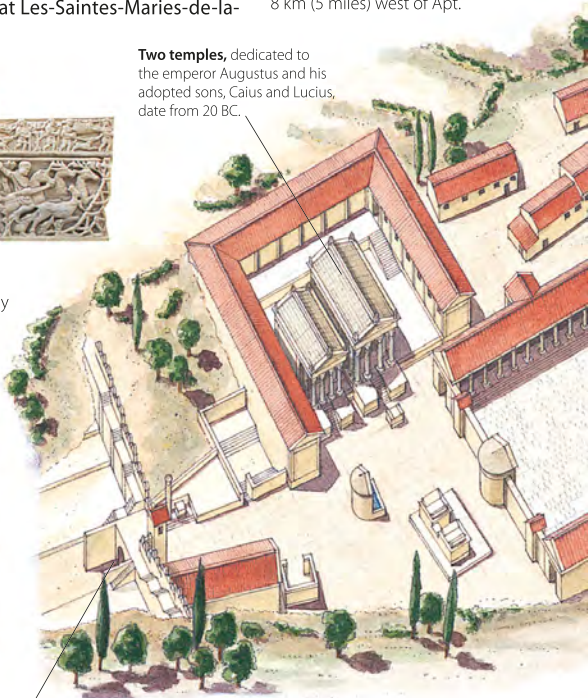


**Marble Sarcophagus** (4th century)  
The Alyscamps in Arles (see p150), once a vast Roman necropolis, contains many carved marble and stone coffins.



**Triumphal Arch at Orange**  
Built in about 20 BC this is, in spite of much crude restoration, one of the best preserved Roman triumphal arches. Carvings depict the conquest of Gaul and sea battle scenes.

Two temples, dedicated to the emperor Augustus and his adopted sons, Caius and Lucius, date from 20 BC.



### Roman Glanum

The fortified gate is thought to have been built by Greeks, who occupied Glanum from the 4th century BC.

The impressive ruined site at Glanum reveals much earlier Roman and Greek settlements. This reconstruction shows it after it was rebuilt in AD 49 (see p145).

**118 BC** Provincia founded – first Gallo-Roman Province

**125 BC** Roman legions defend Marseille against Celto-Ligurian invaders



Consul Marius

**49 BC** Emperor Julius Caesar lays siege to Marseille for supporting his rival, Pompey. Romans rebuild Glanum

**40 BC** Vaison-la-Romaine ranks among Roman Gaul's wealthiest towns

2nd-century BC  
Venus d'Arles



**100 BC**

**AD 1**

**100**

**123 BC** Romans make Entremont first Provençal settlement

**102 BC** Consul Marius defeats invading German tribes; over 200,000 killed

**3 BC** Pont Julien built

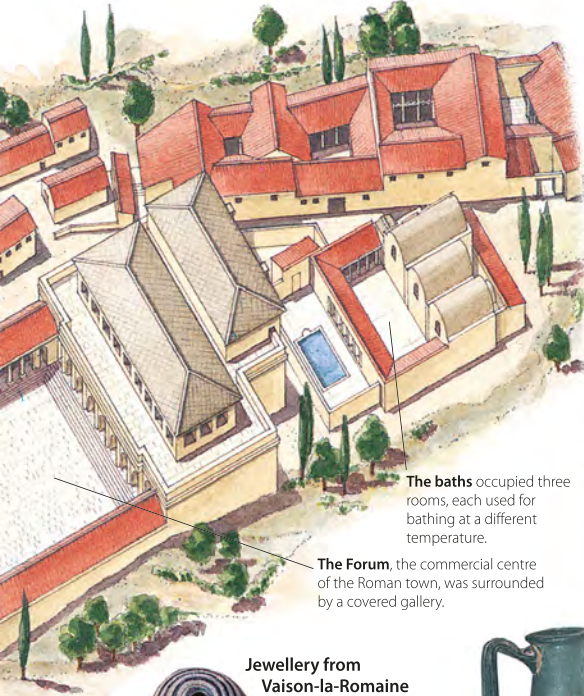
**AD 40** "Boat of Bethany" lands at Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer

**14 BC** Emperor Augustus defeats Ligurians in Alpes Maritimes. Trophy at La Turbie erected (see p93)

**121 BC** Foundation of Aquae Sextiae, later to become Aix-en-Provence

**Les-Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer**

Mary Magdalene, Mary Salome and Mary Jacobe reputedly sailed here in AD 40. The town where they landed is named in their honour and continues to attract pilgrims (see p142).



**The baths** occupied three rooms, each used for bathing at a different temperature.

**The Forum**, the commercial centre of the Roman town, was surrounded by a covered gallery.

**Jewellery from Vaison-la-Romaine**

1st-century AD jewellery was found in excavations of the Roman necropolis.



**Where to See Gallo-Roman Provence**

Arles (see pp148–50) and Nîmes (see pp136–7), with their amphitheatres and religious and secular buildings, offer the most complete examples of Roman civilization. Orange (see p165) and Vaison-la-Romaine (see p162) contain important monuments, and the Pont du Gard (see p135) and Le Trophée d'Auguste (see p93) are unique.



**Théâtre Antique d'Orange**

Built into a hill, this Roman theatre would have held up to 7,000 spectators (see pp166–7).



**Cryptoportico**

The foundations of Arles' forum, these horseshoe-shaped underground galleries were probably used as grain stores (see p150).

**Roman Flask**

Well-preserved ancient Roman glassware and everyday items have been found in many areas of Provence.



476 Western Roman Empire collapses

413 Visigoths seize Languedoc

200

300

400

500

300 Arles reaches height of its prestige as a Roman town

Abbaye St-Victor, founded in AD 416, in Marseille





## Medieval Provence

With the fall of the Roman Empire, stability and relative prosperity began to disappear. Although Provence became part of the Holy Roman Empire, the local counts retained considerable autonomy and the towns became fiercely independent. People withdrew to hilltops to protect themselves from attack by a series of invaders, and *villages perchés* (see pp24–5) began to develop. Provence became a major base for Christian Crusaders, intent on conquering Muslim territories in Africa and Asia.

The Great Walls, finally completed in 1300, 30 years after Louis IX's death, were over 1.6 km (1 mile) long and formed an almost perfect rectangle.



### St-Trophime Carving

The monumental 12th-century portal at St-Trophime in Arles (see p148) is adorned with intricate carvings of saints and scenes from the Last Judgment.

Louis IX's army consisted of 35,000 men plus horses and military equipment.

Louis IX



### St Martha and the Tarasque

This 9th-century legend proved the strength of Christianity. The saint is said to have lured the Tarasque dragon to its death, using hymns and holy water (see p144).

### The Seventh Crusade

Hoping to drive the Muslims out of the Holy Land, Louis IX (St Louis) of France set sail from his new port, Aigues-Mortes (see pp138–9), in 1248. It was a spectacular occasion, with banners waving and his army singing hymns.

536 Provence ceded to the Franks

737–9 Anti-Frankish rebellions in Avignon, Marseille and Arles brutally suppressed by Charles Martel

855 Kingdom of Provence created for Charles the Bald, grandson of Charlemagne

949 Provence divided into four counties

600

700

800

900

Battle between the Crusaders and the Saracens



800 First wave of Saracen invasions

Charles the Bald



924 Hungarians sack Nîmes





**Troubadour Ivory** (c. 1300)  
The poetry of Provençal troubadours tells how knights wooed virtuous women through patience, courtesy and skill.



**Notre-Dame-de-Beauvoir Chapel** At the top of a path from Moustiers (see p190), the chapel has a fine Romanesque porch and nave.

1500 ships set sail for the Holy Land on 28 August 1248.



**St Christopher Fresco** The Tour Ferrande in Pernes-les-Fontaines (see p168) contains religious frescoes from 1285. They are among the oldest in France.

## Where to See Medieval Provence

The highlights are undoubtedly the Romanesque abbeys and churches, especially the "three sisters": Silvacane (see p151), Le Thoronet (see p112) and Sénanque (see p168). Fortified villages *perchés*, such as Gordes (see p173) and the spectacular 11th-century citadel at Les Baux-de-Provence (see p146), testify to the unrest and horrific violence that scarred this period of Provence's history.



### Les Pénitents des Mées

These are said to be 6th-century monks turned to stone for gazing at Saracen women (see p185).



### Silvacane Abbey (1175–1230)

This beautiful, austere Cistercian abbey was Provence's last great Romanesque abbey.



Seal of Simon de Montfort

**974** Saracens defeated at La Garde-Freinet

**1213** Battle of Muret: de Montfort defeats count of Toulouse and King of Aragon

**1209** French military leader Simon de Montfort marches on Provence

**1246** Charles of Anjou marries Béatrice, heiress of Provence, to become Count of Provence

**1248** Louis IX embarks on Seventh Crusade from Aigues-Mortes

**1000**

**1100**

**1200**

**1300**

**1032** Provence becomes part of Holy Roman Empire

**1096–1099** First Crusade

**1186** Counts of Provence declare Aix their capital

**1187** Remains of St Martha discovered at Tarascon

**1295** Death of Guiraut Riquier, the "Last Troubadour"

**1112** Raymond-Bérenger III, Count of Barcelona, marries the Duchess of Provence

**1125** Provence shared between Barcelona and Toulouse

**1274** Papacy acquires Comtat Venaissin

**1280** Relics of Mary Magdalene found at St-Maximin-la-Ste-Baume

## Papal Avignon

When the papacy temporarily abandoned war-torn Italy, Avignon became the centre of the Roman Catholic world. From 1309 until 1377 seven French popes ruled unchallenged. When a new Italian pope, Urban VI, was elected, the French cardinals rebelled. In 1378 they chose a rival pope, Clement VII, thus causing a major schism that lasted until 1403. During the 14th century the papal court in Avignon became a wealthy centre for both learning and the arts, extending its influence across the region.



### Papal Throne

The Pope's Room in the Palais des Papes contains copies of the original 14th-century furniture, like this carved wooden throne.



**Prophets Fresco** (1344–5)  
Matteo Giovanetti from Viterbo was the principal fresco-master of Clement VI. His realism contrasts with earlier medieval artists.

**The Palais Vieux** (1334–42), built by Benedict XII in typically austere Cistercian style, is more of a fortress than a church.



Benedict XII's cloister

Grand Tinel

Consistory Hall

Great Courtyard



Coin of Pope Innocent VI

1316–34 Reign of John XXII

1327 Petrarch first catches sight of Laura of Avignon, his muse

1342–52 Reign of Clement VI

1352–62 Reign of Innocent VI

1310

1320

1330

1340

1350

1309 Papacy moves to Avignon



Pope John XXII

1334–42 Reign of Benedict XII

1348 Clement VI acquires Avignon

1349 Jews take refuge in the Comtat Venaissin, part of the Papal lands



**Death of Clement VI**

Clement VI came to Avignon to “forget he was pope”. In 1348 he bought the town for 80,000 florins and built the splendid Palais Neuf.

**Where to see Papal Provence**

Avignon is surrounded by evidence of religious and aristocratic splendour. With the presence of the wealthy papacy – a kind of miniature Vatican – abbeys, churches and chapels flourished. The Musée du Petit Palais (see p172) in Avignon contains examples of work by the artists who were encouraged to work at the papal court.



**Villeneuve Charterhouse**

Innocent VI established this, the oldest charterhouse in France, in the 1350s (see p134).



**Château-neuf-du-Pape**

John XXII’s early 14th-century castle became the popes’ second residence. The keep and walls still stand today (see p168).

Pope’s Room

**Stag Room Frescoes**

The hunting scenes are a reminder that monastic life was not only about learning and prayer.



Stag Room

**The Great Chapel,** covering 780 sq m (8,400 sq ft), contains the restored papal altar.

**The Palais Neuf** was built by Clement VI in 1342–52.

Great Audience Hall

**Palais Des Papes**

The maze of corridors and rooms in the Palais des Papes (see p172), built over 18 years (1334–52), were richly decorated by skilled artists and craftsmen introduced from Italy. The building’s scale is overwhelming.

**Petrarch** (1304–74)

The great Renaissance poet Petrarch considered papal Avignon to be a “sewer” and a place of corruption.



1362–70 Reign of Urban V

1370–78 Reign of Gregory XI

1378–94 Reign of anti-pope Clement VII

1394–1409 Reign of anti-pope Benedict XIII

1360

1370

1380

1390

1400

1363 Grimaldis recapture Monaco

1377 Papacy returns to Rome

1403 Benedict XIII flees Avignon



Effigy of Urban V

Anti-Pope Benedict XIII





## René and the Wars of Religion

The end of the 15th century saw the golden age of Aix-en-Provence (see pp152–3), then Provence's capital. Under the patronage of King René, art and culture flourished and the Flemish-influenced Avignon School was formed. After René's death, Provence was annexed by the French king, Louis XI. Loss of independence and subsequent involvement with French politics led to brutal invasions by Charles V. The 16th-century Wars of Religion between "heretic" Protestants and Catholics resulted in a wave of massacres, and the wholesale destruction of churches and their contents.



**Detail of the Triptych**  
René's favourite château at Tarascon (see p144) on the Rhône is realistically painted.



**King René**, himself a poet, painter and musician, was a great influence on Provençal culture.

**Nostradamus**  
Born in St-Rémy (see pp144–5), the physician and astrologer is best known for his predictions, *The Prophecies* (1555).



### Massacres of Protestants and Catholics

The religious wars were brutal. Thousands of Protestants were massacred in 1545, and 200 Catholics died in Nîmes in 1567.



### Burning Bush Triptych

Nicolas Froment's painting (1476) was commissioned by King René. The star of the *Cathédrale de St-Sauveur*, Aix, it depicts a vision of the Virgin and Child surrounded by the eternal Burning Bush of Moses.



1434–80 Reign of Good King René

1425

Retable from Avignon



1450

1501 Parliament de Provence created

1486 Union of Provence with France

1475

1500

1481 Charles du Maine, Count of Provence and René's nephew, gives Provence to King of France

1496 Military port built at Toulon



**The Annunciation**  
The Master of Aix, one of René's artistic circle, painted this Annunciation. Dark symbolism, including the owl's wings of the angel Gabriel, undercuts this usually joyful subject.

**Where to See 15th- and 16th-century Provence**

Architecture from this period can be seen today in the fine town houses and elegant streets of Aix (see pp152–3) and Avignon (see pp170–2). The Musée Granet, also in Aix, contains several interesting examples of religious paintings. A collection of period furniture is exhibited in the Musée Grobet-Labadié in Marseille (see p155).

**The Bush**, burning but unconsumed, was a pagan and Christian symbol of eternal life.



**Moses** is seen receiving the word of God from an angel.

**Queen Jeanne**, René's second wife, is shown kneeling in adoration.

**The saints** John the Evangelist, Catherine of Alexandria and Nicolas of Myra are behind Queen Jeanne.



**Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, by Titian**  
Between 1524 and 1536, Charles V (Charles I of Spain) attacked Provence frequently as part of his war against France.



**Château at Tarascon**  
This 13th-century château (see p144) was partly rebuilt by Louis II of Anjou and then completed by King René, his son.



**Rhinoceros Woodcut by Albrecht Dürer**  
In 1516, Marseille's Château d'If (see p156) was briefly home to the first rhinoceros to set foot in Europe. It was in transit as a gift for the Pope, but died later in the journey.

**1525** Jews in Comtat Venaissin forced to wear yellow hats

**1545** Massacre of Protestants in Luberon villages

**1577** First soap factory in Marseille

**1598** Edict of Nantes signals end of Wars of Religion

**1525**

**1550**

**1575**

**1600**

**1524** Invasion of Charles V

**1562** Wars of Religion commence

Protestant martyrdom



## Classical Provence

Provence in the 17th and 18th centuries saw a decrease in regional allegiance and growth of national awareness. Towns grew and majestic monuments, town houses (*hôtels*) and châteaux proliferated. But despite economic development in the textile industry and the growth of the ports of Toulon and Marseille, the period was bleak for many, culminating in the devastating plague of 1720. The storming of the Bastille in Paris in 1789 sparked popular uprisings and revolutionary marches on Paris.



**Pavillon de Vendôme**  
Jean-Claude Rambot made the Atlantes for this building (1667) in Aix (see pp152–3).



### Boat-building in Toulon

Toulon, a strategic port, was famous for its boat-building. Galley slaves, chained to their oars, were a great tourist attraction in the 17th century.

**The death toll** was over 100,000 in the last plague in Europe.



**Corpses** were hauled in carts to mass graves.

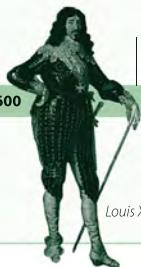


### Santon Crib Scene

The *santon* ("little saints" in Provençal) cribs were first made after the Revolution, when the churches were shut. They soon became a very popular local craft.

### The Great Plague

*Vue du Cours pendant la Peste* by Michel Serre depicts the 1720 plague in Marseille, brought by a cargo boat from Syria. Over half of Marseille's population died. All contact with the city was banned and huge walls were built to halt the epidemic, but it still spread as far as Aix, Arles and Toulon.



**1660** Louis XIV, the "Sun King", enters Marseille

**1622** Louis XIII visits Arles, Aix and Marseille



*Sun King* emblem

**1707** English siege of Toulon fails

**1696** France returns Nice to Savoy

1600

1625

1650

1675

1700

**1646** Jews confined to ghettos, notably in Carpentras

**1666** Work begins on the Canal du Midi

**1679** Vauban starts work on new port at Toulon

**1707** Provence invaded by Eugène of Savoy

**1691** Nice occupied by the French



**Napoleon Seizes Toulon**

Junior officer Napoleon Bonaparte first made his name when he took Toulon from occupying English troops in 1793.

**Cours Belsunce**, built in 1670 in the Italian style, was lined with trees and Baroque palaces.



**Monks**, led by the devout Jean Belsunce, the Bishop of Marseille, gave succour to the dying.

**Marshal Sébastien Vauban**

Louis XIV's brilliant military architect, Vauban, fortified towns and ports including Toulon and Antibes.

**Moustiers Faïence**

Brought to France from Italy in the 17th century, traditional faïence features pastoral scenes in delicate colours.

**Where to See Classical Provence**

Avignon (see pp 170–72) and Aix (see pp 152–3) have period town houses with fine doorways and staircases. Jewish synagogues and remains of Jewish enclaves can be found in Cavaillon (see p 174), Forcalquier (see p 186) and Carpentras (see p 168). The 18th-century Jardin de la Fontaine in Nîmes (see pp 136–7) can still be visited.

**Pharmacy at Carpentras**

The 18th-century Hôtel-Dieu (hospital) houses a chapel and a pharmacy containing faïence apothecary jars.

**Fontaine du Cormoran**

The best known of the 36 fountains in Pernes-les-Fontaines is the 18th-century carved Cormoran fountain.

**1713** Treaty of Utrecht cedes Orange to France

**1791** Avignon and Comtat Venaissin annexed to France

**1718** Nice becomes part of new Kingdom of Sardinia

**1779** Roman mausoleum at Aix demolished

**1793** Breaking of siege of Toulon catapults Napoleon Bonaparte to fame

**1725**

**1750**

**1775**

**1800**

**1720** Great Plague strikes Marseille and spreads throughout Provence

**1771** Aix parliament suppressed

**1787** Provençal silk harvest fails

**1792** Republicans adopt Rouget de Lisle's army song: *La Marseillaise*

**1789** Storming of the Bastille, Paris; Provençal peasants pillage local châteaux and monasteries



*The Great Plague, Marseille*

## The Belle Époque

From the start of the 19th century, the beguiling climate, particularly the mild winters, of coastal Provence attracted foreign visitors, from invalids and artists to distinguished royalty and courtesans. Railways, grand hotels, exotic gardens, opulent villas and the chic promenade des Anglais in Nice were built to meet their needs. Queen Victoria, the Aga Khan, King Leopold of Belgium and Empress Eugénie – Napoleon III's wife and doyenne of Riviera royalty – all held court. Artists and writers came in droves to revel in the light and freedom.



### Homage à Mistral

Frédéric Mistral created the Félibrige group in 1854 to preserve Provençal culture.



### Printing in Marseille

Cheap labour, ample paper supplies and good communications fostered the development of printing.



**Belle époque decor** featured gilt, ornate chandeliers and marble.

**High society** included famous courtesans as well as their rich and royal lovers.

### Grasse Perfume

More modern methods of cultivation and distillation played an important role in the expanding 19th-century perfume-making industry.



### Monte-Carlo Casino Interior

From being the poorest European state in 1850, Monaco boomed with the opening of the first Monte-Carlo casino in 1856, as seen in Christian Bokelmann's painting. The fashionable flocked to enjoy the luxury and glamour, while fortunes were won and lost (see pp96–8).

1815 Napoleon lands at Golfe-Juan

1830 Beginnings of tourism around Nice

1861 Monaco sells Roquebrune and Menton to France

1860 Nice votes for union with France

1859 Mistral publishes his epic poem, *Mirèio*

1800

1820

1840

1860

Paul Cézanne



1839 Marseille-Sète railroad begun. Birth of Cézanne

1854 Founding of Félibrige, the Provençal cultural school

1869 Opening of Suez Canal brings trade to Marseille; railway extended to Nice



### Vineyard blight

Ravaged by phylloxera, vines in Provence and across France were replaced by resistant American root stocks.



Casino tables were sometimes draped in black mourning when a gambler succeeded in breaking the bank with a major win.



### Tourism

By the late 19th century, sun and sea air were considered beneficial to health.



### Van Gogh's Provence

Van Gogh produced turbulent works in the Clinique St-Paul in St-Rémy (see pp144–5).

## Where to See Belle Époque Provence

Although many have been destroyed, villas and hotels built in the extravagant *belle époque* style still survive on the Côte d'Azur. The Négresco in Nice (see pp88–9) is especially fine. Other period pieces include the Cathédrale Orthodoxe Russe, also in Nice, and, on St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, the Ephrussi de Rothschild Villa and Gardens (see pp90–91). In Beaulieu the Villa Grecque Kérylos, Rotunda and gardens are typical of the era (see p92).



### InterContinental Carlton, Cannes

Built in 1911, this ostentatious Riviera landmark is still an exclusive hotel (see p73).



### Monte-Carlo Opéra

Charles Garnier designed this opera house (see pp96–7), as well as the Casino.



1879 Monte-Carlo Opéra opens

Casino at Monte-Carlo

1909 Earthquake centred on Rognes in the Bouches-du-Rhône causes widespread damage.

1880

1900

1920

1888–90 Van Gogh works in Provence

1904 Mistral wins Nobel prize for Literature for *Mirèio*



## Provence at War

After the economic drain caused by World War I, Provence enjoyed increasing prosperity as the tourist industry boomed. While much of the interior remained remote and rural, the vogue for sea-bathing drew crowds to resorts such as Cannes and Nice from the 1920s onwards. Provence continued to build on its image as a playground for the rich and famous, attracting visitors from Noël Coward to Wallis Simpson. The 1942–44 German occupation brought an end to the glamorous social life for many, and some towns, including St-Tropez and Marseille, were badly damaged by Germans and Allies.



### Monaco Grand Prix

This race around the principality's streets was started on the initiative of Prince Louis II in 1929. It is still one of the most colourful and dangerous Formula 1 races.



**Precious ammunition** and arms were dropped from Allied planes or captured from the Nazis.

**Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**  
France's legendary writer-pilot disappeared on 31 July 1944 while on a reconnaissance flight (see p33).



### Tourism

As swimming in the sea and sun-bathing became fashionable pursuits, resorts along the Riviera attracted many new visitors. In the 1930s a nudist colony opened on the Ile du Levant.



### La Résistance

After 1942 the *Résistance* (or *maquis* after the scrubland that made a good hiding place) was active in Provence. The fighters were successful in Marseille and in preparing the coastal areas for the 1944 Allied invasion.

1925 Coco Chanel arrives on the Riviera

1930 Novelist D H Lawrence dies in Vence

1920

1925

1930

F Scott Fitzgerald



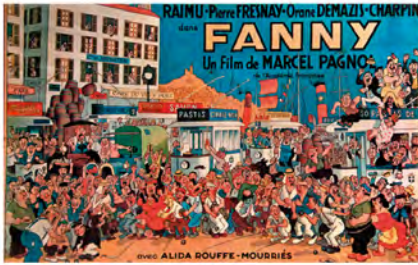
1924 Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald spend a year on the Riviera



Coco Chanel

1928 Camargue National Park created

1930 Pagnol begins filming *Marius, Fanny and César* trilogy in Marseille



### Marcel Pagnol (1905–74)

Pagnol immortalized Provence and its inhabitants in his plays, novels and films, depicting a simple, rural life (see p33).



Many who joined the Résistance had scarcely left school. Training was often only by experience.



### Allied Landings

On 14 August 1944, Allied troops bombarded the coast between Toulon and Marseille and soon gained ground.



### Marseille Exhibition

The 1922 exhibition was an invitation to enjoy the cosmopolitan delights of Marseille.

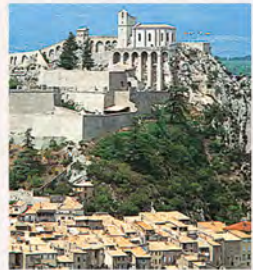
### Where to See 1920s to 1940s Provence

The now slightly seedy suburbs of Hyères (see p119) retain evidence of graceful living after World War I. Toulon harbour's bristling warships (see pp116–17) are a reminder of the French navy's former power. The activities of the Résistance are well documented in the Musée d'Histoire 1939–45 in Fontaine-de-Vaucluse (see p169).



### Les Deux Garçons, Aix

This still chic café was frequented by Winston Churchill and Jean Cocteau among others (see pp152–3).



### La Citadelle, Sisteron

Rebuilt after the Allied bombing in 1944, the impressive citadel has displays on its turbulent history (see p182).

1942 Nazis invade southern France; French fleet scuttled in Toulon harbour

1943 *Maquis* resistance cells formed

1940 Italians occupy Menton

1935

1940

1939 Cannes Film Festival inaugurated, but first festival delayed by war

1944 American and French troops land near St-Tropez; liberation of Marseille

Liberation of Marseille



## Post-War Provence

Paid holidays, post-war optimism, and the St-Tropez sun cult all made the Riviera the magnet it has remained for holiday-makers. The region still offers a rich variety of produce – olive oil, wine, fruit, flowers and perfume – though industry, especially in the high-tech sector, grows apace. The environment has suffered from over-development, pollution and forest fires. The 1960s saw massive North African immigration, and today unemployment creates racial and political tension.



### Port-Grimaud

The successful “Provençal Venice”, a car-free leisure port, was built by François Spoerry in 1966 in regional village style (see p127).



### Bus Stop by Philippe Starck

The modern architecture of Nîmes typifies many bold projects in the region.



### Beach at Nice

Though many are pebbly, the Riviera beaches still attract dedicated sun-worshippers.



### Fires

The devastating forest fires that ravage the region are fought by planes that scoop up sea water.



<p><b>1946</b> Picasso starts painting in the Grimaldi Castle, Antibes</p>	<p><b>1956</b> Grace Kelly marries Monaco's Prince Rainier III</p> <p><b>1952</b> Le Corbusier's Cité Radieuse built</p>	<p><b>1961</b> Art festival of new Ecole de Nice</p>	<p><b>1962</b> Lower Durance engineered to develop hydro-electric power</p> <p><b>1970</b> Sophia-Antipolis technology park opens near Antibes</p>	<p><b>1977</b> First section of Marseille underground railway opened</p>	<p><i>Picasso</i></p>
<p><b>1940</b></p> <p><b>1956</b> Roger Vadim films <i>And God Created Woman</i>, starring Brigitte Bardot, in St-Tropez</p>	<p><b>1950</b></p> <p><b>1954</b> Matisse dies</p>	<p><b>1960</b></p> <p><b>1959</b> Floods in Fréjus</p>	<p><b>1962</b> Algerian Independence – French North Africans (<i> pieds-noirs</i>) settle in Provence</p> <p><b>1970</b> Autoroute du Soleil completed</p>	<p><b>1970</b></p> <p><b>1971</b> The “French Connection” drug ring is exposed</p>	<p><b>1973</b> Picasso dies at Mougins</p> <p><b>1982</b> Princess Grace is killed in car accident</p>





### Winter Sports

Skiing has become increasingly popular (see p100). Isola 2000, near Nice, a purpose-built, futuristic resort, was built in 1971.

### Colombe d'Or café

Once an artists' haunt, this is now one of St-Paul de Vence's chic celebrity venues (see p79).



Brigitte Bardot

Kim Novak

### Cannes Film Festival

First held in 1946, the festival (see p72) has become the world's annual film event, a glamorous jamboree of directors, stars and aspiring starlets. And *God Created Woman*, starring Brigitte Bardot, became a succès de scandale in 1956.

### Where to See Modern Provence

Some of the most striking modern architecture includes Le Corbusier's Cité Radieuse in Marseille (see p156), the Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain in Nice (see p89) and the Norman Foster-designed Carré d'Art in Nîmes (see p136). Large-scale rebuilding programmes in towns such as Marseille (see pp154–6), St-Tropez (see pp122–6) and Ste-Maxime (see p127) have concentrated on new buildings that blend well with the existing ones.



### St-Tropez

Successful post-war restoration means it is often difficult to tell new buildings from old.



### Fondation Maeght

The building reflects the modern use of traditional Provençal style and materials (see pp80–81).

**1998** Jacques Médecin dies in Uruguay, self-exiled after a year in jail in France

**1992** Floods in Vaison-la-Romaine

**1990**

**1990** Jacques Médecin, Mayor of Nice, flees to Uruguay to avoid trial for corruption and tax arrears

**2002** Euro replaces Franc as legal tender

**2000**



TGV train

**2001** TGV Méditerranée link with Paris launched

**2005** Prince Rainier III dies and is succeeded by his only son, Prince Albert II

**2010**

**2009** J M G Le Clézio wins the Nobel Prize for Literature

**2013** EU designates Marseille as European Capital of Culture

Prince Albert II



**2020**

**2016** Terrorist attack in Nice on Bastille Day claims 86 lives

**2011** Prince Albert II marries Charlene Wittstock









# PROVENCE AREA BY AREA

Provence at a Glance	<b>62–63</b>
The Riviera and the Alpes Maritimes	<b>64–103</b>
The Var and the Iles d’Hyères	<b>104–129</b>
Bouches-du-Rhône and Nîmes	<b>130–157</b>
Vaucluse	<b>158–177</b>
Alpes-de-Haute-Provence	<b>178–191</b>



## Provence at a Glance

From natural wonders and historic architecture to the cream of modern art, Provence is a region with something for everyone. Even the most ardent sun-worshiper will be tempted into the cool shade of its treasure-filled museums and churches. Visitors who come in the footsteps of the world's greatest artists will be equally dazzled by the wild beauty of the Gorges du Verdon and the Camargue. In a region packed with delights, those shown here are among the very best.



Papal Avignon's medieval architectural splendour (see pp170–71)



The beautifully preserved Roman theatre at Orange (see pp166–7)



Wildlife in its natural habitat in the Camargue (see pp140–41)



The massive basilica of St-Maximin-la-Ste-Baume, housing relics of St Mary Magdalene (see pp114–15)

0 kilometres 25  
0 miles 25

Outstanding modern art at the Fondation Maeght, St-Paul de Vence (see pp80–81)



Musée Matisse, in the artist's beloved Nice (see pp86–7)



The dramatic Gorges du Verdon (see pp188–9)

Unspoiled and tranquil, the Iles d'Hyères (see pp118–19)



St-Tropez's Musée de l'Annonciade, displaying its art collection in a former chapel (see pp124–5)







# THE RIVIERA AND THE ALPES MARITIMES

The French Riviera is, without doubt, the most celebrated seaside in Europe. Just about everybody who has been anybody for the past 100 years has succumbed to its glittering allure. This is the holiday playground of kings and courtesans, movie stars and millionaires, where the seriously rich never stand out in the crowd.



There is a continual complaint that the Riviera is not what it used to be, that the Cannes Film Festival is mere hype, that grand old Monte-Carlo has lost all sense of taste and that Nice isn't worth the trouble of finding a parking space. But look at the boats in Antibes harbour, glimpse a villa or two on Cap Martin, or observe the baubles on the guests at the Hôtel de Paris in Monte-Carlo; money and class still rule.

The Riviera is not just a millionaire's watering hole: a diversity of talent has visited, seeking patrons and taking advantage of the luminous Mediterranean light. This coast is irrevocably linked with the life and works of Matisse and Picasso, Chagall, Cocteau and Renoir. It lent them the

scenery of its shores and the rich environment of hill villages like St-Paul de Vence. This village has echoed to the voices of such luminaries as Bonnard and Modigliani, F Scott Fitzgerald and Greta Garbo. Today, its galleries still spill canvases on to its medieval lanes.

The Alpes Maritimes, which incorporates the principality of Monaco, is renowned for its temperate winter climate. The abundance of flowers here attracted the perfume industry and the English – who created some of the finest gardens on the coast. Inland, the mountainous areas of Provence offer a range of skiing activities in superb mountain scenery, and a chance to try traditional Alpine food.



Relaxing on the promenade des Anglais, Nice

## Exploring the Riviera and the Alpes Maritimes

The rocky heights of the pre-Alps lie in tiers, running east to west and tumbling down to the Riviera's dramatic, Corniche-hemmed coast. On bluffs and pinnacles, towns and villages keep a watchful eye on the distant blue sea. Towards the Italian border, the Alpine ridges run from north to south, cut by torrents and gorges which provide snowy winter slopes for skiers. Much of the higher ground is occupied by the Parc National du Mercantour (see p101), home of the ibex and the chamoix. Its jewel is the prehistoric Vallée des Merveilles, less than two hours from the contrasting bustle of the Riviera.

### Getting Around

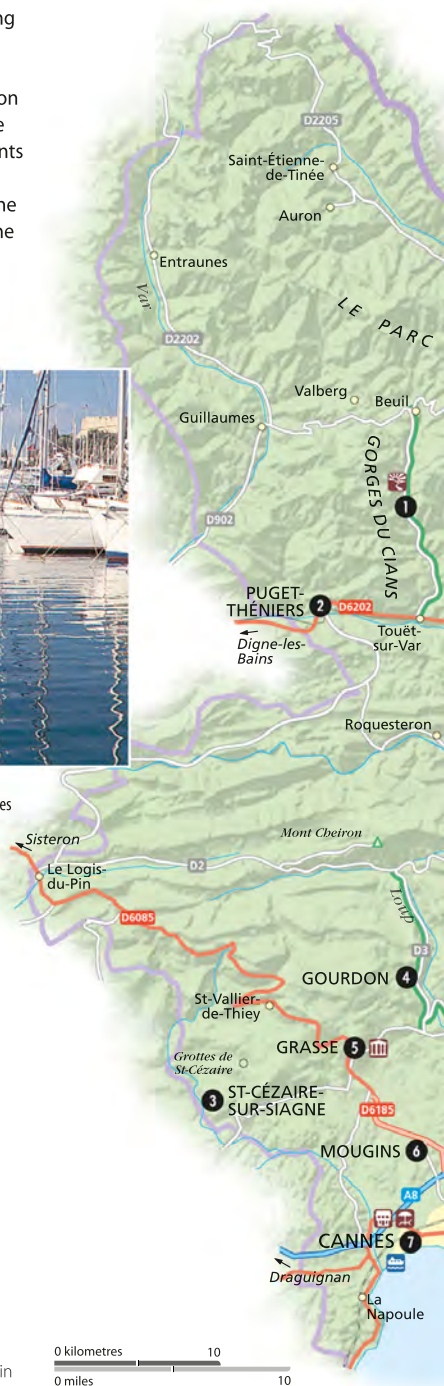
The A8 from Italy runs inland, parallel to the coast. Between this highway and the sea, from Nice to Menton, are three corniches. The Grande Corniche follows the Roman road, Julia Augusta, via La Turbie. The Moyenne Corniche passes through Eze, and the Corniche Inférieure visits all coastal resorts. The inland roads are narrow and winding, so allow more time for your journey. Grasse and Cannes are linked by a regular bus service, and bikes can be hired at some railway stations. Other bus links are also good. The largest airport in the region and second busiest in France, is at Nice, west of the city.



Expensive yachts in the colourful harbour at Antibes

### Sights at a Glance

- |                         |                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Gorges du Cians       | 19 Villefranche-sur-Mer        |
| 2 Puget-Théniers        | 20 Beaulieu-sur-Mer            |
| 3 St-Cézaire-sur-Siagne | 21 Eze                         |
| 4 Gourdon               | 22 La Turbie                   |
| 5 Grasse                | 23 Monaco pp94–8               |
| 6 Mougins               | 24 Peillon                     |
| 7 Cannes pp72–3         | 25 Peille                      |
| 8 Iles de Lérins pp74–5 | 26 Lucéram                     |
| 9 Juan-les-Pins         | 27 Vallée de la Vésubie        |
| 10 Antibes              | 28 Forêt de Turini             |
| 11 Vallauris            | 29 Parc National du Mercantour |
| 12 Biot                 | 30 Tende                       |
| 13 Villeneuve-Loubet    | 31 Saorge                      |
| 14 Vence                | 32 Sospel                      |
| 15 St-Paul de Vence     | 33 Gorbio                      |
| 16 Cagnes-sur-Mer       | 34 Roquebrune-Cap-Martin       |
| 17 Nice pp84–9          | 35 Menton                      |
| 18 St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat   |                                |



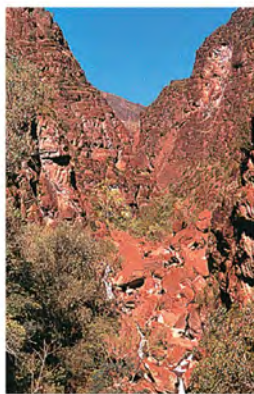


View from Roquebrune towards Nice



The sunshine and relaxing atmosphere of a café in Nice





Impressive upstream view of the upper Gorges du Cians

## 1 Gorges du Cians

**Road map** E3. ✈ Nice. 🏠 Nice, Touët-sur-Var, Valberg. 📞 Pl Charles Ginésy, Valberg (04 93 23 24 25).

Among the finest natural sights in the region, these gorges are a startling combination of deep red slate and vivid mountain greenery. They follow the course of the river Cians, which drops 1,600 m (5,250 ft) in 25 km (15 miles) from Beuil to Touët-sur-Var. At Touët, through a gully in the floor of the church nave, you can see the torrent below.

Approaching from the lower gorges, olives give way to scrubland. It is not until Pra d'Astier that the gorges become steep and narrow: at their narrowest, the rock walls entirely obliterate the sky. Higher still up the gorge, you may spot saffron lilies in June.

At the upper end of the gorges, overlooking the Vallée du Cians, is the 1,430-m (4,770-ft) eyrie of Beuil. Now a military sports centre, it was first fortified by the counts of Beuil, members of the aristocratic Grimaldi family (see pp82–3). They lived here until 1621, despite staff revolt: one count had his throat cut by his barber and another was stabbed by his valet. The last, Hannibal Grimaldi, was tied to a chair and strangled by two Muslim slaves. Stones from their château were used to build the Renaissance chapel of the White Penitents in the 1687 Eglise St-Jean-Baptiste.

## 2 Puget-Théniers

**Road map** E3. 🏠 1,920. 🏠 📞 RD 6202 (04 93 05 05 05). **Closed** Oct–Mar. 🌐 [provence-val-dazur.com](http://provence-val-dazur.com)

This attractive village lies at the foot of a rocky peak, nestling at the confluence of the Roudoule and the Var beneath the ruins of a château that belonged to the Grimaldi family (see pp82–3). The old town has some fine medieval houses with overhanging roofs, but the chief attraction is the 13th-century parish church Notre-Dame de l'Assomption. The delightful altarpiece, *Notre-Dame de Bon Secours* (1525),

is by Antoine Ronzen. Inside the entrance, the altarpiece of the Passion (1520–25) – the masterpiece of the church – is by Flemish craftsmen, working with the architect and sculptor Matthieu d'Anvers.

Beside the main road, the statue of a woman with her hands tied is called *L'Action Enchaînée*, by Aristide Maillol (1861–1944). It commemorates the local revolutionary, Louis-Auguste Blanqui. He was born in the town hall in 1805 and became one of the socialist heroes of



*L'Action Enchaînée*, in Puget-Théniers square

Paris Commune in 1871. A year later he was imprisoned for life and served seven years, having already spent 30 years in jail.

## 3 St-Cézaire-sur-Siagne

**Road map** E3. 🏠 3,850. 📞 3 rue de la République (04 93 60 84 30). 🕒 Tue & Sat. 🌐 [saintcezaireursiagne.fr](http://saintcezaireursiagne.fr)

Dominating the steep-sided Siagne valley, St-Cézaire has been inhabited since pre-Roman times. The walls and gates of

the village are reminders of its feudal past. At its heart is the 13th-century Eglise Paroissiale Notre-Dame de Sardaigne, which houses a Gallo-Roman tomb discovered nearby – a fine example of Provençal Romanesque design.

From the medieval part of the village, there is a magnificent viewpoint.

To the northeast of the village are the **Grottes de St-Cézaire-sur-Siagne** – iron-rich caves filled with beautiful rock crystallization.

Dramatic stalactites and stalagmites have formed on the cave ceilings and floors,








Antoine Ronzen's altarpiece *Notre-Dame de Bon Secours* (1525), Puget-Théniers

creating enchanting shapes, reminiscent of flowers, animals and toadstools. If touched, the stalactites become remarkably resonant, but leave this to the guide. Red oxide in the limestone gives a rich colour to the caves' chambers: the Fairies' Alcove, Great Hall, Hall of Draperies and Organ Chamber, all connected by narrow underground passages, one of which ends abruptly, 40 m (130 ft) below ground, at the edge of an abyss.

#### Grottes de St-Cézaire-sur-Siagne

1481 route des Grottes. **Tel** 04 93 60 22 35. **Open** Feb–mid-Nov: daily.

 obligatory.     
 [grotte-saintcezaire.com](http://grotte-saintcezaire.com)




Inside the remarkable Grottes de St-Cézaire-sur-Siagne




The village of Gourdon, on the edge of a rocky cliff

#### Gourdon

**Road map** E3.  421.

 1 pl Victoria (08 11 81 10 67).

 [gourdon06.fr](http://gourdon06.fr)




For centuries, villages were built on hilltops, surrounded by ramparts. Gourdon is a typical *village perché* (see pp24–5), its shops filled with regional produce, perfume and local art. From the square at its precipitous edge, there is a spectacular view of the Loup valley and the sea with Antibes and Cap Roux in the distance.

There are good views, too, from the gardens of the **Château de Gourdon**, built in the 12th century by the seigneurs du Bar, overlords of Gourdon, on the foundations of what was once a Saracen

fortress. Its vaulted rooms are remnants of Saracen occupation. The terrace gardens were laid out by André Le Nôtre when the château was restored in the 17th century. There are three distinct gardens – the Jardin à l'Italienne, the Jardin de Rocaille (or Provençal Gardens) and the Jardin de l'Apothicaire with its own centrally located sundial. Although the château is still privately owned and not open to the public, visitors can take a guided tour of the gardens in groups during the summer months.

#### Château de Gourdon

**Tel** 04 93 09 68 02. **Open** by reservation for groups of 10 or more.

  May–Aug: call ahead to check for times.  [chateau-gourdon.com](http://chateau-gourdon.com)

### Journey in the Gorges du Loup

The village of Gourdon is on the edge of the Gorges du Loup, the most accessible of many dramatic gorges running down to the coast. The route up to the Gorges du Loup begins at Pré-du-Loup, just east of Grasse, and leads to Gourdon. From Gourdon, the D3 goes up into the gorge and offers the best views, turning back down the D6 after 6.5 km (4 miles).

Descending on the left bank, the road passes the great pothole of Saut du Loup and the Cascades des Demoiselles, where the river's lime carbonate content has partly solidified the vegetation. Just beyond is the 40-m (130-ft) Cascade de Courmes, which has a treacherously slippery stairway under it.

The D2210 continues to Vence, passing via Tourrettes-sur-Loup, an art and craft centre on a high plateau. The 15th-century church has a triptych by the Bréa School and a 1st-century altar dedicated to the Roman god Mercury.



The 40-m (130-ft) Cascade de Courmes

## 5 Grasse

**Road map** E3. 52,000. Pl de la Buanderie (04 93 36 66 66). Sat. [grassetourisme.fr](http://grassetourisme.fr)

Once known for its leather tanning industry, Grasse became a perfume centre in the 16th century. The tanneries have vanished, but three major perfume houses are still here. Today, perfume is mainly made from imported flowers, but each year, Grasse holds a Jasmine festival (see p37). The best place to discover the history of perfume is the **Musée International de la Parfumerie**, which has a garden of fragrant plants. It also displays *bergamotes*, decorated scented *papier-mâché* boxes. At **Molinar** there is also a museum and visitors can create their own perfume.

Grasse became fashionable after 1807–8 when Princess Pauline Bonaparte recuperated here. Queen Victoria often wintered at the Grand Hotel.

Artist Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) was born here and the walls of the **Villa-Musée Fragonard** are covered with his son's murals. The artist's *Washing of the Feet* hangs in the 12th-century **Ancienne Cathédrale Notre-Dame-du-Puy**, in the old town. The cathedral also houses three works by Rubens. The **Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Provence** has Moustiers ware. 18th–19th century Provençal costumes and jewellery can be seen at the **Musée Provençal du Costume et du Bijou**.

### Musée International de la Parfumerie

2 blvd du Jeu de Ballon. **Tel** 04 97 05 58 11. **Open** daily. **Closed** public hols. [museesdegrasse.com](http://museesdegrasse.com)

### Molinar

60 blvd Victor Hugo. **Tel** 04 93 36 01 62. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 25 Dec. [molinar.com](http://molinar.com)

### Villa-Musée Fragonard

23 blvd Fragonard. **Tel** 04 97 05 58 00. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec. by appt.

### Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Provence

2 rue Mirabeau. **Tel** 04 97 05 58 00. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec. by appt.



Exterior of the Musée International de la Parfumerie in Grasse

## 6 Mougins

**Road map** E3. 18,200. 39 place des Patriotes (04 92 92 14 00). [mougins-tourisme.com](http://mougins-tourisme.com)

This old hilltop town (see pp24–5), huddled inside the remains of 15th-century ramparts and fortified Saracen Gate, is one of the finest in the region. Mougins is a smart address: it has been used by royalty and film stars, while Picasso spent his final years

living with his wife in a house opposite the Chapelle de Notre-Dame-de-Vie. This priory house, sitting at the end of an alley of cypresses, is now privately owned and closed to the public.

Mougins is also one of the smartest places in France to eat. Among its many high-class restaurants, is stylish gastronomic restaurant **La Place de Mougins** (see p209).

The **Musée de la Photographie** has a fine permanent collection of Picasso's photographs. The eclectic collection at the **Musée d'Art Classique de Mougins** includes Roman, Greek and Egyptian art alongside pieces by Picasso, Cézanne, Andy Warhol and Damien Hirst. There are also interesting displays of jewellery and Greek war helmets and armour.

### Musée de la Photographie

Porte Sarrazine. **Tel** 04 93 75 85 67. **Open** daily. **Closed** Jan, 25 Dec.

### Musée d'Art Classique de Mougins

32 rue Commandeur. **Tel** 04 93 75 18 65. **Open** daily. **Closed** 25 Dec. [mouginsmuseum.com](http://mouginsmuseum.com)



Jacques-Henri and Florette Lartigue, Musée de la Photographie, Mougins



## The Perfumes of Provence

For the past 400 years, the town of Grasse has been the centre of the perfume industry. Before that it was a tannery town, but in the 16th century, Italian immigrant glove-makers began to use the scents of local flowers to perfume soft leather gloves, a fashion made popular by the Queen, Catherine de' Médici. Enormous acres of lavender, roses, jonquils, jasmine and aromatic herbs were cultivated. Today, cheaper imports of flowers and high land prices mean that Grasse focuses on the creation of scent. The power of perfume is evoked in Patrick Süskind's disturbing novel, *Perfume*, set partly in Grasse, in which the murderous perfumer exploits his knowledge of perfume extraction to grisly effect.



Picking early morning jasmine



Jasmine being processed

### Creating a Perfume

Essences are extracted by various methods, including distillation by steam or volatile solvents, which separate the essential oils. *Enfleurage* is a costly and lengthy method for delicate flowers such as jasmine and violet. The blossoms are layered with lard which becomes impregnated with scent.

**Steam distillation** is one of the oldest extraction processes originally developed by the Arabs. It is now used mainly for flowers such as orange blossom. Flowers and water are boiled together in a still and the essential oils are extracted by steam in an *essencier*, or oil decanter.



**Vast quantities** of blossoms are required to create the essence or "absolut" perfume concentrate. For example, almost a ton of jasmine flowers are needed to obtain just one litre of jasmine essence.



**The best perfumes** are created by a perfumer known as a "nose" who possesses an exceptional sense of smell. The nose harmonizes fragrances rather like a musician, blending as many as 300 essences for a perfume. Today, scents can be synthesized by using "head-space analysis" which analyzes the components of the air above a flower.

## 7 Cannes

Lord Brougham, British Lord Chancellor, put Cannes on the map in 1834 when he stopped there on his way to Nice. He was so entranced by the climate of what was then a tiny fishing village that he built a villa and started a trend for upper-class English visitors. Today, Cannes may not attract blue blood but it has become a town of festivals, the resort of the rich and famous. It is busy all year round, its image reinforced by the Film Festival (see p36). With its casinos, fairs, beach, boat and street life, there is plenty to do, even though Cannes lacks the great museums and monuments of less glamorous resorts.



Relaxing deck chairs on the seafront, Hôtel Martinez

### Exploring Cannes

The heart of the city is built around the Bay of Cannes and the palm-fringed seafront boulevard de la Croisette. Here there are luxury boutiques and hotels and fine views of La Napoule Bay and the Esterel heights. The eastern end of the bay curves out to Pointe de la Croisette, where the medieval Fort de la Croix once stood. The town's two gaming houses, **Casino Les Princes** and **Casino Croisette**, are both open all year.

Brougham persuaded King Louis-Philippe to donate two million francs to build the Cannes harbour wall. Between La Pantiero and rue Félix Faure are the *allées* de la Liberté. Shaded by plane trees and surveyed by a statue of Lord Brougham, this open space is ideal both for *boules* and the colourful morning flower market. It provides a fine view of the harbour, which is filled with pleasure craft and fishing boats. Behind the *allées* is the rue Meynadier, where you can buy delicious pasta, bread

and cheese. This leads you to the **Marché Forville**. Fresh regional produce turns up here every day except Monday. The small streets meander up from the *marché* to the old Roman town of Canoïs Castrum. This area was named after the reeds that grew by the seashore, and is now known as Le Suquet. The Provençal Gothic church in the centre of the old town, **Notre-Dame de l'Espérance**, was completed in 1648.

The Cannes Film Festival has been held here every May since 1946. The main venue is the

**Palais des Festivals**, but there are cinemas all over town, some of which are open to the public, and film screening starts as early as 8:30am. The beach has been a focus for paparazzi since 1953, when Brigitte Bardot's beautiful pout put her on the world's front pages.

The city's connection to cinema is also highlighted by the **Murs peints de Cannes**,



Famous handprint of Faye Dunaway

15 giant murals inspired by the Seventh Art, which can be found at various locations across town.

The main hotels in Cannes have their own beaches with bars and restaurants, where prices match their standing. Celebrities are most likely to be seen at the Carlton, Majestic and Martinez. There is a cover charge to enter most beaches in Cannes, where imported sand covers the natural pebbles, and sun-loungers cost extra. Just next to the festival building there is also a free public beach.

### Palais des Festivals et des Congrès

1 blvd de la Croisette. Tel 04 92 99 84 00. 04 92 99 84 22.

[palaisdesfestivals.com](http://palaisdesfestivals.com)

Built in 1982, this unmistakably modern building stands beside the Vieux Port at the west end of the promenade. It is the chief venue for the *Palmes d'Or* and other internationally recognised awards sufficiently prestigious for the film business to take them seriously, and much business goes on, so that the festival is not

all hype and publicity. Some 78,000 official tickets are distributed to professionals only. Apart from its use for the great Film Festival, the building also houses a casino and a nightclub, and is a regular conference venue. In the nearby *allée* des Stars, handprints of such famous

celebrities as American actress Faye Dunaway are immortalized in pavement cement.



Cannes Old Town, known locally as Le Suquet, overlooking the harbour



InterContinental Carlton, the height of luxury at Cannes

### InterContinental Carlton

58 la Croisette. Tel 04 93 06 40 06.

[carlton-cannes.com](http://carlton-cannes.com) See *Where to Stay* p198.

This ultimate symbol of comfort and grace contains 343 rooms and 39 suites, and has its own private sandy beach. It was designed and built in 1911 by the architect, Charles Dalmas. The huge Rococo-style dining room, where the colonnades rise to an ornate ceiling with finely wrought cornices, is unchanged. The hotel's wedding-cake exterior

is studded with tiny balconies, and the window frames, cornices and attic pediments are decorated with stucco. The hotel's twin black cupolas are said to be modelled on the breasts of the notorious Belle Otero, a Spanish courtesan and dancer who captivated Dalmas. The Carlton was so revered that in World War II, a *New York Times* journalist asked a commanding officer to protect what he considered to be the world's finest hotel.

## VISITORS' CHECKLIST

### Practical Information

Road map E4. 74,600. 1  
blvd de la Croisette (04 92 99 84 22).  
 Tue–Sun. Film Festival (May).  
 [cannes-destination.com](http://cannes-destination.com)

### Transport

rue Jean-Jaurès.  
 pl de l'Hôtel de Ville.

### Musée de la Castre

Château de la Castre, Le Suquet.

Tel 04 93 38 55 26. **Open** Tue–Sun (Jul–Aug: daily). **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec. by app.

The old Cannes castle, erected by the Lérins monks in the 11th and 12th centuries, houses this museum. Set up in 1877, it contains some fine archaeological and ethnographical collections from all over the world, ranging from South Sea Island costumes to Asian art and African masks. Also housed in the Cistercian St-Anne chapel is a collection of superb musical instruments. The 11th-century **Tour de la Castre** is worth climbing for the view.

## Cannes

- ① Palais des Festivals et des Congrès
- ② InterContinental Carlton
- ③ Musée de la Castre



Key to Symbols see back flap



## 8 Iles de Lérins

Although only a 15-minute boat ride from the glitter of Cannes, the Iles de Lérins reflect a contrasting lifestyle, with their forests of eucalyptus and umbrella pine and their tiny chapels. The two islands, separated only by a narrow strait, were once the most powerful religious centres in the south of France. St-Honorat is named after the Gallo-Roman, Honoratus, who visited the smaller island at the end of the 4th century and founded a monastery. Some believe that Ste-Marguerite was named after his sister, who set up a nunnery there. Its fort is well known as the prison of the mysterious 17th-century Man in the Iron Mask, who spent 11 years here.



★ **Fort Ste-Marguerite**  
Built under Richelieu and strengthened by Vauban in 1712, its ground floor has a maritime museum.

### Ile Ste-Marguerite



**St Honorat et les Saints de Lérins**

This icon of St Honorat can be found in the Abbaye de Lérins.

### Ile St-Honorat



**Chapelle St-Caprais**

St Honorat was the disciple of St Caprais during his first visit to Provence.



**The Man in the Iron Mask**

The mystery man was imprisoned in Fort Royal from 1687 to 1698, then moved to the Bastille, where he died in 1703.



**Remains on Ste-Marguerite**

Excavations on the coast near the fort have revealed houses, mosaics, wall paintings and ceramics which date back to around the 3rd century BC.

**VISITORS' CHECKLIST**

**Practical Information**

**Road map** E4. Fort Ste-Marguerite/ Musée de la Mer: **Tel** 04 93 38 55 26. **Open** daily (Oct–May: Tue–Sun). **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec. Monastère Fortifié & Abbaye de Lérins: **Tel** 04 92 99 54 00. **Open** daily. [abbayedelerins.com](http://abbayedelerins.com)

**Transport**

Cannes: quai Laubeuf for Ste-Marguerite (04 92 98 71 36, 04 92 98 71 30 & 04 92 98 71 31); for St-Honorat (04 92 98 71 38).

Allée du Grand Jardin

**Route de la Convention**

Both the islands have many paths leading through the densely wooded interior as well as round the coast.



Chapelle St-Cyprien

La Chapelle de la Trinité



★ **Monastère Fortifié**

Built in 1073 by Abbot Aldebert, to protect the monks from Saracen pirates, this "keep" gives views as far as Esterel. Some rooms may be closed due to restoration work, check before visiting.



0 metres 1000  
0 yards 1000



## 9 Juan-les-Pins

**Road map** E4. 76,770. Palais des Congrès, 60 chemin des Sables (04 22 10 60 01). [antibesjuanlespins.com](http://antibesjuanlespins.com)

To the east of Cannes is the hammerhead peninsula of Cap d'Antibes, a promontory of pines and coves where millionaires' mansions grow. Just next door is one of the finest beaches in the area tucked in the west side of the cape in Golfe-Juan, where Napoleon came ashore from Elba in 1815. This is a 20th-century resort, promoted by American railroad heir Frank Jay Gould, who attracted high society in the 1920s and 1930s when writers F Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway stayed here.

Today, in the high season, it is filled with a young crowd. The area at the junctions of boulevards Baudoin and Wilson is filled with bars. Action centres round the 1988 casino, the Palais des Congrès, and Penedé Gould pine grove, which gives shelter to the International Jazz à Juan Festival (see p37) in July.



A glimpse of nightlife in one of the vibrant streets of Juan-les-Pins

## 10 Antibes

**Road map** E3. 76,770 (Commune of Antibes). 42 ave Robert Soleau (04 22 10 60 10). Mon–Sun (daily Jul & Aug). [antibesjuanlespins.com](http://antibesjuanlespins.com)

Originally the ancient Greek trading post of Antipolis, Antibes became heavily fortified over the centuries, notably by Vauban in the 17th century, who built the main port and Fort Carré, where Napoleon was allegedly temporarily imprisoned.

The old town is pleasant, with a picturesque market place in



Spectacular pleasure yachts in Antibes harbour

cours Masséna. The town's high points include the 12th-century towers of the church and Grimaldi castle on the site of Antipolis. The **Cathédrale Notre-Dame**, which took over the town's watchtower as a belfry, has a wooden crucifix from 1447, a 16th-century Christ and a fine Louis Bréa altarpiece depicting the Virgin Mary.

The Château Grimaldi nearby houses the **Musée Picasso**, which displays over 50 drawings, paintings, and ceramics created by the artist when he used the museum as a studio during 1946.

The exceptional modern art collection includes works by Ernst, Modigliani, Léger, Miró and Nicolas de Staël in the last two years of his life.

Further south, the **Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie** in the fortified Bastion St-André houses Greek and Etruscan finds, including a 3rd-century BC inscription to the spirit of Septentrion, a boy who danced at the Antipolis theatre.

**Marineland** leisure park, north of Antibes, includes a shark-filled aquarium and other attractions such as polar bears and whales.

**Marineland**  
306 ave Mozart. **Tel** 0892 426 226.  
**Open** Feb–Dec: daily. [marineland.fr](http://marineland.fr)

**Musée Picasso**  
Château Grimaldi, Place Mariejol.  
**Tel** 04 93 95 85 98. **Open** Tue–Sun.  
**Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec.

**Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie**  
Bastion St-André. **Tel** 04 93 95 85 98.  
**Open** Feb–Oct: Tue–Sun; Nov–Jan: Tue–Sat. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec.

## 11 Vallauris

**Road map** E3. 31,000. 67 ave George Clemenceau (04 93 63 82 58) & Golfe-Juan Vieux Port (04 93 63 73 12). Mon–Sat. [vallauris-golfe-juan.fr](http://vallauris-golfe-juan.fr)

In summer, the wares of potters spill on to the avenue of this pottery capital. Picasso revitalized this industry, the history of which is traced in the **Musée de la Ceramique**, together with a collection of contemporary pieces. In the square is Picasso's sculpture *L'Homme au Mouton* (1943). *La Guerre et la Paix* (1952) is in the **Musée National Picasso**, housed in the Romanesque chapel of the Château de Vallauris.

**Musée de la Ceramique**  
Pl de la Libération. **Tel** 04 93 64 71 83.  
**Open** Wed–Mon (Jul–Aug: daily).  
**Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec.

**Musée National Picasso**  
Pl de la Libération. **Tel** 04 93 64 71 83.  
**Open** Wed–Mon (Jul–Aug: daily).  
**Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec.



Tourists inspect merchandise in Vallauris, the pottery capital of Provence



## Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Picasso, the giant of 20th-century art, spent most of his later life in Provence, inspired by its luminous light and brilliant colours. He came first to Juan-les-Pins in 1920, and returned to Antibes in 1946 with Françoise Gilot. He was given a studio in the seafront Grimaldi palace, where, after wartime Paris, his work became infused with Mediterranean light and joyful images. No other artist has succeeded with so many art forms, and the Antibes collection is a taste of his versatility. He died at Mougins, aged 92.



**Violin and Sheet of Music** (1912), now in Paris, is a Cubist collage from the period when Picasso experimented with different forms.

**Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)** (1907), now in New York, was the first Cubist painting. Its bold style shocked the art world of the day.



**La Joie de Vivre** (1946), is one of Picasso's main works from the Antibes period, using favourite mythological themes. He is the bearded centaur playing the flute, and Françoise Gilot is the Maenad who dances while two fauns leap about and a satyr plays a panpipe.

**The Goat** (1946), also in Antibes, is one of his best-known images. In 1950 he made his famous goat sculpture using a wicker basket as the ribcage.



**L'Homme au Mouton** (1943) was sculpted in an afternoon. It stands in the main square of Vallauris, also home of *La Guerre et la Paix* (1952).

## 12 Biot

**Road map** E3. 10,300.   
 4 Chemin neuf (04 93 65 78 00).  
 Tue. [biot-tourisme.com](http://biot-tourisme.com)

The picturesque village of Biot, which has 12 themed walks (available at the tourist office), was the main pottery town in the region until Pablo Picasso revived the industry in Vallauris after World War II. Today, Biot is renowned for its bubble-flecked glassware, with eight glassworks, including **La Verrerie de Biot** where visitors can marvel at master craftsmen at work.

Biot was once the domain of the Knights Templar (see p127), and some fortifications remain, such as the 1566 Porte des Miganriers (grenadiers). The church has two fine 16th-century works: *L'Ecce Homo*, attributed to Canavesio, and *La Vierge au Rosaire*, attributed to Louis Bréa.

### The Musée National

**Fernand Léger** contains many of the artist's vibrant works.

### Musée National Fernand Léger

316 chemin du Val-de-Pome. **Tel** 04 92 91 50 20. **Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.   
[musees-nationaux-alpesmaritimes.fr/fleger](http://musees-nationaux-alpesmaritimes.fr/fleger)

### La Verrerie de Biot

Chemin des Combes. **Tel** 04 93 65 03 00. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 & 15–27 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.   
[verrieriebiot.com](http://verrieriebiot.com)



Detail of Léger mosaic from the eastern façade of the museum, Biot

## 13 Villeneuve-Loubet

**Road map** E3. 15,000. 16 ave de la Mer (04 92 02 66 16). Wed & Sat. [villeneuve-tourisme.com](http://villeneuve-tourisme.com)

This old village is dominated by a restored medieval castle built by Romée de Villeneuve. It is also where the celebrated chef, Auguste Escoffier, (1846–1935) was born. The man who invented the *bombe Néro* and *pêche Melba* was *chef de cuisine* at the Grand Hotel, Monte-Carlo before he was persuaded to become head



Chef Auguste Escoffier, born in Villeneuve-Loubet

chef at the Savoy in London. The **Musée Escoffier de l'Art Culinaire**, in the house of his birth, contains many showpieces

in almond paste and icing sugar, and over 1,800 menus, dating back to 1820. Each summer, the town celebrates Escoffier with a gastronomic festival.

### Musée Escoffier de l'Art Culinaire

3 de la rue Escoffier. **Tel** 04 93 20 80 51. **Open** daily (Feb–May & Oct: pm only). **Closed** Nov–Jan, public hols. [fondation-escoffier.org](http://fondation-escoffier.org)

## 14 Vence

**Road map** E3. 19,500. 8 place du Grand-Jardin (04 93 58 06 38). Tue & Fri. [vence-tourisme.fr](http://vence-tourisme.fr)

A delightful old cathedral town on a rocky ridge, Vence has long attracted artists. The English writer D H Lawrence died here in 1930.

The old town is entered by the Porte de Peyra (1441), beside the place du Frêne, named after its giant ash tree planted to commemorate the visits of King François I and Pope Paul III. The 16th-century castle of the lords of Villeneuve, seigneurs of Vence, houses the museum and the **Fondation Emile Hugues**, named after an illustrious former mayor.

The cathedral, one of the smallest in France, stands by the site of the forum of the Roman city of Vintium. Vence was a bishopric from the 4th to the 19th centuries. Its notable prelates included Saint Vêran (d AD 492), and Bishop Godeau (1605–72). The 51 oak and pear chair



## The Creation of Biot Glassware



Biot is the capital of glass-blowing on the coast. Local soils provide sand for glass-making, and typical Biot glass is sturdy, with tiny air bubbles (known as *verre à bulles*). The opening of Léger's museum led to an increased interest in all local crafts, and to the arrival of the Verrerie de Biot workshop in 1956. This revived old methods of making oil lamps, carafes and narrow-spouted *porrons*, from which a jet of liquid can be poured straight into the mouth.

stalls are carved with satirical figures. Marc Chagall designed the mosaic of *Moses in the Bulrushes* in the chapel (1979).

Henri Matisse (see pp86–7) decorated the **Chapelle du Rosaire** between 1947 and 1951 to thank the Dominican nuns who nursed him through an illness. An exhibition is dedicated to Matisse's preparatory drawings for the chapel.

**Fondation Emile Hugues**  
Château de Villeneuve. **Tel** 04 93 24 24 23. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.  

**Chapelle du Rosaire**  
Ave Henri Matisse. **Tel** 04 93 58 03 26. **Open** Tue & Thu: am; Mon–Wed & Sat: pm **Closed** mid-Nov–mid-Dec, public hols. 

## 15 St-Paul de Vence

**Road map** E3.  3,500.  Vence and Nice.  2 rue Grande (04 93 32 86 95).  [saint-pauldevence.com](http://saint-pauldevence.com)

This classic medieval *village perché* (see pp24–5) was built behind the coast to avoid Saracen attack.

Between 1543 and 1547, it was re-ramparted, under François I, to stand up to Savoy, Austria and Piedmont. A celebrity village, it was first “discovered” by Bonnard, Modigliani and other artists of the 1920s. Since that time, many of the rich and famous literati and glitterati have flocked to St-Paul de Vence. Most famously, these personalities slept, dined, and, in the case of Yves Montand and Simone Signoret, had their wedding reception at the



Simone Signoret and Yves Montand in St-Paul de Vence

**Colombe d'Or auberge** (see p210). Today the *auberge* has one of the finest 20th-century private art collections, built up over the years thanks to the owner's friendship with artists and sometimes in lieu of payment of bills. The priceless dining-room décor includes paintings by such world-famous artists as Miró, Picasso and Braque. In the Romanesque and Baroque church, there is a painting, *Catherine of Alexandria*, attributed to Claudio Coello. There are also

gold reliquaries and a fine local 13th-century enamel Virgin. The **Musée d'Histoire Locale** nearby features waxwork costumed characters and a tableaux of scenes from the town's rich past, and the old castle keep adjacent is now used as the town hall. Just in front of the museum, the 17th-century White Penitents chapel was decorated by Belgian artist Jean-Michel Folon.

The main street runs from the 14th-century entrance gate of Porte Royale and past the Grande Fontaine to Porte Sud. This gives on to the cemetery, a resting place for Chagall, the Maeghts and many locals. It also offers wonderful views.

Just outside St-Paul de Vence, on La Gardette Hill, is Josep Lluís Sert's striking concrete and rose **Fondation Maeght** (see pp80–81), one of Europe's finest modern art museums.

**Musée d'Histoire Locale and Chapelle Folon**  
Pl de la Mairie. **Tel** 04 93 32 41 13. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, Nov, 25 Dec. 



Entrance to Chapelle du Rosaire in Vence, decorated by Henri Matisse



## Fondation Maeght

Nestling amid the umbrella pines in the hills above St-Paul de Vence, this small modern art museum is one of the world's finest. Aimé and Marguerite Maeght were Cannes art dealers who numbered the likes of Chagall, Matisse and Miró among their clients and friends. Their private collection formed the basis for the museum, which opened in 1964. Like St-Paul itself, the Maeght has been a magnet for celebrities: Duke Ellington, Samuel Beckett, André Malraux, Merce Cunningham and, of course, a galaxy of the artists themselves have mingled at fundraising events. The museum now receives over 200,000 visitors each year.



### ★ Cour Giacometti

Slender bronze figures by Alberto Giacometti, such as *L'Homme Qui Marche I* (1960), inhabit their own shady courtyard or appear about the grounds as if they have a life of their own.



### La Vie (1964)

Marc Chagall's painting is full of humanity: here is love, parenthood, religion, society, nature; all part of a swirling, circus-like tableau of dancers and musicians, acrobats and clowns.



### Les Renforts (1963)

One of many works of art that greet arriving visitors, Alexander Calder's creation is a "stable" – a counterpart to his more familiar mobiles.

### KEY

- ① **Cowled roofs** allow indirect light to filter into the galleries. The building was designed by Spanish architect Josep Lluís Sert.
- ② **Les Poissons** is a mosaic pool designed by Georges Braque in 1963.
- ③ **Chapelle St-Bernard** was built in memory of the Maeghts' son, who died in 1953, aged 11. Above the altarpiece, a 12th-century Christ, is a stained-glass window by Braque.

### Gallery Guide

The permanent collection is comprised entirely of 20th-century art. The only items on permanent view are the large sculptures in the grounds. The indoor galleries display works from the collection in rotation but, in summer, only temporary exhibitions are held.








**La Partie de Campagne** (1954)  
Fernand Léger lends his unique vision to the classic artistic scene of a country outing.

## VISITORS' CHECKLIST

### Practical Information

623 chemin Gardettes, St-Paul-de-Vence. **Tel** 04 93 32 81 63.

**Open** 10am–6pm daily (Jul–Sep: to 7pm). **Closed** 24 & 31 Dec. 

 Library.  [fondation-maeght.com](http://fondation-maeght.com)



### ★ Labyrinthe de Miró

Joan Miró's *l'Oiseau Lunaire* (1968) is one of the many statues in this multi-levelled maze of trees, water and gargoyles.



### Oiseau dans le Feuillage (1961)

Georges Braque's bird nestles amongst "foliage" made of newsprint. Braque was highly influential in the creation of the Fondation, but died before he could see the museum finally opened to the public.



### L'Été (1917)

Pierre Bonnard settled in Provence for the last 22 years of his life, becoming a close friend of Aimé Maeght. Matisse called Bonnard "the greatest of us all".





Pierre-Auguste Renoir's studio at Les Collettes

## 16 Cagnes-sur-Mer

Road map E3. 47,156.

6 blvd Maréchal Juin (04 93 20 61 64). Tue–Sun. [cagnes-tourisme.com](http://cagnes-tourisme.com)

There are three parts to Cagnes-sur-Mer: Cros-de-Cagnes, the fishing village and beach; Cagnes-Ville, the commercial centre; and Haut-de-Cagnes, the upper town.

Haut-de-Cagnes is the place to head for. This hill-top town is riven with lanes, steps and vaulted passages. It is dominated by the **Château-Musée Grimaldi** but also has some fine Renaissance houses and the church of St-Pierre, where the Grimaldis are entombed.

East of Cagnes-Ville is Les Collettes, built in 1907 among ancient olive trees by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919). He came here, hoping that the climate would relieve his rheumatism and stayed for the rest of his life. A picture of Renoir in his last year shows him still at work, a brush tied to his crippled hand.

Now the **Musée Renoir** at Les Collettes is almost exactly as it was when the artist died. In the house are 14 of Renoir's paintings, as well as works by his friends Bonnard and Dufy. Renoir's beloved olive groves are the setting for the bronze *Venus Victrix* (1915–16).

### Musée Renoir

Chemin des Collettes.

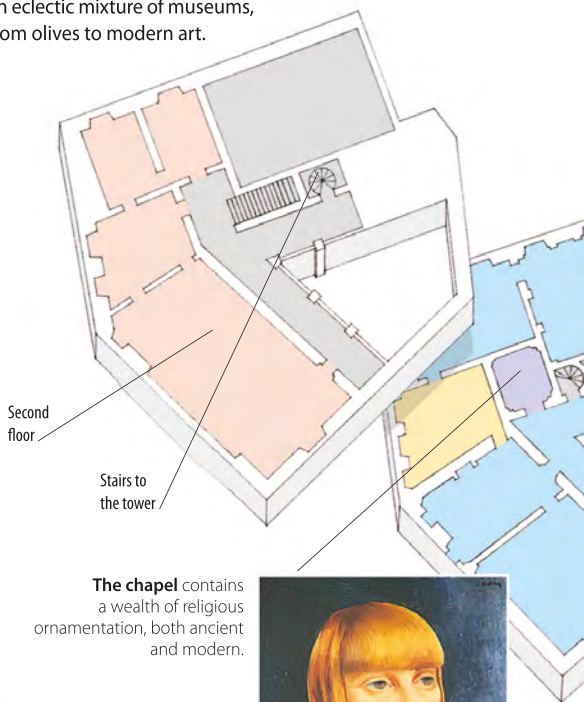
**Tel** 04 93 20 61 07. **Open** Wed–Mon.

**Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.



## Château-Musée Grimaldi

In the Middle Ages the Grimaldi family held sway over many of the Mediterranean coastal towns. The castle that towers over Haut-de-Cagnes was built by Rainier in 1309 as a fortress-prison; in 1620 his descendant, Jean-Henri, transformed it into the handsome palace which shelters behind its dramatic battlements. Mercifully, the château survived the worst ravages of the Revolution and later occupation by Piedmontese troops in 1815. It now houses an eclectic mixture of museums, from olives to modern art.



Second floor

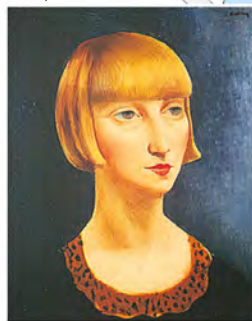
Stairs to the tower

**The chapel** contains a wealth of religious ornamentation, both ancient and modern.



### ★ Donation Suzy Solidor

This 1930s chanteuse was painted by 244 artists during her lifetime. The 40 works on display include portraits by Jean Cocteau (*above*) and Kisling (*above right*).



### Gallery Guide

*The olive tree museum is on the ground floor, along with exhibits about life in the medieval castle. The Suzy Solidor collection is displayed in a former boudoir on the first floor. Selections from the permanent collection of modern Mediterranean art, as well as temporary exhibitions, are on the first and second floors.*





### Renaissance Courtyard

Filled with lush greenery and dappled sunlight, this central space rises past two levels of marble-columned galleries to the open sky.

### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

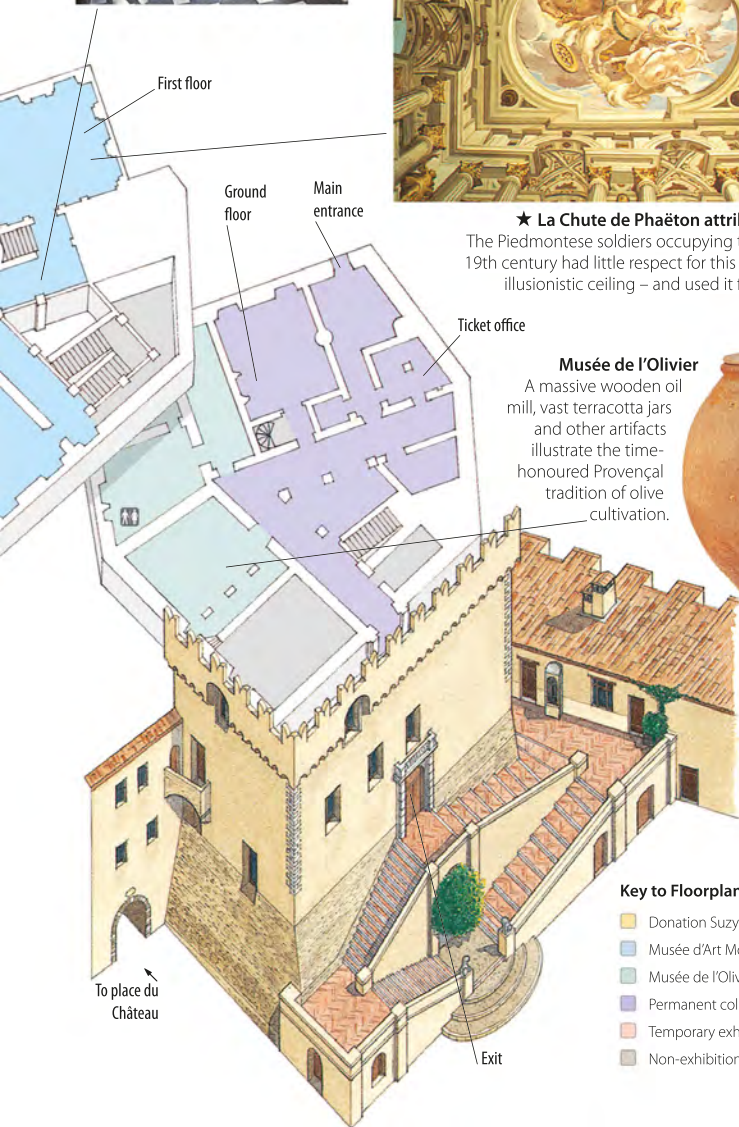
#### Practical Information

Place du Château, Cagnes-sur-Mer.  
**Tel** 04 92 02 47 30. **Open** 10am–noon, 2–6pm Wed–Mon (Nov–Apr: to 5pm). **Closed** 1 Jan, 25 Dec. 📷



#### ★ La Chute de Phaëton attributed to Carlone

The Piedmontese soldiers occupying the château in the 19th century had little respect for this spectacular 1620s illusionistic ceiling – and used it for target practice.



#### Musée de l'Olivier

A massive wooden oil mill, vast terracotta jars and other artifacts illustrate the time-honoured Provençal tradition of olive cultivation.



#### Key to Floorplan

- Donation Suzy Solidor
- Musée d'Art Modern Méditerranéen
- Musée de l'Olivier
- Permanent collection
- Temporary exhibition space
- Non-exhibition space

## ⑩ Street-by-Street: Nice

A dense network of pedestrian alleys, narrow buildings and pastel, Italianate façades make up Vieux Nice or the Old Town. Its streets contain many fine 17th-century Italianate churches, among them St-François-de-Paule, behind the Opéra, and l'Église du Jésus in the rue Droite. Most of the seafront, at quai des Etats-Unis, is taken up by the Ponchettes, a double row of low houses with flat roofs, a fashionable walk before the promenade des Anglais was built. To the east of this lies the Colline du Château, occupied in the 4th century by Greeks who kept fishing nets on the quay.

### Palais de Justice

This awesome building was inaugurated on 17 October 1892, replacing the smaller quarters used before. Nice became part of France. On the same site was a 13th-century church and convent.



### ★ Cours Saleya

The site of an enticing vegetable and flower market, it is also a lively area at night.



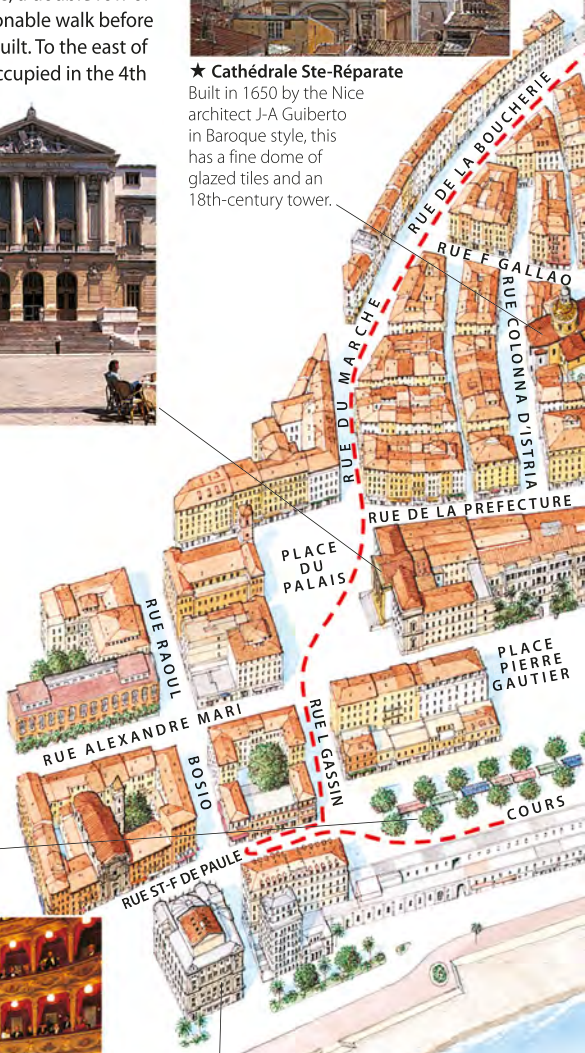
### Opera House

Built in 1855, the ornate and sumptuous Opéra de Nice has its entrance just off the quai des Etats-Unis.



### ★ Cathédrale Ste-Réparate

Built in 1650 by the Nice architect J-A Guiberto in Baroque style, this has a fine dome of glazed tiles and an 18th-century tower.





**Chapelle de la Miséricorde**

Designed in 1740 by Guarino Guarinone, this Baroque masterpiece has a fine Rococo interior. The Nice altarpieces are by Louis Bréa and Jean Miralhet.

**VISITORS' CHECKLIST****Practical Information**

Road map F3. ☎ 347,800.

📍 5 promenade des Anglais (04 92 70 74 07). 🕒 Tue–Sun.

🎪 Carnival (Feb), Nice Jazz Festival (July). 🌐 [nicedtourisme.com](http://nicedtourisme.com)

**Transport**

🚗 7 km (4.5 miles) SW.

🚏 Ave Thiers. 🚶 Quai du Commerce.

**★ Palais Lascaris**

18th-century statues of Mars and Venus flank the staircase. The *trompe l'oeil* ceiling is by Genoese artists.

**Tourist Train**

It passes the market, old town and castle gardens.

**Les Ponchettes**

One of Nice's most unusual architectural features is the row of low white buildings along the seafront once used by fishermen, now a mix of galleries and ethnic restaurants.



0 metres 100  
0 yards 100

**Key**

— Suggested route



## Nice: Musée Matisse

Henri Matisse (1869–1954) first came to Nice in 1916, and lived at several addresses in the city before settling in Cimiez for the rest of his life. His devotion to the city and its “clear, crystalline, precise, limpid” light culminated, just before his death in 1954, with a bequest of works. Nine years later they formed the museum’s core collection, sharing space with archaeological relics in the Villa des Arènes, next to the Cimiez cemetery, which holds the artist’s simple memorial. Since 1993 the entire villa, complete with its new extension, has been devoted to celebrating his life, work and influence.



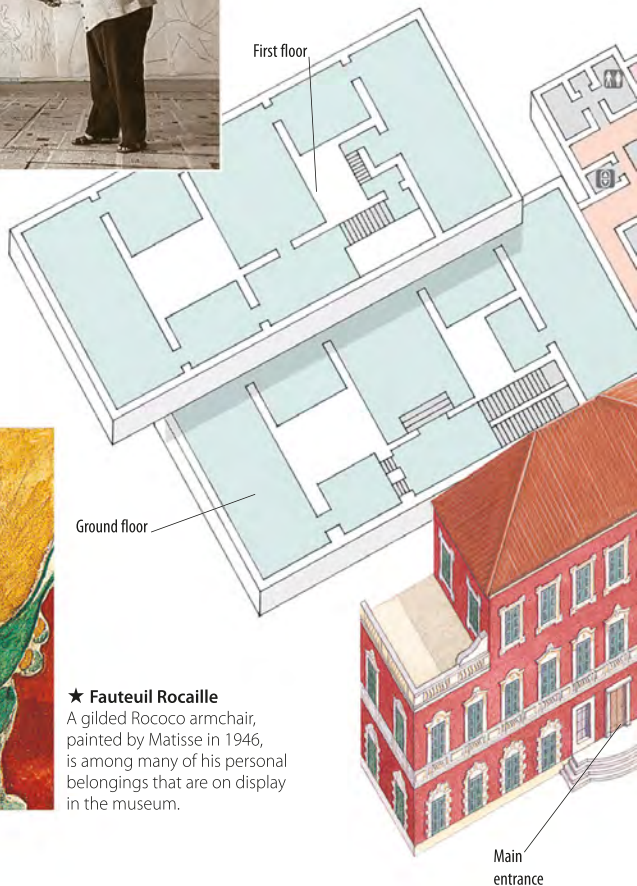
**Matisse in his Studio** (1948)  
The museum’s photographic collection offers a unique insight into the man and his work. Robert Capa’s picture shows him drafting the murals for the Chapelle du Rosaire at Vence (see pp78–9).



★ **Fauteuil Rocaille**  
A gilded Rococo armchair, painted by Matisse in 1946, is among many of his personal belongings that are on display in the museum.



★ **Nu Bleu IV** (1952)  
The celebrated “cut-outs” were made in later life when Matisse was bedridden.



### Gallery Guide

The ground and first floors display works from the museum’s permanent collection, from which items are sometimes loaned out to other museums. The subterranean wing is used for exhibitions devoted to Matisse and his contemporaries.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp198–9 and pp208–11

#### Key to Floorplan

- Permanent collection
- Temporary exhibition space

### Liseuse à la Table Jaune (1944)

The tranquillity of this work belies the troubles that beset Matisse in World War II, including a major operation and the arrest of his wife for Resistance work.



### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

#### Practical Information

164 ave des Arènes de Cimiez, Nice. Tel 04 93 81 08 08. **Open** 10am–6pm Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, Easter Sunday, 1 May, 25 Dec.  [musee-matisse-nice.org](http://musee-matisse-nice.org)

Mezzanine

Children's workshop

### Torse Debout

This bronze of 1909 was given to the museum in 1978 by the artist's son, Jean.



Lower ground floor

Exit

**The upper floors** of the villa hold a library and resource centre for students and researchers.

### Trompe l'Oeil Façade

The decorative stonework that adorns the 17th-century Villa des Arènes is, in fact, a masterful disguise of plain walls, only visible close up.



### ★ Nature Morte aux Grenades (1947)

Ripe pomegranates feature in a favourite setting: an interior with a window to "skies... as brilliantly blue as Matisse's eyes", as the poet Aragon put it.

## Exploring Nice

Nice is France's largest tourist resort and fifth biggest city. It has the second busiest airport in France and more banks, galleries and museums than anywhere else outside the capital. Each year, Nice hosts a lavish pre-Lent carnival, ending with a fireworks display and the Battle of the Flowers (see p228). The city has its own dialect and its own cuisine of *socca*, chickpea pancakes, but the ubiquitous pizza ovens lend a rich Italian flavour.



Beach and promenade des Anglais, one of the major attractions of Nice

### A glimpse of the city

Nice lies at the foot of a hill known as the Château, after the castle that once stood there. The flower and vegetable market (Tue–Sun) in the Cours Saleya is a shoppers' paradise. The fashionable quarter is the Cimiez district, on the hills

overlooking the town, where the old monastery of **Notre-Dame** is worth a visit. Lower down, next to the **Musée Matisse** (see pp86–7), are the remains of a Roman amphitheatre and baths. Artifacts are on show at the nearby archaeological museum.

The city's most remarkable feature is the 19th-century promenade des Anglais, which runs right along the seafront. Built in the 1820s, it is today a pleasant 5-km (3-mile) highway. Until World War II, Nice was popular with aristocrats. Queen Victoria stayed here in 1895, and in 1912, Tsar Nicholas II built the onion-domed **Cathédrale Orthodoxe Russe** (Ave Nicolas II, Bd Tzarévitch; 09 81 09 53 45;

open daily) in St-Philippe. At the heart of the city, the promenade du Paillon is a strip of parkland with a central waterway that runs from the old town, through the centre to the promenade des Anglais. It also hosts arts projects, sports events and includes a children's park.

### Hotel Négresco

37 promenade des Anglais. Tel 04 93 16 64 00. See *Where to Stay* (see p198).

This palatial hotel was built in 1912 for Henri Négresco, once a gypsy-violin serenader, who went bankrupt eight years later. In the *salon royale* hangs a Baccarat chandelier made from 16,000



Ornate statue at the fountain in place Masséna

## Nice

- ① Hotel Négresco
- ② Villa Masséna
- ③ Musée Chagall
- ④ Cathédrale Ste-Réparate
- ⑤ Palais Lascaris
- ⑥ Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (MAMAC)



Key to Symbols see back flap

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp198–9 and pp208–11



stones. The infamous American dancer Isadora Duncan spent her last months here in 1927. She died tragically outside the hotel when her trailing scarf caught in the wheel of her Bugatti and broke her neck.

### Villa Masséna

65 rue de France. **Tel** 04 93 91 19 10.

**Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, Easter, 1 May, 25 Dec. 

This 19th-century Italianate villa belonged to the great-grandson of Napoleon's Nice-born Marshal. Its Empire-style main hall has a bust of the Marshal by Canova. Among its exhibits are religious works, paintings by Niçois primitives, white-glazed faïence pottery (see *p190*) and Josephine's gold cloak.

### Musée Chagall

36 ave Dr Ménard. **Tel** 04 93 53 87 20.


**Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.   

 in summer. [www.musee-chagall.fr](http://www.musee-chagall.fr)

This museum houses the largest collection of Marc Chagall's work. There are 17 canvases from his Biblical Message series, including five versions of *The Song of Songs*.

Three stained-glass windows depict the *Creation of the World*, and the large mosaic reflected in the pool is of the prophet Elijah.

### Cathédrale Ste-Réparate

3, place Rossetti. **Tel** 08 92 70 74 07 for guided tours. **Open** daily. 


This 17th-century Baroque building has a handsome tiled dome. The interior is lavishly decorated with plasterwork, marble and original panelling.



Russian Orthodox cathedral in St-Philippe

### Palais Lascaris

15 rue Droite. **Tel** 04 93 62 72 40.



**Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, Easter Sunday, 1 May, 25 Dec. 

This salon of this stuccoed 17th-century palace has a *trompe l'oeil* ceiling, said to be by Carlone. The palace now houses a museum of musical instruments.

### Musée des Arts Asiatiques

405 promenade des Anglais.

**Tel** 04 92 29 37 00. **Open** Wed–Mon.

**Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.   

This museum has outstanding examples of ancient and 20th-century art from across Asia in Kenzo Tange's uncluttered white marble and glass setting.

### Musée des Beaux-Arts

33 ave des Baumettes. **Tel** 04 92 15

28 28. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, Easter, 1 May, 25 Dec.    

[www.musee-beaux-arts-nice.org](http://www.musee-beaux-arts-nice.org)

Once home to a Ukranian princess, this 1878 villa houses a collection begun with a donation by Napoleon III. Three centuries of art cover work by Jules Chéret, Carle Van Loo, Van Dongen, and Impressionists and Post-Impressionists such as Bonnard, Dufy and Vuillard.

### Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (MAMAC)

Place Yves Klein. **Tel** 04 97 13 42 01.

**Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, Easter, 1 May, 25 Dec.    

Housed in a strikingly original building with marble-faced towers and glass passageways, the collection reflects the history of the *avant-garde*, including Pop Art by Andy Warhol and work by Ecole de Nice artists such as Yves Klein.







Yves Klein's *Anthropométrie* (1960) in the Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain



Amazing hillside view over St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat

## 18 St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat

Road map F3.  1,913.  Nice.

 Beaulieu-sur-Mer.  St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat.  5/59 ave Denis Séméria (04 93 76 08 90).  [saintjeanccapferat-tourisme.fr](http://www.saintjeanccapferat-tourisme.fr)

 [saintjeanccapferat-tourisme.fr](http://www.saintjeanccapferat-tourisme.fr)

The Cap Ferrat peninsula is a playground for the rich, with exclusive villas, luxury gardens and fabulous yachts in the St-Jean marina.

King Léopold II of Belgium started the trend in the 19th century, when he built his Les Cèdres estate on the west side of the cape, overlooking Villefranche. Later residents have included the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, David Niven and Edith Piaf. High hedges and gates protect these villas, but one of the finest, housing the **Musée Ephrussi de Rothschild** (see *pp90–91*), is open to the public.

There is a superb view from the little garden of the 1837 lighthouse at the end of the cape. A pretty walk leads around the Pointe St-Hospice, east of the port at **St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat**, a former fishing village with old houses fronting the harbour.

For a fee, you can enjoy one of the town's two private beaches: **Plage de Passable** or **Plage de Paloma**. Both offer sun loungers, water sports and boat excursions.

### Plage de Passable

Chemin de Passable. **Tel** 04 93 76 06 17.

**Open** daily (Easter–Sep).   

### Plage de Paloma

1 route de Saint Hospice. **Tel** 04 93

01 64 71. **Open** daily (Easter–Sep).

## St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat: Ephrussi de Rothschild Villa and Gardens

Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild (1864–1934) could have led a life of indolent luxury, but her passions for travel and fine art, combined with an iron will, led to the creation of the most perfect “dream villa” of the Riviera, Villa Ile-de-France. Despite interest shown by King Léopold II of Belgium for the land, she succeeded in purchasing it and later supervised every aspect of the villa’s creation. It was completed in 1912 and, although she never used it as a primary residence, Béatrice hosted garden parties and soirées here until 1934. The villa remains a monument to a woman of spirit and vision.



### ★ Fragonard Room

The fine collection of working drawings by Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) includes this sketch, wryly named *If he were as faithful to me*.



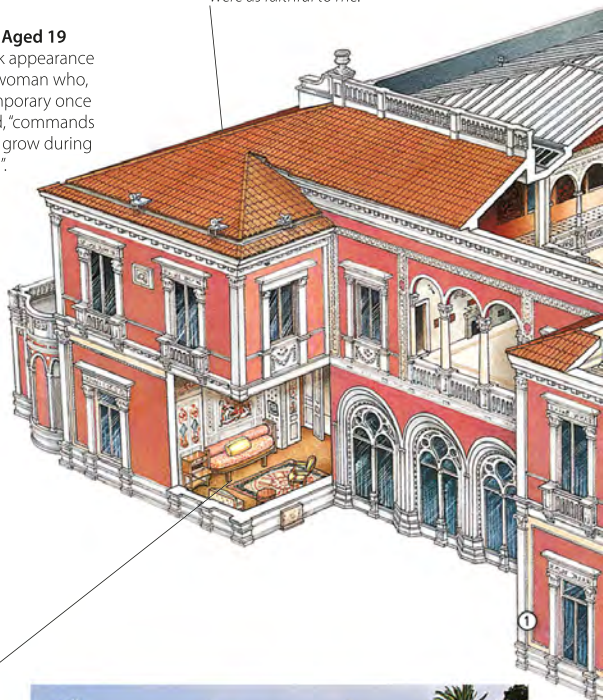
### Béatrice, Aged 19

Her meek appearance belies a woman who, a contemporary once observed, “commands flowers to grow during the Mistral”.



### Béatrice’s Boudoir

Béatrice’s writing desk is a beautiful piece of 18th-century furniture by cabinetmaker Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806).



### Villa Ile-de-France

Béatrice christened her villa following a pattern established by another villa she owned named “Rose de France”. Its stucco walls are coloured in a lovely shade of rose pink.

### KEY

- ① **The State Room** looks out on to the French garden, combining the pleasures of a sea breeze with the comfort of elegant surroundings.
- ② **First-floor apartments**





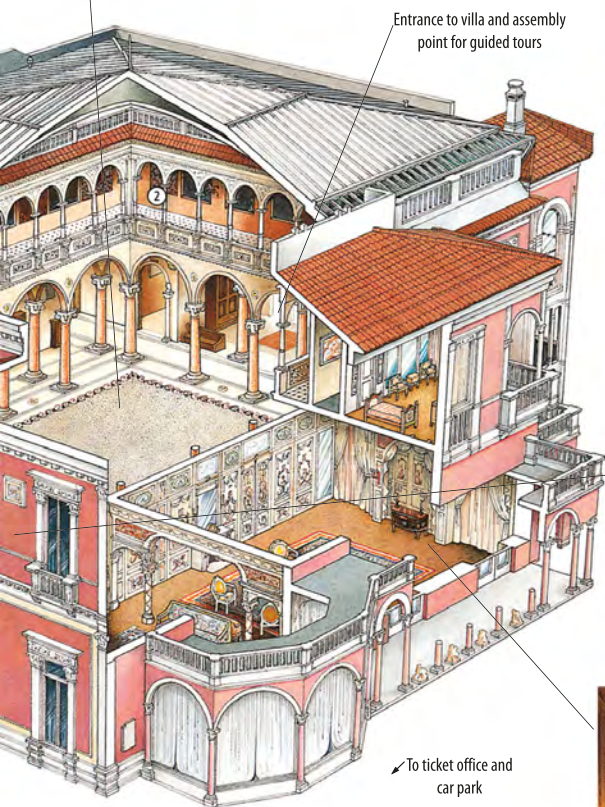
### Covered Patio

Combining Moorish and Italian elements, this airy space rises the full height of the villa. The marble columns, mosaic flooring and diffused light complement the Renaissance religious works on the walls.

### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

#### Practical Information

1 ave Ephrussi de Rothschild, St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat. **Tel** 04 93 01 33 09. **Open** Feb–Jun & Sep–Oct: 10am–6pm daily, Jul–Aug: 10am–7pm daily, Nov–Jan: 2–6pm.   [villa-ephrussi.com](http://villa-ephrussi.com)



Entrance to villa and assembly point for guided tours

➔ To ticket office and car park



### Cabinet des Singes

Béatrice's love of animals is epitomized by this tiny room. Its wooden panels are painted with monkeys dancing to the music of the diminutive 18th-century Meissen monkey orchestra.

### ★ Gardens

The main garden is modelled on a ship's deck – Béatrice employed extra staff to wander around in sailors' uniforms. There are nine themed gardens, including Japanese and Florentine gardens.



### ★ State Room

Like every room in the villa, the decor here is lavish, with wood ornamentation from the Crillon in Paris, Savonnerie carpets, and chairs upholstered in 18th-century Savonnerie tapestries.



## 19 Villefranche-sur-Mer

Road map F3. 5,795.

Jardin François Binon (04 93 01 73 68). Wed, Sat, Sun.

[villefranche-sur-mer.com](http://villefranche-sur-mer.com)

This unspoilt town overlooks a beautiful natural harbour, deep enough to be a naval port, with a lively waterfront lined by bars and cafés.

**Chapelle St-Pierre** on the quay, once used for storing fishing nets, was renovated in 1957, when Jean Cocteau added lavish frescoes. Steep lanes climb up from the harbour, turning into tunnels beneath the tightly packed buildings. The vaulted rue Obscure has provided shelter from bombardment as recently as World War II. The Baroque **Eglise St-Michel** contains a 16th-century carving of St Rock and his dog and a 1790 organ.

Within the 16th-century Citedelle de St-Elme are the chapel, open-air theatre and museums.

### Chapelle St-Pierre

4 quai Amiral Courbet. **Tel** 04 93 76 90 70. **Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** mid-Nov–mid-Dec, 25 Dec.

## 20 Beaulieu-sur-Mer

Road map F3. 3,800.

PI Clemenceau (04 93 01 02 21).

daily. [beaulieusurmer.fr](http://beaulieusurmer.fr)

Hemmed in and protected by a rock face, this is one of the Riviera's warmest resorts in winter, with two beaches: the Baie des Fourmis and, by the port, Petite Afrique. The casino,



Fishing in the natural harbour at Villefranche-sur-Mer

formal gardens and the Belle Epoque Rotunda, now a conference centre and museum, add to Beaulieu's old-fashioned air. Among its hotels is La Réserve, founded by Gordon Bennett, the owner of the *New York Herald*. As a stunt, in 1871, he sent journalist H M Stanley to rescue the Scottish missionary and explorer Dr Livingstone, who was looking for the source of the Nile.

Beaulieu-sur-Mer is the site of the **Villa Grecque Kérylos**. Built by archeologist Théodore Reinach, it resembles an ancient Greek villa. Authentic techniques and precious materials were

used to create lavish mosaics, frescoes and inlaid furniture. There are also numerous original Greek ornaments, and an antique sculpture gallery.

### Villa Grecque Kérylos

Impasse Gustave Eiffel. **Tel** 04 93 01 01 44. **Open** daily.

[villakerylos.fr](http://villakerylos.fr)

## 21 Eze

Road map F3. 2,574.

PI Général de Gaulle (04 93 41 26 00). Sun. [eze-tourisme.com](http://eze-tourisme.com)

Eze, a dramatic *village perché* (see pp24–5) is a cluster of ancient buildings some 429 m (1,407 ft) above the sea. The **Jardin Exotique**, built around the ruins of a 14th-century castle, offers stunning views as far as Corsica.

Flower-decked, car-free streets lead to an 18th-century church. Its bust of Christ is made from olive wood that survived the terrible fires that raged close by in 1986.

### Jardin Exotique

Rue du Château. **Tel** 04 93 41 10 30.

**Open** daily. **Closed** Christmas week.



Steps of the elegant Belle Epoque Rotunda (1886), Beaulieu-sur-Mer

## 22 La Turbie

**Road map** F3. 3,200. 2 pl  
Detras (04 93 41 21 15). Thu.  
 [ville-la-turbie.fr](http://ville-la-turbie.fr)

High above Monte-Carlo is one of the finest views on the Riviera, reached by a stretch of the Grande Corniche that crosses ravines and tunnels through mountains. The village of La Turbie, scented with bougainvillea, has two medieval gateways. Its oldest houses, dating from the 11th–13th centuries, are on the Roman Via Julia.

### Musée du Trophée d'Auguste

18 cours Albert 1er. Tel 04 93 41 20 84.

**Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec.

by appt.

[la-turbie.monuments-nationaux.fr](http://la-turbie.monuments-nationaux.fr)

The most spectacular feature of La Turbie is the Trophée d'Auguste, a huge Roman monument, built out of white local stone, which marked the division between Italy and Gaul. Its construction was ordered in 6 BC by the Roman Senate to



Monument detail, Trophée d'Auguste

honour Augustus's victory in 13 BC over 44 fractious Ligurian tribes. The original trophy was 50-m (164-ft) tall and had niches with statues of each of the campaign's victors. There were stairs leading to all parts of the structure.

When the Romans left, the trophy was gradually dismantled. In the 4th century, St Honorat chipped away at the monument because it had become the object of pagan worship. Later it served both as a fort and as a stone quarry. It was partly

destroyed on the orders of Louis XIV, who feared it would fall into enemy hands during the invasion of Provence by Savoy in 1707. Restoration was first begun in 1905, and continued in 1923 by an American, Edward Tuck. Today, the triumphal inscription of Roman victory has been restored to its original position.

A small museum on the site documents the history of the trophy, with fragments of the monument, pieces of sculpture, inscriptions, drawings and a small-scale model.

The spectacular panorama from the terraces of the trophy takes in Cap Ferrat and Eze. Monaco, at 480 m (1,575 ft) below, seems breathtakingly close, like an urban stage set seen from a seat in the gods.

Among visitors impressed with La Turbie and its trophy, was the poet Dante (1265–1321), and his comments are inscribed on a plaque in rue Comte-de-Cessole. From the end of this street there is a fine view of the monument.

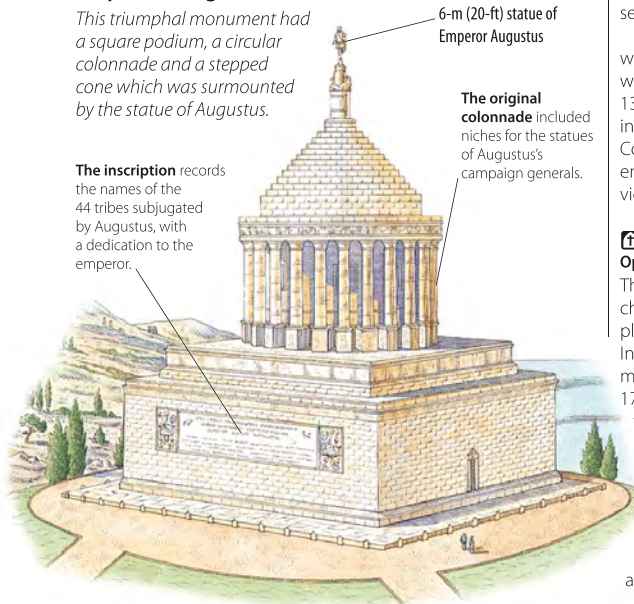
### Trophée d'Auguste

*This triumphal monument had a square podium, a circular colonnade and a stepped cone which was surmounted by the statue of Augustus.*

**The inscription** records the names of the 44 tribes subjugated by Augustus, with a dedication to the emperor.

6-m (20-ft) statue of Emperor Augustus

**The original colonnade** included niches for the statues of Augustus's campaign generals.



### Eglise St-Michel-Archange

**Open** daily.

The 18th-century Nice Baroque church was built with stones plundered from the trophy. Inside there is an altar of multi-coloured marble and a 17th-century onyx and agate table, which was used for communion. Its religious paintings include two works by the Niçois artist Jean-Baptiste Van Loo, a portrait of St Mark attributed to Veronese, and a Piéta from the Bréa School.



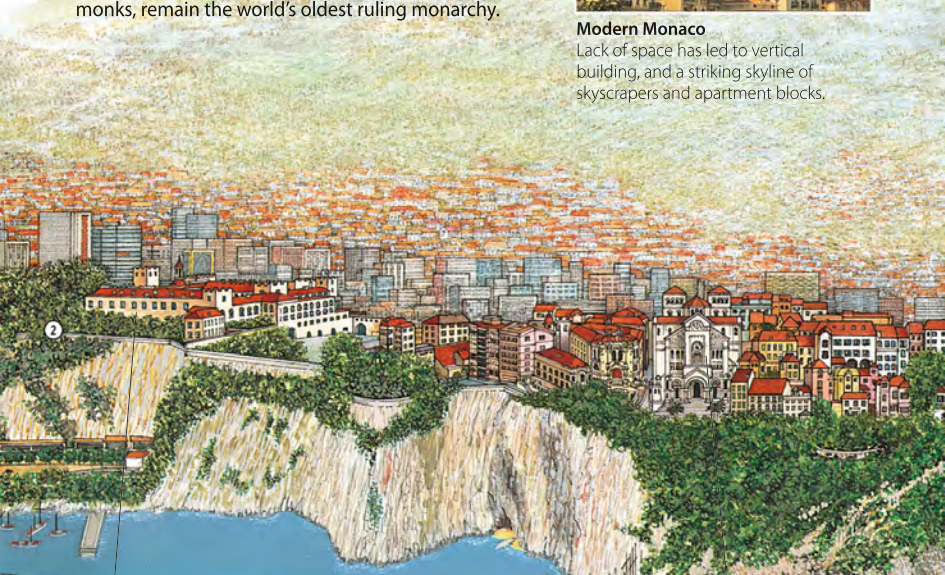
## 23 Monaco

If you come to Monaco by car, you may well travel in on the Moyenne Corniche, one of the world's most beautiful coastal highways. Arriving amid the skyscrapers of present-day Monaco, it is hard to imagine its turbulent history, much of it centred on Monaco-Ville. The palace, cathedral and museums are all in this old part of town, set on the Rock, a sheer-sided, flat-topped finger of land extending 792 m (2,600 ft) into the sea. First a Greek and later a Roman colony, it was bought from the Genoese in 1309 by François Grimaldi. In spite of family feuds and at least one political assassination, the Grimaldis, whose crest shows two sword-waving monks, remain the world's oldest ruling monarchy.



### Modern Monaco

Lack of space has led to vertical building, and a striking skyline of skyscrapers and apartment blocks.



### Palais Princier

The Grimaldis have ruled from here since the 14th century. The palace dates from the 16th–17th centuries but its towers are Genoese of 1215. The constitution insists it is guarded by French *carabiniers*. (See p98).



### Cathédrale

This Neo-Romanesque construction in cream-coloured stone sits on a rocky spur. Among its treasures are two early 16th-century screens by Bréa, *La Pietà* and *St-Nicolas*. (See p98).

### KEY

- ① Museum of Vieux Monaco
- ② Monaco Top Cars Collection, is an automobile museum displaying Prince Rainier III's private collection of more than one hundred antique cars.



### Musée Océanographique

Erected on a sheer cliff, high above the Mediterranean, Monaco has one of the best aquaria in Europe.

It is also used as a scientific research institute. (See p98).



### Théâtre du Fort Antoine

This ancient fort has been converted into a theatre which shows a wide range of productions in summer.



### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

#### Practical Information

Road map F3. 35,000. 2a  
blvd des Moulins (00 377 92 16 61 16). daily. Festival du Cirque (Jan); Grand Prix (May); Fête Nationale (19 Nov).

[visitmonaco.com](http://visitmonaco.com)

#### Transport

15 km (9 miles) SW Nice.

Pl Ste Dévote (08 36 35 35 35)



### Typical Old Town Villa

Hidden in a labyrinth of passages are fountains, tiny squares and elegant façades.

### The Royal Family

Monaco was ruled from 1949 by the businesslike Prince Rainier Louis Henri Maxence Bertrand de Grimaldi. He was the 26th ruling prince, a descendant of the Grimaldi who, disguised as a monk, entered the Monaco fortress in 1297. At that time the territory extended to Antibes and Menton. Prince Rainier's wife, former film star Grace Kelly, whom he married in 1956, died tragically in 1982. Their son, Albert, inherited the \$200 million throne on Rainier's death in 2005. In July 2011, Albert married former Olympic swimmer and model Charlene Wittstock in a civil ceremony, held in the Palais Princier. In 2014, Albert and Charlene became parents to twins, Jacques and Gabriella.



Prince Rainier III and Grace Kelly at their engagement party in 1956

## Monaco: Monte-Carlo

The dramatic heights of Monte-Carlo are the best-known area of Monaco. People flock to the annual car rally in January and many of the world's greatest singers perform here in the opera season. Monte-Carlo is named after Charles III, who opened the first casino in 1856, to save himself from bankruptcy. Such was his success that in 1883 he abolished taxation. Although Queen Victoria thought Monte-Carlo a den of iniquity, her view was not shared by other aristocrats, including Edward VII, who were regular visitors. The stunning Casino and Opera House were built by Charles Garnier, architect of the Paris Opéra. Between Monaco-Ville and Monte-Carlo lies La Condamine, a shopping and commercial centre surrounding the luxury yachts.



**View of Monte-Carlo**  
It is worth pausing at La Turbie (see p93) to admire the panorama.



### Jardin Exotique

Plants normally grown in balmy climates flourish here, and its grottoes housed prehistoric animals and humans 200,000 years ago (see p98).



### KEY

- ① Palais Princier
- ② La Turbie
- ③ Eglise Ste-Dévote
- ④ Hôtel Hermitage
- ⑤ Centre de Congrès

### La Condamine

The quays are pleasant yacht-watching promenades laid out by Albert I. The current prince added a water sports pool, and it is also a popular setting for funfairs.





2



## VISITORS' CHECKLIST

**Practical Information**

**Road map** F3. **📍** 2a blvd des Moulins (00 377 99 99 20 00).

Grimaldi Forum (cultural centre): **Tel** 00 377 99 99 3000.

**Open** daily. 📅 Monte-Carlo Rally (Jan); Festival International de Feux d'Artifice (fireworks) (Jul–Aug). 📺 daily.

**Transport**

🚏 Pl Ste Dévote.

**Le Brasserie du Café de Paris**

Ladies' man Edward VII was a regular visitor to this renovated *belle époque* triumph. The dessert *crêpe suzette* was named after one companion.

**Salle Garnier**

Designed by Charles Garnier in 1878, this was where ballet innovators such as Diaghilev and Nijinsky congregated.

**Casino**

In a 3-day gambling spree in 1891, Charles Deville Wells turned £4,000 into a million francs, inspiring the song, *The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte-Carlo* (see p98).





## Exploring Monaco


After the Vatican, Monaco is the world's smallest sovereign state. It covers 1.95 sq km (0.75 sq miles), about half the size of New York City's Central Park. Its inhabitants, 20 per cent Monégasque citizens, pay no taxes and enjoy the world's highest per capita income. Monégasque, a Ligurian language derived from Provençal French and Genoese Italian, is reflected in street names, such as *piaca* for place, *carrigu* for rue, but the official language is French. The euro is used here and most of France's laws apply. Monaco's road network is complex, so drivers should plan routes with care.



Monaco Grand Prix, one of the major attractions of Monte-Carlo

### Palais Princier

Pl du Palais. **Tel** 00 377 93 25 18 31.

**Open** Apr–Oct: daily. 

Monaco's seat of government, this castle-palace is protected by cannons donated by Louis XIV, and sentries who change daily at 11:55am. The interior features priceless furniture and frescoes.


### Museum of Vieux Monaco


2 rue Emile de Loth. **Tel** 00 377 93 50 57 28. **Open** Jun–Sep: Wed–Fri.

The museum houses a range of exhibits such as paintings, ceramics, furniture and costumes, demonstrating the heritage of Monaco. An initiative taken by the representatives of the old Monégasque families to preserve their national identity, the place allows visitors to catch a glimpse of daily life in the old days.

### Casino

Pl du Casino. **Tel** 00 377 98 06 21 75.

**Open** from 2pm daily. 

 [casino-montecarlo.com](http://casino-montecarlo.com)


Renovated in 1878 by Charles Garnier (see p55), the casino sits on a terrace with superb views of Monaco. Its interior is still decorated in *belle époque* style. Roulette is played in the opulent Salle Médecin, blackjack in

the Salons Privés and American games in the Salle des Amériques.

### Nouveau Musée National de Monaco

Villa Sauber, 17 ave Princesse Grace.


**Tel** 00 377 98 98 91 26. Villa Paloma, 56 blvd du Jardin-Exotique. **Tel** 00 377 98 98 48 60. **Open** for exhibitions only, check website for details. **Closed** 1 Jan, Grand Prix, 19 Nov, 25 Dec. 

 [nmm.m.mc](http://nmm.m.mc)

Two spectacular villas house this museum charting the cultural, historical and artistic heritage of the Principality. The Villa Sauber, a fine example of *belle époque* architecture, hosts entertainment exhibits. Villa Paloma, with its beautiful Italian garden, shows modern and contemporary art, architecture and design.

### Cathédrale

Ave St-Martin. **Tel** 00 377 93 30 87 70.

**Open** daily. 


The 12th-century church of St-Nicolas was replaced by this 19th-century Neo-Romanesque building in La Turbie stone. Its old altarpiece, by Louis Bréa, is by the ambulatory, with its tombs of princes and bishops. The much-mourned Princess Grace is buried here.




Renowned French marine explorer Jacques Cousteau

### Musée Océanographique

Ave St-Martin. **Tel** 00 377 93 15 36 00.

**Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, Grand Prix, 25 Dec. 


 [oceanomc.com](http://oceanomc.com)

Founded by Prince Albert I in 1910, this cliff-top museum has an aquarium filled with rare marine plants and animals, a collection of shells, coral and pearls, and a life-sized model of a giant squid. Marine explorer Jacques Cousteau was director here for 30 years until 1988. The roof terrace offers superb views.

### Jardin Exotique

62 blvd du Jardin Exotique. **Tel** 00 377

93 15 29 80. **Open** daily. **Closed** 19 Nov, 25 Dec. 

 [jardin-exotique.mc](http://jardin-exotique.mc)

A vast array of magnificent tropical and sub-tropical plants grow here. The adjoining **Grotte de l'Observatoire**, is where prehistoric animals lived 200,000 years ago. The **Musée d'Anthropologie Préhistorique**, accessible via the gardens, displays prehistoric tools, figurines and bones.



The casino's magnificent Salle Médecin

## 24 Peillon

**Road map** F3. 1,449. 4 carriera Centrale (06 24 97 42 25)

[tourismepaca.fr](http://tourismepaca.fr)

At a level of 373 m (1,225 ft), this pretty *village perché* is said by locals to mark the extremity of the inhabited world. Its streets are stepped and narrow, with houses that have scarcely changed since the Middle Ages. There is an attractive cobbled square with fine views, and the 18th-century parish church has an unusual octagonal lantern. But most impressive of all are Giovanni Canavesio's frescoes in the Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs. Peillon is ideally placed for woodland walks leading to both Peille and La Turbie.



Ancient arch across a narrow street in Peillon

## 25 Peille

**Road map** F3. 2,343. 15 rue Centrale (04 93 82 14 40). [peille.fr](http://peille.fr)

Peille is a charming medieval village with a view from its war memorial across the Peillon Valley and as far as the Baie des Anges. Behind the village looms the vast Pic de Baudon, rising to 1,264 m (4,160 ft).

The town is full of cobbled alleys and covered passages. At the end of place A-Laugier, beyond a Gothic fountain, two arches beneath a house rest on a Romanesque pillar.

The Counts of Provence were lords of the castle, and the 12th-century church of Ste-Marie has a picture of Peille in the Middle Ages. There is also a fine 16th-century



The Gorges de la Vésubie in the pine-forested Vallée de la Vésubie

altarpiece by Honoré Bertone. The Hôtel de Ville is in the domed 18th-century former Chapelle de St-Sébastien, and there is a museum in rue de la Turbie.

## 26 Lucéram

**Road map** F3. 1,234. Maison de Pays, Pl Adrien Barralis (04 93 79 46 50). [luceram.fr](http://luceram.fr)

In the midst of this pretty, Italianate village is the tiled roof of the 15th-century Eglise Ste-Marguerite, which contains art by Nice's Primitive masters, notably Louis Bréa, the artist of the 10-panelled altarpiece, who made Lucéram a centre for religious painting. Other treasures include a silver statue of the Tarascon dragon and Ste Marguerite (see p144). The church is the setting for a Christmas service, where shepherds, accompanied by flutes and tambourines, bring lambs and fruit as offerings.



Italian-style houses in Lucéram, set between two ravines

## 27 Vallée de la Vésubie

Nice. St-Martin-Vésubie. Hotel de Ville, St-Martin-Vésubie (04 93 03 60 10). [vesubie-mercantour.com](http://vesubie-mercantour.com)

Some of the most attractive landscape around Nice can be uncovered and enjoyed in the valley of the river Vésubie, with its dense pine forests, alpine pastures, peaks and cascades. The river rises high in the snowy Alps near the Italian border, courses past Roquebillière to the west of the Parc National du Mercantour (see p101) and dives through the Gorges de la Vésubie before entering the river Var, 24 km (15 miles) north of Nice airport.

The Vésubie is created from the Madone de Fenestre and the Boréon torrents, which meet at St-Martin-Vésubie. This popular summer mountaineering centre is surrounded by waterfalls, summits and lakes. In its fine 17th-century church is a 12th-century statue of Notre-Dame-de-Fenestre. Each year this statue is carried to the Chapelle de la Madone de Fenestre, 12 km (8 miles) to the east, for a three-month stay.

The Gorges de la Vésubie begins at St-Jean-la-Rivière, and there is a spectacular panorama at la Madonne d'Utelle, above the fortified village of Utelle. In places, the dramatic gorge, etched with coloured rock, runs up to 244 m (800 ft) deep. Sadly, the road beside it has few stopping places from which to admire the view.



## Skiing in the Alpes d'Azur

Provence offers a wide range of skiing activities in the Alpes d'Azur. Around one hour from the coast, in breathtaking mountain scenery, there are more than 20 resorts, with over 250 ski-runs. The *après-ski* includes ice-skating, riding on snowmobiles and a chance to sample traditional Alpine food such as delicious *raclette* melted cheese. In summer, Auron and Isola 2000, resorts in the Parc National du Mercantour, offer swimming, cycling and horse-riding in dramatically contrasting surroundings to the Côte d'Azur.



Snowbound Valberg, a winter resort since 1935

### Auron

**Altitude** 1,600 m (5,250 ft) – 2,100 m (6,890 ft).

**Location** 97 km (60 miles) from Nice via RN 202 and D 2205.

**Ski Runs** 43 runs – 9 black, 15 red, 16 blue, 3 green.

**Ski Lifts** 20 including 8 chair lifts and 3 cable cars.

### Isola 2000

**Altitude** 2,000 m (5,250 ft) – 2,310 m (7,584 ft).

**Location** 90 km (56 miles) from Nice via RN 202, D 2205 and D 97.

**Ski Runs** 42 runs – 3 black, 11 red, 21 blue, 7 green.

**Ski Lifts** 22 including 2 cable cars and 9 chairlifts. Funicular railway.

### Valberg

**Altitude** 1,500 m (4,921 ft) – 2,100 m (6,890 ft).

**Location** 86 km (51 miles) from Nice via RN 202, CD 28, CD 202 or CD 30.

**Ski Runs** 56 runs – 6 black, 28 red, 10 blue, 12 green.

**Ski Lifts** 23 including 6 chair lifts.



Climbing a frozen waterfall, or "frozen fall climbing", in one of the many alpine resorts



Getting ready for a few hours of snow-shoe trekking



Snowboarding in the alpine resort of Isola 2000

### Alpine Activities

Auron	Isola 2000	Valberg	Alpine Activities
●	●	●	Cross-country skiing
●	●	●	Disabled skiing
●	●	●	Horse riding
●	●	●	Horse-driven buggy rides
●	●	●	Ice circuit driving
●	●	●	Ice skating
●	●	●	Kart Cross on ice
●	●	●	Mono-skiing
●	●	●	Night skiing
●	●	●	Skijoring
●	●	●	Ski jumping
●	●	●	Ski school
●	●	●	Ski touring
●	●	●	Snowboarding
●	●	●	Snow scooter circuits
●	●	●	Snow-shoe trekking
●	●	●	Speed ski school
●	●	●	Aquatic centre/pool, sauna and Jacuzzi

## 28 Forêt de Turini

**Road map** F3. 🚗 l'Esçarène, Sospel.  
 🚗 Moulinet, Sospel. 📍 La Bollène  
 (04 93 03 60 54).

Between the warm coast and the chilly Alps, from the Gorges de la Vésubie to the Vallée de la Bévéra, lies this humid, 3,497-sq km (1,350-sq mile) forest. Beech, maple and sweet chestnut thrive here, and pines grow to great heights. At the forest's north-eastern edge is the 1,889-m (6,197-ft) mountain of l'Authion, site of heavy fighting in the German retreat of 1945. Casualties are recorded on a war memorial.

The neighbouring Pointe des Trois-Communes, at 2,082 m (6,830 ft), offers superb views of the pre-Alps of Nice and the peaks of the Mercantour national park.

## 29 Le Parc National du Mercantour

**Road map** E2 & F2. 🚗 Nice.  
 🚗 St Etienne de Tinée, Auron.  
 📍 Maison du Parc, St Etienne de Tinée  
 (04 93 02 42 27). 🌐 [mercantour.eu](http://mercantour.eu)

Scoured by icy glaciers and bristling with rocky summits, this sparsely populated park covers 70,000 ha (270 sq miles). Among its unusual wildlife are the chamois, the ibex and the *mouflon*, a sheep which originated in Corsica. Sometimes visible in the mornings is the marmot, a rodent which is prey to golden eagles, and the exotic lammergeier, a bearded vulture with orange-red feathers and black wings. There are also many brightly coloured butterflies and alpine flowers.



Tower at Tende

## 30 Tende

**Road map** F2. 🚗 2,200. 🚗 📍 103  
 ave 16 Sep 1947 (04 93 04 73 71).  
 🕒 Wed. 🌐 [tendemerveilles.com](http://tendemerveilles.com)

Sombre Tende once guarded the mountain pass connecting Piedmont and Provence, now bypassed by a tunnel. Its tall, green schist buildings appear piled on top of each other. Only a wall



Walkers above Lake Allos, Parc National du Mercantour

remains of the castle of Lascaris' feudal lords, near the cemetery above the town. Tende's unusual towers include that of the 15th-century church of **Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption**. Lions support the pillars around the Renaissance doorway and there are green schist columns inside.

The **Vallée des Merveilles**, the most spectacular part of Mercantour national park, can be visited with a guide. For information, contact the tourist office at Tende or St-Dalmas.

The most direct route starts from Lac des Mesches car park. A two-and-a-half-hour walk leads to Lac Long and Le Refuge des Merveilles. The Mont Bégo area has 36,000 engravings, dating from 2,000 BC, carved into the rock face. They reveal a Bronze Age culture of shepherds and farmers.

In Tende, the **Musée des Merveilles** is worth a visit.

Southeast of Tende, there are fine paintings in the church at La Brigue. Jean Canavesio's 15th-century frescoes of *La Passion du Christ*, and the lurid *Judas pendu* are in the nearby **Chapelle Notre-Dame-des-Fontaines**.

🏛️ **Musée des Merveilles**  
 Ave du 16 Septembre 1947. Tel 04 93 04 32 50. **Open** Wed–Mon.  
**Closed** public hols, 2 weeks mid-Mar & mid-Nov. 🚗 📍

## 31 Saorge

**Road map** F3. 🚗 450. 🚗 📍 La  
 Mairie, Avenue Docteur Joseph  
 Davéio (04 93 04 51 23). 🌐 [saorge.fr](http://saorge.fr)

Saorge is the prettiest spot in the Roya Valley. Set in a natural amphitheatre high over the river, its slate-roofed houses are tiered between narrow alleys, in the style of a typical stacked village or *village empilé*.

Olive-wood carvings are traditional, and carved lintels date many houses to the 15th century, when Saorge was a stronghold. It was taken by the French under Masséna in 1794.

Churches range from the dank 15th-century St-Sauveur with an Italian organ to the Baroque church of the Franciscan monastery and the octagonal tower and Renaissance frescoes of **La Madone-del-Poggio** (open during European Heritage days only).



View of Saorge from the Franciscan monastery terrace



## 32 Sospel

**Road map** F3. 3,650.   
 19 ave Jean Medecin (04 93 04 15 80). Thu, Sun. [sospel-tourisme.com](http://sospel-tourisme.com)

This charming resort has a 13th-century toll tower, which was restored after bomb damage in World War II, when the town's bravery earned it the Croix de Guerre. Fort St-Roch, built in 1932 as protection against a possible Italian invasion, has a museum with exhibits on the Maginot line. The church of St-Michel contains one of François Bréas's best works, and has a lovely façade, as does the Palais Ricci. The interior of the White Penitent chapel is magnificent.

### Musée Maginot de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale

Fort St-Roch. **Tel** 04 93 04 00 70.

**Open** Apr–Jun & Sep: Sat, Sun & public hols pm; Jul & Aug: Tue–Sun pm.



Impressive *trompe l'oeil* façades of houses in Sospel

## 33 Gorbio

**Road map** F3. 1,300. La Mairie, 30 rue Garibaldi (04 92 10 66 50).

More than a thousand species of flowers have been identified in the sunny Gorbio valley, which produces vegetables, as well as fruit, wine and oil. Until the last century the area was entirely supported by its olive production.

Often shrouded in mist in the mornings, Gorbio itself is a *village perché* (see pp24–5), with sea views. The old Malaussène fountain stands by the entrance to the narrow cobbled lanes, and an elm tree in the square was planted in 1713. The church



Early morning Gorbio, surrounded by olive groves

has a conical belfry, a typical feature of the region. Each June a procession marks the Penitents' ritual, when the village lanes twinkle with the lights from oil lamps made from snail shells.

A good hour's walk from Gorbio is Ste-Agnès, at 671 m (2,200 ft) it is the highest *village perché* on the coast.

## 34 Roquebrune-Cap-Martin

**Road map** F3. 12,800.   
 218 ave Aristide Briand (04 93 35 62 87). Wed. [rcm-tourisme.com](http://rcm-tourisme.com)

Roquebrune is said to have the earliest feudal **château** in France, the sole example of the Carolingian style. Built in the 10th century by Conrad I, Count of Ventimiglia, to ward off Saracen attack, it was later remodelled by the Grimaldis (see p95). Wealthy Englishman Sir William Ingram, one of the first wave of tourist residents,



View of Château Grimaldi de Roquebrune, overlooking Cap Martin

bought the **château** in 1911 and added a mock medieval *tour anglaise*.

At the turn of the century, Cap Martin was the Côte d'Azur's smartest resort, attracting the era's glitterati. Empéatrice Eugénie, wife of Napoléon III, wintered here. Winston Churchill, Coco Chanel and Irish poet W B Yeats also visited. Architect Le Corbusier, who drowned off the cape in 1965, has a coastal path named after him.

A number of important pre-historic remains have been found around Roquebrune, some in caves such as the **Grotte du Vallonet**. Just outside the village, on the Menton road, is the *olivier millénaire*, one of the oldest olive trees in the world, which is believed to be at least 1,000 years old.

Every August since 1467, in gratitude for being spared from the plague, Roquebrune's inhabitants take part in scenes from the Passion (see p37).

### Château Grimaldi de Roquebrune

PI William Ingram **Tel** 04 93 35 07 22.

**Open** daily. **Closed** Fri (Nov–Dec), public hols.

## 35 Menton


**Road map** F3. 29,670.   
 Palais de l'Europe, 8 ave Bouter (04 92 41 76 76). Tue–Sun. [tourisme-menton.fr](http://tourisme-menton.fr)

Just a mile from the border, Menton is the most Italian of the French resorts. Tucked in by mountains, it is a sedate town with a Baroque square and a promenade stretching towards Cap Martin.

Menton has several fine tropical gardens, and citrus fruits thrive in a climate mild enough for the lemon festival in February (see p39). The **Palais de l'Europe** of the *belle époque* (1909), once a casino, now a cultural centre, is beside the **Jardin Biovès**. The **Jardin Botanique Exotique** has tropical plants and is in the grounds of Villa Val Rahmeh. Above the town is the **Jardin des Colombières** designed by artist and writer Ferdinand Bac (1859–1952). This private garden reputedly has France's oldest carob tree and can be visited in the summer by appointment.

The jetties offer good views of the old town, and steps lead to Parvis St-Michel, a fine square paved with the Grimaldi coat of arms, where summer concerts are held. To the left side are the twin towers of the Baroque **Basilica St-Michel**, its main altarpiece by Manchello (1565). Behind the marina is Garavan where New Zealand writer Katherine Mansfield lived, in the Villa Isola Bella, from 1920–22.

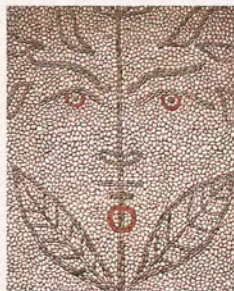
#### **Musée des Beaux-Arts**

Palais Carnolès, 3 ave de la Madone.  
Tel 04 93 35 49 71. **Open** Wed–Mon.  
**Closed** public hols. 

The 17th-century palace, now Menton's main art museum, was once the summer residence of the princes of Monaco. It has paintings by Graham Sutherland (1903–80), an honorary citizen, 13th- to 18th-

#### **Jean Cocteau (1889–1963)**


Born near Paris in 1889, Cocteau spent much of his very public life around the Côte d'Azur. A man of powerful intellect and great élan, he became a member of the Académie Française in 1955. Among other talents, Cocteau was a dramatist (*La Machine Infernale*, 1934); the writer of *Les Enfants Terribles* (1929), and a surrealist film director. *Orphée* (1950) was partly shot against the barren landscape at Les Baux (see p146). He died before his museum opened in 1967.



Mosaic at the entrance of the Musée Jean Cocteau in Menton

century Italian, French and Flemish art, and works by Utrillo and Dufy.

#### **Salle des Mariages**

Mairie de Menton, Pl Ardoino.  
Tel 04 92 10 50 00. **Open** Mon–Fri.  
**Closed** public hols. 

Jean Cocteau decorated this room in 1957 with colourful images of a fisherman and his bride, and the less happy story of Orpheus and Eurydice, and Provençal motifs such as using a fish for a fisherman's eye.

#### **Musée Jean Cocteau – Collection Severin Wundermun**

2 quai de Monléon. Tel 04 89 81 52 50. **Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec. 

 [museecocteaumenton.fr](http://museecocteaumenton.fr)

Cocteau supervised the conversion of this former

17th-century fort into his museum. He designed the mosaic on the ground floor, and donated his first tapestry and other pieces.

#### **Cimetière du Vieux-Château**

Rue du Vieux-Château. Tel 04 93 57 95 99.

Each terrace of this former castle site accommodates a separate faith. Webb Ellis, inventor of rugby, is buried here, as is Rasputin's assassin, Prince Youssouпов.

#### **Musée de Préhistoire Régionale**

Rue Loredan Larchey. Tel 04 93 35 84 64.  
**Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** public hols.  
The museum's fine local history and archaeological pieces include the skull of 30,000-year-old "Grimaldi Man".



View over Menton from Ferdinand Bac's Jardin des Colombières







# THE VAR AND THE ILES D'HYÈRES

The Var is a region of rolling lands, rocky hills, thick forests and swathes of vineyards. To the north, Provençal villages are thinly scattered by mountain streams, on hilltops and in valleys; to the south, a series of massifs slope down to the coast making this stretch of the Côte d'Azur the most varied and delightful shore in France.



The A8 autoroute runs through the centre of the Var, dividing it roughly into two sections. To the south of this artery the influence of the sea is unmistakable. Toulon, the departmental capital, occupies a fine deep-water harbour that is home to the French Mediterranean fleet. Beyond it are the pleasant resorts of Bandol and Sanary, where Jacques Cousteau first put scuba-diving to the test. To the east are the sandy beaches beneath the great slab of the Massif des Maures. The Var's most famous resort, St-Tropez, facing north in the crook of a bay, lies in a glorious landscape of vineyards. Beyond it, just past Fréjus, the first Roman settlement in Gaul, the land turns blood red in the twinkling inlets and coves below the beautiful Corniche de l'Esterel, which heads east towards the

Riviera. The more remote areas to the north of the autoroute have always provided a retreat from the bustling activity of the coast. This is where the Cistercians built their austere Abbaye du Thoronet. Today visitors escape inland from the summer traffic around St-Tropez to the sparsely populated Haut Var, where towns seem to grow from tufa rock.

Highlights include wines from the Côtes de Provence, and fresh tuna from quayside restaurants. Music enthusiasts should spare time to hear both the organ at St-Maximin-la-Ste-Baume, Provence's finest Gothic building, and the string quartets at the festival in the hill towns near Fayence. Visitors can also go walking, sailing and sunbathing, and enjoy a rich collection of museums and architecture.



Sunrise over the boats in St-Tropez harbour

## Exploring the Var and the Iles d'Hyères

The Var *département* covers about 6,000 sq km (2,300 sq miles). It combines a stunning coastline sprinkled with red cliffs, delightful bays and the Iles d'Hyères, which spill out from its southernmost point, with dramatic chains of hills, rising up behind the coast and further inland. The slopes of the Massif des Maures and the Haut Var are home to a fascinating array of flora and fauna, as well as to the many producers of Côtes-de-Provence wines.



View of the Abbaye du Thoronet

### Sights at a Glance

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| 1 Barjols                                     | 22 Ramatuelle               |
| 2 Haut Var                                    | 23 <i>St-Tropez</i> pp122–6 |
| 3 Comps-sur-Artuby                            | 24 Port-Grimaud             |
| 4 Mons  | 25 Grimaud                  |
| 5 Fayence                                     | 26 Ste-Maxime               |
| 6 Bargemon                                    | 27 St-Raphaël               |
| 7 Draguignan                                  | 28 Massif de l'Esterel      |
| 8 Les-Arcs-sur-Argens                         | 29 Fréjus                   |
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| 12 Brignoles                                  | 11 Côtes de Provence        |
| 13 <i>St-Maximin-la-Ste-Baume</i><br>pp114–15 | 21 Massif des Maures        |
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| 16 <i>Toulon</i> pp116–17                     |                             |
| 17 <i>Iles d'Hyères</i> pp118–19              |                             |
| 18 Hyères                                     |                             |
| 19 Le Lavandou                                |                             |
| 20 Bormes-les-Mimosas                         |                             |

### Key

- Motorway
- Major road
- Secondary road
- Minor road
- Scenic route
- Main railway
- Minor railway
- Regional border
- Summit







Les Issambres beach, north of Ste-Maxime

## Getting Around

The uplands of the Maures and Esterel force the A8 auto route and DN7 road inland, leaving the coast to the more scenic routes: the Corniche d'Or in the Massif de l'Esterel is one of France's loveliest. The combination of stunning views and tight bends means you should allow plenty of time for your journey. The unspoiled Haut Var is easy to get to by car. Alternatively, the railway reaches as far as Les-Arcs-sur-Argens, from where you can explore the region by bus. Comps-sur-Artuby is a good tour base for the Gorges du Verdon (see pp188–9).



A narrow street in St-Tropez old town



A traditional flute-maker at work in Barjols

## 1 Barjols

Road map D4. 3,135. Blvd Grisolles (04 94 77 20 01). Sun.

[la-provence-verte.net/ot\\_barjols](http://la-provence-verte.net/ot_barjols)

Once renowned for its seething tanneries, Barjols lies peacefully among woods and fast-flowing streams. In 1983, after almost 400 years, the leather industry finally folded. The many abandoned factories have become bustling artisans' studios.

Today, it is these local craftsmen who bring manufacturing acclaim to the area. Two traditional Provençal instruments, the three-holed flute (*galoubet*) and the narrow drums (*tambourins*), were still made in Barjols until recently.

These instruments resound each January at the annual *fête* of St-Marcel, the town's patron saint. About every four years the ceremony includes the slaughter and roasting of an ox in the square. This is followed by a colourful "tripe dance" inside and outside the 11th-century church of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption, where St-Marcel's relics can be seen. The ceremony commemorates the survival of the town after a siege in 1350. For information about roastings contact the tourist office.

Of the many stone fountains dotted around the town, the most famous is the mossy *Champignon* in place Capitaine Vincens. It stands under what is reputed to be the largest plane tree in Provence. Between the church and the old tanneries are the restored buildings of the old quartier du Réal. Exotic

porticoes, particularly on the Renaissance Hôtel de Pontevès, add spice to some otherwise drab streets.

## 2 Haut Var

Road map D3. Toulon-Hyères, Nice. Les Arcs. Aups. Pl Martin Bidoure, Aups (04 94 84 00 69).

[aups-tourisme.com](http://aups-tourisme.com)

The most remote and unspoiled lands of the Var are situated between Barjols and Comps-sur-Artuby, up towards the Gorges du Verdon (see pp188–9). Much of the land near here has been taken over by the military.

Aups, set among undulating hills on the plateau edge, is the region's centre. Epicureans may be drawn by the local honey, olive oil and the truffle market each Thursday morning in winter. It is an attractive town with a grand old square and castle ruins. The 15th-century St-Pancrace church has a Renaissance doorway. Also worth a visit is the **Musée Simon Segal**, which is housed in a former Ursuline convent. The museum contains works by Segal and Paris painters, as well as local scenes.

About 5 km (3 miles) north-west on the D9 is the village of Moissac-Bellevue. Many of its buildings date from the 16th and 17th centuries and its church was mentioned in a papal edict of 1225.



View of Entrecasteaux château near Cotignac, Haut Var

South from Aups is Villecroze. The town is set against a natural backdrop of caves on three levels, which local lords in the 16th century turned into dwellings, known as the **Grottes Troglodytiques**. The arcaded streets and the keep of the feudal castle give the town a medieval flavour. A short drive from Villecroze leads up to the hill village of Tourtour, a smaller, prettier and more popular place. Renowned French expressionist painter Bernard Buffet lived his last days here. Two of his creations – large, metal-built insect sculptures are still displayed in the village.

The valley town of Salernes lies in the opposite direction, 10 km (6 miles) west on the D51. Smoke pumps from the



Troglodyte dwellings in Villecroze





The 110 m (361 ft) Artuby bridge spanning the Canyon du Verdon

kilns of its 15 ceramic factories. Salernes is one of the best-known Provençal tile-making centres, noted for *tomettes* – hexagonal terracotta floor-tiles.


Cotignac, west of Salernes, is an echo of Villecroze, with a cave-pocked cliff behind it. Behind the *mairie*, a river springs from the rocks and beyond is an open-air theatre.

The region's most intriguing château is **Entrecasteaux**, 15 km (8 miles) east of Cotignac. The 17th-century castle is filled with the present owner's 17th- to 18th-century collection of paintings, artifacts, tapestries and furniture. The garden, by Le Nôtre, is publicly owned.

#### Musée Simon Segal

Rue Albert Premier, Aups. **Tel** 04 94 70 01 95. **Open** Jun–Sep: Wed–Mon.




#### Grottes Troglodytiques

Villecroze. **Tel** 04 94 70 63 06. **Open** Apr–Jun: Fri–Mon; Jul–Sep: daily. 

#### Château d'Entrecasteaux

83570 Entrecasteaux. **Tel** 04 94 04 43 95. **Open** Easter–mid-Jun: Sun & public hols; mid-Jun–Sep: Sun–Fri.   
 [chateau-entrecasteaux.com](http://chateau-entrecasteaux.com)

### **3** Comps-sur-Artuby


**Road map** D3.  338.   2 ave Lazare Carnot, Draguignan (04 98 10 51 05).

The eastern approach to the Gorges du Verdon (see pp 188–9) passes through Comps-sur-Artuby. The village nestles at the foot of a rock topped by the 13th-century chapel of **St-André**, which has been restored. From the church there are grand views of the Artuby Gorges.

To the east lies Bargème, a village of steep streets and hollyhocks with a population of just 86. At 1,094 m (3,589 ft) it is the highest community in the Var. The village itself is closed to all traffic.

Dominating Bargème is a large, partially ruined but nevertheless remarkably well preserved 14th-century castle. Also worth a visit is the 13th-century Romanesque **Eglise St-Nicolas** which contains a carved, wooden altarpiece depicting Saint Sebastian.

### **4** Mons

**Road map** E3.  885. 

 Pl St Sébastien (04 94 76 39 54).

Dramatically situated on a rock-spur, Mons, with its tiny lanes and overhanging arches, has an almost magical appeal. The place St-Sébastien looks out across the entire coast, from Italy to Toulon.

Originally a Celtic-Ligurian settlement, its Château-Vieux quarter dates from the 10th century, but it was mainly built by Genoese who repopulated the village after ravages by the plague in the 14th century. The first families came in 1461 from Figounia near Ventimiglia; their legacy is the local dialect, *figoun*, which still survives thanks to the unusually isolated position of the village. Nearby is the *roche taillée*, a Roman aqueduct carved from solid rock. There are also many dolmens in the surrounding area.



One of the quiet streets of the picturesque village of Mons

### Truffles

This richly flavoured and treasured fungal delicacy of the Var is traditionally sniffed out by trained pigs. The golfball-sized truffles are collected during the winter, when they are at their most fragrant, from underground near the roots of oak trees. Local markets specialize in truffles when they are in season, though their rarity means that they tend to be very expensive.

A trained pig hunting for truffles







View over Bargemon's terracotta rooftops to the wooded hills beyond

## 5 Fayence

**Road map** E3. 5,500. PI  
Léon Roux (04 94 76 20 08). Tue,  
Thu, Sat. [paysdefayence.com](http://paysdefayence.com)

The hillside town of Fayence is the largest between Draguignan and Grasse and is an international centre for local crafts as well as gliding. Dominated by a wrought-iron clock tower, it still has a few remains of its 14th-century defences including a Saracen-style gate.

The **Eglise St-Jean-Baptiste** was built in the 18th century with a baroque marble altar (1757) by a local mason, Dominique Fossatti. Its terrace offers a sweeping view over the town's glider airfield.

On the hillside opposite, in the community of Tourettes, there is a striking château.

Part modelled on the Cadet school in St Petersburg, it was constructed in 1824 for General Alexandre Fabre, who once worked as a military engineer for Tsar Alexander I of Russia. He originally intended to make the building a public museum, but failed to finish the task and so it remains private.

There are a number of attractive villages nearby. Among the best are Callian and Montauroux to the east and Seillans, 5 km (3 miles) to the west, where the German-born painter Max Ernst (1891–1976) chose to spend his last years. The prestigious *Musique en Pays de Fayence* festival in October brings string quartets who perform in some of the charming local churches.

## 6 Bargemon

**Road map** E3. 1,550. Les Arcs.  
 Ave Pasteur (04 94 47 81 73).  
 Thu. [ot-bargemon.fr](http://ot-bargemon.fr)

This medieval village, fortified in AD 950, has three 12th-century gates and a tower from the mid-16th-century. The village is laid out around a number of squares with fountains, shaded by plane trees.

The angels' heads on the high altar of the 15th-century church, **St-Etienne**, now the *Musée-Galerie Honoré Camos*, are attributed to the school of Pierre Puget, like those in the **Chapelle Notre-Dame-de-Montaigu** above the town. The chapel also contains an oak-wood carving of the Virgin brought here in 1635. The **Fossil and Mineral Museum** on rue de la Résistance displays over 3,000 pieces.

## Traditional Pottery and Crafts

Cotignac, Aups and Salernes are at the centre of an exciting revitalization of Provençal crafts, which includes weaving, pottery, stone and wood carving.

A regional speciality is hand-crafted domestic pottery made using traditional techniques and designs, as well as local clays in a wonderful variety of colours. Examples of all these crafts can be found in small shops and studios, or craft fairs and local markets.

There are good buys to be had, but do shop around to avoid being unknowingly overcharged.

A Provençal potter at work



## 7 Draguignan

**Road map** D4. 38,317. 2 ave  
Lazare Carnot (04 98 10 51 05). Wed,  
Sat. [tourisme-dracenie.com](http://tourisme-dracenie.com)

During the day, the former capital of the *Var département* has the busy air of a small market town. At night, however, the only sign of life is groups of young people in the place des Herbes. Baron Haussmann, planner of modern Paris, laid out

Draguignan's 19th-century boulevards. At the end of his plane-tree-lined allées d'Azémar, there is a Rodin bust of the prime minister Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929) who represented Draguignan for 25 years.

The main interest lies in the pedestrianized old town. Its 24-m (79-ft) clockless clock tower, built in 1663, stands on the site of the original view and there is a good view from its wrought-iron campanile. The **Eglise St-Michel**, in the place de la Paroisse, contains a statue of St Hermentaire, first bishop of Antibes. In the 5th century he slew a local dragon, giving the town its name.

Draguignan has two good local museums. The **Musée des Arts et Traditions Provençales** is concerned with the region's


social and economic history. It occupies buildings that date back to the 17th century. Regional country life is illustrated using reconstructed kitchens and barns. Exhibits include beautiful hand-painted wooden horses.

The **Musée Municipal d'Art et d'Histoire** shows local and regional archaeology as well as eye-catching collections of both

ceramics and furniture. The adjoining library houses a lavishly illuminated 14th-century manuscript of the *Roman de la Rose*, considered to be the most important book of courtly love (*see p146*) in France (by appointment only).

Northwest of the town on the D955 is the enormous prehistoric dolmen Pierre de la Fée, or Fairy Stone (*see p43*).

#### Musée des Arts et Traditions Provençales

15 rue Joseph-Roumanille. **Tel** 04 94 47 05 72. **Open** Tue–Sat. **Closed** 1 May, 25 Dec.    ltd.

#### Musée Municipal d'Art et d'Histoire

9 rue de la République. **Tel** 04 98 10 26 85. **Closed** for restoration until 2020. 





**St Hermentaire**  
slaying the dragon




Pierre de la Fée, the giant dolmen outside Draguignan

## Les-Arcs-sur-Argens

**Road map** D4.  7,153.  

 Place du Général de Gaulle (04 94 73 37 30).  Thu.

 [tourisme-dracenie.com](http://tourisme-dracenie.com)

Wine centre for the Côtes de Provence (*see pp112–3*), Les Arcs has a medieval quarter, Le Parage, based around the 13th-century Château de Villeneuve. The **Eglise St-Jean-Baptiste** (1850), in the rue de la République, contains a screen by Louis Bréa (1501).

East of Les Arcs on the D91 is the 11th-century Abbaye de Ste-Roseline, which was named

after Roseline de Villeneuve, daughter of Arnaud de Villeneuve, Baron of Arcs. Legend has it that when Roseline's father stopped her while taking food to the poor, her provisions turned into roses. She entered the abbey in 1300 and later became its abbess.

The Romanesque **Chapelle Ste-Roseline** contains the well-preserved body of the saint in a glass shrine. There is also a famous Chagall mosaic (*see p31*).

#### Chapelle Ste-Roseline

RD 91, Les Arcs-sur-Argens. **Tel** 04 94 73 37 30. **Open** Tue–Sun pm.

**Closed** mid-Dec–Jan, public hols. 



Mosaic by Marc Chagall (1887–1985) in the Chapelle Ste-Roseline



## 9 Lorgues

**Road map** D4. 9,341.   
 12 rue du 8 mai (04 94 73 92 37).  
 Tue. [lorgues-tourisme.fr](http://lorgues-tourisme.fr)

Nestling on a slope beneath oak and pine woodland, Lorgues is surrounded by vineyards and olive groves. Its old town was fortified in the 12th century. Today, two 14th-century gates and city wall remains can be seen. The town centre's handsome square is shaded by a large plane tree. Lorgues has many 18th-century municipal buildings and monuments and one of France's longest plane-tree avenues.

In the centre of town is the stately **Collégiale St-Martin**, consecrated in 1788. Its organ, dating from 1857, is the finest example of the work of the Augustin Zeiger factory, Lyon. Also on display is a marble Virgin and Child (1694) which came from the Abbaye du Thoronet and is attributed to the school of Pierre Puget.

## 10 Abbaye du Thoronet

**Road map** D4. 83340 Le Thoronet.  
**Tel** 04 94 60 43 90. **Open** daily.  
**Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec. restricted.

Founded in 1146, Le Thoronet was the first Cistercian building in Provence. Lost in deep woodland, it occupies a typically remote site. Along



Graceful cloisters on the north side of the Abbaye du Thoronet

with the two Romanesque abbeys of Sénanque (see pp168–9) and Silvacane (see p151), it is known as one of the three “Cistercian sisters” of Provence.

The cool geometry of the church, cloister, dormitory and chapter house reflects the austerity of Cistercian principles. Only the bell tower breaks with the order's strict building regulations: instead of wood, it is made of stone, to enable it to withstand the strong Provençal winds.

Dilapidated by the 1400s, the abbey was finally abandoned in 1791. Its restoration, like that of many medieval Provençal buildings, was instigated by Prosper Mérimée, Romantic novelist and Napoleon III's Inspector of Historic Monuments, who visited in 1834.

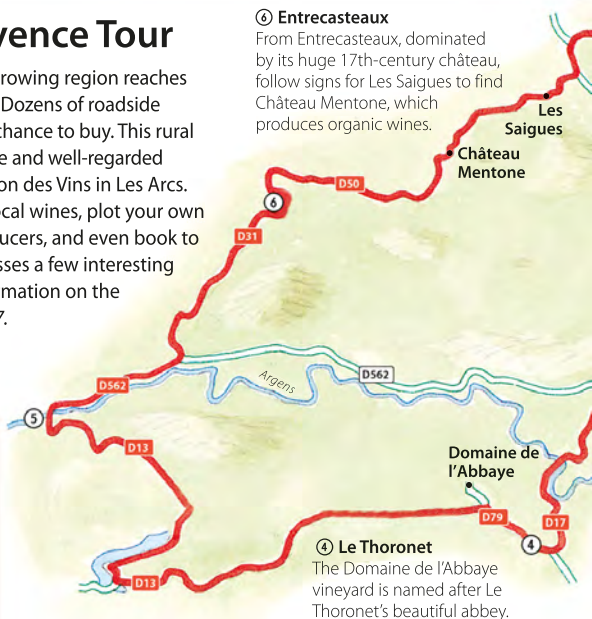
Just beside the abbey is the modern Monastère de Bethléem, home to Cistercian nuns.

## 11 Côtes de Provence Tour

The Côtes de Provence wine-growing region reaches from the Haut Var to the coast. Dozens of roadside vineyards offer tastings and a chance to buy. This rural route suggests a few accessible and well-regarded producers, starting at the Maison des Vins Les Arcs. Here you can find out about local wines, plot your own route, buy wine from the producers, and even book to stay at a vineyard. The tour passes a few interesting towns en route. For more information on the region's wines, see pages 206–7.

### Tips for Drivers

**Tour length:** 100 km (62 miles).  
**Stopping-off points:** The Maison des Vins should be your first stopping point – it is open all day. Around the route motorists should have no difficulty in spotting places to stop and sample, though many of the wine producers close between noon and 2pm. The Lac de Carcès makes a good place for a picnic. (See also pp250–51.)



### 6 Entrecasteaux

From Entrecasteaux, dominated by its huge 17th-century château, follow signs for Les Saigues to find Château Mentone, which produces organic wines.

### 4 Le Thoronet

The Domaine de l'Abbaye vineyard is named after Le Thoronet's beautiful abbey.

### 5 Carcès

As you head north, the Lac de Carcès is on the left in a steep valley. The town's castle remains and gardens are worth seeing.

### Key

Tour route  
 Other roads



La Gayole sarcophagus, dating from the 2nd or 3rd century, in the Musée du Pays Brignolais

## 12 Brignoles

Road map D4. 16,881.

Carrefour de l'Europe (04 94 72 04 21). Sat. [ot-brignoles.provenceverte.fr](http://www.ot-brignoles.provenceverte.fr)

Bauxite mines have stained the Brignoles countryside red: vital to the region's economy, over a million tonnes of metal are mined here annually. The medieval town remains above it all, quiet and empty for most of the year. An unexpected

delight is the **Musée du Pays Brignolais** in a 12th-century castle that was built as a summer retreat for the Counts of Provence. The eclectic collection includes La Gayole marble sarcophagus, which is carved with images in both the pagan and Christian traditions; a boat made of cement designed by J Lambot (1814–87), who gave the world reinforced concrete; and a collection of votive offerings. St Louis,

bishop of Toulouse and patron of Brignoles, was born in a palace beside the Eglise St-Sauveur in 1274. The church has a 12th-century portico and a side entrance in the rue du Grand Escalier.

**Musée du Pays Brignolais**  
2 place des Comtes de Provence.

**Tel** 04 94 69 45 18. **Open** Apr–Sep: Wed–Sun; Oct–Mar: Wed–Sat.

**Closed** 1 Jan, Easter, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec. [www.musebrignolais.com](http://www.musebrignolais.com)

**⑦ Flayosc**  
A good town to stop in, from the church there is a vista of vineyards. The formerly Swedish state-run vineyard Domaine Rabiega is up a track off the D57 to Les Arcs.

**③ Lorgues**  
Olives and grapes are pressed in Lorgues. The British-run Château de Berne is nearby.

**② Vidauban**  
Château d'Astros vineyard, near Vidauban, produces a range of red, white and rosé wines.

**① Les Arcs**  
Driving south on the DN7, you pass the Maison des Vins. Near Les Arcs itself is Chapelle Ste-Roseline (see p111) and a producer of the same name.

**Pruning vines after the harvest**

**Maison des Vins near Les Arcs**



## 18 St-Maximin-la-Ste-Baume

Surrounded by hills and vineyards, St-Maximin-la-Ste-Baume is dominated by the basilica Ste-Marie-Madeleine and its attached monastery. According to Provençal tradition, the basilica was built on the site of the tombs of St Mary Magdalene and of St Maximin, legendary first bishop of Aix (see pp152–3). The saints' remains, hidden from the Saracens (see pp46–7), were rediscovered in 1279. The building, started 16 years later by Charles II, Count of Provence, is the region's finest example of Gothic architecture.



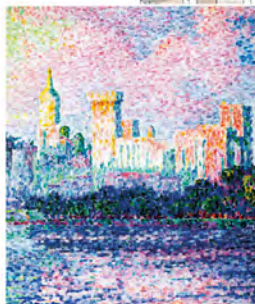
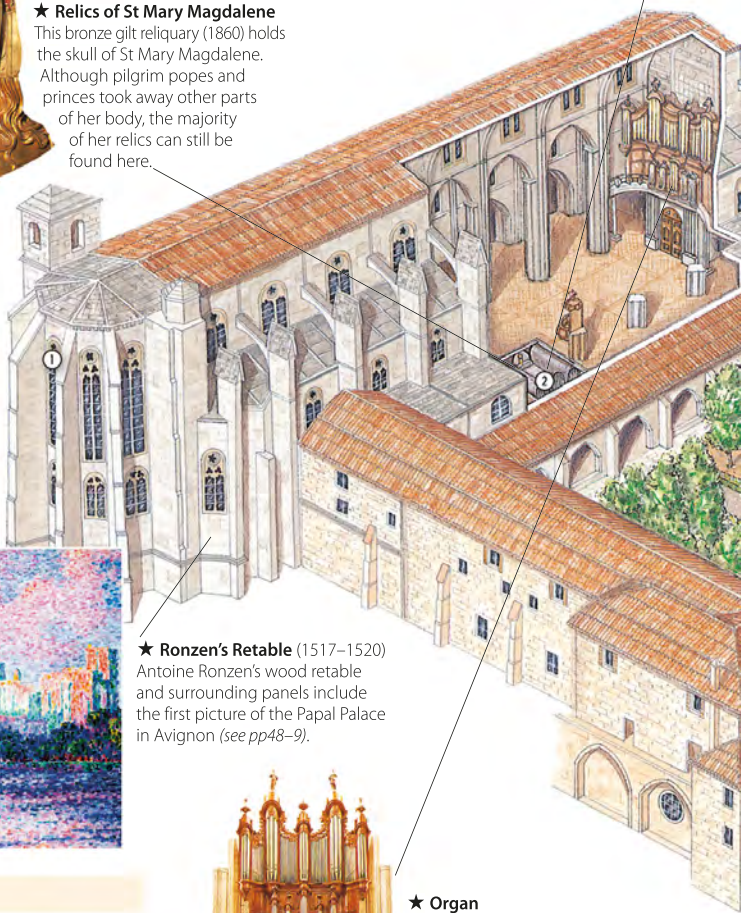
### ★ Relics of St Mary Magdalene

This bronze gilt reliquary (1860) holds the skull of St Mary Magdalene. Although pilgrim popes and princes took away other parts of her body, the majority of her relics can still be found here.



### Sarcophagus of St Cedonius

This is one of four 4th-century saints' sarcophagi in the crypt, which was once the burial vault of a Roman villa.



### ★ Ronzen's Retable (1517–1520)

Antoine Ronzen's wood retable and surrounding panels include the first picture of the Papal Palace in Avignon (see pp48–9).



### ★ Organ

One of the finest in France, with 2,962 pipes, the organ was built between 1772 and 1774 by Jean-Esprit Isnard. Napoleon's brother Lucien saved it in the Revolution by having the *Marseillaise* played on it whenever a visiting official arrived to dismantle the organ for its metal.

### KEY

- ① The apse was completed in the early 14th century. The present Baroque-style arrangement was finished in 1697.
- ② Stairs to crypt
- ③ Former refectory



### Basilica Entrance

The western side of the basilica has three matching wooden doors. They feature studied carving that contrasts sharply with the surrounding façade, which appears to have been crudely chopped off. When work stopped on the building in 1532, this part was left unfinished.

### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

#### Practical Information

**Road map** D4. **f** Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. **Tel** 04 94 59 84 59. Basilica and Monastery:

**Open** 9am–7:30pm daily (except during services). **f** 6:30pm Sat, 10:30am Sun; call 04 94 78 00 19 for details of weekday services. ☑ summer only.

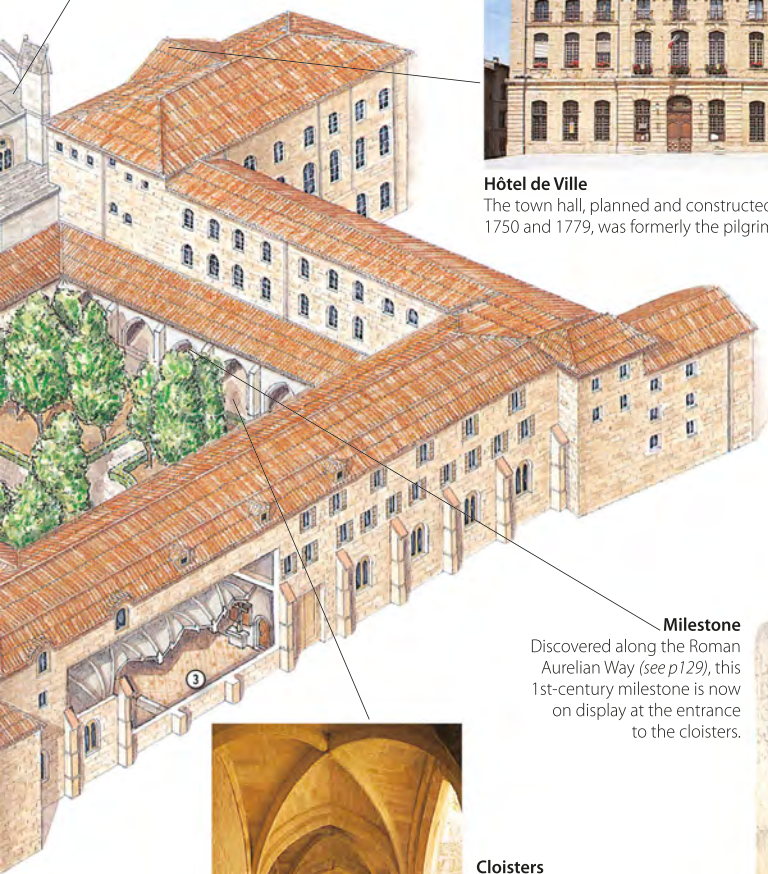
**f** summer only. **f** basilica only.

**w** [lesamisdelabasilique.fr](http://lesamisdelabasilique.fr)



### Hôtel de Ville

The town hall, planned and constructed between 1750 and 1779, was formerly the pilgrims' hostel.



### Milestone

Discovered along the Roman Aurelian Way (see p129), this 1st-century milestone is now on display at the entrance to the cloisters.



### Cloisters

The cloisters are at the centre of the Royal Monastery, so called because the French kings were its priors. The Dominican friars left in 1957 and it is now a hotel-restaurant.





Boats in the colourful, palm-fringed harbour at Sanary-sur-Mer

## 14 Bandol

Road map C4. 📍 7,745. 🚗  
 🚗 📍 Allée Alfred Vivien  
 (04 94 29 41 35). 🕒 daily.  
 🌐 [bandoltourisme.fr](http://bandoltourisme.fr)

Tucked away in a bay, this cheerful resort has a tree-lined promenade, casino and yachting harbour. The shelter of encircling hills makes for excellent grape-growing conditions. Indeed, Bandol has produced superb wines since 600 BC. There are also plenty of shops and restaurants to interest visitors.



Rosé wine from Bandol

its entirety. Dating from about 1300, the landmark medieval tower in the town still contains the cannon that saw off an Anglo-Sardinian fleet in 1707. It is now part of a hotel. Sanary-sur-Mer has enticed visitors for many years. Once the home of the British writer Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), it was a haven between the wars for innumerable other authors. Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) and Thomas Mann (1875–1955) fled here from Nazi Germany. To the east of Sanary, the coast becomes dramatic

and rocky. By the peninsula's extremity at the Cap Sicié is the **Notre-Dame-du-Mai** chapel, which was built in the 17th century. A pilgrimage destination full of votive offerings, its stepped approach offers a wonderful panorama over the coast and surrounding hills.

Outside town, the **Parc Animalier & Exotique Sanary-Bandol** has wildlife and tropical plants.

### 📍 Parc Animalier & Exotique Sanary-Bandol

131 ave Pont d'Aran, Sanary-sur-Mer.  
**Tel** 04 94 29 40 38. **Open** Apr–Sep:  
 9:30am–7pm daily; Oct & Mar: 9:30am–  
 6pm daily; Nov–Feb: 9:30am–5:30pm  
 Wed, Sat & Sun. **Closed** public hols  
 am. 📍 🚗 📍 🌐 [zoaparc.com](http://zoaparc.com)

## 16 Toulon

Road map D4. 📍 167,168. ✈️ 🚗  
 🚗 📍 12 place Louis Blanc  
 (04 94 18 53 00). 🕒 Tue–Sun.  
 🌐 [toulontourisme.com](http://toulontourisme.com)

Tucked into a fine natural harbour, Toulon is home to France's Mediterranean fleet. In the old town, or along the quays of the Darse Vieille, the *matelots* and the bars reinforce the maritime connection.

In Roman times, Toulon was renowned for its sea snails (*murex*) which, when boiled, produced an imperial-quality purple dye. During the reign of Louis XIV, Pierre Puget (1620–94) was in charge of the port's decoration. Two of his best-known works now support the town-hall balcony. These are



Ornate Baroque entrance to the Musée de la Marine

## 15 Sanary-sur-Mer

Road map C4. 📍 16,200.  
 🚗 📍 Ollioules-Sanary. 🚗 📍 Maison  
 du Tourisme, 1 quai du Levant (04 94  
 74 01 04). 🕒 Wed. 🌐 [sanary-tourisme.com](http://sanary-tourisme.com)

In the agreeable, clear blue waters of Sanary-sur-Mer, the diver Jacques Cousteau's experiments to develop the modern aqualung took place. Diving and fishing (mainly for tuna and swordfish) are still popular pursuits in this delightful resort, where rows of pink and white houses line the bay. Its name derives loosely from St-Nazaire; the lovely local 19th-century church took the saint's name in



*Strength and Tiredness*, his 1657 carved marble figures of Atlantes.

The port was extensively damaged in World War II by the Allies and Nazis. Today, much of the town is under restoration. Toulon has a large opera house and several interesting museums, including the **Musée des Arts Asiatiques** located in the Villa Jules Verne, which has been entirely re-designed to house it.


### Musée National de la Marine

Place Monsenergue. **Tel** 04 22 42 02 01. **Open** Wed–Mon (Jul–Aug: daily). **Closed** Jan.  [musee-marine.fr](http://musee-marine.fr)

Imposing statues of Mars and Bellona decorate the grand entrance, once the gateway to the 17th-century city arsenal that stretched for more than 240 ha (595 acres) behind it.

Inside, the museum boasts two vast model galleons, *La Sultane* (1765) and *Duquesne* (1790), used for training. Some figureheads and ships' bows are on show, as are two wooden figures that were carved by Pierre Puget, and various 18th-century naval instruments.

### Musée d'Art de Toulon

113 blvd du Maréchal Leclerc. **Tel** 04 94 36 81 01. **Open** Tue–Sun pm only. **Closed** public hols.  limited.

A permanent collection of traditional and contemporary Provençal paintings forms the core of this small but illuminating museum. Works by international artists are often included in the first-floor temporary exhibitions.

### Musée d'Histoire de Toulon

10 rue Saint Andrieu. **Tel** 04 94 62 11 07. **Open** Mon–Sat pms. **Closed** public hols.

This quaint museum features the young Napoleon and his

endeavours in the defence of Toulon, as well as old weapons and a number of historical sketches by Puget.

### Cathédrale Ste-Marie-de-la-Seds

Place de la Cathédrale. **Tel** 04 94 92 28 91. **Open** daily.

Directly inland from the town hall, in the Darse Vieille, is the city's 11th-century cathedral. It was treated to a Classical facade and extended in the 1600s.

Inside, there are works by Puget and Jean Baptiste Van Loo (1684–1745), as well as a spectacular Baroque altar.



Place Victor Hugo and the opera house in Toulon

## Toulon

- ① Musée National de la Marine
- ② Musée d'Art de Toulon
- ③ Musée d'Histoire de Toulon
- ④ Cathédrale Ste-Marie-de-la-Seds



Key to Symbols see back flap

Musée des Arts Asiatiques

## ⑩ Iles d'Hyères

The Iles d'Hyères, also known as the Golden Isles, are three unspoilt islands, found 10 km (6 miles) off the Var coast – Porquerolles, Le Levant and Port-Cros. Their history has been chequered due to their important strategic position: occupiers have included Greeks, Romans and Saracens, as well as ruthless pirates. Today the French Navy uses much of Le Levant. Porquerolles, the largest island, is partly cultivated with vineyards, but also has expanses of pine forest and *maquis*. Both Porquerolles and Port-Cros are national parks, protected for their woodlands (including holm oak, strawberry tree and myrtle), rare birds and rich underwater habitats.



Locator Map

### Port-Cros Marine Life

The wooded slopes of the island shelve down into unpolluted sea, where colourful fish swim among beds of Neptune grass. A ready-planned swimming route makes exploration easy.



Sponge alga  
*Codium bursa*

Mermaid's cup  
*Acetabularia mediterranea*

Bath sponge  
*Spongia officinalis*

Neptune grass  
*Posidonia oceanica*



Sea urchins, *Paracentrotus lividus*

Peacock's tail  
*Padina pavonia*

Sea peacock  
*Thalassoma pavo*

Saupe *Sarpa salpa*



Black goby *Gobius niger*

Moray eel  
*Muraena helena*

Fort du Moulin, over-looking Port-Cros harbour







### Port-Cros Harbour

The tiny, palm-fringed harbour and village of Port-Cros nestle in a sheltered bay to the northwest of the island.

## VISITORS' CHECKLIST

### Practical Information

**Road map** D5. Porquerolles (04 94 58 33 76).

### Transport

Toulon-Hyères. Hyères. Hyères. from Hyères (La Tour-Fondue) to Porquerolles daily (every 30 mins in summer); from Hyères and Le Lavandou to Port-Cros and Le Levant daily (Jan–Feb: 3–4 times a week).

## 18 Hyères

**Road map** D4. 57,000. Toulon-Hyères. Rotonde du Park Hotel, Ave de Belgique (04 94 01 84 50). Tue, Thu & Sat in city centre; Mon, Wed, Fri & Sun in neighbourhoods. [hyeres-tourisme.com](http://hyeres-tourisme.com)

Hyères is one of the most agreeable towns on the Côte d'Azur, and the oldest of the south of France winter resorts. The town lies at the centre of well-cultivated land that provides fresh fruit and vegetables all year. It has three leisure ports, 25-km (16-miles) of sandy beach and a peninsula facing the Iles d'Hyères.

The new town was called Hyères-les-Palmiers. A palm-growing industry was established here in 1867, soon becoming the largest in Europe. The industry is still important and thousands of palms line the new town boulevards.

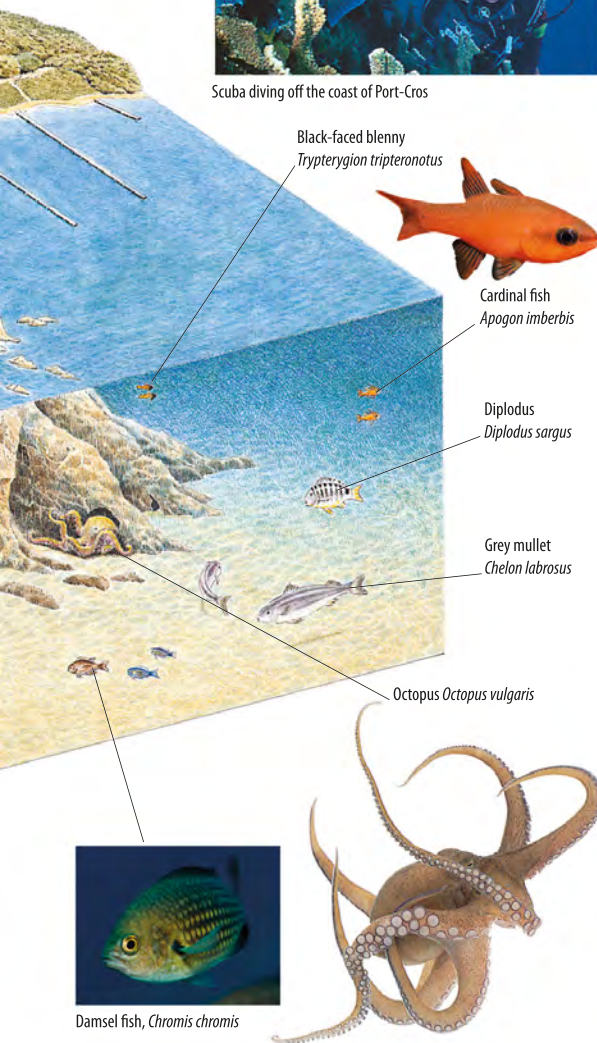
Hyères' main church is **St-Louis** in Place de la République. Romanesque and Provençal Gothic, it was completed in 1248. From place Massillon, rue St-Paul leads past the 11th-century **Eglise St-Paul**, full of 17th-century ex-votos. The road continues to the ruined 12th-century Château St-Bernard, which has good views. In the gardens is the Cubist-inspired **Villa de Noailles** (1924), built by Robert Mallet-Stevens for the Vicomte de Noailles. **Jardin Olbuis Riquier** has a petting zoo and exotic plants.

### Jardin Olbuis Riquier

Ave Ambroise Thomas. **Tel** 04 94 00 78 65. **Open** daily.



Scuba diving off the coast of Port-Cros



Black-faced blenny  
*Trypterygion tripteronotus*

Cardinal fish  
*Apogon imberbis*

Diplodus  
*Diplodus sargus*

Grey mullet  
*Chelon labrosus*

Octopus  
*Octopus vulgaris*

Damsel fish, *Chromis chromis*



Façade of a house in Hyères built in Moorish architectural style





Beach at Le Lavandou overlooked by hotels and exclusive villas

## 19 Le Lavandou

**Road map** D4. 5,236. Quai Gabriel Péri (04 94 00 40 50).  
 Thu. [ot-lelavandou.fr](http://ot-lelavandou.fr)

An embarkation port for the nearby Iles d'Hyères, Le Lavandou is a fishing village now almost entirely given over to tourism. This is due to its twelve sandy beaches, each with a different coloured sand.

It is a centre for water sports and offers moorings for luxury yachts. Full of bars, nightclubs and restaurants, Le Lavandou is a favourite of younger, less well-heeled visitors.

It takes its name not from the lavender fields in the surrounding hills, but from a *lavoiil* (wash-house) depicted in a painting of the town by Charles Ginoux dating from 1736. During the last century, when it was no more than a fishing village, Le Lavandou was popular with artists. The most famous, though not so well known outside France, was Ernest Reyer (1823–99), a composer and music critic after whom the main square is named. From this square there is a view over the Iles du Levant and Port-Cros.

Much of nearby Brégançon is in the hands of the military and the French president has a summer residence there.

## 20 Bormes-les-Mimosas

**Road map** D4. 7,845. Hyères.  
 1 place Gambetta (04 94 01 38 38).  
 Wed. [bormeslesmimosas.com](http://bormeslesmimosas.com)

Bormes is a medieval hill village on the edge of the Dom Forest, bathed in the scent of oleander and eucalyptus and topped with a flower-lined walk around its castle. "Les



Rue Rompi-Cuou, one of the steep, old streets in Bormes-les-Mimosas

## 21 Tour of the Massif des Maures

The ancient mountain range of Maures takes its name from the Provençal *maouro*, meaning dark or gloomy, for the Massif is carpeted in sweet chestnuts, cork trees, oaks and pines with a deeply shaded undergrowth of myrrh and briar, though forest fires have reduced some of it to scrubland. Lying between Hyères and Fréjus, the Massif is nearly 60-km (40-miles) long and 30-km (18-miles) wide. This tour is a simple route that takes you through the wild and often deserted heart of the Massif, through dramatic countryside ranging from flat valley floors covered in cork trees to deep valleys and lofty peaks. A few of the roads are steep and winding.

**4 Notre-Dame-des-Anges**  
Beside this priory and its chapel full of votive offerings, is the highest summit in the Massif at 780 m (2,559 ft).

### 3 Village des Tortues

Keep bearing left on the D75 for the "Tortoise Village", which has saved France's only remaining species of wild tortoise.



### 5 Collobrières

This riverside village with its hump-backed bridge is famed for its *marrons glacés*. Nearby forests supply bottle corks.

### Tips for Drivers

**Tour length:** 75 km (47 miles)  
**Stopping-off points:** Collobrières is a pleasant lunchtime stop. Allow time to visit Chartreuse de la Verne (04 94 48 08 00 for opening times), which is reached up narrow, steep roads. (See also pp250–51.)

Farm workers at Collobrières



Mimosas" was not added to its name until 1968, a century after the plant was first introduced to the south of France from Mexico. A pretty and popular village, Bormes serves a marina of more than 800 berths. Plummeting streets such as Rompi-Cuou lead to lively cafés and coastal views.

A statue of St Francis di Paola stands in front of the attractive 16th-century **Chapelle St-François**, commemorating the saint's timely arrival during a plague outbreak in 1481. The 18th-century church of **St-Trophyme** has restored 18th-century frescoes. The works of local painter Jean-Charles Cazin (1841–1901) are well represented in the **Musée d'Arts et Histoire**.

#### Musée d'Arts et Histoire

103 rue Carnot. Tel 04 94 71 56 60.  
Open Tue–Sun (Oct–Apr: Tue–Sat).



Ramatuelle village enclosed by wooded slopes and vineyards

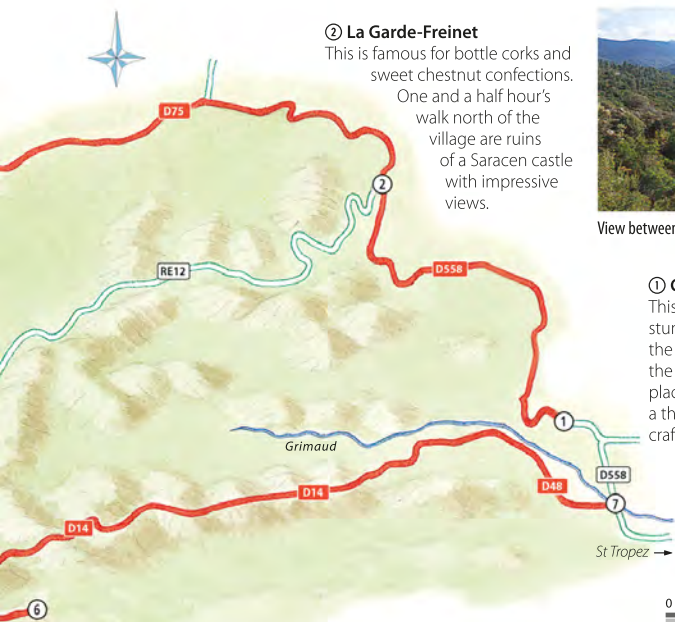
## 22 Ramatuelle

**Road map** E4.  2,166.  Pl de l'Ormeau (04 98 12 64 00).  Thu & Sun.  [ramatuelle-tourisme.com](http://ramatuelle-tourisme.com)

Surrounded by vineyards, this attractive hilltop village was called "God's Gift" (Rahmatu 'llah) by the Saracens who left behind a gate, now well-restored, in its fortifications, as well as a penchant for figs. It is one of three particularly quaint

villages on the St-Tropez peninsula (with Grimaud and Gassin). Gérard Philipe (1922–59), the leading young French actor during the 1950s, is buried here. Theatre and jazz festivals take place here annually.

Nearby, Les Moulins de Paillas (322 m, 940 ft), offers a fine panorama, as does Cap Camarat, with its lighthouse, 5 km (3 miles) east of Ramatuelle.



### 2 La Garde-Freinet

This is famous for bottle corks and sweet chestnut confections. One and a half hour's walk north of the village are ruins of a Saracen castle with impressive views.



View between Cogolin and Collobrières

### 1 Grimaud

This hill village offers stunning views south over the coast and west over the Massif des Maures from place du Château. It is also a thriving centre for local crafts (see p127).



### 6 Chartreuse de la Verne

Inhabited since the 12th century, this restored hilltop charterhouse is surrounded by chestnut woods.

### 7 Cogolin

Visitors can see the rugs for which the town is known being handmade at Manufacture des Tapis in Cogolin (see p221).

#### Key

-  Tour route
-  Other roads

## 23 Street-by-Street: St-Tropez

Clustered around the old port and nearby beaches, the centre of St-Tropez, partly rebuilt in its original style after World War II (see p56), is full of fishermen's houses. In the port itself, traditional fishing boats are still to be seen moored side-by-side with sleek luxury cruisers of all shapes and sizes. Behind the port-side cafés of the quai Jean-Jaurès, the narrow, bustling streets are packed with boutiques and restaurants. The town is overlooked by the church's wrought-iron bell tower in the centre and the citadel just outside.



### The Port de Pêche

The Tour Vieille separates this port from La Glaye beach next door.



### St-Tropez Old Town

The ochre-coloured rooftops of the Old Town and azur-blue sea make an arresting view.



La Fontanette beach leads to a coastal walk with views over Ste-Maxime.

The Ponche quarter is a comparatively quiet and unspoiled area of St-Tropez.



Tour Vieille

Place de la Ponche

Tour du Portalet

Môle Jean Réveille

### ★ Quai Jean-Jaurès

The attractively painted houses and packed cafés lining the quay have enticed visitors and inspired artists for over a century.



### View from the Ramparts of the Citadel

The hilltop citadel, situated east of St-Tropez, offers spectacular views over the rooftops of the town and beyond.



Statue of Pierre  
André de Suffren

To Musée de l'Annonciade  
(see pp124–5)

### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

#### Practical Information

**Map** E4. 4,525. Quai Jean-Jaurès (08 92 68 48 28). Tue & Sat. Bravades: 16–18 May, 15 Jun.  
 [sainttropeztourisme.com](http://sainttropeztourisme.com)

#### Transport

Gare Routière  
(04 94 56 25 74).



#### ★ Eglise Notre-Dame de l'Assomption

Its bust of St Torpès features in the bravade (see p228).



#### Open Window on the Harbour at St-Tropez (1925–6)

Charles Camoin's painting is now in the Annonciade.

#### Key

Suggested route

0 metres 50  
0 yards 50

## Musée de l'Annonciade

This innovative gallery opened in 1955 in the former Chapelle de l'Annonciade by the old port in St-Tropez. Built in 1568, the building was converted into a museum by architect Louis Süe (1875–1968), funded by art collector Georges Grammont. The collection began with the paintings of Paul Signac and the other artists who followed him to St-Tropez, and now contains many stunning Post-Impressionist works from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1961, 65 valuable works were stolen from the museum, but were recovered and restored a year later.

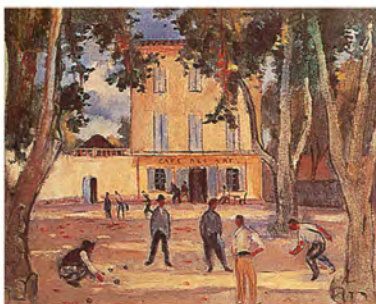


**Le Rameur** (1914)

This bold Cubist work is by Roger de la Fresnaye.

### ★ St-Tropez, la Place des Lices et le Café des Arts

This painting (1925) is one of several that Charles Camoin made of St-Tropez's famous square after he followed Paul Signac and settled in the town.



### ★ L'Orage (1895)

Paul Signac's atmospheric work vividly depicts the onset of a storm in St-Tropez harbour.

### Gallery Guide

*Exhibition space is too limited for all works to be permanently on view, so the display changes frequently. An exhibition room holds temporary displays linked with the permanent collection.*



### ★ Nu Devant la Cheminée (1919)

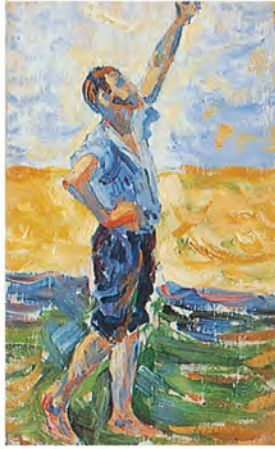
In this warm, intimate picture, characteristic of the artist, Pierre Bonnard uses delicate tones within a limited colour range to create an effect of light and shade.

Temporary exhibition room




**Le Temps d'Harmonie**

In this study (1893–5) for a larger work, Paul Signac departs from his more usual Pointillist technique, using simple, fluid lines.



Balcony

**VISITORS' CHECKLIST****Practical Information**

2 rue de l'Annonciade, Place Grammont, St-Tropez. Tel 04 94 17 84 10. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, Ascension, 1 May, 17 May, Nov, 25 Dec.  ground floor only.





**La Nymphe** (1930)

This Classically influenced bronze sculpture, one of several excellent works by Aristide Maillol in the Annonciade, is a graceful evocation of ideal beauty.

**Deauville, le Champ de Courses**

Raoul Dufy's racecourse, painted in 1928, is typical of his interest in glamorous subjects.

**Key to Floorplan**

-  Ground floor
-  Mezzanine
-  First floor
-  Non-exhibition space

18th-century main entrance



## Exploring St-Tropez

This exceptional resort has become a victim of its own charms – the August high season attracts about 80,000 hell-bent hedonists. Following their departure, however, the genuine, peaceful nature of the village is able to shine through. Surrounded by slopes covered with vineyards, looking out over the millpond bay of Golfe St-Tropez and protected by an imposing citadel, its situation remains inviolate. It does, however, face the northerly Mistral which thunders through the town for much of the winter, ensuring it remains a summer haunt.



Paintings by local artists for sale on the quai Jean-Jaurès

### A glimpse of the town

Activity is centred north of the Musée de l'Annonciade, beside the little port. Here, local artists sell their wares and people pass the time of day in the Café de Paris, le Gorille or Senequier (see p219).

The pretty, pastel-painted houses lining the quai Jean-Jaurès can be viewed at their best from the harbour breakwater, the Môle Jean Réveille. These buildings were among the town's sights that inspired Paul Signac (1863–1935) to start painting in St-Tropez. Many other artists followed, all well represented in the Annonciade (see pp124–5).



Fishing boats and luxury cruisers docked at quai Jean-Jaurès

The old town, just behind the waterfront, is marked by the tower of the Eglise Notre-Dame de l'Assomption. To its north lies the Hôtel de Ville and the Tour Suffren, home of the former local lords. Admiral Pierre André de Suffren (1726–88), "terror of the English", is commemorated by a statue on the quay. Behind the quai Suffren is the place des Lices, a large square crowded with cafés.

Out to the east, beyond the old Ponche quarter and the unspoiled fishing port nearby, lies the 16th-century hexagonal citadel. With fine views from the ramparts, it contains the Musée Naval de St-Tropez. Further east, is La Madrague where Brigitte Bardot used to live. *And God Created Woman*, the 1959 film shot in St-Tropez starring Bardot, started the celebrity rush to the town.

 **Musée de l'Annonciade**  
See pp124–5.

 **Eglise Notre-Dame de l'Assomption**  
Rue de l'Eglise. **Open** Tue–Sun am. This 19th-century Baroque church contains several busts



Baroque-style Eglise Notre-Dame de l'Assomption

of saints, including one of St Tropès after whom St-Tropez is named. Beheaded for his Christianity, his body was put in a boat with a dog and a cockerel and the boat landed here in AD 68. Every year, his bust is carried through the town in the 16 May *bravade*.



The impressive hilltop citadel east of St-Tropez

 **Musée de la Citadelle**  
Forteresse. **Tel** 04 94 97 59 43.

**Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 & 17 May, 11 Nov, 25 Dec.   
Located in the dungeon of the citadel keep, to the east of the town, this museum houses a collection on the colourful history of St-Tropez and the navy.

 **Maison des Papillons**  
9 rue Etienne Berny. **Tel** 04 94 97 63 45.  
**Open** Apr–Nov: Tue pm & Wed–Sat.  
**Closed** 1 Jan, 1 & 17 May, Ascension, 15 Aug, 1 Nov, 25 Dec.  ground floor only.

Hidden in a narrow medieval lane is this amazingly complete collection of butterflies found in France, as well as rare specimens from the Amazon.

## 24 Port-Grimaud

**Road map** E4. 150. Les Terrasses, Rue de l'Amarrage (04 94 55 43 83). Thu & Sun. [grimaud-provence.com](http://grimaud-provence.com)

This beautiful port village was dreamed up entirely by the renowned Alsace architect François Spoerry (1912–98). In 1962 he bought up the marshy delta lands of the River Giscle west of the Golfe St-Tropez. Four years later, work began on a mini-Venice of 2,500 canal-side houses with moorings covering 90 ha (222 acres). There are now three “zones”, a marina and a beach. Its church, **St-François-d'Assise**, in the place d'Eglise, contains some stained glass by Victor Vasarély (1908–97) and offers a sweeping view of the port from the top of its tower.

The whole port is free of traffic and the *coche d'eau* offers a water-taxi service. A major tourist attraction, Port-Grimaud brings in about one million visitors a year.

## 25 Grimaud

**Road map** E4. 2,700. 679 route nationale (04 94 55 43 83). Thu. [grimaud-provence.com](http://grimaud-provence.com)

The medieval, fortified, traffic-free *village perché* (see pp24–5) of Grimaud has a long history dating back to the Gallo-Roman days. During the 11th century, its steep summit allowed Grimaud to dominate the Gulf



View of Port-Grimaud from the Eglise de St-François-d'Assise

of St-Tropez (also known as the Golfe de Grimaud) and control access to the town from the North and Maures mountains. Contrary to popular belief, Grimaud has no connection to the ubiquitous Grimaldi family. Rather it can be associated with the much older Grimaldo family. The castle of Grimaud dates from the 11th century and was reduced to ruins in the Wars of Religion between Catholics and Protestants (see pp50–51).

The view of the coast from its heights made it an ideal vantage point from which to watch for further invasion.

Once called rue Droite, the rue des Templiers is the town's oldest street, lined with arcades designed to be battered down in case of attack. Legend has it that the Knights Templar stayed in Grimaud, but this fact has not been historically attested. In the same street is the pure Romanesque 12th-century church of St-Michel.



One of the popular beaches at Ste-Maxime on a sunny day

## 26 Ste-Maxime

**Road map** E4. 13,900. St-Tropez, St-Raphaël. promenade Aymeric Simon-Lorière (08 76 20 83 83). daily.

Facing St-Tropez across the neck of the Gulf, Ste-Maxime is protected by hills. Its year-round clientele reaches saturation point in summer. The attractions of this smart resort are its port, promenade, sandy beaches, water-sports, nightlife, fairs and casino.

Ste-Maxime was once protected by the monks of Lérins, who named the port after their patron saint and put up the defensive Tour Carrée des Dames which now serves as the **Musée de la Tour Carrée**. The church opposite contains a 17th-century green marble altar that was brought from the former Carthusian monastery of La Verne in the Massif des Maures.

**Musée de la Tour Carrée**  
Place Mireille de Germond. Tel 04 94 96 70 30. **Open** Wed–Sun (Sep–Jun: pm only). **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec, Feb.



Grimaud, dominated by the castle ruins

## 27 St-Raphaël

**Road map** E4. 34,716.   
**f** Quai Albert Premier (04 94 19 52 52).  
 Tue–Sun. [saint-raphael.com](http://saint-raphael.com)

This staid family resort dates to Roman times when rich families came to stay at a spot near the modern seafloor casino. Napoleon put the town on the map when he landed here in 1799 on his return from Egypt, and 15 years later when he left St-Raphaël for exile on Elba.

Popularity came when the Parisian satirical novelist Jean-Baptiste Karr (1808–90) publicized the town's delights. In the old part is the 12th-century church of St-Raphaël and the **Musée Archéologique**, which contains Greek amphorae and other underwater finds.

### Musée Archéologique

Place de la Vieille Eglise. **Tel** 04 94 19 25 75. **Open** Mar–Jun: Tue pm–Sat; Jul–Sep: Tue–Sat; Nov–Feb: Tue pm–Sat am. **Closed** public hols.



Tourist poster of St-Raphaël from the 19th century

## 28 Massif de l'Estérel

**Road map** E4. Nice. Agay, St-Raphaël. **f** Quai Albert Premier, St-Raphaël (04 94 19 52 52) & 86 ave de Cannes, Mandelieu-La Napoule (04 93 93 64 64).

The Estérel, a mountainous volcanic mass, is a wilderness compared to the popular coast. Although it rises to no more than 620 m (2,050 ft), and a succession of fires have laid waste its forests, its innate ruggedness and the dramatic colours of its porphyry



Château de la Napoule, now an art centre

rocks remain intact. Until the mid-1800s, it was a refuge for highwaymen and escaped prisoners from Toulon. Here, after being fêted on arrival in St-Raphaël, Napoleon and his coach were robbed of all their valuables while on their way out of town heading to Paris.

The north side of the massif is bounded by the DN7 which runs through the Esterel Gap, following the Roman Aurelian way from Cannes to Fréjus. To reach Mont Vinaigre, at the Testanier crossroads 11 km (7 miles) from Fréjus, follow the road leading to the Malpey ranger station. Park there and do the final 45 minutes on foot. This is the highest point on the massif, and there is a fine panorama from the Alps to the Massif des Maures.

On the seaward side of the massif the D1089 from St-Raphaël twists along the top of startlingly red cliffs to Agay. This resort has the best anchorage on the coast. It is famous for its red porphyry, from which the Romans cut columns for their Provençal monuments. Be aware that there is only one paved road (mostly one-way) to reach Agay and no access to return to the seafloor between Agay and Theoule.

Round the bay is Pointe de Baumette where there is a memorial to French writer and World War II aviator, Antoine de St-Exupéry (see p33). The road continues to Anthéor and the Pointe de l'Observatoire. Just before here, a left turn leads to the circuit of the Cap Roux and Pic de l'Ours.

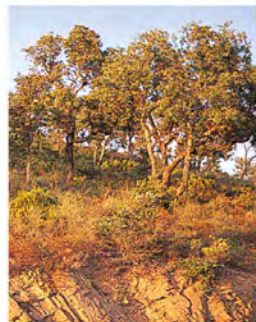
The coast road continues through a series of resorts to the

start of the Riviera, at La Napoule. Here there is a 14th-century château refurbished by American sculptor Henry Clews (1876–1937), who left work scattered about the estate. The château is now an art centre, the **Fondation Henry Clews**. The pedestrian route leading inland to the Col Belle-Barbe from the coast passes on the right a turn to the 452-m (1,483-ft) Pic du Cap Roux. An hour's walk to the top is rewarded by a sweeping view of the coast.

Inland from Col Belle-Barbe over the Col du Mistral up to the Col des Trois Termes, the path then twists south to Col Notre-Dame. A 45-minute walk leads to the dramatic 496-m (1,627-ft) Pic de l'Ours. Between here and the coast is the 323-m (1,060-ft) Pic d'Aurelle, which also provides an impressive vista.

### Fondation Henry Clews

1 blvd Henry Clews, Mandelieu-La Napoule. **Tel** 04 93 49 95 05. **Open** daily; Nov–Feb: Mon–Fri pm. **Closed** 25 Dec. Apr–Sep [chateau-lanapoule.com](http://chateau-lanapoule.com)



Remaining timber on the fire-ravaged Massif de l'Estérel



## 29 Fréjus

**Road map** E4. 52,344. St Raphaël.  
 249 rue Jean-Jaurès (04 94 51 83 83). Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun.  
[frejus.fr](http://frejus.fr)

Visibly, though not ostentatiously, wealthy in history, Fréjus is one of the highlights of the coast. The oldest Roman city in Gaul, it was founded by Julius Caesar in 49 BC and greatly expanded by Augustus. Lying on the Aurelian way – a huge road built in the reign of Augustus from Rome to Arles – it covered 40 ha (100 acres), had a population of 30–40,000 and, as a port, was second in importance only to Marseille.

Although substantial sections of the Roman city were decimated by the Saracens in the 10th century, a few parts of their walls remain, including a tower of the western *Porte des Gaules*. The opposite eastern entrance, the *Porte de Rome*, marks one end of a 40-km (25-mile) aqueduct, the ruins of which amble alongside the DN7 towards the Siagnole river near Mons.

Just to the north of here the remains of the semicircular, 1st-century theatre can be viewed. In their midst, performances are still held. The praetorium or Plateforme – military headquarters that formed the eastern citadel – lie to the south. North of the *Porte des Gaules*, on the road to Brignoles, stands the large 1st–2nd-century **Arènes**, built to hold 6,000 spectators, now used for music and dance.

The spectacular **Cathédrale St-Léonce et Cloître** houses a Musée Archéologique with finds from all around Fréjus. The *Chapelle Notre-Dame*, decorated by Cocteau, and Musée d'Histoire Locale are also well worth a visit.

South of the town is the Butte St-Antoine citadel, which once overlooked the harbour. The canal linking the harbour to the sea began silting up in the 10th century; by the 1700s it was entirely filled in, forming Fréjus-Plage. A little over 2 km (1 mile) from the town's centre, this modern



Mosaic in the Musée Archéologique in Fréjus



Well in the centre of the Cathedral cloisters at Fréjus

resort stretches along a sandy beach towards St-Raphaël. North of the Arènes is a Buddhist Pagoda commemorating Vietnamese soldiers who died serving in the French army.

### Arènes de Fréjus

Rue Vadon. **Tel** 04 94 51 34 31.

**Open** Apr–Sep: Tue–Sun; Oct–Mar: Tue–Sat. **Closed** public hols.

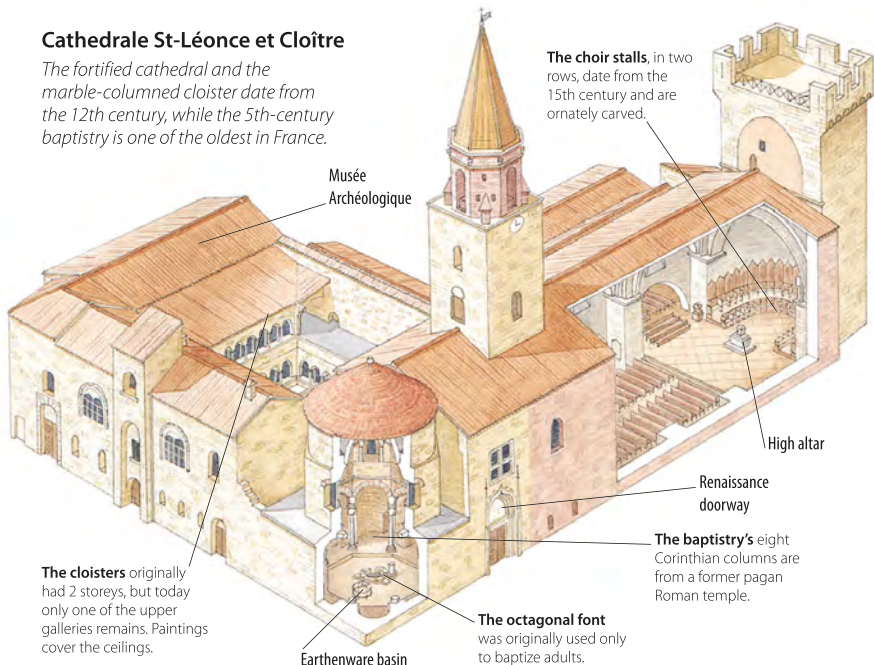
### Cathédrale St-Léonce

58 rue du Cardinal Fleury. **Tel** 04 94 52 14 01. **Open** daily. Cloisters: daily (Oct–May: Tue–Sun). **Closed** Mon (winter), public hols. cloisters.

[cathedrale-frejus.monuments-nationaux.fr](http://cathedrale-frejus.monuments-nationaux.fr)

## Cathédrale St-Léonce et Cloître

*The fortified cathedral and the marble-columned cloister date from the 12th century, while the 5th-century baptistry is one of the oldest in France.*



**The cloisters** originally had 2 storeys, but today only one of the upper galleries remains. Paintings cover the ceilings.

**Earthware basin**

**The octagonal font** was originally used only to baptize adults.

**The choir stalls**, in two rows, date from the 15th century and are ornately carved.

**Renaissance doorway**

**The baptistry's eight Corinthian columns** are from a former pagan Roman temple.





# BOUCHES-DU-RHÔNE AND NÎMES

This southwestern corner of Provence has a feel that's unique in the region. It is the land of Van Gogh, brightly patterned materials and beaches of shifting sands. Its wildest point is the Camargue in the Rhône delta, a place of light and colour, lived in for centuries by gypsies and by cowboys who herd the wild horses and bulls.



Many inland towns reflect the region's Greek and Roman past. The Greeks first settled in France circa 600 BC and founded Marseille, now a cosmopolitan cultural centre and the country's second largest city. The Romans, who arrived after them, built the theatre at Arles and the amphitheatre at Nîmes, and left the remains of Classical houses at the archaeological site of Glanum. The skeleton of a Roman aqueduct runs between a spring at Uzès to a water tower at Nîmes, a great feat of engineering best seen at Pont du Gard.

"A race of eagles" is how Frédéric Mistral, the Provençal writer (*see p32*) described the Lords of Baux, bloodthirsty warriors who ruled in the Middle Ages from an extraordinary eyrie in Les Baux-de-Provence. This former fief was paradoxically famous as a Court of Love

(*see p146*) during the 13th century. Louis IX (Saint Louis) built the fortified city of Aigues-Mortes for the Crusaders. In the 15th century, Good King René (*see pp50–51*), held his court in the castle of Tarascon and in Aix-en-Provence, the ancient capital of Provence. Aix's university, founded by René's father in 1409, is still the hub of this lively student town.

The area provides great walks and stunning scenery, particularly in the Alpilles and around Marseille. The films and books of Marcel Pagnol (*see 157*) and the stories of Daudet (*see p147*), which have influenced perceptions of Provençal people and life, are set in this region. The Camargue maintains a unique collection of flora and fauna, providing, in addition to fine vistas, superb horse riding and bird-watching.

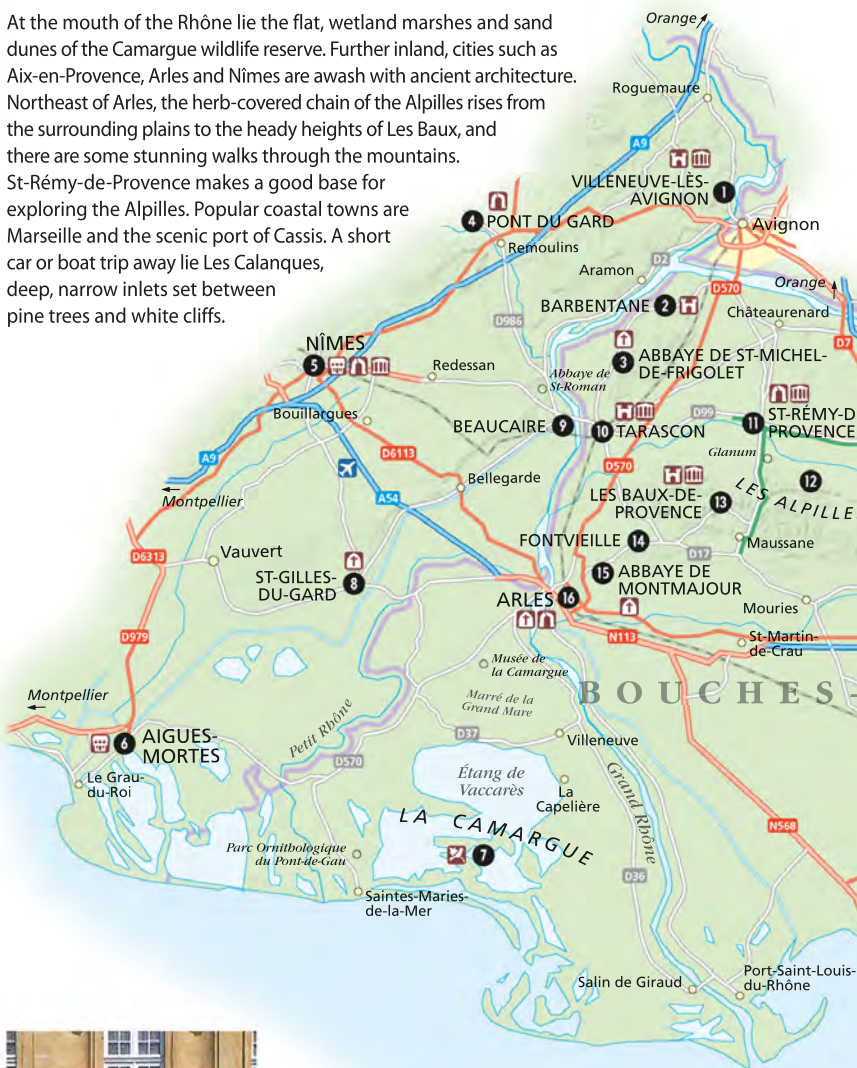


Produce on display in the colourful food market, Aix-en-Provence



## Exploring Bouches-du-Rhône and Nîmes

At the mouth of the Rhône lie the flat, wetland marshes and sand dunes of the Camargue wildlife reserve. Further inland, cities such as Aix-en-Provence, Arles and Nîmes are awash with ancient architecture. Northeast of Arles, the herb-covered chain of the Alpilles rises from the surrounding plains to the heady heights of Les Baux, and there are some stunning walks through the mountains. St-Rémy-de-Provence makes a good base for exploring the Alpilles. Popular coastal towns are Marseille and the scenic port of Cassis. A short car or boat trip away lie Les Calanques, deep, narrow inlets set between pine trees and white cliffs.



Atlantes grace the doorway of the Pavillon de Vendôme in Aix

### Sights at a Glance

- |                                   |                            |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Villeneuve-lès-Avignon          | 13 Les Baux-de-Provence    |
| 2 Barbentane                      | 14 Fontvieille             |
| 3 Abbaye de St-Michel-de-Frigolet | 15 Abbaye de Montmajour    |
| 4 Pont du Gard                    | 16 Arles pp148–50          |
| 5 Nîmes pp136–7                   | 17 Martigues               |
| 6 Aigues-Mortes pp138–9           | 18 Salon-de-Provence       |
| 7 La Camargue pp140–3             | 19 Abbaye de Silvacane     |
| 8 St-Gilles                       | 20 Aix-en-Provence pp152–3 |
| 9 Beaucaire                       | 21 Marseille pp154–7       |
| 10 Tarascon                       | 22 Aubagne                 |
| 11 St-Rémy-de-Provence            | 23 Les Calanques           |
| 12 Les Alpilles                   | 24 Cassis                  |

For additional map symbols see back flap



View across the harbour of Fort St-Jean, Marseille

## Getting Around

If you have a car, the autoroutes are fast and bypass slow traffic in the towns. The A8 autoroute which leads along the Riviera meets the Paris-Marseille A7 Autoroute du Soleil 17 km (11 miles) west of Aix, while the A9 Languedocienne heads west through Nimes towards Spain. The main towns are all linked by trains and buses, though bus services tend to be poor outside towns. Arles and Aix-en-Provence make particularly good bases for getting around. Boat trips are organized from Arles and Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer in the Camargue, where a good way to see the countryside is to hire the native horses.





Part of the Chartreuse du Val-de-Bénédiction, Villeneuve

## 1 Villeneuve-lès-Avignon

Road map B3. 12,735. Avignon. 1 pl Charles David (04 90 25 61 33). Thu & Sat. [tourisme-villeneuvelezavignon.fr](http://www.tourisme-villeneuvelezavignon.fr)

This town arose beside the Rhône, opposite Avignon (see pp170–71), and the connecting bridge, Pont St-Bénézet, was guarded by the **Tour de Philippe le Bel**, built in 1307. Its rooftop terrace, 176 steps up, gives a fine panorama of the papal city. Even better is the view from the two giant 40-m (130-ft) round towers at the entrance to the impressive 14th-century **Fort St-André**, which enclosed a small town, monastery and church.

Between these two bastions lies the 14th-century Eglise-Collégiale Notre-Dame. In the **Musée Pierre de Luxembourg** is *The Coronation of the Virgin*

(1453) by Enguerrand Quarton, regarded as the best work of the Avignon School. This work was painted for the abbot of the **Chartreuse du Val-de-Bénédiction**, which was founded by Innocent VI in 1356. There are three cloisters and a chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist decorated with frescoes by Giovanetti da Viterbo. The building is now used as a cultural centre.

### Fort St-André

Tel 04 90 25 45 35. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec. [fort-saint-andre.monument-nationaux.fr](http://www.fort-saint-andre.monument-nationaux.fr)

### Musée Municipal Pierre de Luxembourg

Rue de la République. Tel 04 90 27 49 66. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** Jan, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec.

### Chartreuse du Val-de-Bénédiction

Rue de la République. Tel 04 90 15 24 24. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec. in summer. in summer. in winter. [chartreuse.org](http://www.chartreuse.org)

## 2 Barbentane

Road map B3. 4,067. Avignon, Tarascon. 3 rue des Pénitents (04 90 90 85 86). [barbantane.fr](http://www.barbantane.fr)

Members of Avignon's Papal court liked to build summer houses in Barbentane, beside the Rhône 10 km (6 miles) south of the city. One such, opposite the 13th- to 15th-century Notre-Dame-de-Grace, was the handsome *Maison des Chevaliers*, which was

owned by the Marquises of Barbantane. Only the 40-m (130-ft) Tour Anglica remains of the town's 14th-century castle. Just outside the medieval quarter is the Château de Barbantane, a finely decorated Italianate mansion, built in 1674 by the Barbantane aristocracy who still own and reside in it.

In the town is the 16th- to 17th-century **Moulin de Mogador**, which was used as an oil mill and now hosts dinners.



Façade of the 17th-century Château de Barbentane

## 3 Abbaye de St-Michel de Frigolet

Road map B3. Tel 04 90 95 70 07.

**Open** 8am–6pm daily. Phone to reserve for groups. 3pm Sun. [frigolet.com](http://www.frigolet.com)

The abbey is situated south of St-Michel de Frigolet, in the La Montagnette countryside. A cloister and small church date from the 12th century, but in 1858 a Premonstratensian abbey was founded and one of the most richly decorated churches of that period was built. The whole interior is colourfully painted, with stars and saints on the pillars and ceiling. After a brief period of exile in Belgium at the beginning of the 20th century, the monks returned to Frigolet. The word *frigolet* is Provençal for thyme.



The ceiling of the abbey church of St-Michel de Frigolet



## 4 Pont du Gard

**Road map** A3. Nimes. Place des Grands Jours, Remoulins (04 66 37 22 34).  
**Open daily.** [ot-pontdugard.com](http://ot-pontdugard.com)

Begun around 19 BC, this bridge is part of an aqueduct which transported water from a spring near Uzès to Roman Nimes (see pp 136–7). An underground channel, bridges and tunnels were engineered to carry the 20 million litre (4.4 million gallon) daily water supply 50 km (31 miles). The three-tiered structure of the Pont du Gard spans the Gardon valley and was the tallest aqueduct in the Roman empire.



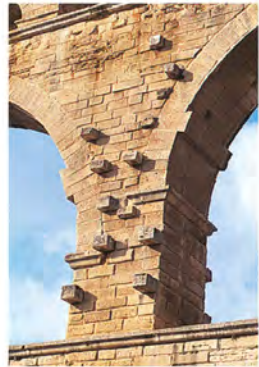
Trademark graffiti left by 18th-century masons on the stones



The Pont du Gard, the tallest of all Roman aqueducts at 48 m (158 ft)

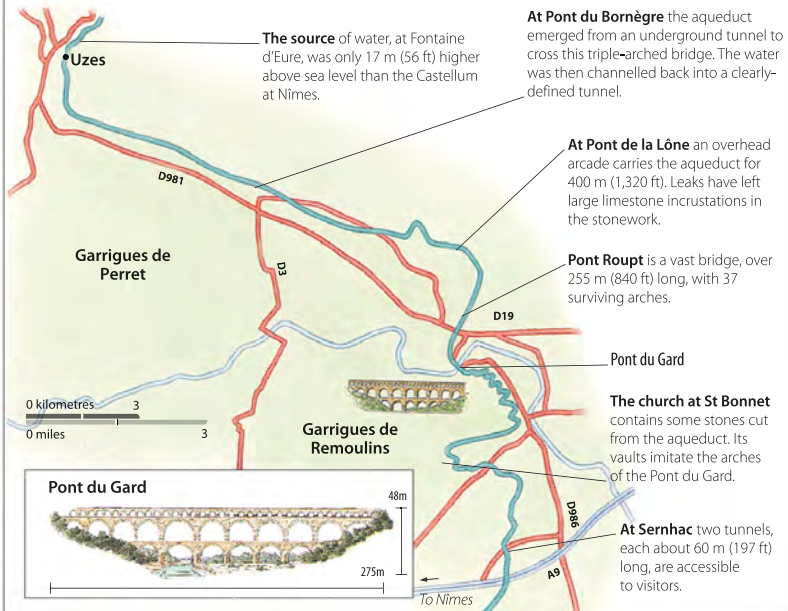
Its huge limestone blocks, some as heavy as 6 tonnes, were erected without mortar. The water channel, covered by stone slabs, was in the top tier of the three. Skilfully designed cutwaters ensured that the bridge has resisted many violent floods.

It is not known for certain how long the aqueduct remained in use but it may still have been functioning as late as the 9th century AD. The adjacent road bridge was erected in the 1700s. The **Site du Pont du Gard** has a museum (open daily in summer) tracing the aqueduct's history.



Protruding stones for supporting scaffolding during construction

### The Remains of the Aqueduct



## 5 Nîmes

A magnificent carved black bull at the end of the avenue Jean-Jaurès highlights Nîmes' passion for bullfighting. Crowds fill Les Arènes, the Roman amphitheatre, for bullfights during the two annual *ferias* (see pp36–8). Year round, the city's biggest draw is its fine Roman architecture, and it is a great city of the arts. The city's textile industry is famous for creating denim (*de Nîmes*), worn by the Camargue cowboys. Most shops stock vividly coloured Provençal fabrics, known as *indiennes* (see p221).


### Exploring Nîmes

Roman veterans from Emperor Augustus's 31 BC Egyptian campaign introduced the city's coat of arms: a crocodile chained to a palm tree. Today, the logo is splashed on everything from bollards to road signs.

Nîmes' generous boulevards give it a wide-open feel. A renaissance of modern building, art and design, including the fine Carré d'Art, lends a touch of class.

Some of the newer monuments, such as the Fontaine du Crocodile in place du Marché, are becoming as well known as Nîmes' most familiar landmark, the Castellum.

### Les Arènes (L'Amphithéâtre)

Place des Arènes. **Tel** 04 66 21 82 56. **Open** daily. **Closed** Feria de Pentecôte, Feria des Vendanges & performance days.    [arenes-nimes.com](http://arenes-nimes.com)

The most dramatic of the city's Roman ruins is the 1st-century amphitheatre. At 130 m (427 ft) by 100 m (328 ft) and with seating for 22,000, it is slightly

smaller than Arles' amphitheatre (see p150). It was built as a venue for gladiatorial combat, and you can see a demonstration of their fighting technique. After Rome's collapse in AD 476, it became a fortress and knights' headquarters. Until its 19th-century restoration, it was used as home for 2,000 people in slum conditions. Today it is thought to be one of the best preserved of all Roman amphitheatres.



The city's coat of arms: a crocodile and palm tree

### Porte d'Auguste

Bldv Amiral Courbet.

With a central arch 6 m (20 ft) high and 4 m (13 ft) wide, this gate was built to take horsemen and carriages, since the main road from Rome to Spain, the Domitian Way, passed through the middle of Nîmes.

An ancient inscription tells visitors that the city walls were built in 15 BC.

### Musée du Vieux Nîmes






Pl aux Herbes. **Tel** 04 66 76 73 70.

**Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec. 

The 17th-century Bishop's Palace just east of the cathedral houses

this museum. The old-fashioned interior has been beautifully restored: the summer room has Directoire and Empire-style furnishings and Old Town views.

### Carré d'Art (Musée d'Art Contemporain)



Pl de la Maison Carrée. **Tel** 04 66 76 35 70. **Open** Tue–Sun.      [carreartmusee.com](http://carreartmusee.com)

On the opposite side of the square from the Maison Carrée, this modern, light-flooded art complex opened in 1993 and was designed by Norman Foster.




Modernist façade of Norman Foster's Carré d'Art

### Maison Carrée

Pl de la Maison Carrée. **Tel** 04 66 21 82 56. **Open** daily.   [arenes-nimes.com](http://arenes-nimes.com)

The Maison Carrée ("square house") is the world's best-preserved Roman temple. Built by Marcus Agrippa, it is Hellenic with Corinthian columns around the main hall. Louis XIV's chief minister, Colbert, wanted it taken brick by brick to Versailles. A multimedia film – *Nemausus, the birth of Nîmes* – is shown inside the temple.

### Musée d'Histoire Naturelle

13 bis blvd Amiral Courbet. **Tel** 04 66 76 73 45. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec. 

Set around a cloister and 17th-century chapel, this museum, still undergoing renovation, covers three themes: the prehistoric period, ethnography and zoology. Visitors can see collections devoted to mammals and birds, including bears, the Siberian tiger, the Canadian moose and even a prehistoric auroch or bull.



The Roman amphitheatre, today used for bullfights at festival times

There are also rooms on botany, geology, mineralogy, palaeontology and prehistoric archaeology, spread over three floors. The archaeological collection will be moved to the Musée de la Romanité once it opens. The atmospheric chapel in this one-time Jesuits' College is used for temporary displays.

### Musée des Beaux-Arts

Rue Cité Foulc. **Tel** 04 66 28 18 32.  
**Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec.  

A diverse collection in the Fine Art Museum includes paintings by Boucher, Rubens and Watteau. The ground floor displays a large Roman mosaic, *The Marriage of Admetus*, found in 1883 in Nîmes' former covered market.

### Cathédrale Notre-Dame et St-Castor


Pl aux Herbes. **Tel** 04 66 67 27 72.  
**Open** daily & for services.

Nîmes' cathedral, in the centre of the Old Town, dates from the 11th century but was extensively rebuilt in the 19th century. The west front has a partly Romanesque frieze with scenes from the Old Testament.

### Castellum

Rue de la Lampèze.  
Between the Porte d'Auguste and the Tour Magne, set in the Roman wall, is the Castellum, a tower used for storing the water brought in from Uzès via the aqueduct at Pont du Gard (see p135). The water was distributed in the town by means of a canal duct system.

### Les Jardins de la Fontaine



Quai de la Fontaine. **Tel** 04 66 21 82 56 (Tour Magne). **Open** daily. 


The city's main park lies at the end of the wide avenue Jean-Jaurès. It was named after an underground spring harnessed in the 18th century. The park's 2nd-century Temple of Diana is today in ruins. Benedictine nuns lived there during the Middle Ages and converted it into a church, which was sacked in the Wars of Religion (see pp50–51).


At the summit of the 114-m (374-ft) Mont Cavalier stands the 32-m (105-ft) octagonal Tour Magne. Of all the towers originally set in Nîmes' Roman wall, this is the most remarkable. Dating from 15 BC, it is the earliest surviving Roman

## VISITORS' CHECKLIST




### Practical Information

**Road map** A3.  150.019.  6  
rue Auguste (04 66 58 38 00) & Pavillon de l'Esplanade, Esplanade Charles de Gaulle.  daily.

 FERIA de Pentecôte (May/Jun); FERIA des Vendanges (late Sep).

 [ot-nimes.fr](http://ot-nimes.fr)

### Transport

 Nîmes-Arles-Camargue.   
 Pl de l'ONU.

building in France. There are 140 steps, worth climbing for a fine view of Mont Ventoux.



*L'Obéissance Récompensée* by Boucher, Musée des Beaux-Arts

## Nîmes

- ① Les Arènes
- ② Porte d'Auguste
- ③ Musée du Vieux Nîmes
- ④ Carré d'Art
- ⑤ Maison Carrée
- ⑥ Musée d'Histoire Naturelle
- ⑦ Musée des Beaux-Arts
- ⑧ Cathédrale Notre-Dame et St-Castor



0 metres 250  
0 yards 250

**Key to Symbols** see back flap



Aéroport 12 km (7.5 miles) 

Musée des Beaux-Arts 



## ⦿ Aigues-Mortes

A lone, sturdy sentinel set among the salt marshes of the Camargue, Aigues-Mortes ("dead waters" in Provençal) looks today much as it must have done when it was completed, around 1300. Then, however, the Rhône had not yet deposited the silt which now landlocks the town. Canals transported the vast stone blocks to make its walls from the quarries of Beaucaire, and the town's founder, Louis IX, set sail from under the shadow of Tour de Constance on his crusade of 1248 (see pp46–7). Only the Hundred Years' War saw its ramparts breached: now its gates are always open to the besieging armies of admiring visitors.



### King Louis IX

Saint Louis, as he was to become, built Aigues-Mortes as his only Mediterranean sea port. People had to be bribed to come and settle in this inhospitable spot.

### Porte de la Reine

was named for Anne of Austria, who visited the town in 1622.



### ★ The Ramparts

The 1,634-m (1-mile) long walls are punctuated by ten gates, six towers, arrow slits and overhanging latrines.

**Tour de la Mèche** or "wick tower" held a constant flame used to light cannon fuses.



### Chapelle des Pénitents Gris

Built around 1607, this chapel is still used by an order founded in 1400. Named for their grey cowls, they walk with their white-cowled former rivals in the Palm Sunday procession.

### Tour de la Poudrière

was the arsenal, where weapons and gunpowder were stored.



Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs

Tour du Sel



### Porte de la Marine

This was the main portside gate. Ships were moored by the Porte des Galions, anchored to a vast metal ring known as an *organeau*.

### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

#### Practical Information

Road map A3. 8,600.  
 Pl St-Louis (04 66 53 73 00).  
 Wed, Sun. [ot-aigues-mortes.com](http://ot-aigues-mortes.com)

#### Transport

30 km (15 miles)  
 W Montpellier. Tour de Constance. Rte de Nîmes.



### Place St-Louis

This charming, leafy square, lined with cafés, is at the heart of town life. In its centre is a bronze statue of Saint Louis, on a base carved with the prows of crusader ships.



Notre-Dame des Sablons, "Our Lady of the Sands," was built before the town itself.



### Tour des Bourguignons

In the massacre of 1421 Gascons took the town from Burgundy. There were too many bodies to bury, so salted bodies were kept here.

### ★ Tour de Constance

This tower often held religious prisoners: first Catholic, then Calvinist, and then Huguenot women such as Marie Durand, freed in 1768 after 38 years.



Porte des Galions

Porte de l'Organeau

Porte de la Gardette

#### Key

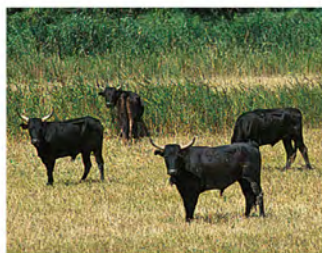
Suggested route

0 metres 100  
 0 yards 100



## 1 The Camargue

This flat, scarcely habited land is one of Europe's major wetland regions and natural history sites. Extensive areas of salt marsh, lakes, pastures and sand dunes, covering a vast 140,000 ha (346,000 acres), provide a romantic and haunting environment for the wildlife. Native horses roam the green pastures and are ridden by the traditional cowboys of the region, the *gardians*, (see p26) who herd the black bulls. Numerous sea birds and wildfowl also occupy the region, among them flocks of greater flamingoes. North of the reserve, rice is cultivated in paddy fields. Many of the thousands of visitors confine their exploration to the road between Arles and Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, and miss the best of the wild flora and fauna.



### Camargue Bulls

Periodically, the herds of black bulls are rounded up by the *gardians* to perform in local bullfights. The larger bulls are sold to Spain.

### Camargue Birds

This region is a haven for bird spotters, particularly during the spring when migrant birds visit on their journey north. Resident birds include little egrets and marsh harriers. This is the only French breeding site of the slender-billed gull, and the red-crested pochard, rarely seen in Europe, also breeds here.



Little egret  
(*Egretta garzetta*)



Collared pratincole  
(*Glareola pratincola*)



Slender-billed gull  
(*Larus genei*)



Marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)



Black-winged stilt  
(*Himantopus himantopus*)



Red-crested pochard  
(*Netta rufina*)



### KEY

- 1 Parc Ornithologique du Pont-de-Gau bird reserve (see p142) is where most birds in the Camargue live and where, twice a year, over 350 species of migrating birds stop off on their journey north or south.
- 2 Musée de la Camargue (see p143).
- 3 Information Centre for Nature Reserve



### Camargue Horses

These hardy animals are direct descendants of pre-historic horses. The foal's coat turns white between the ages of four and seven.



### European Beavers

European beavers came close to extinction at the start of the 20th century, when they were hunted for their fur. These nocturnal animals were protected in 1905 and began to colonize the region in the 1970s.



### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

#### Practical Information

Road map A4 & B4.

**f** La Capelière (04 90 97 00 97).

**f** Pèlerinage des Gitans (24–25 May, end Oct).

**w** [parc-camargue.fr](http://parc-camargue.fr)

**w** [reserve-camargue.org](http://reserve-camargue.org)

#### Transport

**f** 90 km (56 miles) E Montpellier-Méditerranée. **f** **r** **m** Ave Paulin Talabot, Arles.

### Greater Flamingoes

Some 10,000 pairs of these exotic, bright pink birds breed in the Camargue. They are often seen feeding on the marshes of the Etang de Vaccarès, although their main breeding ground is on the saltier lagoons towards the south.



### The Salt Industry

Flat, shallow lagoons fill with sea water, which then evaporates in the sun, leaving behind huge salt deposits. These expanses provide a rich feeding ground for waders such as avocets.



#### Key

- Nature reserve boundary
- - - Walking routes
- - - Walking and cycling routes

0 kilometres 5  
0 miles 5

### Dune Vegetation

The sand dunes form a line between the lagoons and salt marshes and the sea. Among the many wild flowers that grow here is sea chamomile.

## Exploring the Camargue

The unique character of the Camargue has given rise to unusual traditions. The native white horses and black bulls are ranched by *manadiers* and herded, branded and tended by the region's cowboys, or *gardians*, whose small, low, whitewashed houses dot the landscape. Local bullfights are advertised in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, the main tourist centre of the region and chief place to stay, also renowned for its gypsy population. It has a sandy beach and offers watersports and boat trips. Tourist offices throughout the area provide information on walks, but the best views are from the 7-km (5-mile) footway and cycle path along the Dignes-de-la-Mer (sea dyke) from the town. Several sights within the Camargue have been turned into museums and exhibitions of local life and natural history. Several ranches and activity centres organize rides and riding holidays.



A bloodless Camargue bullfight in Méjanès

### A place of pilgrimage

The three Marys who gave Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer its name are Mary Magdalene, Mary Jacobe (the Virgin Mary's sister) and Mary Salome, mother of the apostles James and John. Set adrift after the Crucifixion with, among others, their servant Sara, Saint Martha and her brother Lazarus, they landed here in their boat. They built a shrine to the virgin, and while the others went to spread the word of the gospel, Mary Jacobe, Mary Salome and Sara stayed behind.

In winter, the town is an unpretentious, low-rise resort. It overflows during the May and October festivals, when Mary Salome and Mary Jacobe are celebrated, their statues marched to the sea to be blessed. The larger festival is in May, when

gypsies from all over the world come to pay homage to their patron saint, Sara, the black Madonna who lies in the crypt of the 9th-century **Eglise de Notre-Dame-de-la-Mer**. An effigy is also paraded through the streets.



Eglise de Notre-Dame-de-la-Mer, in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer

Afterwards there are bullfights, horse races and flamenco dances (see pp228–9). The church is also worth visiting for the view from its rooftop walkway.

Throughout the centre of the town are cheery restaurants with checked tablecloths, and shops selling patterned skirts, shirts and scarves, lucky charms and Romany souvenirs.

Still in the Saintes-Maries area, 4.5 km (3 miles) north of the centre on the banks of the Etang de Ginès, lies the **Parc Ornithologique du Pont-de-Gau**, with a vast range of Camargue birdlife (see p140).

### 📍 Eglise de Notre-Dame-de-la-Mer

19 pl Jean XXIII. Church: **Tel** 04 90 97 80 25. **Open** daily. Walkway: **Open** Apr–Nov & school hols: daily; Dec–Mar: Wed, Sat & Sun pm. 🕒 6pm Tue–Sat, 10:30am Sun. 📍 for walkway.

The church dates back to the 4th century, but has been destroyed and rebuilt due to excavations of the saints and its early (and valuable) relics. These are all on display here. The population of the village increases dramatically during the summer and the great pilgrimages. Over 200,000 pilgrims and visitors enter the “Door of Faith” every year. Pilgrims are welcomed and offered guided tours.

### 🏡 Domaine de la Palissade

13129 Salin de Giraud. **Tel** 04 42 86 81 28. **Open** Feb & Nov: Wed–Sun; Mar–Oct: daily. 📍

This natural reserve boasts rich flora and fauna, which can be explored either on foot, through walks ranging from 30 minutes to 3 and a half hours in duration, or on a Camargue horse.




### 📍 Parc Ornithologique du Pont-de-Gau

RD 570, Pont-de-Gau **Tel** 04 90 97 82 62. **Open** daily. **Closed** 25 Dec. 📍 📧 📱 🌐 [parcornithologique.com](http://parcornithologique.com)

Most of the birds that live in or migrate through the region are represented in this reserve. Huge aviaries house birds that might otherwise be hard to spot. Try to keep to the signposted paths to avoid damage or disturbance (see p140).

### Musée de la Camargue

Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue, Mas du Pont de Rousty. (On the D570, 10 km south-west of Arles). Tel 04 90 97 10 82. **Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec, Nov–Dec: Sat & Sun. 

   [museedelacamargue.com](http://museedelacamargue.com)

A traditional Provençal *mas* or farmhouse (see pp26–7), that only a short time ago was part of a farm raising cattle and sheep, has been converted to accommodate a fascinating museum of the Camargue. The main part of the museum is housed in a huge sheep barn, built in 1812 and skillfully restored. Displays, including video footage and slide shows, provide an excellent introduction to traditional life in the Camargue and to the unique plant and animal life of the Camargue delta. Among the many subjects covered are the lives of the Camargue cowboys, and the *grand* and *petit* Rhône rivers which once flowed far to the east past Nîmes. Many of the displays are focused on traditional life at the time of poet and champion of the Provençal language, Frédéric Mistral, (see p32), a local man who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1904.

A signposted 3.5-km (2-mile) nature trail leads out from the museum to the Marré de la Grand Mare and back again by a pleasant circular route. Examples of traditional *mas* husbandry are marked on the way. An observation tower at the end of the walk gives great views over the surrounding countryside.








Honey buzzard enclosure at the Pont-de-Gau bird sanctuary



The fine Romanesque façade of the abbey church at St-Gilles-du-Gard

### 8 St-Gilles-du-Gard


**Road map** A3.  13,838.  Nîmes  
 1 place F Mistral (04 66 87 33 75).  
 Thu & Sun.  [tourisme.saint-gilles.fr](http://tourisme.saint-gilles.fr)

Called the “Gateway to the Camargue”, St-Gilles is famous for its **Abbaye de St-Gilles**. In medieval times the abbey was vast. The building was damaged in 1562 during the Wars of Religion and all that remains are the west façade, chancel and crypt. The carved façade is the most beautiful in all Provence. It includes the first sculpture of the Passion in Christendom, from the late 12th century.

Founded by Raymond VI of Toulouse, the abbey church was the Knights of St John’s first priory in Europe. It soon became one of the key destinations on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela in Spain and a port of embarkation for the Crusades (see pp46–7). The crypt houses the tomb of Saint Gilles, a hermit who arrived by raft from Greece.

The belltower of the original abbey contains *La Vis*, a spiral staircase which is a masterpiece of stonemasonry.

### 9 Beaucaire

**Road map** B3.  16,000.  Tarascon.  
 24 cours Gambetta (04 66 59 26 57).  Thu & Sun.  [provence-camargue-tourisme.com](http://provence-camargue-tourisme.com)

The bullring in Beaucaire occupies the site of one of the largest fairs in Europe. Held




The unique troglodyte Abbaye de Saint-Roman near Beaucaire

every July for the past seven centuries, it attracted up to a quarter of a million people. A smaller version of the fair takes place today, with a procession through the town on 21 July.

It was inaugurated by Raymond VI in 1217, who enlarged the **Château de Beaucaire**. This was later used by the French kings to look down on their Provençal neighbours across the river. It was partly dismantled on the orders of Cardinal Richelieu but the triangular keep and enough of the walls remain to indicate its impressive scale. There is a Romanesque chapel within the walls, and medieval spectacles, including frequent displays of falconry.

The **Abbaye de St-Roman** is situated 5 km (3 miles) to the northwest of Beaucaire. Dating from the 5th century, it is the only troglodyte monastery in Europe.

### Château de Beaucaire

Place Raymond VII. Tel 04 66 59 90 07. **Open** Wed–Sun (Jul–Aug: daily). 





The legendary Tarasque, the terror of Tarascon

## 10 Tarascon

**Road map** B3. 13,600. Avignon.  
 Ave de la République (04 90 91 03 52). Tue & Fri. [tarascon.fr](http://tarascon.fr)

The gleaming white vision of the **Château Royal de Provence** is one of the landmarks of the Rhône. Little is left of the glittering court of Good King René who finished the building his father, Louis II of Anjou, began early in the 15th century (see pp50–51). Following René's death in 1480, Provence fell to France, and the castle became a prison until 1926. A drawbridge leads to the poultry yard and garrison quarters. Beside it rises the impressive main castle, centred on a courtyard from where two spiral staircases lead to royal apartments and other rooms in its sturdy towers. Prisoners' graffiti and some painted ceiling panels remain, but the only adornment is a handful of borrowed 17th-century tapestries which depict the deeds of Roman general Scipio (237–183 BC).

The **Collégiale Ste-Marthe**, nearby has a tomb in the crypt to the monster-taming saint. According to legend, St Martha (see p46) rescued the inhabitants from the Tarasque, a man-eating monster, half lion, half armadillo, which gave the town its name. The event is celebrated each June in the Fête de la Tarasque (see p37).

In the old town is the 16th-century Cloître des Cordeliers where exhibitions are held. On the arcaded Rue des Halles is the 17th-century town hall, with a carved façade and balcony.



The fairy-tale Château de Tarascon, stronghold of Good King René

The traditional life of the area and its hand-printed fabrics is seen in the **Musée Souleïado**. The ancient textile industry was revived in 1938, under the name *Souleïado*, meaning "the sun passing through the clouds" in Provençal. In the museum are 40,000 18th-century woodblocks, many of them still used for the company's colourful prints.

The **Musée d'Art et d'Histoire**, housed in the Couvent des Cordeliers, covers the history of the Fête de la Tarasque, and also holds temporary art exhibitions.

**Château Royal de Provence**  
 Blvd du Roi René. **Tel** 04 90 91 01 93.  
**Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec.   
[chateau.tarascon.fr](http://chateau.tarascon.fr)

**Musée Souleïado**  
 39 rue Charles Deméry. **Tel** 04 90 91 08 80. **Open** Mon–Sat. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec. .

**Musée d'Art et d'Histoire**  
 Pl Frédéric Mistral. **Tel** 04 90 91 38 71.  
**Open** May & Oct–Jan: Mon–Fri; Jun–Sep: Tue–Fri & Sat pm.

## 11 St-Rémy-de-Provence

**Road map** B3. 10,600. Avignon.  
 Pl Jean-Jaurès (04 90 92 05 22).  
 Wed & Sat. [saintremy-de-provence.com](http://saintremy-de-provence.com)

St-Rémy is ideal for exploring the Alpilles countryside which supplies the plants for its traditional *herboristeries*, or herb shops. In nearby Graveson, the **Musée des Arômes et du Parfum** displays implements of their craft.

St-Rémy's **Eglise St-Martin** contains an exceptional organ, which can be heard during the summer festival "Organa", or on Saturday recitals.

One of the town's most attractive 15th–16th-century mansions is now a museum. The **Musée des Alpilles** has a fine ethnographic collection. The well-known 16th-century physician and astrologer, Nostradamus, was born in a house in the outer wall of the avenue Hoche, in the old quarter of St-Rémy.

The **Musée Estrine Centre**, in the 18th-century Hôtel Estrine, houses modern and contemporary art. Temporary exhibits pay tribute to Van Gogh's relationship with St-Rémy. In May 1889, after he had mutilated his ear, Van Gogh arrived at the **Cloître et Cliniques de St-Paul de Mausole**, which is situated between the town and Glanum. The grounds and the 12th-century monastery house a museum and culture centre in which an entire wing is dedicated to the painter's stay. You can visit a reconstruction of Van Gogh's room and the field that he painted 15 times.

Just behind the clinic is Le Mas de la Pyramide, a farmstead half-built into the rock, which was once a Roman quarry. The



Herbs and spices on sale in St-Rémy market, place de la République




The triumphal arch at the Site Archéologique de Glanum, built in the reign of Augustus, a 15-minute walk from the centre of St-Rémy

remains of the earliest Greek houses in Provence, from the 4th-century BC, are in **Site Archéologique de Glanum** (see p44), a Greco-Roman town at the head of a valley in the Alpilles. Dramatic memorials, known as Les Antiques, still stand along the roadside – a triumphal arch from 10 BC, celebrating Caesar's conquest of the Greeks and Gaul, and a mausoleum dating from about 30 BC.

#### Musée des Arômes et du Parfum

Ancien chemin d'Arles, Graveson-en-Provence. **Tel** 04 90 95 81 72. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.    
[www.museedesaromes.com](http://www.museedesaromes.com)


#### Musée des Alpilles

Place Favier. **Tel** 04 90 92 68 24. **Open** May–Sep: Tue–Sun; Oct–Apr: Tue–Sat pm only. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec. 




#### Musée Estrine Centre

8 rue Estrine. **Tel** 04 90 92 34 72. **Open** Tue–Sun (Mar & Nov: pm only). **Closed** Dec–Feb.   restricted.  
[www.musee-estrine.fr](http://www.musee-estrine.fr)

#### Cloître et Cliniques de St-Paul de Mausole

Chemin St-Paul. **Tel** 04 90 92 77 00. **Open** Mar–Dec: daily. **Closed** public hols.    [saintpauldemausole.fr](http://www.saintpauldemausole.fr)

#### Site Archéologique de Glanum

Rte des Baux. **Tel** 04 90 92 35 07. **Open** Apr–Sep: daily; Oct–Mar: Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec.    [site-glanum.fr](http://www.site-glanum.fr)

## Les Alpilles

**Road map** B3.  Arles, Tarascon, Salon-de-Provence.  Les Baux-de-Provence, St-Rémy-de-Provence, Eyguières, Eygalières.  St-Rémy-de-Provence (04 90 92 05 22).

St-Rémy-de-Provence is on the western side of the limestone massif of Les Alpilles, a 24-km (15-mile) chain between the Rhône and Durance rivers. A high point is **La Caume**, at 387 m (1,270 ft), reached from St-Rémy, just beyond Glanum.

East of St-Rémy, the road to Cavaillon runs along the north side of the massif, with a right turn to Eygalières. The painter Mario Prassinos

(1916–85) lived here. Just beyond the village is the 12th-century Chapelle St-Sixte.

The road continues towards Orgon where there are views across the Durance Valley and the Luberon. Orgon skirts the massif on the eastern side. A right turn leads past the ruins of Castelas de Roquemartine and Eyguières, a pleasant village with a Romanesque church. It is a two-hour walk to Les Opiés, a 493-m (1,617-ft) hill crowned by a tower. This forms part of the GR6 which crosses the chain to Les Baux, one of the best walking routes in Provence. From Castelas de Roquemartine the road heads back west towards Les Baux.



The chalky massif of Les Alpilles, "Little Alps", in the heart of Provence



A late 18th-century fresco showing the Baux warriors in battle against the Saracens in 1266

## 13 Les Baux-de-Provence

Road map B3. 470. La Maison du Roy (04 90 54 34 39).

[lesbauxdeprovence.com](http://lesbauxdeprovence.com)

Les Baux sits on a spur of the Alpilles (*bau* in Provençal means escarpment) and the historic **Château des Baux** has views across to the Camargue (see pp140–43). The most dramatic fortress site in Provence, it has nearly two million visitors a year, so avoid midsummer, or go early in the morning. The pedestrianized town has a car park beside the Porte Mage gate.

When the Lords of Baux built their fine citadel here in the 10th century, they claimed one of the three wise men, King Balthazar, as an ancestor and took the star of Bethlehem as their emblem. These fierce warriors originated the troubadour Courts of Love and wooed noble ladies with poetry and songs. This became the medieval convention known as courtly love and paved the way for a literary tradition.

The citadel ruins lie on the heights of the escarpment. Their entrance is via the 14th-century Tour-du-Brau. A plateau extends to the end of the escarpment, where there is a monument to the poet Charoun Rieu (1846–1924). In the town centre, two other museums of local interest are



Monument to poet Charoun Rieu

the **Fondation Louis Jou** and the **Musée des Santons**. Next door to the 12th-century Eglise St-Vincent is the Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs, decorated in 1974 by the local artist Yves Brayer. Just north of Les Baux lies the **Carrières de Lumières**.

### **Château des Baux**

Tel 04 90 54 55 56. **Open** daily.

[chateau-baux-provence.com](http://chateau-baux-provence.com)

This majestic fortified castle offers breathtaking views of the surrounding region from Aix to Arles.

### **Fondation Louis Jou**

Hôtel Brion, Grande Rue.

Tel 04 90 54 34 17.

**Open** by appt.

Medieval books are housed here,

along with a collection of prints and drawings by Dürer, Goya and Jou, the local engraver after whom the museum is named.

### **Musée des Santons**

La Maison du Roy. Tel 04 90 54 34 39.

**Open** daily.

In the 16th-century old town hall, a Provençal crib scene has been created, representing the nativity at Les Baux. Handmade clay *santons* or figurines (see p52), representing saints and local figures, show the evolution of Provençal costume.

### **Carrières de Lumières**

Route de Maillane. Tel 04 90 54 47 37.

**Open** daily. **Closed** mid-Jan–Feb.

[carrieres-lumieres.com](http://carrieres-lumieres.com)

Located on the D27 road to the north of Les Baux and within walking distance of the main car park in Les Baux is the Val d'Enfer or the Valley of Hell. This jagged gorge, said to be inhabited by witches and spirits, may have inspired some of Dante's poetry. It is also the site where bauxite was discovered in 1822 by the mineralogist Berthier, who named it after the town. It was in this big quarry that the Cathédrale d'Images



View of the citadel and village of Les Baux



or presently, the Carrières de Lumières was established. The imaginative slide show is projected not only onto the white limestone walls of the natural theatre, but also the floor and ceiling, creating a three dimensional effect. The 35-minute show is renewed each year. Accompanied by captivating music, it is an extraordinary audio-visual experience.



Les Baux's Chapelle des Pénitents, next to the Eglise St-Vincent

## 14 Fontvieille

**Road map** B3. 3,700. Ave des Moulins (04 90 54 64 49). Mon & Fri. [fontvieille-provence.com](http://fontvieille-provence.com)

Fontvieille is an agreeable country town in the flat fruit and vegetable lands of the irrigated Baux Valley. Halfway between Arles and Les Alpilles, the town makes an excellent centre from which to explore. Until the French Revolution in 1789, the town's history was

bound up with the Abbaye de Montmajour. The oratories that stand at the four corners of the small town were erected in 1721 to celebrate the end of the plague (see pp52–3).

To the south on the D33, set on a stony hill is the Moulin de Daudet and further on at Barbegal are the remarkable remains of a Roman aqueduct.

## 15 Abbaye de Montmajour

**Road map** B3. Route de Fontvieille. **Tel** 04 90 54 64 17. **Open** Apr–Sep: daily; Oct–Mar: Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec.

Standing out like Noah's ark on Mount Ararat, 5 km (3 miles) northwest of Arles, this Benedictine abbey was built in the 10th century. At the time, the site was an island refuge in marshland. The handful of monks in residence spent all their spare time draining this area of marshland between the Alpilles chain and the Rhône.

The abbey is an imposing place, though all the Baroque buildings were destroyed by fire in 1726 and never restored. The original church is said to have been founded by Saint Trophime as a sanctuary from the Romans. It grew rich in the Middle Ages when thousands of pilgrims arrived at Easter to purchase pardons. After 1791, the abbey was broken up by two successive owners who bought it from the state. The



The cloisters and keep of the Abbaye de Montmajour

abbey was largely restored in the 19th century.

The **Eglise Notre-Dame** is one of the largest Romanesque buildings in Provence. Below, the 12th-century crypt has been built into the sloping hill. The cloister has double pillars ornamented with beasts and lies in the shadows of the 26-m (85-ft) tower, built in the 1360s. It is worth climbing the 124 steps to the tower platform to see the stunning view across to the sea. Also carved into the hillside is the atmospheric **Chapelle de St-Pierre**. It was established at the same time as the abbey and is a primitive place of worship. There are a number of tombs in the abbey grounds, but the principal burial area is the 12th-century **Chapelle Ste-Croix**. It lies not far to the east and is built in the shape of a Greek cross.

## Daudet's Windmill

The Moulin de Daudet is one of the most famous literary landmarks in France. Alphonse Daudet was born in Nîmes in 1840 and made his name in Paris. The windmill is the setting of Daudet's *Letters from my Windmill*, stories about Provençal life, first published in 1860 and popular ever since. He observed the local characters and wrote about their lives with irony and pathos. He never actually lived in the mill, but made imaginative use of some of the resident miller's tales. When he stayed in Fontvieille he was a guest in the 19th-century Château de Montauban. He came to find respite from the capital, but returned there in order to write his stories. The mill cannot be visited, but there is a small museum located in the château dedicated to Daudet.

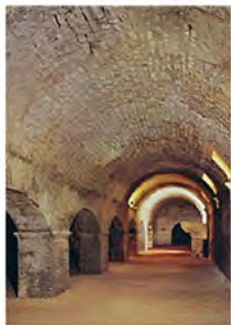


## 16 Street-by-Street: Arles

Many tourist sites in Arles bear the stamp of their Roman past, and all are within comfortable walking distance of the central place de la République. On its north side is the Hôtel de Ville, behind which is the place du Forum. This square is the heart of modern life in Arles. Another place to sit at a café and observe the Arlésiens is the boulevard des Lices, where the lively twice-weekly market is held. Some of the shops here and in nearby rue Jean-Jaurès sell bright Provençal fabrics. For museum-buffs, an inclusive ticket (*Passeport Avantage*) gives access to all the museums (except temporary exhibits) and monuments (except Abbaye de Montmajour).

### Musée Réattu

This museum on the banks of the Rhône houses 18th–19th-century and modern art, including this figure of *Le Griffu* (1952) by Germaine Richier.



### Cryptoportico

These three, vaulted subterranean galleries, from the 1st century BC, were built as foundations for the forum. Access is via the Hôtel de Ville.

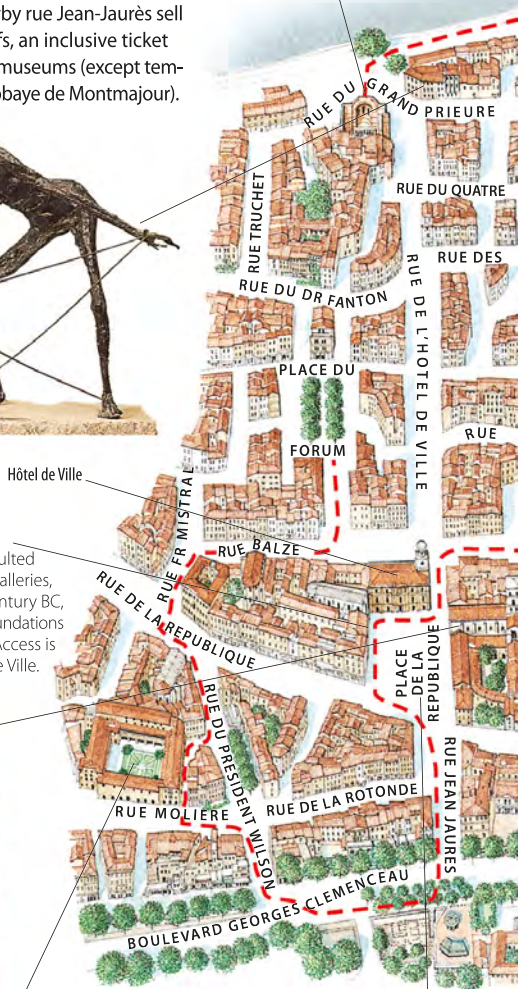


### ★ Eglise St-Trophime

This fine Romanesque church has a 12th-century portal of the *Last Judgment*, including saints and apostles.

0 metres 100  
0 yards 100

Les Thermes de Constantin are all that remain of Constantine's Palace, built in the 4th century AD.



L'Espace Van Gogh, a cultural centre

### Roman Obelisk

An ancient obelisk with fountains at its base (one of which is shown here) stands in the place de la République. It came from the Roman circus across the Rhône.





### ★ Les Arènes

This is one of the largest, best-preserved Roman monuments in Provence. The top tier provides an excellent panoramic view of Arles.



### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

#### Practical Information

Road map B3. 53,500.

Blvd des Lices (04 90 18 41 20).

Wed, Sat. Feria de Paquès (Easter); Fête des Gardians (1 May); Fêtes d'Arles (Jul); FERIA du Riz (Sep).

[arlestourisme.com](http://arlestourisme.com)

#### Transport

Nîmes-Garons.

Ave P Talabot.

### ★ Théâtre Antique

Once a fortress, its stones were later used for other buildings. These last remaining columns are called the "two widows".



**Eglise Notre-Dame-de-la-Major** is dedicated to Saint George, patron saint of the Camargue *gardians* (cowboys).

### Cloister of St-Trophime

This sculpted capital is a fine example of the Romanesque beauty of the cloister.

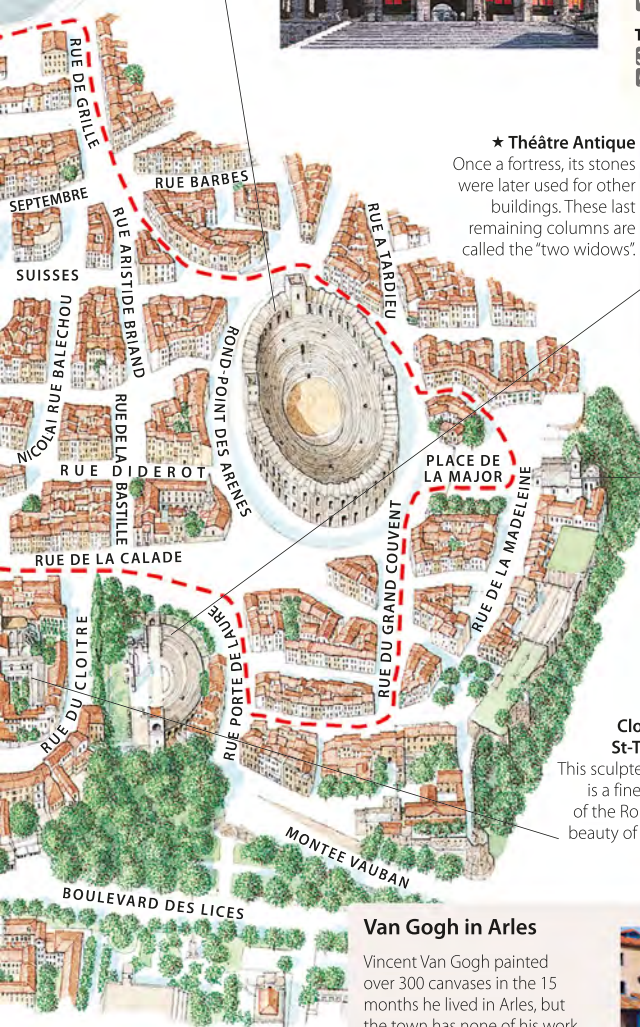


### Van Gogh in Arles

Vincent Van Gogh painted over 300 canvases in the 15 months he lived in Arles, but the town has none of his work. In belated appreciation of this lonely artist, the Hôtel-Dieu has been turned into L'Espace Van Gogh, with a library and exhibition space. Several sites are evocative of him, however; the Café Van Gogh in the place du Forum has been renovated to look as it did in his *Café du Soir*.



Courtyard of L'Espace Van Gogh, formerly known as Hôtel-Dieu



#### Key

Suggested route



## Exploring Arles

The city of Arles was a Greek site expanded by the Romans into a "little Rome". Here, on the most southerly crossing point on the Rhône, they built shipyards, baths, a racetrack and an arena. Then the capital of the three Gauls – France, Spain and Britain – Arles remains one of the most distinctive towns in Provence with fine relics from its Gallo-Roman past. Cars should be parked outside the narrow lanes of the old town.



Sarcophagi in the historic cemetery of Les Alyscamps

### Les Arènes

Rond-point des Arènes. **Tel** 04 90 49 59 05. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec & for bullfights and events. [arenas-arles.com](http://arenas-arles.com)

The most impressive of the surviving Roman monuments, the amphitheatre is on the east side of the old town. It was the largest of the Roman buildings in Gaul. Slightly oval, it measures 136 m (446 ft) by 107 m (351 ft) and could seat 20,000. Mosaics decorated the floors of some internal rooms, the better to wash down after bloody affrays. Today Spanish and Provençal bullfights are held regularly in the arena.



View of Arles from the opposite bank of the Rhône

Just to the southwest of the amphitheatre is the elegant Roman **Théâtre Antique**, which has 2,000 tiered seats arranged in a hemisphere.

### Musée Départemental de l'Arles Antique

Presqu'île du Cirque Romain. **Tel** 04 13 31 51 03. **Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec. [arles-antique.cg13.fr](http://arles-antique.cg13.fr)

Arles became Christian after Constantine's conversion in AD 312. This museum displays fine examples of Romano-Christian sculpture, while a wing opened in 2013 houses a Roman flat-bottomed barge, rescued from the Rhône riverbed.

### Cryptoportico

Place de la République. **Tel** 04 90 49 38 20. **Open** daily (mid-May–Oct). **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec. [patrimoine.ville-arles.fr](http://patrimoine.ville-arles.fr)

These huge subterranean galleries (see p45), ventilated by air shafts, were part of the forum's structure.

### Les Alyscamps

Ave des Alyscamps. **Tel** 04 90 49 38 20. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec.

From Roman to late Medieval times, Les Alyscamps was one

of the largest and most famous cemeteries in the Western world. Romans avoided it at night, making it an ideal meeting place for early Christians, led by St Trophime. Christians were often buried by the tomb of Genesius, a Roman servant and beheaded Christian martyr.

### Eglise St-Trophime

Place de la République. **Tel** 04 90 96 07 38. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec. cloisters. [patrimoine.ville-arles.fr](http://patrimoine.ville-arles.fr)

This is one of the most beautiful Romanesque churches in Provence. The portal and cloisters are decorated with biblical scenes. St Trophime, thought to be the first bishop of Arles in the early 3rd century, appears with St Peter and St John on the carved northeast pillar.

### Les Thermes de Constantin

Rue du Grand-Prieuré. **Tel** 04 90 49 38 20. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec.

Built by the Roman emperor Constantine in 306 AD, these once vast public baths fell into ruin, but were partially restored at the end of the 19th century. The three remaining original buildings attest to the ingenuity of Roman engineering.

### Musée Réattu

10 rue du Grand-Prieuré. **Tel** 04 90 49 37 58. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec. [museereattu.arles.fr](http://museereattu.arles.fr)

The local artist Jacques Réattu (1760–1833) and his contemporaries form the basis of this collection. A Picasso donation and a photographic display are among 20th-century works.

### Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles

35 rue du Dr Fanton. **Tel** 04 90 93 08 08. **Open** Tue–Sun (Apr–Sep: daily). [fondation-vincentvangogh-arles.org](http://fondation-vincentvangogh-arles.org)

Housed in the 15th-century Hôtel Léautaud de Donines, this museum has a dynamic collection of the artist's paintings as well as contemporary artworks highlighting van Gogh's influence on 20th- and 21st-century artists.

## 17 Martigues

**Road map** B4. 48,200.   
 Rond-Point de l'Hôtel de Ville  
 (04 42 42 31 10). Thu & Sun.  
[martigues-tourisme.com](http://martigues-tourisme.com)

The Etang de Berre, situated between Marseille and the Camargue, has the largest petroleum refinery industry in France, which dominates the landscape. However, on the inland side of the Canal de Caronte is the former fishing port and artists' colony of Martigues, which still attracts a holiday crowd.

Martigues lies on both banks of the canal and on the island of Brescon, where the Pont San Sébastien is a popular place for artists to set up their easels. Félix Ziem (1821–1911) was the most ardent admirer of this “little Venice” (see p30); his paintings and works by contemporary artists can be viewed in the **Musée Ziem**.

**Musée Ziem**  
 Blvd du 14 Juillet. **Tel** 04 42 41 39 60.  
**Open** Wed–Sun pm (Jul–Aug: Wed–  
 Mon). **Closed** public hols.



Canal San Sébastien in Martigues, known as the Birds' Looking-Glass

## 18 Salon-de-Provence

**Road map** B3. 44,500.   
 249 pl Morgan (04 90  
 56 27 60). Wed & Sun.  
[visitsalondeprovence.com](http://visitsalondeprovence.com)

Known for its olives (the olive oil industry was established in the 1400s) and soap, Salon-de-Provence is dominated by the castellated **Château de l'Empéri**. Once home of the archbishops



The 12th-century Cistercian Abbaye de Silvacane

of Arles, this now contains the Musée de l'Empéri, which has a large collection of militaria from Louis XIV to World War I.

The military tradition in the town is upheld by the French Air Force officers' college, La Patrouille Aérienne de France.

Near the château is the 13th-century **Eglise de St-Michel** and in the north of the old town is the Gothic **St-Laurent**, where the French physician and astrologer Nostradamus, Salon's most famous citizen, is buried. Here, in his adopted home, he wrote *Les Centuries*, his book of predictions, published in 1555. It was banned by the Vatican, as it foretold the diminishing power of the papacy. But his renown was widespread and in 1560 he was made Charles IX's physician.

Salon hosts a 10-day classical music festival, from late July to August, with concerts in the château, Eglise de St-Michel, Abbaye de Sainte-Croix and the town's theatre.

**Château de l'Empéri**  
 Montée du Puech. **Tel** 04 90 44 72 80.  
**Open** Tue–Sun pm. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1  
 May, 1 Nov, 24–25 Dec, 31 Dec.

## 19 Abbaye de Silvacane

**Road map** C3. **Tel** 04 42 50 41 69.  
**Open** Jun–Sep: daily; Oct–May: Tue–  
 Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.   
[abbaye-silvacane.com](http://abbaye-silvacane.com)

Like her two Cistercian sisters, Silvacane is a harmonious 12th-century monastery tucked away in the countryside. A bus from Aix-en-Provence runs regularly to Roque-d'Anthéron, the nearest village. The abbey was founded on the site of a Benedictine monastery, in a clearing of a

“forest of reeds” (*silva canorum*).

It adheres to the austere Cistercian style, with no decoration. The church, with nave, two aisles and a high, vaulted transept, is solid, bare and echoing. The cloisters, arcaded like a pigeon loft, are 13th century and

the refectory 14th century. Shortly after the refectory was built, all the monks left and the church served the parish. After the Revolution, it was sold as state property and became a farm until transformed back into an abbey.



Nostradamus, astrologer and citizen of Salon

## 20 Aix-en-Provence

Provence's former capital is an international students' town, with one of the region's most cosmopolitan streets of restaurants and bars, rue de la Verrerie. The university was founded by Louis II of Anjou in 1409 and flourished under his son, Good King René (see pp50–51). Another wave of prosperity transformed the city in the 17th century, when ramparts, first raised by the Romans in their town of Aquae Sextiae, were pulled down, and the mansion-lined cours Mirabeau was built. Aix's renowned fountains were added in the 18th century.



The cours Mirabeau, grandest of Aix's boulevards

### Exploring Aix

North of the cours Mirabeau, between the **Cathédrale St-Sauveur** and the place d'Albertas, lies the town's old quarter. Signs include the **Musée du Palais de l'Archevêché**, housed in the former Bishop's palace, and the 17th-century Hôtel de Ville. Built around a courtyard by Pierre Pavillon, it stands in a square now used as a flower market. Nearby is the 16th-century clock tower.

Just outside the old town are the ancient Roman baths, the **Thermes Sextius**, and nearby is the 18th-century spa complex.

Aix's finest street, the cours Mirabeau, is named after the orator and revolutionary Comte de Mirabeau. At its western end is the Fontaine de la Rotonde, a cast-iron fountain built in 1860. The north side is lined with shops, pâtisseries and cafés, the most illustrious being the 18th-century Les Deux Garçons (see p219). The south side is lined with elegant mansions: No. 4, Hôtel de Villars (1710); No. 10, the Hôtel d'Isoard de Vauvenargues (1710), former residence of the Marquis of Entrecasteau who murdered his wife here; No. 19, Hôtel d'Arbaud

Jouques (1730); No. 20, Hôtel de Forbin (1658); and Hôtel d'Espagnet at No. 38, once home to the Duchess of Montpensier, known as "La Grande Made-moiselle", niece of Louis XIII. South of the cours Mirabeau is the Quartier Mazarin built during the time of Archbishop Michel Mazarin. Aix's first Gothic church, St-Jean-de-Malte, now houses the **Musée Granet**. The museum has also been expanded into the Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs, a few steps away from the original building.



The splendid 17th-century Hôtel de Ville, with the flower market in front

### **f** Cathédrale St-Sauveur

34 pl des Martyrs de la Résistance.

**Tel** 04 42 23 45 65. **Open** daily (timings vary, call ahead). ☞ for cloisters. **w** [cathedrale-aix.net](http://cathedrale-aix.net)

The cathedral at the top of the old town creaks with history. The main door has solid walnut panels sculpted by Jean Guiramand (1504). On the right there is a fine 4th–5th-century baptistry, with a Renaissance cupola standing on 2nd-century Corinthian columns. These are from a basilica which stood here beside the Roman forum. The jewel of the church is the triptych of *The Burning Bush* (1476, see pp50–51) by Nicolas Froment. South of the cathedral are tiled Romanesque cloisters.

### **m** Musée du Palais de l'Archevêché

Ancien Palais de l'Archevêché, 28

place des Martyrs de la Résistance. **Tel** 04 42 23 09 91. **Open** Wed–Mon.

**Closed** 1 May, 25 Dec. ☞

Apart from magnificent 17th- and 18th-century Beauvais tapestries, the museum has costumes and stage designs from 1948 onwards, used in the annual Festival International d'Art Lyrique (see p37).

### **m** Musée Estienne de Saint-Jean (Vieil Aix)

17 rue Gaston de Saporta. **Tel** 04 42 91 89 78. **Open** Wed–Mon. ☞

This eclectic collection includes furniture, a 19th-century *crèche parlante* and figures from the Corpus Christi parade commissioned by King René.

### **m** Hôtel de Caumont Centre d'Art

3 rue Joseph Cabassol. **Tel** 04 42 20 70 01. **Open** daily. ☞ ☞ ☞

**w** [caumont-centredart.com](http://caumont-centredart.com)

Housed in an 18th-century hotel, the Caumont Art Centre hosts temporary art exhibitions and a programme of concerts and lectures. A film on Paul Cézanne's life in Aix is also screened daily.

### **m** Musée Granet

Pl St-Jean de Malte. **Tel** 04 42 52 88 32.

**Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec. ☞ ☞ ☞ **w** [museegranet-aixenprovence.fr](http://museegranet-aixenprovence.fr)

The city's main museum is in a 17th-century former priory of the





Cézanne's studio, filled with his furniture and personal belongings

Knights of Malta. François Granet (1775–1849), a local artist, bequeathed his collection of French, Italian and Flemish paintings to Aix, including Ingres' *Portrait of Granet* and *Jupiter and Thetis*. There are also works by Granet and other Provençal painters, eight canvases by Paul Cézanne, plus artifacts from Roman Aix.

### Fondation Vasarely

1 ave Marcel Pagnol. **Tel** 04 42 20 01 09. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 24, 25 & 26 Dec. [fondationvasarely.org](http://fondationvasarely.org)

This series of innovative black-and-white metal hexagons was

designed by the king of Op Art Victor Vasarely in the mid-1970s. Alongside his monumental works, the gallery's exhibitions promote art in the city at a national and international level.

### L'Atelier de Cézanne

9 ave Paul Cézanne. **Tel** 04 42 21 06 53. **Open** Mar–Oct: daily; Nov–Feb: Mon–Sat. **Closed** 1 May, 25 Dec. [cezanne-en-provence.com](http://cezanne-en-provence.com)

Ten minutes' walk uphill from the Cathédrale St-Sauveur is the house of renowned artist Paul Cézanne (see p30),

## VISITORS' CHECKLIST

### Practical Information

Road map C4. 145,000.

300 ave Giuseppe Verdi (04 42 16 11 61). daily.

Fest d'Art Lyrique (Jun–Jul).

[aixenprovencetourism.com](http://aixenprovencetourism.com)

### Transport

Ave Victor Hugo. Ave de l'Europe

who was unfortunately jeered at during his lifetime in his hometown. The studio is much as he left it when he died in 1906. Not far from here you can see the scenic Montagne Ste-Victoire, a favourite subject of the painter.

### Pavillon de Vendôme (Arts Décoratifs)

13 rue de la Molle or 32 rue Célony. **Tel** 04 42 91 88 75. **Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.

One of Aix-en-Provence's grandest houses, built for Cardinal de Vendôme in 1667 and later enlarged, the main entrance is supported by two figures of Atlantes. The beautiful rooms are filled with Provençal furniture and portraits.

## Aix-en-Provence

- 1 Cathédrale St-Sauveur
- 2 Musée du Palais de l'Archevêché
- 3 Musée Estienne de Saint-Jean (Vieil Aix)
- 4 Hôtel de Caumont Centre d'Art
- 5 Musée Granet
- 6 Pavillon de Vendôme (Arts Décoratifs)



Key to Symbols see back flap

## 21 Marseille

France's premier port and oldest major city is in a surprisingly attractive setting, centred on the Vieux Port, which fishing boats enter between the guardian forts of St-Jean and St-Nicolas. On the north side are the commercial docks and the old town, rebuilt after World War II. People have lived here for 26 centuries, its mixture of cultures being so varied that Alexandre Dumas called it "the meeting place of the entire world".



Boats moored at Marseille's Vieux Port

### Exploring Marseille

Inland, running from the end of the port, is La Canebière – cannabis walk – a big, bustling boulevard which stretches from former hemp fields down to the port where the hemp was made into rope.

At the top of La Canebière is the Neo-Gothic Eglise des Réformés. A left and a right turn lead to boulevard Longchamp, and a walk along its length brings you to the Palais Longchamp. This is not really a palace, but more an impressive folly in the form of a colonnade that fans out around a fountain and ends in two large wings. These wings support a natural history and a fine arts museum.

Behind the palace is the city's zoo. Beyond the grid of shopping streets to the south, the town rises towards the basilica of Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde, which provides an unparalleled view of the city. If you visit the morning fish market on the quai des Belges, you can delight in Marseille's famed *bouillabaisse* (see pp204–5) at one of the many fish restaurants nearby. Just

behind the quai des Belges, at the back of St-Ferréol, is the Jardin des Vestiges, where remains of the Greek settlement, dating from the 4th century BC, have been found.

### La Vieille Charité

2 rue de la Vieille Charité. Tel 04 91 14 58 38. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** public hols.       [vieille-charite-marseille.com](http://vieille-charite-marseille.com)

The old town's finest building is the Vieille Charité, a large, well-restored hospice designed by Pierre Puget (1620–94), architect



The Palais Longchamps, a 19th-century folly set around a fountain

to Louis XIV. Begun in 1671, its original purpose was to house rural migrants. It is centred on a chapel, now used as an exhibition centre. The first floor has a rich collection of ancient Egyptian artifacts in the Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne and the second floor displays African and Oceanic art.

### Cathédrale de la Major







Place de la Major. Tel 04 91 90 52 87. **Open** Wed–Mon.

The old town descends on the west side to the Cathédrale de la Major, a Neo-Byzantine confection completed in 1893. Its crypt contains the tombs of the bishops of Marseille. Beside it, small and beautiful, is the 11th-century Ancienne Cathédrale de la Major, part of which was sacrificed in the building of the new cathedral. Inside are a reliquary altar of 1073 and a 15th-century altar.

### Musée des Docks Romains

10 place Vivaux. Tel 04 91 91 24 62.

**Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** public hols.







      [musee-des-docks-romain-marseille.fr](http://musee-des-docks-romain-marseille.fr)

During post-war rebuilding the Roman docks were uncovered. A small museum, mainly displaying large storage urns once used for wine, grain and oil, occupies the site of the docks, now buried in the foundations of a residential block.

### Musée d'Histoire de Marseille

2 rue Henri Barbusse. Tel 04 91 55 36 63.

**Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** public hols.

      [musee-histoire-marseille-voie-historique.fr](http://musee-histoire-marseille-voie-historique.fr)

Formerly located at the Centre Bourse, this renovated and

expanded historical museum now sits on the archaeological site of the Jardin des Vestiges, which has been reclassified as Marseille's ancient sea port. Surrounded by the remains of the port, with its fortifications and docks dating from the 1st century, visitors can follow the paved Roman road leading to the entrance of the museum. The museum retraces the history of the city and its port, from prehistoric times to the present day, around the theme of navigation. There are ten maritime wrecks, including the hull of an important 3rd-century ship and seven ancient Greek and Roman vessels. Other interesting exhibits include medieval ceramics, a relief map of the city as it was in 1848 and sarcophagi unearthed at nearby excavations. A visit to the museum ends with displays on the latest developments in Marseille and predictions about the future of the city.



The Jardin des Vestiges, Greek ruins outside the Musée d'Histoire de Marseille

### Musée Cantini

19 rue Grignan. **Tel** 04 91 54 77 75. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** public hols.  [culture.marseille.fr](http://culture.marseille.fr)

The Musée Cantini is housed in the 17th-century Hôtel de Montgrand. Its collection of 20th-century art, donated along with the building by the sculptor Jules Cantini, includes Fauve, Cubist and Surrealist paintings.



Basilique de Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde in Marseille

### Musée Borély – la Musée des Arts Décoratif, de la Mode et de la Faïence

Château Borély, 134 av Clôt Bey. **Tel** 04 91 55 33 60. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** public hols.  [culture.marseille.fr/patrimoine-culturel/le-chateau-borely](http://culture.marseille.fr/patrimoine-culturel/le-chateau-borely)


Château Borély, a masterpiece of 18th-century architecture, now houses an exhibition devoted to decorative arts and furniture, fashion from the 17th century to the present day, and earthenware and ceramics. Outdoor shows and concerts take place in the château's gardens.

### Abbaye de St-Victor

Pl St-Victor. **Tel** 04 96 11 22 60. **Open** daily.  for crypt. [saintvictor.net](http://saintvictor.net) Marseille's finest piece of religious architecture is St Victor's basilica, between Notre-Dame and the port. This religious fortress belonged to one of the most powerful abbeys in Provence. It was founded in the 5th century by a monk, St Cassian, in honour of St Victor, martyred two centuries earlier. There are crypts containing catacombs, sarcophagi and the cave of St Victor.

On 2 February St-Victor becomes a place of pilgrimage. Boat-shaped cakes are sold to commemorate the legendary arrival in Provence of the Stes-Maries (see p45).

### Basilique de Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde

Rue Fort du Sanctuaire. **Tel** 04 91 13 40 80. **Open** daily.  [notredamedelagarde.com](http://notredamedelagarde.com)




The basilica of Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde, which dominates the

## VISITORS' CHECKLIST

### Practical Information

**Road map** C4.  860,000.  11 la Canebière (08 26 50 05 00).  Mon–Sat.  Fête de la Chandeleur (2 Feb).  [marseille-tourisme.com](http://marseille-tourisme.com)

### Transport

 25 km (15 miles) NW Marseille.  pl Victor Hugo.  SNCM, 61 bd des Dames; Chateau d'Iff ferry, Quai des Belges.

south of the town at 155 m (500 ft), is a 19th-century Neo-Byzantine extravaganza. It is presided over by a golden Madonna on a 46-m (150-ft) bell tower. Much of the interior decoration is by the Düsseldorf School. Many come for the incomparable view over the city.

### Musée Grobet-Labadié

140 blvd Longchamp. **Tel** 04 91 62 21 82. **Closed** for renovation (call for details).  [culture.marseille.fr/les-musees-de-marseille](http://culture.marseille.fr/les-musees-de-marseille)

To the north of the city, at the top of boulevard Longchamp, is the finest house in Marseille, with one of the most unusual interiors in the region. It was built in 1873 for a Marseille merchant, Alexandre Labadié. The house and its collection were given to the city in 1919 by his daughter, Marie-Louise.

The Musée Grobet-Labadié has a fine furniture collection, tapestries, 17th–19th century paintings, and many objects of interest, including unusual musical instruments, among them silk and ivory bagpipes.



Detail of *The Flagellation of Christ*, in the Musée Grobet-Labadié



### Palais Longchamp

Bld de Montrichet. Musée des Beaux-Arts (left wing): **Tel** 04 91 14 59 30. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** public hols. [musee-des-beaux-arts.marseille.fr](http://musee-des-beaux-arts.marseille.fr) Museum d'Histoire Naturelle (right wing): **Tel** 04 91 14 59 50. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** public hols. [museum-marseille.org](http://museum-marseille.org)

This 19th-century palace is home to the Musée des Beaux-Arts and the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle, with its stuffed animal collection. The renovated Musée des Beaux-Arts contains works by local artists as well as paintings by French, Italian and Flemish old masters.

### Château d'If

Vieux Port. **Tel** 04 91 59 02 30. **Open** daily (Sep–Mar: Tue–Sun). Feb–Nov. Fact, fiction and legend mingle in this island castle in the bay of Marseille. It was a barren island until 1516, when François I decided to make it a fortress. It was built in 1529, and turned into a prison in 1540 until World War I. Famous inmates have included Alexander Dumas' fictional Count of Monte Cristo, the legendary Man in the Iron



The Château d'If in the bay of Marseille, a prison in reality and fiction

Mask (see p75) and the real Comte de Mirabeau. In 1516, the first rhinoceros to set foot in Europe was brought ashore here, and drawn by Albrecht Dürer (see p51).

### Cité Radieuse

280 bld Michelet. **Tel** 08 26 50 05 00 (for guided tour information). **Open** Tue–Sat.

A landmark in modern architecture, Radiant City was opened in 1952. This vertical, concrete construction by Le Corbusier includes shops, social clubs, schools and crèches (see p29).

### Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM)

7 Promenade Robert Laffont. **Tel** 04 84 35 13 13. **Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 May, 24 & 25 Dec. [mucem.org](http://mucem.org)

This museum is split between a striking Post-Modern building on the seafront and the adjacent Fort St-Jean, which are linked together by a roof-level bridge suspended over the sea. It features art from around the Mediterranean, dating back from Neolithic times to the present day.

## Marseille

- ① La Vieille Charité
- ② Cathédrale de la Major
- ③ Musée des Docks Romains
- ④ Musée d'Histoire de Marseille
- ⑤ Musée Cantini
- ⑥ Abbaye de St-Victor



For map symbols see back flap

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp200–1 and pp212–15

## 22 Aubagne

**Road map** C4. 45,700.

8 cours Barthélémy (04 42 03 49 98). Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun.

[tourisme-paysdaubagne.fr](http://tourisme-paysdaubagne.fr)

Marcel Pagnol's life and work is the main attraction of this simple market town. It has a tradition of making ceramics and *santons* (see p52). The tableaux can be seen in the Petit Monde de Marcel Pagnol display on the Esplanade de Gaulle about 300 m from the tourist office.

Just outside the town is the headquarters of the French Foreign Legion, moved here from Algeria in 1962. The renovated headquarters has a **Musée de la Légion Etrangère** with memorabilia on display from a variety of campaigns ranging from Mexico to Indo-China and an extensive library.

**Musée de la Légion Etrangère**

Chemin de la Thuillière. **Tel** 04 42 18 12 41.

**Open** 10am–12pm & 2–6pm Tue–Sun.

[samle.legion-etrangere.com](http://samle.legion-etrangere.com)

## 23 Les Calanques

**Road map** C4. Marseille. Marseille,

Cassis. Cassis. Cassis, Marseille.

Cassis (08 92 39 01 03).

Between Marseille and Cassis the coast is broken up by *calanques* – enticing fjord-like inlets lying between vertical white cliffs.

Continuing deep under the blue waters, they offer safe natural harbours and fascinating aquatic life, with glorious views from the high clifftops (see also pp34–5). Their



Poster for Pagnol's film *Marius*

precipitous faces provide a challenge to climbers. A major attraction is the Parc national des Calanques, the only national park in Europe to include land, marine and semi-urban areas. Opened in 2012, it has around 200 protected animal, plant and marine species.

From Cassis, it is possible to walk to the nearest *calanque*, Port-Miou. Beyond it lies Port-Pin, with occasional pine trees and a shady beach, but the most scenic is En-Vau, which has a sandy beach and needle-like rocks rising from the sea. These walking paths may be closed during peak summer, due to the risk of fire. On the western side, the Sormiou and Morgiou inlets can be approached by road.

In 1991, a cave was found with its entrance 100 m (350 ft) beneath the sea at Sormiou. It is decorated with pictures of prehistoric animals resembling the ancient cave paintings at Lascaux in the Dordogne.

## Marcel Pagnol

A plaque at No. 16 cours Barthélémy in Aubagne marks the birthplace of Pagnol, Provençal writer and film-maker. Born in 1895, his holidays were spent in the village of La Treille. His insights into rural Provence enriched tales such as *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*. The Office de Tourisme has a Circuit Marcel Pagnol, with road routes and walks which take in La Treille and other sites of Pagnol's inspiration.

Bear in mind when visiting the area that the main car parks serving Les Calanques beaches are notorious for theft.

## 24 Cassis

**Road map** C4. 7,600.

Quai des Moulins (08 92 39 01 03).

Wed & Fri. [ot-cassis.com](http://ot-cassis.com)

A favourite summer resort of artists such as Derain, Dufy and Matisse, Cassis is a lovely port, tucked into limestone hills. The Romans liked it, too, and built villas here, and when Marseille prospered in the 17th century a number of mansions were erected. It was also a busy fishing centre in the 19th century, and is still known for its seafood. The local delicacy is sea urchins, enjoyed with a glass of Cassis' reputed AOC white wine.

There is **Musée Municipal Méditerranéen**, with items dating back to the Greeks, some rescued from the seabed. It also shows Cassis to have been a substantial trading port up till World War II. There are paintings by Félix Ziem (see p30) and by other early 20th-century artists who were equally drawn to Cassis, like Winston Churchill, who learnt to paint here.

There are three good beaches nearby, notably the Plage de la Grande Mer. Between Cassis and La Ciotat are the red cliffs of Cap Canaille, with a 4-hour walk (one-way) along Route des Crêtes.

**Musée Municipal Méditerranéen d'Art et Traditions Populaires**

Place Baragnon. **Tel** 04 42 18 36 78.

**Open** Wed–Sat. **Closed** public hols.

restricted.



En-Vau, the most beautiful of Les Calanques, along the coast from Cassis







# VAUCLUSE

Vaucluse is a land of vines and lavender, truffles and melons, which many know about through the books of the English expatriate and author Peter Mayle. His works depict village life in the Luberon, an idyllic countryside where Picasso spent his last years. Roussillon, set among ochre quarries, also became the topic of a book, when American sociologist Laurence Wylie experienced village life there in the 1950s.



The jewel of Vaucluse is the fortified riverside city of Avignon, home to the popes during their "Babylonian exile" from 1309–77, and now host to one of the great music and theatre festivals of France. The popes' castle at Châteauneuf-du-Pape is now a ruin, but the village still produces stupendous wines. The Rhône valley wine region is justly renowned, and its vineyards spread as far northeast as the slopes of the towering giant of Provence, Mont Ventoux.

The Roman legacy in Vaucluse is also remarkable. It is glimpsed in the great theatre and triumphal arch in Orange, and in the ruins of Vaison-la-Romaine which were not built over by successive

civilizations. Carpentras was also a Roman town, but its claim to fame is its possession of France's oldest synagogue. The story of the Jews, who were given papal protection in Vaucluse, is one of many religious histories which can be traced through the region. Another is the Baron of Oppède's brutal crusade against the Vaudois heretics in 1545, when many villages were destroyed.

Near Oppède, at Lacoste, a path leads to the château of France's notorious libertine Marquis de Sade. Perhaps a more elevated writer was Petrarch, who lived in Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, where the Sorgue river emerges from a mysterious source.



A vine-covered house at Le Bastidon, near the Luberon

## Exploring Vaucluse

Vaucluse, which takes its name from the Latin *vallis clausa* (closed valley), covers 3,540 sq km (2,200 sq miles). It is bordered by the Rhône in the west, the Durance in the south, and the foothills of the Alps to the east, and has a series of highland chains, dominated by the serene Mont Ventoux (see p164). The extraordinary Dentelles pinnacles are in the west and to the south is the Vaucluse Plateau, where the river Sorgue flows in the beautiful and dramatic setting of Fontaine-de-Vaucluse.

### Sights at a Glance

- 1 Bollène
- 2 Vaison-la-Romaine
- 4 Mont Ventoux
- 5 Orange pp165–7
- 6 Caderousse
- 7 Châteauneuf-du-Pape
- 8 Carpentras
- 9 Abbaye de Sénanque
- 10 Fontaine-de-Vaucluse
- 11 L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue
- 12 Avignon pp170–2
- 13 Gordes
- 14 Roussillon
- 15 Cavailon
- 17 Apt
- 18 Cadenet
- 19 Ansois
- 20 Pertuis
- 21 La Tour d'Aigues

### Tours

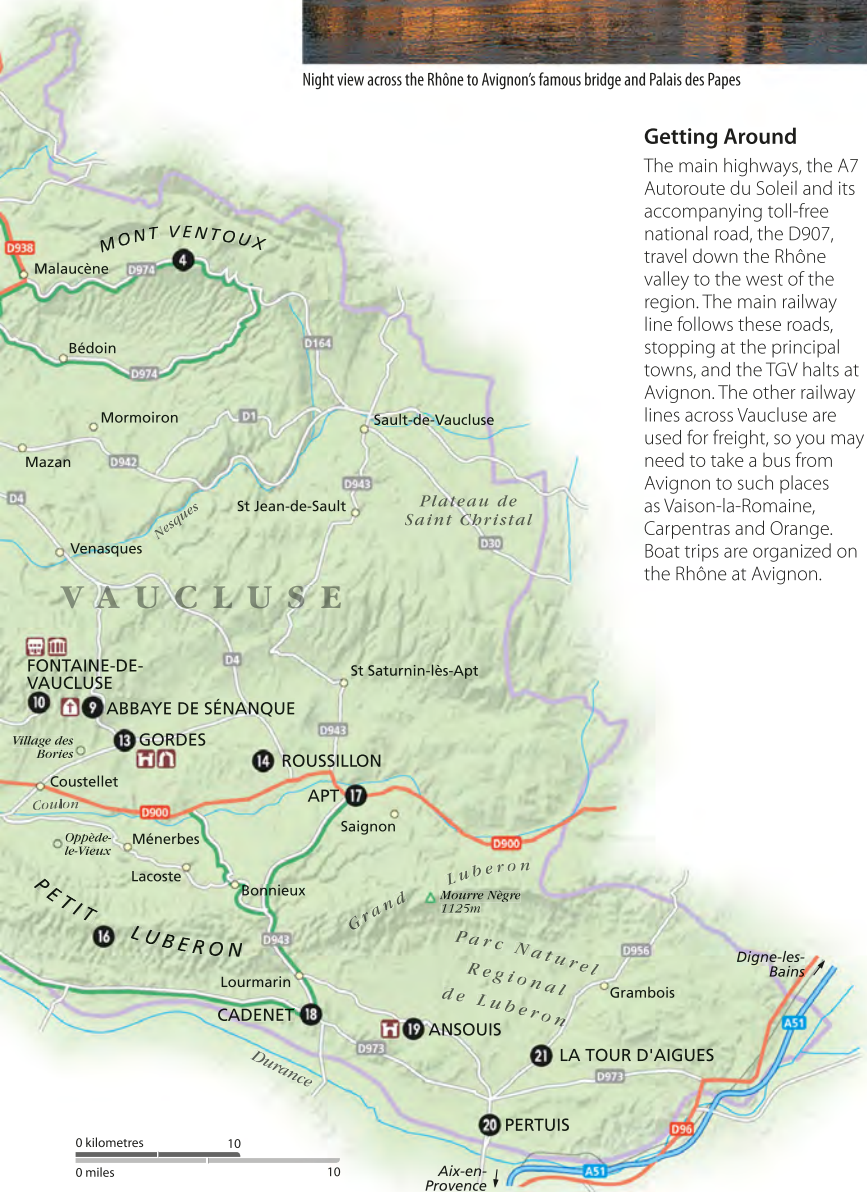
- 3 Dentelles
- 16 *Petit Luberon* pp174–5



The roofs and terraces of Gordes, crowned by the church and castle



Night view across the Rhône to Avignon's famous bridge and Palais des Papes



## Getting Around

The main highways, the A7 Autoroute du Soleil and its accompanying toll-free national road, the D907, travel down the Rhône valley to the west of the region. The main railway line follows these roads, stopping at the principal towns, and the TGV halts at Avignon. The other railway lines across Vaucluse are used for freight, so you may need to take a bus from Avignon to such places as Vaison-la-Romaine, Carpentras and Orange. Boat trips are organized on the Rhône at Avignon.





The Belvédère Pasteur garden in Bollène

## 1 Bollène

**Road map** B2. 14,400.   
 Pl Reynaud de la Gardette  
 (04 90 40 51 45). Mon.  
[bollenetourisme.com](http://bollenetourisme.com)

Despite being spread along the A7 autoroute, Bollène is pleasant, with airy boulevards and walks beside the river Lez, where there is a camping site. The narrow streets of the old quarter lead to the 11th-century **Collégiale St-Martin**, with its timber saddle-back roof and Renaissance doorway. Bollène became famous in 1882, when Louis Pasteur stayed here and developed inoculation against swine fever. The **Belvédère Pasteur** garden above the town has views over the Rhône valley to the Cévennes, the Bollène hydroelectric power station and Tricastin nuclear power plant. The town hosts free open-air concerts from early July to August.

South of Bollène is the cliff-top fortress of Mornas, built by the Earl of Toulouse, which was later fought over for its strategic position during the Wars of Religion. The steep climb is rewarded by superb views of the Rhône valley.

## 2 Vaison-la-Romaine

**Road map** B2. 6,429. Pl du Chanoine Sautel (04 90 36 02 11).  
 Tue. [vaison-ventoux-tourisme.com](http://vaison-ventoux-tourisme.com)

The pavement cafés in this attractive stone-and-red-roof town on the river Ouvèze are among Provence's most chic.

The modern town sits beside the Roman town, opposite the hilltop Haute-Ville on the other side of the river. Vaison is a smart address for Parisians' second homes and, judging by the opulent remains left by the Romans, it has long been sought after. The Romans lived with the native Celtic Vocontii and the population was around 10,000. Two sites have been excavated, divided by the avenue Général-de-Gaulle. The upper site, known as the Puymin Quarter, has a Roman theatre, still used for Vaison's summer festival in July, centred on dance. Its stage is cut out of rock, and the theatre seats up to 6,000. Many Roman remains come from the villa of a wealthy family, the House of the Messii, and an elegant,



Mosaic in the museum at Vaison-la-Romaine

colonnaded public building, Pompey's Portico. The site is dotted with copies of original statues that are now kept in the **Musée Théo Desplans**, and include a powerful nude of Hadrian and his well-draped empress, Sabina. Many statues were designed to have their heads replaced whenever there was a change of local officials. Other remains include a communal six-seater latrine and a 3rd-century silver bust, which once stood in the hall of a patrician's house in La Villasse, the district on the other side of the avenue Général-de-Gaulle.

The Haute-Ville, which artists and craftspeople helped to re-populate, is reached by means of a Roman bridge, a single 56-ft (17-m) span used for more than 2,000 years until devastating floods necessitated huge repairs. Entrance is via a 14th-century fortified gate. The Romanesque church, built as a **cathedral**, has 7th-century columns in the apse, and a 12th-century cloister. A walk to the summit reveals the ruined castle the victorious

Counts of Toulouse built in 1160.

### Roman City

Fouilles de Puymin and Musée Archeologique Théo Desplans, Pl du Chanoine Sautel. **Tel** 04 90 36 50 48.

**Open** daily. **Closed** Jan.

restricted.



Grounds of Roman house with 3rd-century silver bust, Vaison-la-Romaine

### 3 A Tour of the Dentelles

Dentelle means “lace”, and the Dentelles de Montmirail is the name of the 15-km (9-mile) range of hills that form a lacework of delicate peaks. Not as high or rugged as they initially seem, the Dentelles have good paths and offer some of the most accessible, enjoyable mountain walks in Provence. The paths are bright with broom and flanked by pines, oaks and wild almond trees. When you have had your fill of the stunning scenery, enjoy fine Côtes du Rhône wines and delicious goat’s cheese produced in the picturesque villages tucked into the folds of the Dentelles.



Muscat grapes outside Beaumes-de-Venise



Gigondas vineyard

#### 6 Gigondas

The local red wine is highly regarded and its producers include the master-chef Roux brothers. The Counts of Orange built the 14th-century château.

#### 5 Vacqueyras

The home of the famous troubadour, Raimbaud, who died on a Crusade, this village has a church with a 6th-century baptistry.

#### 4 Beaumes-de-Venise

This is a town of many restaurants, and the home of Muscat, the town’s famous fortified sweet white dessert wine, which can be enjoyed with lunch or dinner.

#### 1 Vaison-la-Romaine

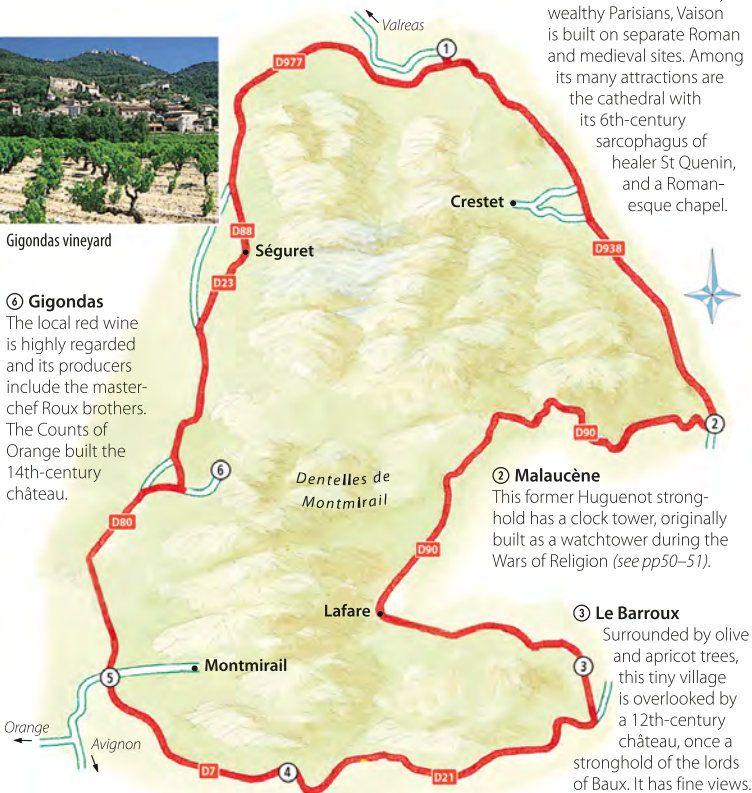
A chic town, favoured by wealthy Parisians, Vaison is built on separate Roman and medieval sites. Among its many attractions are the cathedral with its 6th-century sarcophagus of healer St Quenin, and a Romanesque chapel.

#### 2 Malaucène

This former Huguenot stronghold has a clock tower, originally built as a watchtower during the Wars of Religion (see pp50–51).

#### 3 Le Barroux

Surrounded by olive and apricot trees, this tiny village is overlooked by a 12th-century château, once a stronghold of the lords of Baux. It has fine views.



#### Key

- Tour route
- Other roads

0 kilometres 2  
0 miles 2

#### Tips for Drivers

**Tour length:** 50 km (30 miles).

**Stopping off points:** The hilltop village of Crestet; Lafare, a hamlet leading to the 627-m (2057-ft) Rocher du Turc; and Montmirail, a 19th-century spa resort visited by Mistral. (See also pp250–51.)

## 4 Mont Ventoux

**Road map** C2. Avignon. 3,000.

Ave de la Promenade, Sault-en-Provence (04 90 64 01 21).

[ventoux-en-provence.com](http://ventoux-en-provence.com)

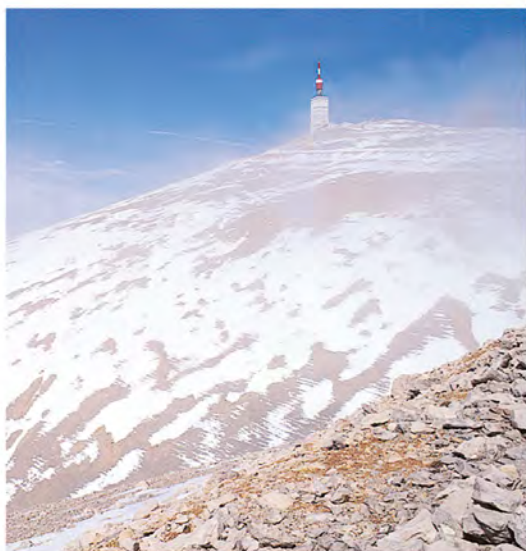
The “Giant of Provence” is the dominant feature west of the Alps, a limestone massif which reaches 1,912m (6,242 ft). It is easy to reach the car park at the top, unless there is deep snow, which can last until April. The snowline starts at 1,300 m (4,265 ft), but the limestone scree of its summit forms a year-round white cap.

Until 1973 there was a motor race on the south side of Mont Ventoux, to the top: speeds reached up to 145 km/h (90 mph). A car rally takes place in Bedoin in June. The roads have gradually improved and the worst hairpins are now ironed out, but the mountain roads are often included as a gruelling stage on the Tour de France. Britain’s cyclist Tommy Simpson suffered a fatal heart attack here in 1967.

It takes around five hours to walk to the summit of Mont Ventoux. Petrarch (*see p49*) made the first recorded journey from Malaucène at dawn one day in May in 1336. As there were no roads then, it took him a great deal longer.



Engraving of rally motor car ascending Mont Ventoux (1904)



Summit of Mont Ventoux during the Mistral season

The mountain is often windy and its name comes from the French word (*vent*) for wind. When the northerly Mistral blows, it can almost lift you out of your boots. But the winds dry the moisture in the sky, painting it a deep blue colour and leaving behind clear vistas.

There are three starting points for a walking tour of the mountain: Malaucène, on the north slopes, Bedoin to the south and Sault to the east.

Another direct route for hikers is from Brantes on the northeast side, up the Toulourenc valley. The first two towns both have tourist offices that organize guided hikes to see the sun

rise at the summit. The 21-km (13-mile) road from Malaucène passes the 12th-century Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Groseau and the Source Vauclusienne, a deep pool tapped for an aqueduct by the Romans.

The ski centre at Mt Serein is based 5 km (3 miles) from the summit. A viewing table at the peak helps to discern the Cévennes, the Luberon and Ste-Victoire.

Descending, the road passes the Col des Tempêtes, known for its stormy weather. The ski centre of Le Chalet-Reynard is at the junction to Sault and les Gorges de la Nesque, and St-Estève has fine views over the Vaucluse.



Monument to cycling hero Tommy Simpson

### Provençal Flowers

Because the temperature on Mont Ventoux drops between the foot and the summit by around 11° C (20° F), the vegetation alters from the lavender and peach orchards of the plain via the oak, beech and conifer woodlands to the arctic flowers towards the summit. June is the best month for flowers.



Early purple orchid  
*Orchis mascula*



Alpine poppy  
*Papaver rhoeaticum*



Trumpet gentian  
*Gentiana clusii*



## 5 Orange

**Road map** B2. 30,000.   
**7** 5 cours Aristide Briand (04 90 34 70 88). Thu. [orange-tourisme.fr](http://orange-tourisme.fr)

This historical town contains two of the finest Roman monuments in Europe. The Théâtre Antique d'Orange is known for its world-famous concerts (see pp166–7), while the Arc de Triomphe celebrates the honour of Tiberius and the conquest of Rome after the Battle of Actium. Orange is also the centre for the Côtes du Rhône vineyards and produce such as olives, honey and truffles. Around the 17th-century Hôtel de Ville, streets open on to peaceful, shady squares with café terraces.



Side-chapel altar in the Ancienne Cathédrale Notre-Dame, Orange

### Roman Orange

When the first Roman army attempted to conquer Gaul, it was defeated near Orange with a loss of 80,000 men in 105 BC. When the army came back three years later and triumphed, one of the first monuments built to show supremacy was the 19-m (63-ft) Arc de Triomphe on the via Agrippa between Arles and Lyons, today little used.

### The Old Town

Old Orange is centred around the 17th-century town hall and **Ancienne Cathédrale Notre-Dame**, with its crumbling Romanesque portal, damaged in the Wars of Religion (see pp50–51). The theatre's wall dominates the place des Frères-Mounet. Louis XIV described it as "the greatest wall in my kingdom". There is an

excellent view of the theatre, the city of Orange and the Rhône plain from **Colline St-Eutrope**. This is the site of the remains of the castle of the princes of Orange, who gave the Dutch royal family its title, the House of Orange, through marriage. The family also lent their name to states and cities around the world.

### Arc de Triomphe

Ave de l'Arc de Triomphe. The monument, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has excellent decorations devoted to war and maritime themes. There is a modernistic quality, particularly visible in the trophies above the side arches. On the east face, Gallic prisoners, naked and in chains, broadcast to the world who was in charge. Anchors and ropes showed maritime superiority.

When Maurice of Nassau fortified the town in 1622 by using Roman buildings as quarries, the arch escaped this fate by being incorporated into the defensive walls as a keep.

### Musée d'Art et d'Histoire d'Orange

1 rue Madeleine Roch. **Tel** 04 90 51 17 60. **Open** daily. [theatre-antique.com](http://theatre-antique.com)

The exhibits found in the courtyard and ground floor reflect the history of Orange. They include more than 400 marble fragments which, when assembled, proved to be plans of the area, based on



Stone carving of a centaur in the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire d'Orange

three surveys dating from AD 77. Also in the museum are portraits of members of the Royal House of Orange and paintings by the British artist, Sir Frank Brangwyn (1867–1956). One room demonstrates how printed fabrics were made in 18th-century Orange.

### L'Harmas de Fabre – Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle

Route d'Orange, Sérignan du Comtat.

**Tel** 04 90 70 15 61. **Open** Mon–Fri (Apr–Oct; also Sat & Sun pm). **Closed** Wed, 1 May, Christmas hols.

At Sérignan-du-Cwomtat, 8 km (5 miles) northeast of Orange is *L'Harmas*, the estate of the entomologist and poet Jean-Henri Fabre (1823–1915). His collection of insects and fungi, and the surrounding botanical garden, attract visitors worldwide.



Arc de Triomphe monument, representing Julius Caesar's conquests

## Théâtre Antique et Musée d'Orange

Orange's Roman theatre, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is one of the best preserved in Europe. It was built at the start of the Christian era against the natural height of the Colline-St-Eutrope. Its stage doors were hollow so that actors could stand in front of them and amplify their voices; today other acoustic touches make it ideal for concerts. The *cavea*, or tiered semicircle, held up to 7,000 spectators. From the 16th to 19th centuries, the theatre was filled with squalid housing, traces of which can still be seen. A new roof has been built above the stage, and a multimedia presentation of great moments in the theatre's history takes place in four grottoes behind the tiers of the amphitheatre. Some parts of the theatre may be closed for restoration work, check before visiting.

### Roman Theatre

This reconstruction shows the theatre as it would have looked in Roman times. Today it owes its reputation to its exceptional stage wall, the only Roman stage wall to remain intact.

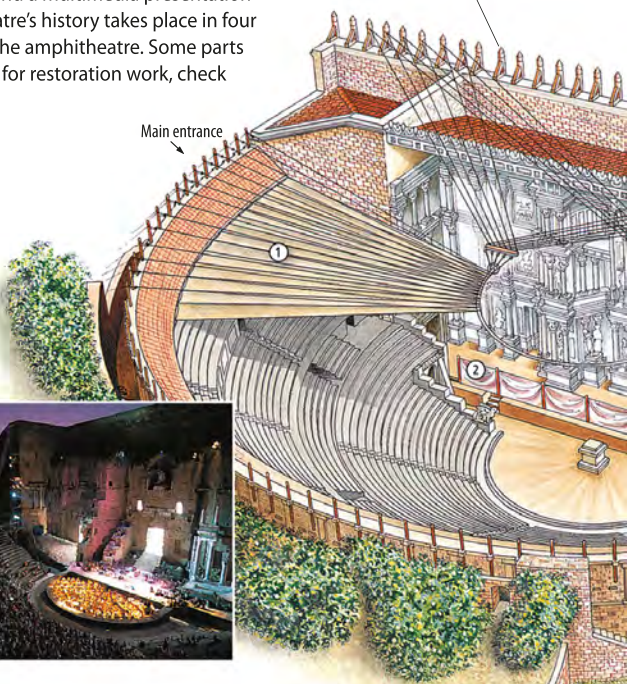
#### Night Concerts

Cultural events such as *Les Chorégies d'Orange*, a festival of opera, drama and ballet (see p37), once frequented by Sarah Bernhardt, have been held here since 1869. The theatre is also a popular rock concert venue.



#### Awning Supports

Still visible on the exterior walls are corbels which held the huge *velum*-bearing masts.



#### KEY

- ① A canvas awning, known as a *velum*, protected the theatregoers from sun or rain.
- ② The stage curtain (*aulaeum*) was lowered to reveal the stage, rather than raised. It was operated by machinery concealed beneath the floor of the stage.
- ③ Side rooms, or *parascenia*, were where actors could rest, and props be stored, when not required on stage.
- ④ Each strip of *velum* awning could be rolled individually to suit the direction of the sunlight.
- ⑤ Winched capstans held and tightened the ropes supporting the *velum*.



#### The Great Wall

Built of red limestone, this massive construction is 103 m (338 ft) long, 36 m (117 ft) high and over 1.8 m (5 ft) thick.





### Emperor Augustus

This 3.5-m (11-ft) statue, with a hand raised in greeting, dominates the stage at the third level. At its base kneels a figure in breeches, possibly a defeated enemy. Other statues have been destroyed, but this copy was returned to the niche in 1951.

### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

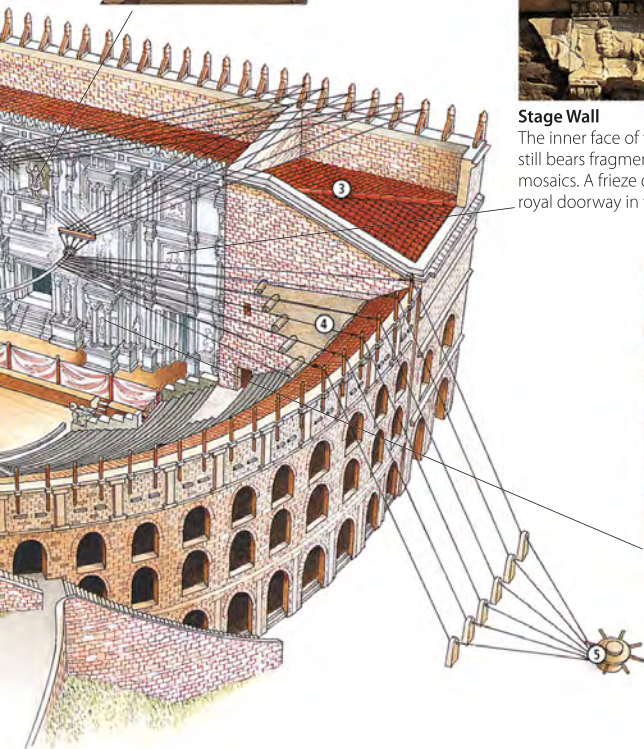
#### Practical Information

1 rue Madeleine Roch. Tel 04 90 51 17 60. **Open** daily. Jan–Feb, Nov–Dec: 9:30am–4:30pm; Mar, Oct: 9:30am–5:30pm; Apr, May, Sep: 9am–6pm; Jun–Aug: 9am–7pm. **Closed** 1 Jan, 25 Dec. (for occasional shows)



#### Stage Wall

The inner face of the stage wall (*Frons Scenae*) still bears fragments of marble friezes and mosaics. A frieze of centaurs framed the royal doorway in the centre.



#### Marble Columns

The stage wall had three levels, the two upper levels with 76 marble columns, of which only two remain. The wall's many surfaces broke up sound waves, so that the actors could speak without their voices having an echo.

### The Great Roman Temple

From 1925–37, excavations took place to the west of the theatre, where 22 houses had been pulled down. They unearthed a vast semicircle and ruins of a temple.

Together with the theatre, they would have formed an *Augusteum*, an architectural unit devoted to the worship of Roman emperors.







Exterior of the Romanesque St-Michel church at Caderousse

## 6 Caderousse

**Road map** B2. 2,700. La Mairie, Rue Berbiguier (04 90 51 90 69). Tue. [caderousse.fr](http://caderousse.fr)

This bankside village lies at a point where Hannibal is said to have crossed the river Rhône with his elephants on his way to Rome in 218 BC. For centuries, Caderousse has endured the floods of the Rhône, and plaques on the town hall record the high levels of floodwater. By 1856, the villagers had had enough, and erected a dyke that is still in place. Its four entry points can close if floods should threaten again.

Caderousse has a Romanesque church, **St-Michel**, to which the Flamboyant Gothic chapel of St-Claude was added during the 16th century.

## 7 Châteauneuf-du-Pape

**Road map** B3. 2,200. Sorgues, then taxi. Place du Portail (04 90 83 71 08). [chateauneuf-du-pape-tourisme.fr](http://chateauneuf-du-pape-tourisme.fr)

The best-known of the Côtes-du-Rhône wine labels takes its name from an unassuming yellowstone village on a small hill, given over to cellars and restaurants selling the products of the local growers entitled to the *appellation d'origine contrôlée*. The **Musée du Vin** traces the history and current state of the local viniculture.

At the top of the village are the ruins of the **Château des Papes**, mostly burned down in the 16th-century Wars of Religion. From the remaining walls there is a superb view of Avignon and the vineyard-lined clay fields where smooth stones deposited by the Rhône reflect the sun's heat onto 13 varieties

of grapes. The château was built in 1317 by John XXII, an Avignon pope who planted the first vineyards, but it took some 400 years for the wine's reputation to spread. Today, there are 350 Châteauneuf-du-Pape domaines. The nearby town of Pernes-les-Fontaines is known for its 40 fountains, in particular the 18th-century Fontaine du Cormoran. Until 1914, each of the fountains had an individual keeper.

**Musée du Vin – Maison Brotte**  
Ave Pierre de Luxembourg, Châteauneuf-du-Pape. **Tel** 04 90 83 59 44. **Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 25 Dec.

## 8 Carpentras

**Road map** B3. 29,500. 97 place 25 Août 1944 (04 90 63 00 78). Fri. [carpentras-ventoux.com](http://carpentras-ventoux.com)

As the capital of the Comtat Venaissin, this market town is in the centre of the Côtes-du-Ventoux wine region.

Boulevards encircle the old town, but the Porte d'Orange is the only surviving part of the medieval ramparts. In the Middle Ages, the town had a large Jewish community, and their 14th-century **synagogue** is the oldest in France, now used by some 100 families.

While not openly persecuted under papal rule, many Jews changed faith and entered the **Cathédrale-St-Siffrein** by its 15th-century south door, the *Porte Juive*. The cathedral is in the centre of the old town, near a smaller version of Orange's Arc de Triomphe. In it are Provençal paintings and statues by local

sculptor Jacques Bernus (1650–1728). The **Hôtel-Dieu** has a fine 18th-century pharmacy, and there are regional costumes in the **Musée Comtadin-Duplessis**.

### Synagogue

Pl Maurice Charretier. **Tel** 04 90 63 39 97. **Open** Mon–Fri. **Closed** Jewish feast days.

### Cathédrale St-Siffrein

3 pl Saint-Siffrein. **Tel** 04 90 63 08 33. **Open** Tue–Sat. **Closed** Sun.

**Musée Comtadin-Duplessis**  
234 blvd Albin-Durand. **Tel** 04 90 63 04 92. **Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** public hols, Oct–Mar.



Pharmacy in the 18th-century Hôtel-Dieu at Carpentras

## 9 Abbaye de Sénanque

**Road map** C3. **Tel** 04 90 72 05 86. **Open** late Jan–mid-Nov: Mon–Sat & Sun pm; mid-Nov–early Jan: pms only, by guided tour (in French). [senanque.fr](http://senanque.fr)

The beautifully sited Abbaye de Sénanque, surrounded by a tranquil sea of lavender, is best approached from Gordes (see p173). Its monks are often to be seen in the fields.

Like the other abbeys that make up the Cistercian triumvirate in Provence (see p47), Sénanque is harmonious and



Châteauneuf-du-Pape vineyards

unadorned. It was founded in 1148 by an abbot and 12 monks, and the building of the serene north-facing abbey church started 12 years later.

Some roofs of the building are still tiled with limestone slates called *lauzes*, also used for making traditional stone dwellings known as *bories* (see p.173). The abbey's simply designed interior has stone walls, plain windows and a barrel-vaulted ceiling.

Sénanque reached its zenith in the early 13th century, when the abbey owned several local farms. But new riches brought corruption in the 14th century, and by the 17th century, only two monks remained. In 1854 it was restored and housed Cistercian monks, some of whom remained there from 1926 to 1969. The present monks have been living there since 1988.



Serene Abbaye de Sénanque built in the 12th century

## 10 Fontaine-de-Vaucluse

Road map B3. 600. Avignon.

Residence Jean Garcin, Ave Robert Garcin (04 90 20 32 22).

[oti-delasorgue.fr](http://oti-delasorgue.fr)

The source of the Sorgue river is one of the natural wonders of Provence. It begins underground, with tributaries that drain the Vaucluse plateau, an area of around 2,000 sq km (800 sq miles). In the closed valley above the town, water erupts from an unfathomable depth to develop into a fully fledged river.



Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, where the Sorgue river begins

Beside the river is the **Moulin à Papier Vallis Clausa**, which produces handmade paper using a 15th-century method. It sells maps, prints and lampshades.

The underground museum, the **Eco-Musée du Gouffre**, features a speleologist's findings over 30 years of exploring Sorgue's dams, caves and waterfalls. The **Musée d'Histoire 1939–1945**, traces the fate of the Resistance during WWII and daily life under Occupation. The **Musée Bibliothèque Pétrarque** was the house where the poet lived for 16 years, and wrote of his love for Laura of Avignon.

**Moulin à Papier Vallis Clausa**

Chemin du Gouffre. **Tel** 04 90 20 34 14.

**Open** daily. **Closed** 1–15 Jan, 25 Dec.

[moulin-vallisclausa.com](http://moulin-vallisclausa.com)

**Eco-Musée du Gouffre (Musée de Spéléologie)**

Chemin du Gouffre. **Tel** 04 90 20 34 13.

**Open** Feb–15 Nov: daily.

restricted.

**Musée d'Histoire Jean Garcin 1939–45**

Chemin de la Fontaine. **Tel** 04 90

20 24 00. **Open** Apr–Oct: Wed–Mon

pm only. **Closed** 1 May, 25 Dec.

**Musée Bibliothèque Pétrarque**

Rive gauche de la Sorgue. **Tel** 04 90

20 37 20. **Open** Apr–Oct: Wed–Mon.

**Closed** 1 May, Nov–Mar.

## 11 L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue

Road map B3. 19,400.

Pl de la Liberté (04 90 38 04 78).

Mon, Thu, Sat, Sun (antiques).

[oti-delasorgue.fr](http://oti-delasorgue.fr)

A haunt for antique hunters at weekends, this attractive town lies on the river Sorgue, which once powered 70 watermills. Today, 14 idle wheels remain. The ornate 17th-century **Notre-Dame-des-Anges** is a major attraction. The tourist office is in an 18th-century granary, and the Musée du Jouet et de la Poupée Ancienne has displays of antique toys and dolls.



Water wheel near place Gambetta, l'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue



## 10 Street-by-Street: Avignon

Bordered to the north and west by the Rhône, the medieval city of Avignon is the chief city of Vaucluse and gateway to Provence. Its walls cover nearly 4.5 km (3 miles) and are punctuated by 39 towers and seven gates. Within the walls thrives a culturally rich city with its own opera house, university, several foreign language schools and numerous theatre companies. The streets and squares are often filled with buskers, and the Avignon festival in July, which includes theatre, mime and cabaret, has now become a major international event.

**Chapelle St-Nicolas**, named after the patron saint of bargemen, is a 16th-century building on a 13th-century base. Entrance is via Tour du Châtelet.



### ★ Pont St-Bénézet

Begun in 1177 by shepherd boy Bénézet, this bridge is the subject of the famous rhyme *Sur le Pont d'Avignon*.



### Hôtel des Monnaies

The façade of this former mint, built in 1619, bears the arms of Cardinal Borghese.



### Place de l'Horloge

The main square was laid out in the 15th century and is named after the Gothic clock tower above the town hall. Many of today's buildings date from the 19th century.



### Key

— Suggested route



### Musée du Petit Palais

The former episcopal offices house a museum of medieval and Renaissance Italian paintings and French works by the Avignon School, including this 1457 *Vierge de Pitié*.



### VISITORS' CHECKLIST

#### Practical Information

Road map B3. 📍 91,250.

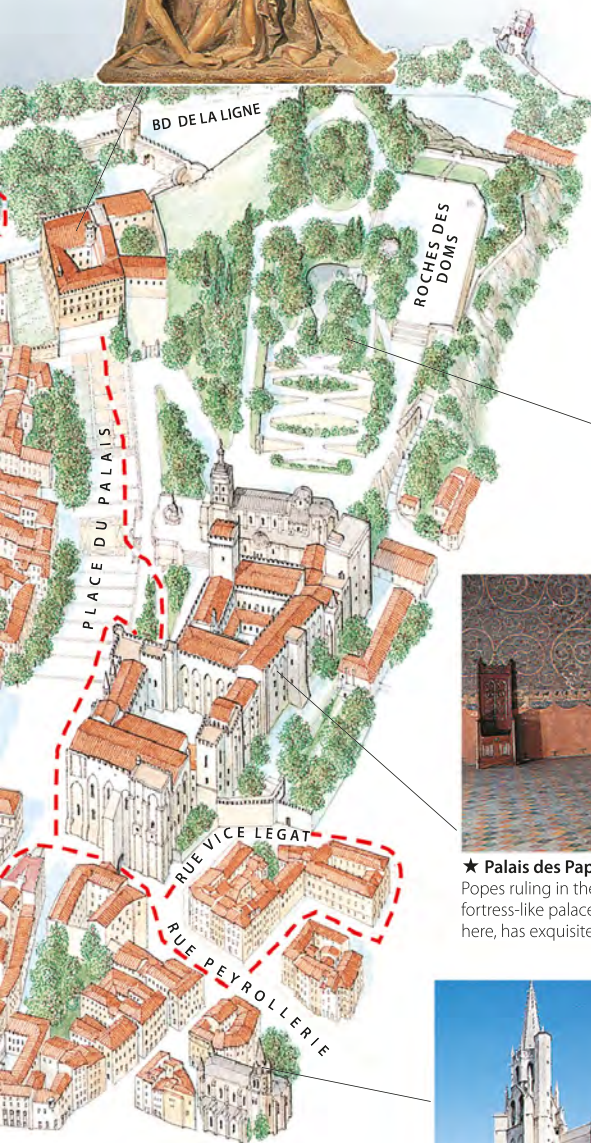
📍 41 cours Jean-Jaurès  
(04 32 74 32 74). 🕒 Tue–Sun.

📺 Le Festival d'Avignon (see p37).

🌐 [avignon-tourisme.com](http://avignon-tourisme.com)

#### Transport

🚗 8 km (5 miles) Avignon–Caumont. 🚏 Blvd St-Roch; Gare TGV (pl de l'Europe, Courtine).



### Rocher des Doms

These hillside gardens behind Notre-Dame-des-Doms are the site of earliest settlement.



### ★ Palais des Papes

Popes ruling in the 14th century built this grand, fortress-like palace (see pp48–9). The Chambre du Pape, here, has exquisite tiles.



### Eglise St-Pierre

This church was built during the 14th to early 16th centuries. The doors on its west façade were carved in 1551 by Antoine Valard. Inside is a fine 15th-century pulpit.

0 metres 100  
0 yards 100



## Exploring Avignon


Massive ramparts enclose one of the most fascinating towns in southern France. A quick stroll reveals *trompe l'oeil* windows and mansions such as King René's house in the rue du Roi-René. This street leads to the rue des Teinturiers, named after local dyers and textile-makers, where a bridge for pedestrians crosses the river Sorgue to the 16th-century Chapelle des Pénitents Gris.




Palais des Papes in Avignon glimpsed across the river Rhône

### Palais des Papes

Pl du Palais. **Tel** 04 32 74 32 74.

**Open** daily (times vary). 

 [palais-des-papes.com](http://www.palais-des-papes.com)

These buildings (see pp48–9) give an idea of the grand life under the seven French popes who built a miniature Vatican during their rule here, lasting from 1309–77. They owned their own mint, baked a vast number of loaves every day, and fortified themselves against the French.

Entrance is by means of the Porte des Champeaux, beneath the twin pencil-shaped turrets of the flamboyant Palais Neuf (1342–52), built by Clement VI, which extends south from the solid Palais Vieux (1334–42) of Benoit XII. In the new palace, the main courtyard, La Cour d'Honneur, is the grand central setting for the summer festival (see p229). La Chambre du Pape in the Tour des Anges opposite the entrance has exquisite tiles, and there are fine 14th-century deer-hunting scenes painted by Matteo Giovanetti and others in the adjoining Chambre du Cerf. The larger rooms around the Palais Vieux include the 45-m (148-ft) banquetting hall,



Bird tile in the Chambre du Pape

Le Grand Tinel, and La Salle du Consistoire, where pictures of all the popes are displayed. The chapel beside it has exquisite frescoes painted by Giovanetti between 1346 and 1348.

### Cathédrale Notre-Dame-des-Doms

Pl du Palais. **Tel** 04 90 82 12 21.

**Open** Mon–Sat & Sun pm.

 [cathedrale-avignon.fr](http://www.cathedrale-avignon.fr)

This building beside the Palais des Papes was begun in the 12th century. Since then it has been damaged and rebuilt several times. A gilded Madonna was added to the tower in the 19th century, and the original 6th-century

altar is now in the Chapelle St-Roch, where two popes are buried.

### Musée du Petit Palais

Pl du Palais. **Tel** 04 90 86 44 58.

**Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec. 

 [petit-palais.org](http://www.petit-palais.org)

Set around an arcaded courtyard, the “little palace”, built in 1318, was modified in 1474 to suit Michelangelo's patron, Cardinal Rovere, later Pope Julius II. It became a museum in 1958, and houses Avignon's medieval collection, which

includes works by Simone Martini and Botticelli, as well as works from the Avignon School, and many French and Italian religious paintings.

### Musée Lapidaire

27 rue de la République. **Tel** 04 90 85 75 38. **Open** Tue–Sun. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.   [musee-lapidaire.org](http://www.musee-lapidaire.org)

Once a 17th-century Baroque Jesuit college, the museum has Celtic-Ligurian, Egyptian, Gallic and Roman artifacts, including a 2nd-century Tarasque monster (see p144).

### Musée Calvet



65 rue Joseph Vernet. **Tel** 04 90 86 33 84. **Open** Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.  restricted.

 [musee-calvet-avignon.com](http://www.musee-calvet-avignon.com)

This evocative museum was visited by the French writer Stendhal, who left his inscription behind. Renovated in 2003 to permit the display of many of the treasures previously stored in their vaults, the highlight is the 19th–20th-century collection, with works by Soutine, Manet, Dufy, Gleizes and Marie Laurencin.

### Musée Angladon



5 rue Laboureur. **Tel** 04 90 82 29 03.

**Open** Tue–Sat pm only (call ahead to check).   [angladon.com](http://www.angladon.com)

This museum cleverly combines modern technology with the intimacy of a private home for displaying this outstanding private collection of 18th–20th-century works of art.

### Collection Lambert

Musée d'Art Contemporain, 5 rue Violette. **Tel** 04 90 16 56 20.

**Open** Sep–Jun: Tue–Sun; Jul–Aug: daily. **Closed** 1 May.  

 [collectionlambert.com](http://www.collectionlambert.com)

Opened in 2000, the Collection Lambert is located in an 18th-century mansion, next to the School of Art. The museum houses an outstanding collection of contemporary art on loan for 20 years from gallery-owner Yvon Lambert. Paintings date from the 1960s, and represents all the major art movements since then.

## 13 Gordes

**Road map** C3. 2,000. Pl de Château (04 90 72 02 75). Tue.

[luberoncoeurdeprovence.com](http://luberoncoeurdeprovence.com)

Expensive restaurants and hotels provide a clue to the popularity of this hilltop village, which spills down in terraces from a Renaissance château and the church of St-Firmin. Its impressive position is the main attraction, although its vaulted, arched medieval lanes are also alluring. The village has been popular with artists since the academic Cubist painter André Lhote began visiting in 1938.

The **Château de Gordes** was built in the 16th century on the site of a 12th-century fortress. One of the château's best features is an ornate 16th-century fireplace in the great hall on the first floor, decorated with shells, flowers and pilasters. In the entrance there is an attractive Renaissance door. The building was rented and restored by the Hungarian-born Op Art painter Victor Vasarely (1908–97), and once housed a museum of his abstract works. The château

## Bories

The ancient dwellings known as *bories* were domed dry-stone buildings made from *lauzes* (limestone slabs), with walls up to 1.5 m (4 ft) thick. They dated from 2,000 BC and were regularly rebuilt, using ancient methods, until the last century when they were abandoned. Around 3,000 bories are still standing, many in fields where they were used for shelter or storing implements. Twenty have been restored in the Village des Bories, outside Gordes.



now hosts temporary exhibitions during the summer. The 17th-century Caves du Palais St-Firmin have an impressive old stone olive press.

Just outside Gordes is the **Village des Bories** (see box), now a museum of rural life.

### Château de Gordes

Pl du Château. **Tel** 04 90 72 98 64.

**Open** Apr–Oct: daily.

### Village des Bories

Rte de Cavaillon. **Tel** 04 90 72 03 48.

**Open** daily. **Closed** 1 Jan, 25 Dec.



The hilltop village of Gordes, spilling down in terraces

## 14 Roussillon

**Road map** C3. 1,350. Pl de la Poste (04 90 05 60 25). Thu.

[roussillon.pagesperso-orange.fr](http://roussillon.pagesperso-orange.fr)

The deep ochres used in the construction of this hilltop community are stunning. No other village looks so warm and rich, so harmonious and inviting. Its hues come from at least 17 shades of ochre discovered in and around the village, notably in the dramatic former quarries along the Sentier des Ochres. The entrance to the quarries is to the east of the village, a 1-hour and 30-minute trip from the information office. The Conservatoire des Ochres et de la Couleur in the old factory (*open mid-Feb–Dec: daily*), is worth visiting. It displays a huge collection of natural pigments, and runs day courses on the subject.

A superb panorama to the north can be seen from the Castrum, the viewing table beside the church, above the tables with umbrellas in the main square.

Before its housing boom, Roussillon was a typical Provençal backwater. In the 1950s, American sociologist Laurence Wylie spent a year in Roussillon with his family and wrote a book about village life, *Un Village du Vaucluse*. He concluded that Roussillon was a “hard-working, productive community”, for all its feuds and tensions. Playwright Samuel Beckett lived here during WWII, but his impression was much less generous.





The 1st-century Roman triumphal arch behind Cavaillon

## 15 Cavaillon

**Road map** B3. 26,000.   
 📞 Pl François Tourel (04 90 71 32 01).  
 🕒 Mon. [www.luberoncoeurdeprovence.com](http://www.luberoncoeurdeprovence.com)

The viewing table outside the **Chapelle St-Jacques** at the top of the town renders the Luberon range in perspective against the Mont Ventoux and the Alpilles chain. In closer proximity are the acres of fruit and vegetable plots, for Cavaillon is France's largest market garden, synonymous especially with melons. Its local market competes with the one in Apt for renown as the most important in Vaucluse.

Colline St-Jacques was the site of the pre-Roman settlement that, under Rome, prospered. There is a 1st-century Roman arch in place Duclos nearby. Roman finds are on display in the **Musée Archéologique de l'Hotel Dieu** in the Grand Rue, which leads north from the church, a former cathedral dedicated to its 6th-century bishop, Saint Vêran. The synagogue in rue Hébraïque dates from 1772, although there has been one on this site ever since the 14th century. The **Musée Jouvès et Juif Comtadin**, commemorates its history.

### Musée Archéologique de l'Hotel Dieu

Hôtel Dieu, Porte d'Avignon. **Tel** 04 90 72 26 86. **Open** May–Sep: Mon, Wed–Sat pm only.

### Musée Jouvès et Juif Comtadin (et de la Synagogue)

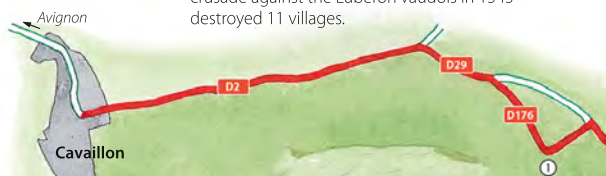
Rue Hébraïque. **Tel** 04 90 71 21 06. **Open** Oct–Apr: Mon, Wed–Sat; May–Sep: Wed–Mon. **Closed** 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.

## 16 A Tour of the Petit Luberon

The Parc Naturel Régional covers 1,200 sq km (463 sq miles) of a limestone mountain range running east from Cavaillon towards Manosque in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence. It embraces about 50 communities and a past peppered with such infamous figures as the Baron of Oppède and the Marquis de Sade. An unspoiled area, it is ideal for walking. Its two main centres are Apt and Lourmarin. The D943 in the Lourmarin Coomb valley divides the park: the Grand Luberon (see p176) is to the east; and to the west is the Petit Luberon, a land of limestone cliffs, hidden corries and cedar woods, with most towns and villages to the north side of the range.

### 1 Oppède-le-Vieux

The dominating ruined castle belonged to Jean Maynier, Baron of Oppède, whose bloody crusade against the Luberon Vaudois in 1545 destroyed 11 villages.



Cedar Forest Botanical Trail, Bonnieux

0 kilometres 2  
0 miles 2

#### Key

Tour route  
 Other roads

## Luberon Wildlife

The Parc Naturel Régional is rich in flora and fauna. The central massif is wild and exposed on the north side, sheltered and more cultivated in the south. A wide range of habitats exist in a landscape of white chalk and red ochre cliffs, cedar forests, moorlands and river-hewn gorges. Information is available from La Maison du Parc in Apt (see p176) which publishes suggested walks and tours.



**Monkey orchid** (*Orcis simia*) is found on the sunny, chalky grasslands.



The rugged peaks of the Petit Luberon



### ② Ménerbes

At the foot of this stronghold of 16th-century Calvinists is the Musée du Tire-Bouchon, a fascinating collection of corkscrews, dating from the 17th century.

### ③ Lacoste

Little remains of the Marquis de Sade's château. Arrested for corrupt practices in 1778, he spent 12 years in prison writing up his experiences.

## Tips for Drivers

**Tour length:** 40 km (25 miles).

**Stopping-off points:** Ménerbes has several cafés, Bonnieux is good for lunch and the Cedar Forest has attractive picnic spots. Lourmarin, where Albert Camus lived and was buried, is handy for the Petit and Grand Luberon. All these villages are small, and quickly fill with cars, so you may have to walk some distance, and even climb to castle heights.

**W** [parcduluberon.fr](http://parcduluberon.fr)

### ④ Bonnieux

The Musée de la Boulangerie gives a history of bread making. From here the two-hour Cedar Forest Botanical Trail is a pleasant, scenic walk.



### ⑤ Lourmarin

The Countess of Agout, whose family owned the village château, bore the composer Franz Liszt (1811–86) three children: one married Richard Wagner.



**Wild boar** (*Sus scrofa*, known as *sanglier* in French) is a hunter's prize and a chef's delight.



**Eagle owl** (*Bubo bubo*, known as *dugas* in Provençal) is judged Europe's largest owl.



**Beaver** (*Castor fiber*, known as *Castor* in French) builds dams on the Calavon and Durance.

## Grand Luberon

This spectacular range of mountains to the east of the Lourmarin Coomb rises as high as 1,125 m (3,690 ft) at Mourre Nègre. The fine view at the summit must be appreciated on foot, and takes several hours from where you leave the car at Auribeau. The area is outstandingly beautiful and ideal to escape from the crowds. The panorama from the top takes in Digne, the Lure mountain and Durance valley, the Apt basin, l'Etang de Berre and Mont Ventoux.



## 17 Apt

**Road map** C3. 12,325.   
 Avignon. Av Victor Hugo.  
 Tue & Sat.

Apt is the northern entry to the Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon (see pp174–5). The **Maison du Parc**, a restored 17th-century mansion, provides information on the area, with details of walks, *gîtes d'étapes* and flora and fauna.

The busy old town of Apt has a square for playing *boules*, fountains and plane trees. Surrounded by cherry orchards, it claims to be the world capital of crystallized fruit. The **Musée de l'Aventure Industrielle** explains how the production of crystallized fruits and earthenware pottery combined with the extraction of ochre to bring prosperity to Apt in the 18th and 19th centuries. The town is also famous for truffles and lavender essence. The Saturday market offers Provençal delicacies and entertainment, including jazz, barrel organ music and stand-up

comedy. Excursions can be made to the *Colorado de Rustrel*, the best ochre quarry site by the River Dôa, to the northeast.

The medieval **Cathédrale Ste-Anne** lies at the heart of Apt's old town. Legend has it that the veil of St Anne was brought back from Palestine and hidden in the cathedral by Auspice, who is thought to have been Apt's first bishop. Each July her festival is celebrated with a procession. The Royal Chapel commemorates Anne of Austria. She paid a pilgrimage to Apt to pray for fertility and contributed the funds to finish the chapel, which was finally completed around 1669–70. The treasury inside the sacristy contains the saint's shroud and an 11th-century Arabic standard from the First

Crusade (1096–9). In the apse is a 15th–16th-century window that depicts the tree of Jesse.

Nearby is the 17th-century Hôtel d'Albertas.

The items on display in the **Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie** consist of prehistoric flints, stone implements, Gallo-Roman carvings, jewellery and mosaics from that period.

Just a few miles from Apt, **L'Observatoire Sirene** has an idyllic

location and state-of-the-art technology, ideal for star-gazing.



14th-century priest's embroidery

**Maison du Parc**  
60 pl Jean-Jaurès. **Tel** 04 90 04 42 00.  
**Open** Mon–Fri (& Sat Jun–Oct).  
 [parcduluberon.fr](http://parcduluberon.fr)

**Cathédrale Ste-Anne**  
Rue Ste-Anne. **Tel** 04 90 04 85 44.  
**Open** Tue–Sat. [apt-cathedrale.com](http://apt-cathedrale.com)

**Musée de l'Aventure Industrielle**  
Pl du Postal. **Tel** 04 90 74 95 30.  
**Open** Sep–Jun: Tue–Sat; Jul–Aug: Mon–Sat. **Closed** Jan, public hols.

**Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie**  
27 rue de l'Amphithéâtre. **Tel** 04 90 74 95 30. **Open** only on special occasions.

**L'Observatoire Sirene**  
D34 Lagarde d'Apt. **Tel** 04 90 75 04 17.  
**Open** daily by appt. **Closed** public hols. [obs-sirene.com](http://obs-sirene.com)



Jam label illustrating traditional produce of Apt



## 18 Cadenet

**Road map** C3.  4,250.  Avignon.  
 7 11 pl du Tambour d'Arcole;  
 Château de la Tour d'Aigues (04 90 07 50 29).  Main square: Mon & Sat (May–Oct behind the church).  
 [ot-cadenet.com](http://ot-cadenet.com)

Tucked underneath the hills in the Durance valley, Cadenet has 11th-century castle ruins and a 14th-century church with a square bell tower. Its font is made from a Roman sarcophagus. In the main square, which is used for Cadenet's bi-weekly market, is a statue of the town's heroic drummer boy, André Estienne, who beat such a raucous tattoo in the battle for Arcole Bridge in 1796 that the enemy thought they could hear gunfire, and retreated.



Drummer boy in Cadenet town square



Puy, a descendant of the Viscount of Marseille. But she had resolved to become a nun, so agreed to the marriage, but not to its consummation. Both were canonized in 1369. The castle's original keep and two of its four towers are still visible. Its gardens include the Renaissance Garden of Eden, built on the former cemetery. Rousset-Riviere family, the new owners, has restored the castle and expanded its collection. The **Musée Extraordinaire de Georges Mazoyer**, located south of the village, displays the artist's work, Provençal furniture and a recreated underwater cave, all in 15th-century cellars.

## 19 Ansouis



**Road map** C3.  1,200.  Easter–Sep: Pl de la Vieille Fontaine (09 77 84 33 64).  Sun.  [luberon.cotesud.com](http://luberon.cotesud.com)

One of the most remarkable things about the Renaissance **Château d'Ansouis** is that it was owned by the Sabran family from 1160 until 2008, when it was sold to a new owner. The Sabrans have a proven pedigree: in the 13th century, Gersende de Sabran and Raymond Bérenger IV's four daughters became queens of France, England, Romania and Naples respectively. In 1298, Elzéar de Sabran married Delphine de

### Château d'Ansouis

Rue du Cartel. **Tel** 04 90 77 23 36.  
**Open** Apr–Oct: Thu–Mon for guided tours. **Closed** Nov–Mar.   
 [chateauansouis.com](http://chateauansouis.com)

### Musée Extraordinaire de Georges Mazoyer

Rue du Vieux Moulin. **Tel** 04 90 09 82 64. **Open** daily (mid-Sep–mid-Jun: pm only).  

## 20 Pertuis

**Road map** C3.  19,500.    
 7 Le Donjon, pl Mirabeau (04 90 79 15 56).  Wed, Fri, Sat.  
 [tourismepertuis.fr](http://tourismepertuis.fr)

Once the capital of the Pays d'Aigues, present-day Pertuis

is a quiet town, whose rich and fertile surrounding area was gradually taken over by Aix-en-Provence. Pertuis was the birthplace of the philandering Count of Mirabeau's father, and the 13th-century clock tower is located in place Mirabeau.

The **Eglise St-Nicolas**, re-built in Gothic style in the 16th century, has a 16th-century triptych and two 17th-century marble statues. To the south-west is the battlemented 14th-century **Tour St-Jacques**.





Triumphal arch entrance to La Tour d'Aigues' Renaissance château

## 21 La Tour d'Aigues

**Road map** C3.  4,290.  to Pertuis.  Château de la Tour d'Aigues (04 90 07 50 29).  Tue.  
 [luberoncotesud.com](http://luberoncotesud.com)

Nestling beside the grand limestone mountain ranges of Luberon, and surrounded by scenic vineyards and orchards, this beautiful town takes its name from a historic 10th-century tower. The 16th-century castle completes the triumvirate of Renaissance châteaux in the Luberon (the others are Lourmarin and Ansouis). Built on the foundations of a medieval castle by Baron de Central, its massive portal is based on the splendid Roman arch at Orange (see p165). The castle was damaged in the French Revolution (1789–94), but has been partially restored.

### Château de la Tour d'Aigues

BP 48. **Tel** 04 90 07 50 29.  
 Courtyard: **Open** daily.   
 private tours only (04 90 07 42 10).



Duchess's bedroom in the Château d'Ansouis





# ALPES-DE-HAUTE-PROVENCE

In this, the most undiscovered region of Provence, the air is clearer than anywhere else in France, which is why it was the chosen site for France's most important observatory. But the terrain and the weather conditions can be severe. Inaccessibility to areas has restricted development and the traditional, rural way of life is still followed.



Irrigation has helped to improve some corners of this mountainous land. The Valensole plain is now the most important lavender producing area of France. Peaches, apples and pears have been planted in orchards only recently irrigated by the Durance, the region's main river, which has been tamed by dams and a hydro-electric power scheme. These advances have created employment and helped bring prosperity to the region. Another modern development is the Cadarache nuclear research centre, situated just outside Manosque. The town's population has grown rapidly to 20,300 inhabitants, overtaking the region's capital, Digne-les-Bains. Famous for its lavender and healthy living, Digne-les-

Bains is a handsome spa town that has attracted visitors for more than a century and now hopes to enhance its appeal through its devotion to sculpture, which fills the streets.

The region's history and architecture have also been greatly influenced by the terrain and climate. Strategically positioned citadels crown mountain towns such as Sisteron, which was won over by Napoleon in 1815, and the frontier town of Entrevaux. The design of towns and buildings has remained practical, mindful of the harsh winter and strong Mistral winds. Undoubtedly, the beauty of the region is revealed in the high lakes and mountains, the glacial valleys and the colourful fields of Alpine flowers.



Bundles of cut lavender drying in fields near the Gorges du Verdon

◀ Walker at the bottom of the cliff enclosing the Chambre du Roi, one of vast *grès d'Annot* sandstone outcrops in Annot



## Exploring Alpes-de-Haute-Provence

This remote and rugged area in the north of Provence covers 6,944 sq km (2,697 sq miles) of mountainous landscape. Its main artery is the Durance river which is dotted with dams, gorges and lakes – a haven for mountaineers and canoeists. One tributary is the Verdon, which runs through the stunning Gorges du Verdon, Europe's answer to the Grand Canyon. The scenery becomes wilder and more rugged in the northeast, with Mont Pelat at the heart of the Parc National du Mercantour. Further south lie the plains of Valensole, which colour the landscape in July when the abundant lavender blossoms.



Fields of lavender on the Valensole plains

### Sights at a Glance

- 1 Sisteron
- 2 Seyne-les-Alpes
- 3 Barcelonnette
- 4 Mont Pelat
- 5 Colmars
- 6 Digne-les-Bains
- 7 Les Pénitents des Mées
- 8 Lurs
- 9 Forcalquier
- 10 Manosque
- 11 Gréoux-les-Bains
- 12 Valensole
- 13 Riez
- 15 Moustiers-Ste-Marie
- 16 Castellane
- 17 St-André-les-Alpes
- 18 Annot
- 19 Entrevaux

### Tour

- 14 Gorges du Verdon pp188–9

### Key

- Motorway
- Major road
- Minor road
- Scenic route
- Minor railway
- International border
- Regional border
- Summit



A quiet Provençal-style bar in the mountain town of Castellane, situated in the picturesque old quarter

## Getting Around

The Durance river provides the point of entry into the region. The A51 autoroute from Aix-en-Provence follows the river to Sisteron and on to La Saulce, just short of Gap. National roads continue to follow the Durance, to Lac de Serre-Ponçon in the north, then east along

the Ubaye to Barcelonnette. The region's capital, Digne-les-Bains, is well connected by national roads, but otherwise there are only minor roads. The region's railway line also follows the Durance, connecting Sisteron and Manosque with Aix.



The dramatic Rocher de la Baume, just outside the town of Sisteron



## 1 Sisteron

**Road map** D2. 7,664.   
 1 pl de la République (04 92 61 36 50). Wed & Sat. [www.sisteron-tourisme.fr](http://www.sisteron-tourisme.fr)

Approaching Sisteron from the north or south, it is easy to see its strategic importance. The town calls itself the “gateway to Provence”, sitting in a narrow valley on the left bank of the Durance river. It is a lively town, protected by the most impressive fortifications in Provence. However, it has suffered for its ideal military position, most recently in heavy Allied bombardment in 1944.

The **citadelle**, originally built in the 12th century, dominates the town and gives superb views down over the Durance. These defences, though incomplete, are a solid assembly of keep, dungeon, chapel, towers and ramparts, and offer a fine setting for the Nuits de la Citadelle, the summer festival of music, theatre and dance. The cathedral in the main square, **Notre-Dame et St-Thyrse**, is an example of the



A traditional Provençal farmhouse just outside the village of Seyne

Provençal Romanesque school, dating from 1160. At its east end, the 17th-century Chapelle des Visitandines houses the **Musée Terre et Temps**. In the Old Town, small boutiques, cafés and bars line the narrow alleyways called *andrônes*.

**Rocher de la Baume** on the opposite bank is a popular practice spot for mountaineers.

### La Citadelle

Pl de la Citadelle, 04200 Sisteron.  
**Tel** 04 92 61 27 57. **Open** Apr–11 Nov: daily. [www.citadelledesisteron.fr](http://www.citadelledesisteron.fr)



Sisteron citadelle, strategically positioned high above the Durance valley

## 2 Seyne-les-Alpes

**Road map** D2. 1,460. Place d'Armes (04 92 35 11 00). Tue & Fri. [www.seynesalpes.fr](http://www.seynesalpes.fr)

The small mountain village of Seyne dominates the Vallée de la Blanche, sitting 1,260 m (4,134 ft) above sea level. Horses and mules graze in the nearby fields, and there is a celebrated annual horse and mule fair in August. Beside the main road is **Notre-Dame de Nazareth**, a 13th-century Romanesque church with Gothic portals, sundial and large rose window. The path by the church leads up to the **citadelle**, built by Vauban in 1693, which encloses the still-standing 12th-century watchtower. The town is also a centre for winter sports, with facilities nearby at St-Jean, Le Grand Puy and Chabanon.

## 3 Barcelonnette

**Road map** E2. 2,860.   
 Pl Frédéric Mistral (04 92 81 04 71). Wed & Sat am only. [www.barcelonnette.com](http://www.barcelonnette.com)

In the remote Ubaye Valley, surrounded by a demi-halo of snowy peaks, lies Provence's northernmost town. It is a flat, open town of cobbled streets, smart cafés and restaurants and quaint gift shops, selling specialities such as raspberry and juniper liqueurs. The town was named in 1231 by its founder Raymond-Bérenger V, Count of Barcelona and Provence, whose great-grandfather of the same name married into the House



## Napoleon in Provence

In his bid to regain power after his exile on Elba, Napoleon knew his only chance of success was to win over Sisteron. On 1 March, 1815, he secretly sailed from the island of Elba, landing at Golfe-Juan with 1,026 soldiers.

He hastily started his journey to Paris via Grenoble, making his first stop at Grasse, where the people shut their doors against him. Abandoning carriages, cannon and horses, Napoleon and his troops scrambled along mule-tracks and across difficult terrain, surmounting summits of more than 3,000 ft (1,000 m). At Digne, he lunched at the Hôtel du Petit Paris before spending the night at Malijai Château where he waited for news of the royalist stronghold of Sisteron. He was in luck. The arsenal was empty and he entered the town on 5 March – a plaque on rue du Jeu-de-Paume honours the event. The people were, at last, beginning to warm to him.



The dramatic *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, painted by Jacques-Louis David in 1800



One of the distinctive residential villas in Barcelonnette

of Provence in 1112. The town's Alpine setting gives it a Swiss flavour; it also has Mexican spice. The Arnaud brothers, whose business in Barcelonnette was failing, emigrated to Mexico and made their fortune. Others followed, and on their return in the early 20th century, they built grand villas which encircle the town.

Housed in one of the villas is the **Musée de la Vallée**, where the Mexican connection is explained through illustrations and costumes. There are four other branches of this museum in the Ubaye valley, at St-Paul, Jauziers, Pontis and Le Lauzet.

In summer there is an information point here for the Parc National du Mercantour (see p101). The park stretches along

the Italian border and straddles the Alpes Maritimes region in the south. It is a haven for birds, wildlife and fauna, with two major archaeological sites.

### Musée de la Vallée

10 ave de la Libération. Tel 04 92 81 27 15. **Open** Wed–Sat pm (Jul & Aug: daily). **Closed** mid-Nov–mid-Dec, 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.   in summer.

## Mont Pelat

 Thorame-Verdon.  Colmars, Allos.  Pl de la Coopérative, Allos (04 92 83 02 81).  [valdallos.com](http://valdallos.com)

This is the loftiest peak in the Provençal Alps, rising to a height of 3,050 m (10,017 ft) and all around are mountains and breathtaking passes, some

of them closed by snow until June. Among them are the Col de Cayolle (2,327 m/7,717 ft) on the D2202 to the east, and the hair-raising Col d'Allos (2,250 m/7,380 ft) on the D908 to the west. South of Mont Pelat, in the heart of the Parc National du Mercantour, is the beautiful 50-ha (124-acre) Lac d'Allos. It is the largest natural lake in Europe at this altitude. The setting is idyllic, ringed by snowy mountains, its crystal-clear waters swimming with trout and char. Another record-breaker is Cime de la Bonette, on the D64 northeast of Mont Pelat, at 2,862 m (9,390 ft) the highest pass in Europe. It has what is perhaps the most magnificent view in all this abundant mountain scenery.



Cime de la Bonette, the highest mountain pass in Europe

## 5 Colmars

Road map E2. 400.

Ancienne Auberge Fleurie (04 92 83 41 92). Tue & Fri (Jun–Sep). [colmarslesalpes-verdoutourisme.com](http://colmarslesalpes-verdoutourisme.com)

Colmars is an unusually complete fortified town, nestling between two 17th-century forts. You can walk along the 12-m (40-ft) ramparts, which look across oak-planked roofs. The town is named after the hill on which it is built, *collis Martis*, where the Romans built a temple to the god Mars. Vauban, the military engineer, designed its lasting look. On the north side, an alley leads to the 17th-century **Fort de Savoie**, a fine example of military architecture. From the Porte de France a path leads to the Fort de France.

Situated among wooded hills Colmars is popular in summer, when time is spent relaxing on wooden balconies (*soleillades lit*, sun-traps), or strolling along alpine paths with beautiful views. Signposts lead from the town to the Cascade de la Lance, a waterfall half-an-hour's walk away.

### Fort de Savoie

04370 Colmars. **Tel** 04 92 83 41 92.

**Open** mid-Jun–mid-Sep: Sat–Mon pm (Jul–Aug: daily); mid-Sep–mid-Jun: by appt only. obligatory.

## 6 Digne-les-Bains

Road map D2. 17,700.

Pl du Tampinet (04 92 36 62 62).

Wed & Sat (Blvd Gassendi).

[ot-dignelesbains.fr](http://ot-dignelesbains.fr)

The capital of the region has been a spa town since Roman times, primed by seven hot springs. It still attracts those seeking various cures, who visit the Thermes Digne-les-Bains, a short drive southeast of the town. Health seems to radiate from Digne's airy streets, particularly from the boulevard Gassendi, named after local mathematician and astronomer Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655). This is where the



Street sculpture in Digne

town's four-day lavender carnival rolls out in August (see p229), for Digne styles itself the "*capitale de la Lavande*". In recent years, the town has promoted itself as an important centre for modern sculpture, which liberally furnishes the town.

The **Musée Gassendi**, found in the old town hospice, houses 16th–19th-century French, Italian and Dutch paintings, a collection of contemporary art and 19th-century scientific instruments. Among portraits of Digne's famous is Alexandra David-Néel, one of Europe's most intrepid travellers, who died in 1969 aged 101. Her house, *Samten-Dzong* (fortress of meditation) is now the **Maison Alexandra David-Néel** and includes a Tibetan centre and a museum. At the north end of boulevard Gassendi is the 19th-century **Grande Fontaine** and beyond



The fortified town of Colmars, flanked by two compact forts

lies the oldest part of Digne-les-Bains. The grand cathedral of **Notre-Dame-du-Bourg**, built between 1200–1330, is the largest Romanesque church in Haute Provence. It has its own archaeological crypt with relics dating back to the Roman era.

The **Jardin des Cordeliers**, an enchanting walled garden in a converted convent, houses a large collection of medicinal plants and a sensory garden.

### Musée Gassendi

64 blvd Gassendi. **Tel** 04 92 31 45 29.

**Open** Wed–Mon (Oct–mid-May: Sat & Sun pm only). **Closed** public hols, 25 Dec–2 Jan.

[musee-gassendi.org](http://musee-gassendi.org)

### Maison Alexandra David-Néel

27 ave Maréchal Juin. **Tel** 04 92 31 32 38. **Open** Apr–Jun & Sep–Mar: Tue–Sun (Dec–Mar: pm only); Jul–Aug:

daily, by guided tour only.

[alexandra-david-neel.org](http://alexandra-david-neel.org)

### Jardin des Cordeliers

Couvent des Cordeliers, Ave Paul Martin. **Tel** 04 92 31 59 59. **Open** Mar–Nov: Mon pm–Fri. **Closed** public hols.

## 7 Les Pénitents des Mées

**Road map** D3. Marseille.  
 St-Auban. Les Mées. Mairie, 18 blvd de la République  
 (04 92 34 36 38).

One of the most spectacular geological features in the region is Les Pénitents des Mées, a serried rank of columnar rocks more than 100 m (300 ft) high and over a mile (2 km) long. The strange rock formation is said to be a cowed procession of banished monks. In local mythology, monks from the mountain of Lure took a fancy to some Moorish beauties, captured by a lord during the time of the Saracen invasion in the 6th century. Saint Donat, a hermit who inhabited a nearby cave, punished their effrontery by turning them into stone.

The small village of Les Mées is tucked away at the north end. Walk up to the chapel of St-Roch for a view of the rocks' strange formation of millions of pebbles and stones.

## 8 Lurs

**Road map** D3. 390. La Brillanne. Mairie (04 92 79 95 24).

The Bishops of Sisteron and the Princes of Lurs were given ownership of the fortified town of Lurs in the 9th century, under the command of Charlemagne.



The curiously-shaped Pénitents des Mées, dominating the area

In the early 20th century the small town was virtually abandoned, and was only repopulated after World War II, mainly by printers and graphic artists, who keep their trade in the forefront of events with an annual competition.

The narrow streets of the old town, entered through the Porte d'Horloge, are held in by the medieval ramparts. North of the restored Château of the Bishop-Princes is the beginning of the 300-m (900-ft) **Promenade des Evêques** (Bishops' walk), lined with 15 oratories leading to the chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Vie and stupendous views over the sea of poppy fields and olive groves of the Durance valley.

Head north out of Lurs on the N96, to the 12th-century **Prieuré de Ganagobie**. The church has beautifully restored red-, black- and white-tiled mosaics, inspired by oriental and Byzantine

design and imagery. Offices are held several times a day by the monks – visitors may attend.

**Prieuré de Ganagobie**  
 N96, 04310. **Tel** 04 92 68 00 04.

**Open** Tue–Sun pms. **Closed** 1 week in mid-Jan.



Floor mosaic of the church of the 12th-century Prieuré de Ganagobie

## Le Train des Pignes

An enjoyable day out is to be found on the Chemin de Fer de Provence, a short railway line that runs from Digne-les-Bains to Nice. It is the remaining part of a network that was designed to link the Côte d'Azur with the Alps, built between 1891 and 1911. Today the Train des Pignes, a diesel train, usually with two carriages, runs four times a day throughout the year. It is an active and popular service, used by locals going about their daily business as much as by tourists. It rattles along the single track at a fair pace, rolling by the white waters of the Asse



de Moriez and thundering over 16 viaducts, 15 bridges and through 25 tunnels.

The train journey is a great way of seeing the countryside, although the ride can be bumpy at times. The most scenic parts are in uninhabited countryside, such as between St-André-les-Alps and Annot, where the *grès d'Annot* can be seen (see p191). The journey takes about 3 hours each way and can be broken en route. Entrevaux (see p191) is a good place to stop. For tickets, call 04 92 03 80 80 (from Nice), 04 92 31 01 58 (from Digne-les-Bains) or visit <http://tourisme.trainprovence.com>





Scenic view of Forcalquier, the former capital of Alpes-de-Haute-Provence

## 9 Forcalquier

Road map C3. 4,875.

13 pl du Bourguet (04 92 75 10 02).

Mon, Thu. [haute-provence-tourisme.com](http://haute-provence-tourisme.com)

Crowned by a ruined castle and domed chapel of the 19th-century Notre-Dame-de-Provence, this town – once an independent state and the capital of the region – is now a shadow of its former self. Although the weekly market is a lively affair, drawing local artists and artisans.

There are some fine façades in the old town, but only one remaining gate, the Porte des Cordeliers. The Couvent des Cordeliers (closed to visitors) dates from 1236, and is where the local lords have been entombed.

The **Musée Départemental Ethnologique** in nearby Mane preserves the history of the people and culture of Haute-Provence. The **Observatoire de Haute Provence** to the south of the town was sited here after

a study in the 1930s to find the town with the cleanest air. The Centre d'Astronomie nearby is a must for star-gazers.

### Musée Départemental Ethnologique

N100, Mane. **Tel** 04 92 75 70 50.

**Open** Feb–Apr & Oct–mid-Dec: Wed–Mon; May–Sep: daily. **Closed** 24, 25 & 31 Dec. for groups.

### Observatoire de Haute Provence

St-Michel l'Observatoire. **Tel** 04 92 70 64 00. **Open** Easter–1 Nov: Wed pm.

from the Office de tourisme.

only. [obs-hp.fr](http://obs-hp.fr)

## 10 Manosque

Road map C3. 22,825.

Pl du Docteur Joubert (04 92 72

16 00). Sat. [ville-manosque.fr](http://ville-manosque.fr)

France's national nuclear research centre, Cadarache, has brought prosperity to Manosque, a town which has sprawled beyond its original hill site above the

Durance. The centre has 13th- and 14th-century gates, Porte Soubeyran and Porte Saunerie. The perfume shop in rue Grande was once the atelier of writer Jean Giono's mother and the second floor belonged to his father (see p32). The **Centre Jean Giono** tells the story of his life. The town's adoptive son is the painter Jean Carzou, who decorated the interior of the **Couvent de la Présentation** with apocalyptic allegories of modern life.

### Centre Jean Giono

3 blvd E Bourges. **Tel** 04 92 70 54 54.

**Open** Tue–Sat (Oct–Mar: pm only).

**Closed** public hols, 25 Dec–2 Jan.

[centrejeangiono.com](http://centrejeangiono.com)

### Couvent de la Présentation

9 blvd Elémir Bourges. **Tel** 04 92 87 40

49. **Open** Apr–Oct: 10am–12:30pm &

2–6pm Tue–Sat; Nov–Mar: 2–6pm

Wed–Sat. **Closed** Sun, public hols,

23 Dec–2 Jan.

## 11 Gréoux-les-Bains

Road map D3. 2,640.

7 pl

Hôtel de Ville (04 92 78 01 08). Tue

& Thu. [greouxlesbains.com](http://greouxlesbains.com)

The thermal waters of this spa town have been enjoyed since antiquity, when baths were built by the Romans in the 1st century AD. Gréoux flourished in the 19th century, and the waters can still be enjoyed at the Etablissement Thermal, on the east side of the village, on Avenue du Verdon, where bubbling, sulphurous water arrives at the rate of 100,000 litres (22,000 gallons) an hour.

## Lavender and Lavandin

The famous flower of Provence colours the Plateau de Valensole every July. Lavender began to be cultivated in the region in the 19th century and provides the world with around 80 per cent of its needs. Harvesting continues until September and is mostly mechanized although, in some areas, it is still collected in cloth sacks slung over the back. After two or three days' drying it is sent to a distillery.

These days the cultivation of a hybrid called lavandin has overtaken traditional lavender. Lavender is now used mainly for perfumes and cosmetics, lavandin for soaps.



Harvesting the abundant lavender in Haute Provence



The sweeping fields of the Plateau de Valensole, one of the largest lavender-growing areas of Provence

A restored castle ruin of the Templars is on a high spot and an open-air theatre is in the grounds. **Le Musée des Miniatures, poupées et jouets du Monde** is a museum with 148 miniatures from 1832 to the present, including dolls, costumes and toy trains.

**Le Musée des Miniatures, poupées et jouets du Monde**

16 ave des Alpes. **Tel** 06 84 62 71 23. **Open** mid-Apr–Oct: Mon, Wed & Fri pm only. **Closed** public hols. for groups.



Corinthian columns front the Gallo-Roman baths in Gréoux-les-Bains

## 12 Valensole

**Road map** D3. 3,330. Pl des Héros de la Résistance (04 92 74 90 02). Sat. [valensole.fr](http://valensole.fr)

This is the centre of France's most important lavender-growing area. It sits on the edge of the Valensole plains with a sturdy-towered Gothic church at its height. Admiral Villeneuve, the unsuccessful adversary of Admiral Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar,

was born here in 1763. Signs for locally made lavender honey are everywhere and just outside the town is the **Musée Vivant de l'Abeille**. This is an interactive museum explaining the intriguing life of the honey bee, with informative demonstrations, photographs and videos. In the summer, you can visit the beehives and see the beekeepers at work.

**Musée Vivant de l'Abeille**

Rte de Manosque. **Tel** 04 92 74 85 28. **Open** Tue–Sat. **Closed** public hols.

## 18 Riez

**Road map** D3. 1,850. Pl de la Mairie (04 92 77 99 09). Wed & Sat. [ville-riez.fr](http://ville-riez.fr)

At the edge of the sweeping Valensole plateau is this unspoiled village, filled with small shops selling ceramics and traditional *santons*, honey and lavender. Its grander past is reflected in the Renaissance façades of the houses and mansions in the old town. This is entered through the late-13th-century Porte Aiguère, which leads on to the peaceful, tree-lined Grand Rue, with fine examples of Renaissance architecture at numbers 27 and 29.

The most unusual site is the remains of the 1st-century AD Roman temple dedicated to Apollo. It stands out of time and place, in the middle of a field by the river Colostre; this

was the original site of the town where the Roman colony, *Reia Apollinaris*, lived. On the other side of the river is a rare example of Merovingian architecture, a small baptistry dating from the 5th century.

The village has a number of fountains: Fontaine Benoîte, opposite Porte Sanson, dates to 1819, although a fountain has existed on this spot since the 15th century; the 17th-century Fontaine de Blanchon is fed by an underground spring – its use was reserved for washing the clothes of the infirm in the days before antibiotics and vaccines; and the soft waters of the spring-fed Fontaine de Saint-Maxime were believed to possess healing qualities for the eyes.



Ruins of the Roman temple in Riez, built in 1st century AD

## 14 Tour of the Gorges du Verdon

The breathtaking chasm of the Gorges du Verdon is one of the most spectacular natural phenomena in France. The Verdon river, a tributary of the Durance, cuts into the rock up to 700 m (2,300 ft) deep. A tour of the gorges takes at least a day and this circular route encompasses its most striking features.

At its east and west points are the historic towns of Castellane, the natural entry point to the gorges, and Moustiers-Ste-Marie. Parts of the tour are particularly mountainous, so drivers must be aware of hairpin bends and narrow roads with sheer drops. Weather conditions can also be hazardous and roads can be icy until late spring.



Hikers in one of the deep gorges

### 5 La Palud-sur-Verdon

Organized walking excursions start at the village of La Palud, the so-called capital of the Gorges.

### 4 Moustiers-Ste-Marie

Set on craggy heights, the town is famed for its faïence (p 190).



Flowered-façade in Moustiers

#### Key

- Tour route
- Other roads
- Viewpoint

### Tips for Drivers

**Tour length:** 113 km (72 miles).

**Stopping-off points:** La Palud-sur-Verdon has several cafés and Moustiers-Ste-Marie is a good place to stop for lunch. For an overnight stop, there are hotels and campsites in the town of Castellane. (See also pp250–51.)



### 3 Aiguines

The beautifully restored 17th-century château crowns the small village, with fine views down to the Lac de Ste-Croix.



The azure-blue waters of the enormous Lac de Ste-Croix



## Outdoor Activities

The Verdon gorges have offered fantastic opportunities for the adventurous since Isadore Blanc (1875–1932) made the first complete exploration in 1905. Today's activities include hiking, climbing, canoeing and white-water rafting (see pp230–31). Boating needs to be supervised as the river is not always navigable and the powerful water flow can change dramatically.



White-water rafting down the fast-flowing Verdon river



Gorge explorer  
Isadore Blanc



### ⑥ Point Sublime

This is one of the best viewing points. Signposted walks lead down to the canyon floor, but a torch is required to walk through the long tunnels.

### ① Castellane

An ancient clock tower and gate remain in the Old Town of Castellane, a popular tourist centre (p190).



View of Pont de Tusset



Stunning view across the meandering river Verdon

0 kilometres 2  
0 miles 2

### ② Pont de l'Artuby

Park at either end of the 100-m (328-ft) bridge, which spans the Artuby river, and marvel at the superb views. It is also a favourite spot for bungee jumping.

## 15 Moustiers-Ste-Marie

**Road map** D3. 700. Pl de l'Église (04 92 74 67 84). Fri am; craft market (Jul/Aug).  
 [moustiers.eu](http://moustiers.eu)

The setting of the town of Moustiers is stunning, high on the edge of a ravine, beneath craggy rocks. Situated in the town centre is the parish church, with a three-storey Romanesque belfry. Above it, a path meanders up to the 12th-century chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Beauvoir. The view across Lac de Ste-Croix is magnificent.

A heavy iron chain, 227 m (745 ft) in length, is suspended above the ravine. Hanging from the centre is a five-pointed, golden star. Although it was renewed in 1957, it is said to date back to the 13th century, when the chevalier Blacas hoisted it up in thanks for his release from captivity during the Seventh Crusade of St Louis (see p46).

Moustiers is a popular tourist town, the streets crowded in summer. This is due to its setting and its ceramics. The original Moustiers ware is housed in the **Musée de la Faïence**. Modern reproductions can be bought in the town. The new **Musée de la Préhistoire** in Quinson, 40 km (25 miles) south, is a must.

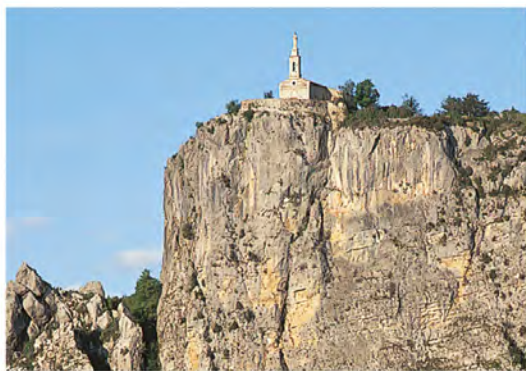
### Musée de la Faïence

Le Village, Rue du Seigneur de la Clue, Moustiers-Ste-Marie. **Tel** 04 92 74 61 64.

**Open** Apr–Oct: Wed–Mon; Nov, Dec, Feb & Mar: Sat–Sun.



The narrow streets of Moustiers



Notre-Dame-du-Roc chapel, perched high above the town of Castellane

## 16 Castellane

**Road map** D3. 1,600. Rue Nationale (04 92 83 61 14). Wed & Sat.  
 [castellane-verdontourisme.com](http://castellane-verdontourisme.com)

This is one of the main centres for the Gorges du Verdon, surrounded by campsites and caravans. Tourists squeeze into the town centre in summer and, in the evenings, fill the cafés after a day's hiking, climbing, canoeing and white-water rafting. It is a well-sited town, beneath an impressive 180-m (600-ft) slab of grey rock. On top of this, dominating the skyline, is the chapel of **Notre-Dame-du-Roc**, built in 1703. A strenuous, 30-minute walk from behind the parish church to the top is rewarded with superb views. Castellane was once a

sturdy fortress and repelled invasion several times. The lifting of the siege by the Huguenots in 1586 is commemorated every year with firecrackers at the Fête des Pétardiers (last Sun in Jan).

The town's fortifications were completely rebuilt in the 14th century after most of the town, dating from Roman times, crumbled and slipped into the Verdon valley. Most social activity takes place in the main square, place Marcel-Sauvaire, which is lined with small hotels that have catered for generations of visitors.

All that remains of the ram-parts is the Tour Pentagonal and a small section of the old wall, which lie just beyond the 12th-century St-Victor church, on the way up to the chapel.

## Moustiers Ware

The most important period of Moustiers faïence was from its inception in 1679 until the late 18th century, when a dozen factories were producing this highly glazed ware. Decline followed and production came to a standstill in 1874, until it was revived in 1925 by Marcel Provence. He chose to follow traditional methods, and output continues.

The distinctive glaze of Moustiers faïence was first established in the late 17th century by Antoine Clérissy, a local potter who was given the secret of faïence by an Italian monk. The first pieces to be fired had a luminous blue glaze and were decorated with figurative scenes, often copied from engravings of hunting or mythological subjects. In 1738, Spanish glazes were introduced and brightly coloured floral and fauna designs were used.

A number of potters continue the tradition, with varying degrees of quality, and can be seen at work in their *ateliers*.



A tureen in Moustiers' highly glazed faïence ware



## 17 St-André-les-Alpes

**Road map** D3. 920. Place Marcel Pastorelli (04 92 89 02 39). Wed & Sat. [saintandreesalpes-verdoutourisme.com](http://saintandreesalpes-verdoutourisme.com)

Lying at the north end of the Lac de Castillon, where the river Isolde meets the river Verdon, is St-André. It is a popular summer holiday and leisure centre, scattered around the sandy flats on the lakeside. The lake is man-made, formed by damming the river by the 90-m (295-ft) Barrage de Castillon and is a haven for rafting, canoeing and kayaking as well as swimming and fishing.

Inland, lavender fields and orchards make for picturesque walks and hang-gliding is so popular here that one of the local producers advertises its wine as “the wine of eagles”.

## 18 Annot

**Road map** E3. 1,120. Place du Germe (04 92 83 23 03). Tue. [annot-tourisme.com](http://annot-tourisme.com)

The town of Annot, on the Train des Pignes railway line (see p185), has a distinct Alpine feel. Annot lies in the Vaïre valley, crisscrossed by icy waters streaming down from the mountains. The surrounding scenery however, is a more unfamiliar pattern of jagged rocks and deep caves.

Vast sandstone boulders, known as the *grès d'Annot*, are strewn around the town, and



The steep path of zigzag ramps leading to the citadel of Entrevaux

local builders have constructed houses against these haphazard rocks, using their sheer faces as outside walls. The *vieille ville* lies behind the main road, where there is a Romanesque church. The tall buildings that line the narrow streets have retained some of their original 15th- to 18th-century carved stone lintels.

Most Sundays (May–Oct) in summer, a 1909 *belle époque* steam train chugs its way from Puget-Théniers to Annot, a pleasant way for visitors to enjoy the unspoiled countryside.

## 19 Entrevaux

**Road map** E3. 950. Porte Royale du Pont Levis (04 93 05 46 73). [tourisme-entrevaux.fr](http://tourisme-entrevaux.fr)

It is clear why Entrevaux is called a “fairy-tale town”, as you cross the drawbridge and enter through the Porte Royale. The dramatic entrance is flanked by twin towers and from here you enter the Ville Forte.

Fortified in 1690 by the military engineer Vauban (1633–1707), Entrevaux became one of the strongest military sites on the Franco-Savoy border. Even the 17th-century cathedral was skilfully incorporated into the turreted ramparts.

Unlike most military strongholds, the citadel was not built on top of a hill, but strategically placed on a rocky outcrop. It was last used during World War I as a prison for German officers. A steep, zigzag track leads to the citadel, 156 m (511 ft) above the village. The 20-minute climb to the top, past basking lizards, should not be made in the midday heat.



Houses in the town of Annot built against huge sandstone rocks





ANTIQUITES  
SEIT 1848  
ESTABLISHED  
Musik  
Bilder  
Keramik  
Porzellan  
Damen  
Schmuck  
Kunstwerke  
Antiquitäten  
Kunstgegenstände  
Kunstwerke  
Kunstgegenstände  
Kunstwerke  
Kunstgegenstände

KUB







# TRAVELLERS' NEEDS

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# WHERE TO STAY

The diversity of Provence is reflected in the wide range of hotels it has to offer. Accommodation varies from luxurious palaces like the InterContinental Carlton in Cannes to simple country inns where a warm welcome, peaceful setting and often excellent cuisine

are more customary than mod cons. Self-catering holidays are a popular and inexpensive option and on pages 196–7 information is given on renting a rural home or *gîte*, and on camping, as well as how to find B&Bs and youth hostels in the area.

## Where to Look

There is no shortage of hotels in Provence and the Côte d'Azur. Ever since the crusades of the Middle Ages, the region has been hosting travellers in a variety of hotels across all price levels. Some of the best value coastal accommodation, especially for families, is found along the shores of the Var between Toulon and St-Tropez. The glamour and glitz come further east – the coast from Fréjus to Menton is predictably extravagant, but you can find accommodation to suit all budgets, from the exclusive Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc, popular with film stars on Cap d'Antibes, to the 15th-century inn of the Hôtel des Arcades in Biot.

Inland, the major towns of Provence offer a good variety of hotels, from the luxurious mansions of Aix-en-Provence, Avignon and Arles to the more simple hostleries of the Luberon and the Var. Boutique hotels and deluxe *chambres d'hôtes* (B&Bs) have become very fashionable, making the picturesque fantasy of a converted farmhouse or medieval priory set in lavender fields a reality.



Palm trees shading the garden pool, Pastis Hotel St-Tropez (see p199)

Travellers seeking tranquillity can travel north to the wilds of Haute Provence where several historic *châteaux*, *auberges* (country inns) and *relais de poste* (post-houses) provide excellent accommodation and regional cuisine in rustic surroundings.

Those looking for a country idyll should head to the hills and valleys of the Central Var, the Luberon National Park or the foothills of Mont Ventoux. For an exciting, cosmopolitan base, Marseille is a great choice, with excellent hotels and restaurants on offer.

## Hotel Types

Hotels in Provence can be divided into several categories. The region's famous luxury establishments include some of the most spectacular hotels in France. Many of these are located near the Mediterranean Sea, or in beautiful inland or hilltop settings. They come with a wide array of sports and spa facilities, private beaches, and usually a gastronomic restaurant.

Known for its art, Provence and the French Riviera also have some of the country's most chic and contemporary boutique hotels and B&Bs, many featuring minimalist or exotic interiors by hip designers. These tend to be located in the cities and resorts, and come equipped with all the modern conveniences, from iPod docks to rain showers. Many of them have spas or beauty and wellness centres.

Provence and the Cote d'Azur also boasts beautiful historic hotels and charming B&Bs. Located in castles, farmhouses, convents, medieval inns or mills, these establishments offer guests a chance to immerse themselves in the region's rich past. Rooms here are generally furnished with antiques, and



Stylish guest room at the luxurious InterContinental Carlton, Cannes (see p198)



many are set in century-old parks and gardens.

For those travelling with children, family hotels are the ideal option. While the romantic boutique hotels or upmarket B&Bs with antique furnishings may refuse guests under a certain age, most of the family hotels are quite welcoming, and may offer interconnecting rooms. Numerous country hotels now have annexes with bungalow apartments specifically designed for families. These may be only a few steps away from the swimming pool.

Classic hotels are generally purpose-built hotels and inns, many of which are still family-run. These establishments are found in virtually every village and the atmosphere is often extremely informal. The hotel is likely to be the focal point of the village, with the dining room and bar open to non-residents. The annual *Logis de France Fédération* guide, which can be ordered online at [www.logis-hotels.com](http://www.logis-hotels.com), lists these one- and two-star restaurants-with-rooms (*puberges*), often specializing in regional cuisine. Many are basic roadside inns, with a few listed in the main towns and cities, but off the beaten track you can find charming farmhouses and inexpensive seaside hotels.

The classic category also includes some chain hotels, such as the **Campanile** and **Ibis** chains, which offer inexpensive yet comfortable accommodation on the outskirts of towns. They are a reliable option and can be booked directly online or over the phone by credit card.

Other modern chains are geared to the business traveller and are found in most major towns. **Sofitel**, **Novotel** and **Mercur**e all have hotels in Aix, Nice and Marseille.

## Hotel Prices

In many hotels, the price of each room depends on the view, size, decor or plumbing. Single occupancy rates are usually the same as two sharing – prices are normally per room, not per person. Tax and service



La Bastide de Voullonne, Cabrières d'Avignon-Gordes (p201)

are included in the price, with the exception of *pension* (full board) and *demi-pension* (half board), and rates posted are exclusive of breakfast. In more remote areas, half board may be obligatory and is often necessary in places where the hotel has the only restaurant. For stays of just one night, many hotels offer a fixed-price, good value package including the room, dinner and breakfast (*soirée étape*). In high season, popular coastal hotels may give preference to visitors who want half board.

Prices drop considerably in Provence in low season (Oct–Mar). Many hotels close for five months of the year, reopening for Easter. During festivals (see pp36–9 and pp228–31), prices can rival high-season tariffs. In low season, discount packages are common along the coast. It is worth checking the Internet and the hotel website, as many of the biggest and most famous hotels offer fabulous deals during this period – even the palaces of the Riviera need to fill their rooms in winter.

## Hotel Gradings

French hotels are classified by the tourist authorities into five categories: one to five stars, with the best of the five-star hotels called 'palaces'. A few very basic places are unclassified. These ratings give you an indication of the level of facilities you can expect but offer little idea of cleanliness, ambience or

friendliness of the owners. Some of the most charming hotels are blessed with few stars, while the higher ratings sometimes turn out to be impersonal business hotels.

## Bed and Breakfast

As old-fashioned family hotels in Provence have been closed down by EU regulations, *chambres d'hôtes* (B&Bs) have risen to take their place. They come in all shapes and sizes, including some very stylish ones as priced as four-star hotels. Many provide *table d'hôte* dinners on request. They are listed separately in tourist office brochures, and many are inspected and registered by the **Gîtes de France** organization.

Stays on working farms are also an excellent option for families. Listings and useful information pertaining to these can be found on the **Accueil en Provence Paysanne** and **Bienvenue à la Ferme** websites.



Impressive staircase and glass lift at the exclusive Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc (see p198)



Antique-furnished guest room at the romantic Jardins Secrets, Nîmes (see p200)

## Facilities and Meals

Facilities will vary greatly depending on the location and rating of each hotel. In more remote areas, most hotels have adjoining restaurants and nearly all feature a breakfast room or terrace. Many three-star hotels have swimming pools, which can be a godsend in the summer. Parking is readily available at country hotels. Some city hotels have underground or guarded parking – in larger cities like Marseille and Nice this is becoming a necessity as car crime is a serious problem.

Many Provençal hotels are converted buildings and, while this adds a definite charm, it can mean eccentric plumbing and disturbing creaks and bumps in the night. Some hotels are near a main road or a town square – choosing a room at the back is usually all that is required for a peaceful night. Most hotels and *chambres d'hôtes* now offer free Wi-Fi, at least in the public areas, if not in the rooms.

Traditional French breakfasts are common in Provence and in summer are often enjoyed outside. Evening meals are served daily until about 9pm. Dining rooms are often closed on Sunday – check before you

arrive. Check-out time is usually late morning; if you stay any longer you will have to pay for an extra day.

## Booking

In high season, it is imperative to book well in advance, especially for any popular coastal hotel. During peak season (Jun–Sep), proprietors may ask for a deposit. Outside peak season you may be able to turn up on the day, but it is always wise to phone ahead to make sure the establishment is open. Check hotel websites, many of which allow you to book online and offer some good deals for Internet bookings.

## Self-Catering

Provence is a popular self-catering destination, and many companies specialize in renting anything from rural farm cottages to beach apartments. One of the best organizations is **Gîtes de France**, with its headquarters in Paris, which provides detailed lists of accommodation to rent by the week in each *département*.

The *gîte* owners are obliged to live nearby and are always welcoming, but rarely speak

much English. Do not expect luxury from your *gîte* (holiday cottage) as facilities are basic, but it is a great way to get a better insight into real Provençal life. The websites of **Clévances**, **AirBNB**, **Homelidays** and **Owners Direct** list affordable *gîte* and apartment rentals.

## Hostels

For the independent traveller, this is the cheapest, and often the most convivial accommodation option. There are nine youth hostels in Provence, all of which are under the umbrella of **Hostelling International**.

A membership card from your national **Youth Hostel Association** ([www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk)) is required, or an *Ajiste* card, which you can obtain from French hostels. In each university town, the **Centre Régional Information Jeunesse (CRIJ)** can provide a great deal of information about student life and a list of inexpensive accommodation options.

## Camping

A popular pastime in Provence, camping remains an inexpensive and atmospheric way of seeing the area. Facilities range from a basic one-star farm or vineyard site to the camping metropolises of the Riviera, complete with water fun parks and satellite TV. **Eurocamp** specializes in family holidays. Luxury tents are pre-assembled at the campsite of your choice,



Camping in Provence, a popular accommodation alternative

and everything is ready on arrival. 'Glamping' – glamorous camping – has become increasingly popular in France, and offers unusual outdoor accommodation. Some campsites require visitors to have a special *camping carnet*, available from clubs such as the **Fédération Française de Camping et de Caravaning**.

## Disabled Travellers

Due to the venerable design of most Provençal hotels, few are able to offer unrestricted wheelchair access. Larger hotels have lifts, and hotel staff will go out of their way to aid disabled guests. Most resort hotels and many B&Bs have at least one or two accessible rooms. The **Association des Paralysés de France (APF)** has useful information on their website.

Other useful sources of information are **Mobility International** and **Tourism for All**, who publish a guide to France listing specialized tour operators for disabled travellers.

## Recommended Hotels

The hotels and B&Bs listed in this guide have been carefully chosen and are among the best in Provence in their categories: Boutique, Classic, Family, Luxury and Historic. The establishments have been chosen from all over Provence for the quality of accommodation they offer and in some cases, for offering good value for money. The hotel listings on pages 198–201 are

arranged by *département* and town according to price.

Among the listings, hotels and B&Bs have been designated as "DK Choice" for one or more of their outstanding features. This could be for the beauty of the location or the views, for the exceptional facilities on offer or the historic charm of the places, or any other feature that sets them apart from the rest of the entries here.



Olive groves surround the pool at serene La Bonne Etape, Château-Arnoux (see p201)

## DIRECTORY

### Hotel Types

#### Campanile

[www.campanile.com](http://www.campanile.com)

#### French Government Tourist Office

UK: Lincoln House,  
300 High Holborn,  
London WC1V 7JH.  
Tel (00 44) 20 70 61  
66 00.

[www.uk.france.fr](http://www.uk.france.fr)

US: 29th Floor, 825 Third  
Ave, New York, NY 10022.  
Tel (212) 838 7800.

[www.us.france.fr](http://www.us.france.fr)

#### Ibis, Novotel, Sofitel, Mercure

Tel (087) 1663 0624 (UK).  
Tel 08 25 88 00 00 (France).

[www.accorhotels.com](http://www.accorhotels.com)

### Bed and Breakfast

#### Accueil en Provence Paysanne

[www.accueil-paysan-paca.com](http://www.accueil-paysan-paca.com)

#### Bienvenue à la Ferme

[www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com](http://www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com)

### Self-Catering

#### AirBNB

[www.airbnb.fr](http://www.airbnb.fr)

#### Clévacances

[www.clevacances.com](http://www.clevacances.com)

#### Gîtes de France

40 avenue de Flandre,  
75019 Paris.  
Tel 01 49 70 75 75.  
[www.gites-de-france.com](http://www.gites-de-france.com)

#### Homelidays

[www.homelidays.com](http://www.homelidays.com)

#### Owners Direct

[www.ownersdirect.co.uk](http://www.ownersdirect.co.uk)

### Hostels

#### American Youth Hostel Association

Tel (240) 650 2100 (US).  
[www.hiusa.org](http://www.hiusa.org)

### CRIJ Provence Alpes

96 la Canebière,  
13001 Marseille.  
Tel 04 91 24 33 50.  
[www.crijpa.fr](http://www.crijpa.fr)

### CRIJ Cote D'Azur

19 rue Gioffredo,  
06000 Nice.  
Tel 04 93 80 93 93.  
[www.ijca.fr](http://www.ijca.fr)

### Hostelling International

UK. Tel (01707) 324170.  
[www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com)

### Camping

#### Eurocamp UK

UK. Tel (016) 1694 9014.  
[www.eurocamp.co.uk](http://www.eurocamp.co.uk)

### Fédération Française de Camping et de Caravaning

78 rue de Rivoli,  
75004 Paris.  
Tel 01 42 72 84 08.  
[www.ffcc.fr](http://www.ffcc.fr)

### Disabled Travellers

#### APF

13 pl Rungis, 75013 Paris.  
Tel 01 53 80 15 56.  
[www.apf.asso.fr](http://www.apf.asso.fr)

#### Mobility International USA

132 E Broadway,  
Eugene,  
Oregon 97401.  
Tel (541) 343 1284.  
[www.miusa.org](http://www.miusa.org)

#### Tourism for All

7A Pixel Mill,  
44 Appleby Road,  
Kendall,  
Cumbria LA9 6ES.  
Tel (0845) 124 9971.  
[www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk)



## Where to Stay

### The Riviera and the Alpes Maritimes

#### ANTIBES: Mas Djoliba

Family €€ Map E3

29 av Provence, 06600

Tel 04 93 34 02 48

[www.hotel-djoliba.com](http://www.hotel-djoliba.com)

Charming, old-fashioned farmhouse with palm trees around its pool and terrace.

#### BEAULIEU-SUR-MER: La Réserve de Beaulieu

Luxury €€€ Map F3

5 Blvd du Maréchal Leclerc, 06310

Tel 04 93 01 00 01

[www.reservebeaulieu.com](http://www.reservebeaulieu.com)

Elegant hotel with a magnificent seaside pool and spa. Michelin-starred restaurant.

#### BIOT: Hôtel des Arcades

Historic € Map E3

14/16 pl des Arcades, 06410

Tel 04 93 65 01 04

[www.hotel-restaurant-les-arcades.com](http://www.hotel-restaurant-les-arcades.com)

Small but comfortable rooms in a 15th-century inn with a quiet, homely atmosphere.

#### CANNES: L'Hotel Carolina

Classic € Map E4

35 rue Hoche, 06400

Tel 04 93 38 33 67

[www.carolina-hotel.com](http://www.carolina-hotel.com)

An affordable option near the Croisette, offering spacious rooms with minibars and flatscreen TVs.

#### CANNES: InterContinental Carlton

Luxury €€€ Map E4

58 la Croisette, 06400

Tel 04 93 06 40 06

[www.intercontinental-carlton-cannes.com](http://www.intercontinental-carlton-cannes.com)

Glamorous Art Deco landmark with breathtaking suites and a fabulous private beach.

#### CAP D'ANTIBES: La Gardiole et La Garoupe

Family €€ Map E3

60-74 chemin de la Garoupe, 06160

Tel 04 92 93 33 33

[www.hotel-lagaroupe-gardiole.com](http://www.hotel-lagaroupe-gardiole.com)

Quiet, simple rooms in a 1920s building surrounded by trees. Friendly, helpful staff.

#### CAP D'ANTIBES: Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc

Luxury €€€ Map E3

Blvd Kennedy, 06601

Tel 04 93 61 39 01

[www.hotel-du-cap-eden-roc.com](http://www.hotel-du-cap-eden-roc.com)

A Riviera hideaway for the rich and famous; features luxury suites,

apartments, seaside cabanas and five clay tennis courts.

#### EZE: Hermitage du Col d'Eze

Classic €€ Map F3

1951 av des Diables Bleus, 06360

Tel 04 93 41 00 68

[www.ezehermitage.com](http://www.ezehermitage.com)

This shabby-chic hotel is a good budget option with spectacular mountain views. Free Wi-Fi.

#### EZE: La Chèvre d'Or

Luxury €€€ Map F3

Rue du Barri, 06360

Tel 04 92 10 66 66

[www.chevedor.com](http://www.chevedor.com)

A plush hotel with breathtaking views and romantic, individually decorated rooms.

#### JUAN-LES-PINS: Hotel des Mimosas

Classic €€ Map E4

Rue Pauline, 06160

Tel 04 93 61 04 16

[www.hotelmimosas.com](http://www.hotelmimosas.com)

Just a short walk from the station, this gracious hotel is surrounded by beautiful tropical gardens.

#### MENTON: Hotel Napoléon

Classic €€ Map F3

29 porte de France, 06500

Tel 04 93 35 89 50

[www.napoleon-menton.com](http://www.napoleon-menton.com)

Bright, modern rooms decorated with Jean Cocteau-style prints that offer lovely views of the bay.

#### MONACO: Novotel Monte Carlo

Family €€ Map F3

16 Blvd Princesse Charlotte, 98000

Tel 00 377 99 99 83 00

[www.novotel.com](http://www.novotel.com)

Avant-garde style hotel equipped with all modern facilities, located on the historic former site of Radio Monte Carlo.

#### Price Guide

Prices are for a standard double room per night in high season, inclusive of all taxes and service charges.

€	up to €125
€€	€125 to €250
€€€	over €250

#### MONACO: Hôtel

Hermitage €€€ Map F3

Square Beaumarchais, 98000

Tel 00 377 98 06 40 00

[www.hotelhermitagemontecarlo.com](http://www.hotelhermitagemontecarlo.com)

Opulent belle époque landmark with a spectacular, glass-domed Winter Garden foyer. Private beach and golf course.

NICE: Hotel Windsor €€ Map F3

11 rue Dalpozzo, 06000

Tel 04 93 88 59 35

[www.hotelwindsornice.com](http://www.hotelwindsornice.com)

Hotel Windsor offers a vibrant and artistic ambience. Relax in the pool in the exotic garden. Free Wi-Fi.

NICE: Le Négresco €€€ Map F3

37 promenade des Anglais, 06000

Tel 04 93 16 64 00

[www.hotel-negresco-nice.com](http://www.hotel-negresco-nice.com)

A landmark since it opened in 1913, this palatial hotel is popular with the well-heeled who want to soak up the vintage atmosphere.

#### ST-JEAN-CAP-FERRAT:

Hotel Brise Marine €€ Map F3

58 Jean Mermoz, 06230

Tel 04 93 76 04 36

[www.hotel-brisemarine.com](http://www.hotel-brisemarine.com)

Located merely steps away from the beach, this family-run hotel offers good views of the harbour. Welcoming staff.



Elegantly laid out breakfast table in a "sea-view" room at Le Négresco, Nice

**DK Choice****ST-JEAN-CAP-FERRAT:****Royal Riviera** €€€Luxury **Map F3**

3 av Jean Monnet, 06230

**Tel** 04 93 76 31 00**w** royal-riviera.com

Built in 1904 at a superb location overlooking "Billionaire's Bay", Royal Riviera features luminous and elegantly decorated rooms. This ultra-stylish hotel has warm, friendly staff and offers an impeccable service.

**ST-PAUL DE VENEC:****Le Saint Paul** €€€Luxury **Map E3**

86 rue Grande, 06570

**Tel** 04 93 32 65 25**w** lesaintpaul.com

Peaceful and artistic place with lavishly furnished rooms. Exquisite walled-in restaurant terrace with a 17th-century fountain.

**VENEC: Hotel Villa****Roseaie** €€Boutique **Map E3**

128 av Henri Giraud, 06140

**Tel** 04 93 58 02 20**w** villaroseaie.com

Belle époque town house with a colourful, rustic chic decor and delightful pool and garden.

**VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-MER:****Hôtel Versailles** €€Family **Map F3**

7 av Princesse Grace, 06230

**Tel** 04 93 76 52 52**w** hotelvesailles.com

Sleek, modern hotel with magnificent views and a fine Mediterranean restaurant.

**The Var and the Iles d'Hyères****BORMES-LES-MIMOSAS:****Domaine du Mirage** €€Family **Map D4**

38 rue de la Vue des Iles, 83230

**Tel** 04 94 05 32 60**w** domainedumirage.com

Victorian-style hotel with bright rooms, each with a terrace or balcony offering sea views. Good restaurant and attentive staff.

**COLLOBRIÈRES: Hôtel****des Maures** €Classic **Map D4**

19 blvd Lazare-Carnot, 83610

**Tel** 04 94 48 07 10**w** hoteldesmaures.fr

Family-run hotel offering pleasant, budget-friendly rooms. Superb traditional restaurant.

**FAYENCE: Moulin de la****Camandoule** €Historic **Map E3**

159 chemin de Notre Dame des

Cyprès, 83440

**Tel** 04 94 76 00 84**w** camandoule.com

Provençal-style rooms in a converted 15th-century olive mill. Excellent on-site restaurant.

**FOX-AMPHOUX: Auberge du****Vieux Fox** €Historic **Map D3**

Pl de l'Eglise, 83670

**Tel** 04 94 80 71 69

Set in a 12th-century priory, this hotel is a perfect stopover when visiting the Gorges du Verdon. Small and cosy rooms.

**FRÉJUS: Hôtel L'Arena** €€Classic **Map E4**

139-145 rue Gén de Gaulle, 83600

**Tel** 04 94 17 09 40**w** hotel-frejus-arena.com

Elegant hotel with a warm Mediterranean decor, exotic landscaped garden and outdoor swimming pool. Located in the heart of the town's historic centre.

**GRIMAUD: Les Aurochs** €Classic **Map E4**

Quartier Embaude, 83310

**Tel** 04 94 81 31 90**w** lesaurochs.com

Housed in a converted sheep farm near the Grimaud castle. Choose between tranquil cottages and rooms with private terraces.

**ÎLE DE PORQUEROLLES: Hôtel****Résidence Les Medes** €€Family **Map D5**

Rue de la Douane, 83400

**Tel** 04 94 12 41 24**w** hotel-les-medes.fr

Located near the Courtade beach, this hotel is set in a pretty garden with a waterfall and a sun terrace. Smartly furnished rooms.

**ÎLE DE PORT-CROS:****Le Manoir** €€€Historic **Map D5**

Île de Port-Cros, 83400

**Tel** 04 94 05 90 52**w** hotel-lemanoirportcros.com

Simple and romantic century-old mansion offering a warm welcome, and delicious food.

**LA CADIÈRE D'AZUR: Hostellerie****Béard & Spa** €€Historic **Map C4**

6 rue Gabriel-Péri, 83740

**Tel** 04 94 90 11 43**w** hotel-berard.com

Converted 11th-century convent with bright, spacious rooms that offer magnificent views over the Bandol vineyards.



Cosy and well-furnished room at the Pastis Hotel, St-Tropez

**LA CELLE: L'Hostellerie de****l'Abbaye de la Celle** €€€Luxury **Map D4**

10 pl du Général de Gaulle, 83170

**Tel** 04 98 05 14 14**w** abbaye-celle.com

Sublimely relaxing 12th-century abbey hotel with stunning rooms and a fabulous restaurant.

**PORT-GRIMAUD: Hôtel****le Suffren** €€Family **Map E4**

16 pl du Marché, 83310

**Tel** 04 94 55 15 05**w** hotel-suffren.com

Pleasant waterfront hotel featuring bright, airy rooms with balconies overlooking the marina.

**ST-TROPEZ: Lou Cagnard** €€Classic **Map E4**

18 av Paul Roussel, 83990

**Tel** 04 94 97 04 24**w** hotel-lou-cagnard.com

Charming, wisteria-draped town house with pretty rooms and a lush garden.

**DK Choice****ST-TROPEZ: Pastis Hotel****St-Tropez** €€€Boutique **Map E4**

75 av du Général Leclerc, 83990

**Tel** 04 98 12 56 50**w** pastis-st-tropez.com

An intimate hideaway furnished with an eclectic mix of modern and antique art. The private garden with centuries-old palm trees and a pool is the perfect spot for breakfast or a nightcap.

**SEILLANS-VAR: Hôtel des****Deux Rocs** €Historic **Map E3**

1 pl Font d'Amont, 83440

**Tel** 04 94 76 87 32**w** hoteldeuxrocs.com

This lovely 18th-century mansion is good for families. Fantastic Mediterranean restaurant.

**TOULON: Ibis Styles Toulon Centre Congrès** €  
Family Map D4  
Pl Besagne, 83000  
Tel 04 98 00 81 00  
www.ibis.com  
Centrally located chain hotel decorated in bright colours. Babysitting available.

**TOURTOUR: L'Auberge St-Pierre** €  
Family Map D3  
Route d'Ampus, 83690  
Tel 04 94 50 00 50  
www.aubergesaintpierre.com  
Rural tranquility in a 16th-century farmhouse with stunning views. Upscale facilities on site include a pool, spa, Jacuzzi and fitness room.

## Bouches-du-Rhône and Nîmes

**AIX-EN-PROVENCE: Hôtel Cézanne** €€  
Boutique Map C4  
40 av Victor Hugo, 13100  
Tel 04 42 91 11 11  
www.hotelaix.com  
Classy place with colourful designer rooms and an arty decor. Excellent breakfast-brunch buffet includes a glass of champagne.

**AIX-EN-PROVENCE: Hôtel Saint Christophe** €€  
Family Map C4  
2 av Victor-Hugo, 13100  
Tel 04 42 26 01 24  
www.hotel-saintchristophe.com  
Superb, well-equipped hotel with Art Deco flair, and a bustling old-fashioned brasserie.

**ARLES: Hôtel de l'Amphithéâtre** €  
Family Map B3  
5-7 rue Diderot, 13200  
Tel 04 90 96 10 30  
www.hotelamphitheatre.fr  
Characterful hotel set in a 17th-century building with charming Provençal decor and friendly staff.

### DK Choice

**ARLES: L'Hôtel Particulier** €€€  
Historic Map B3  
4 rue de la Monnaie, 13200  
Tel 04 90 52 51 40  
www.hotel-particulier.com  
A beautiful mansion with an aristocratic feel, featuring a walled garden, a swimming pool and an exquisite spa and hammam. The guest rooms are elegantly decorated with antiques. Impeccable service.



The colourful interior of Hôtel Cézanne, Aix-en-Provence

**CASSIS: Le Clos des Arômes** €  
Classic Map C4  
10 rue Abbé Paul Mouton, 13260  
Tel 04 42 01 71 84  
www.leclosdesaromes.fr  
Old-fashioned but charming, this peaceful Provençal hotel has a lovely garden.

**FONTVIEILLE: Villa Régálido** €€  
Boutique Map B3  
118 av Frédéric Mistral, 13990  
Tel 04 90 54 60 22  
www.laregalido.com  
Housed in a converted olive oil mill; offers luxurious rooms. Opt for a bedroom with a terrace overlooking the village.

**LES BAUX-DE-PROVENCE: L'Hostellerie de la Reine Jeanne** €  
Classic Map B3  
Grande Rue, 13520  
Tel 04 90 54 32 06  
www.la-reinejeanne.com  
Historical setting for this hotel-restaurant with solidly comfortable rooms. Enjoy panoramic views over Les Baux and dine on the restaurant terrace in summer.

**LES BAUX-DE-PROVENCE: Baumanière** €€€  
Luxury Map B3  
Chemin Departmental 27 Carita, 13520  
Tel 04 90 54 33 07  
www.lacabrodor.com

Beautiful country house set in an idyllic location, offering Provençal-chic bedrooms furnished with antiques. Superb restaurant.

**MARSEILLE: Hôtel Saint-Ferreol** €  
Classic Map C4  
19 rue Pisançon, 13000  
Tel 04 91 33 12 21  
www.hotel-stferreol.com  
Centrally located off the main shopping street, this modern, cheery hotel has small but thoughtfully designed rooms.

**MARSEILLE: Hotel La Résidence du Vieux Port** €€  
Boutique Map C4  
18 quai du Port, 13002  
Tel 04 91 91 91 22  
www.hotel-residence-marseille.com  
Stylish waterfront hotel designed in the 1950s and inspired by Le Corbusier. Its simple, airy bedrooms with splashes of colour have picture-perfect views.

**MARSEILLE: Sofitel Marseille Vieux Port** €€  
Classic Map C4  
36 blvd Charles Livon, 13007  
Tel 04 91 15 59 00  
www.sofitel.com  
Luxury hotel with minimalist style, dark wood and streamlined furniture. Enjoy spectacular views from the top-floor restaurant.

**NÎMES: Hôtel des Tuileries** €  
Classic Map A3  
22 rue Roussy, 30000  
Tel 04 66 21 31 15  
www.hoteldestuileries.com  
Excellent centrally located budget hotel with old-fashioned bedrooms. Charming owners.

**NÎMES: Jardins Secrets** €€€  
Boutique Map A3  
3 rue Gaston Maruejols, 30000  
Tel 04 66 84 82 64  
www.jardinssecrets.net  
Stylish, romantic hotel furnished with antiques. Superb breakfast spread. Garden oasis with a pool.

**ST-RÉMY-DE-PROVENCE: Hôtel L'Amandière** €  
Classic Map B3  
Av Théodore-Aubanel, 13210  
Tel 04 90 92 41 00  
www.hotel-amandiere.com  
A peaceful retreat with a rustic feel. All rooms offer garden views, but only some have air-conditioning.

**SAINTE-MARIES-DE-LA-MER: Mas de la Fouque** €€  
Boutique Map A4  
Route du Petit Rhône, Départemental 38, 13460  
Tel 04 90 97 81 02  
www.masdelafouque.com  
Luxurious hotel and spa offering boudoir-style gypsy trailers and ultra-chic rooms with a private terrace. Great views of Camargue Nature Park.

**SALON-DE-PROVENCE: Abbaye de Sainte-Croix** €€  
Historic Map B3  
Route de Val de Cuech, 13300  
Tel 04 90 56 24 55  
www.abbaye-de-saintecroix.fr  
Rustic style former monks' cells in a 12th-century abbey, with fine views from the pool terrace.



**VILLENEUVE-LÈS-AVIGNON:**  
**La Magnaneraie** €€  
 Historic Map B3  
 37 rue Camp de Bataille, 30400  
 Tel 09 70 38 34 95  
 www.magnaneraie.najeti.fr  
 Refined hotel with lovely gardens and a frescoed restaurant in a 15th-century silk worm nursery.

## Vaucluse

**AVIGNON: Bristol Hotel** €  
 Classic Map B3  
 44 cours Jean Jaurès, 84000  
 Tel 04 90 16 48 48  
 www.bristol-avignon.com  
 Pleasant hotel at a convenient location in the city centre. Family rooms and garage available.

**AVIGNON: Hotel d'Europe** €€€  
 Historic Map B3  
 12 pl Crillon, 84000  
 Tel 04 90 14 76 76  
 www.heurope.com  
 A 16th-century hotel elegantly decorated with period furniture. Beautiful fountain in the garden.

**AVIGNON: La Mirande** €€€  
 Luxury Map B3  
 4 pl de l'Amirande, 84000  
 Tel 04 90 14 20 20  
 www.la-mirande.fr  
 A cardinal's mansion renovated in 18th-century style. Situated near the Palais de Papes.

### DK Choice

**CABRIÈRES D'AVIGNON-GORDES: La Bastide de Voullonne** €€  
 Family Map B3  
 Cabrières d'Avignon, Route des Beaumettes, Dept 148, 84220  
 Tel 04 90 76 77 55  
 www.bastide-voullonne.com  
 Set in a traditional 18th-century farm and surrounded by acres of beautiful grounds, La Bastide de Voullonne is the ideal spot for a family break. The heated pool and terrace offer fantastic views over the Luberon. The guesthouse has three family suites and the friendly owner offers superb *table d'hôte* meals. Choose from a variety of exciting theme-based stays.

**GORDES: Le Mas des Romarins** €€  
 Historic Map C3  
 Route de Sénanque, 84220  
 Tel 04 90 72 12 13  
 www.masromarins.com  
 Charming 18th-century country house with traditional Provençal features such as stone fireplaces.

**LOURMARIN: Villa Saint Louis** €  
 Historic Map C3  
 35 rue Henri Savournin, 84160  
 Tel 04 90 68 39 18  
 www.villasaintlouis.com  
 Set in an 18th-century villa that once served as a coaching inn, this handsome B&B oozes faded charm.

**PERNES-LES-FONTAINES: Mas de la Bonoty** €  
 Historic Map B3  
 355 chemin de la Bonoty, 84210  
 Tel 04 90 61 61 09  
 www.bonoty.com  
 Renovated 17th-century farmhouse surrounded by fragrant lavender fields and olive groves.

**SEGURET: Domaine de Cabasse** €€  
 Classic Map B2  
 Route de Sablet, 84110  
 Tel 04 90 46 91 12  
 www.cabasse.fr  
 Comfortable rooms in a working vineyard with wine tastings for guests. Excellent restaurant.

**VAISON-LA-ROMAINE: Les Tilleuls d'Elisée** €  
 Historic Map B2  
 Chemin du Bon Ange, 1 av Jules Mazer, 84110  
 Tel 04 90 35 63 04  
 www.vaisonchambres.info  
 Centrally located charming B&B in a traditional farmhouse. Wine tastings are held in the cellars.

## Alpes-de-Haute-Provence

**CASTELLANE: Nouvel Hôtel du Commerce** €  
 Family Map D3  
 Pl Marcel Sauvaire, 04120  
 Tel 04 92 83 61 00  
 www.hotel-du-commerce-verdon.com  
 Excellent hotel with clean, pretty rooms and fine garden-restaurant. The owners are warm and friendly.



Outdoor swimming pool surrounded by trees at Domaine de Cabasse, Seguret

### DK Choice

**CHÂTEAU-ARNOUX: La Bonne Etape** €€  
 Classic Map D2  
 Chemin du Lac, 04160  
 Tel 04 92 64 00 09  
 www.bonneetape.com  
 This 18th-century post house, owned by master chef Jany Gleize, makes a serene retreat. Rooms are stunningly decorated with antiques and there is a charming heated pool in the olive groves. Explore the vast organic gardens that provide the produce served in the excellent restaurant and bistro.

**FORCALQUIER: Charembeau** €  
 Historic Map C3  
 Route de Niozelles, 04300  
 Tel 04 92 70 91 70  
 www.charembeau.com  
 Relax and de-stress in an 18th-century eco-friendly farmhouse amid rolling hills. Delicious breakfasts.

**MOUSTIERS-STE-MARIE: La Bastide de Moustiers Boutique** €€€  
 Map D3  
 Chemin de Quinson, 04360  
 Tel 04 92 70 47 47  
 www.bastide-moustiers.com  
 Rustically chic 17th-century inn with attractive gardens and splendid mountain views. Superb restaurant.

**REILLANNE: Auberge de Reillanne** €  
 Historic Map C3  
 D214 Le Pigonnier, 04110  
 Tel 04 92 76 45 95  
 www.auberge-de-reillanne.com  
 Surrounded by a beautiful garden, this serene country house offers spacious, well-furnished rooms, each with a terracotta-tiled bathroom. Large dining area.

# WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

One of the joys of this sunny region is the abundance of fresh, enticing food on offer. The coast of Provence is famous for its seafood restaurants – the best are in the coastal towns of Marseille and Nice, though generally they do not come cheap. For traditional Provençal fare, head inland to the villages of the Var and northern Vaucluse. In the valleys of Haute Provence, the cuisine is simpler, but

still delicious, often featuring local game and produce, and the much-loved truffle. Life in the south revolves around mealtimes and villages and towns come to a standstill during the midday meal and at dinner. Lunch is served from noon until 2pm with dinner from 7:30pm until about 10pm, while cafés and bars in towns tend to stay open later, especially in high season (see pp218–19).

## Types of Restaurant

The restaurants on pages 208–17 have been selected for their excellent food, decor and ambience. Within each area, entries are listed alphabetically within each price category, from the least to the most expensive. At the expensive end are the gastronomic palaces, where famous chefs showcase French *haute cuisine*. These are usually honoured with one or more Michelin stars. In some restaurants, chefs creatively combine fresh local ingredients. Provençal restaurants specialize in the region's traditional recipes. At classic restaurants you'll find French favourites such as steak and *moules-frites*, or *escargots* and *tournedos Rossini* at more upmarket places. Bistros and brasseries – pub-restaurants serving beer and alcoholic drinks are less formal, and often stay open throughout the day and night. You will also find many places serving foreign cuisine, especially Italian restaurants and pizzerias.

## How Much to Pay

Prices in Provence, notably along the fashionable Côte d'Azur, are

relatively high. Most restaurants offer fixed-price menus that are better value than à la carte. Lunch is always a good deal – you can enjoy a large repast with wine for around €15–20. Inland, you can dine well for under €40 a head, while on the coast, a good restaurant will generally charge more in the evening. In the deluxe dining rooms of the Côte d'Azur, expect to spend at least €90 a head, although the food will usually be outstanding.

Restaurants are obliged by law to post menu prices outside. These generally include service, but a tip is often expected for good service – up to five per cent of the bill. Tips are usually given in cash. The most widely accepted credit cards are Visa and MasterCard. American Express and Diners Club are also accepted in some restaurants.

## Making Reservations

No matter where you are dining, it is always advisable to book, especially for dinner. Most up-market restaurants only have one sitting and are often packed, particularly during high season.



Dining al fresco at Les Deux Garçons brasserie in Aix (see p219)

## Reading the Menu

Menus usually comprise three or four courses, with cheese eaten before dessert, while some country restaurants serve six-course extravaganzas, which can take several hours to eat. These days even fixed-price menus tend to offer several choices of *entrée* (starter), main course and dessert. Gastronomic restaurants may serve numerous small, immaculate courses, on a choice of *dégustation* (tasting) menus.

The *entrée* usually includes salads, pâté, Provençal soups and often shellfish. Main dishes are predominantly a choice of lamb, chicken or fish – game is widely available in season.

Coffee is always served after, not with, dessert – you should specify how you like your coffee.

## Choice of Wine

Wine is so much a part of everyday life in Provence that you will find a good range at even the smallest establishments (see pp206–7). The price may be off-putting as all restaurants put a large mark-up on wine (up to



L'Olivier, Île de Porquerolles (see p211)



Ferdinand Léger's tiled mural still graces the terrace at La Colombe d'Or, St-Paul de Vence (see pp210–11)

300 per cent). Most wine is locally produced and usually served in carafes. If in doubt, choosing the house wine (*la réserve* or *vin de la maison*) is a safe bet. Ordering a *demij* (50 cl) or *quart* (25 cl) is an inexpensive way of sampling the wine before ordering more. French law divides the country's wines into three classes, in ascending order of quality: the lowest level is Vin de France, the intermediate category is Indication géographique protégée (IGP) and the highest category is Appellation d'origine protégée (AOP).

### Vegetarian Food

Uniquely vegetarian restaurants are hard to find, as this concept largely has yet to filter down to the carnivorous south, although *bio* (organic) restaurants are increasingly springing up. Most establishments will offer salads, omelettes or soup, or dishes from the *entrée* menu. Pasta and pizza are popular vegetarian standbys.

### Children

Meals in Provence are very much a family affair and children are welcome in most places. However, special facilities like high chairs or baby seats are rarely provided. Many establishments have a children's menu and most will be happy to provide smaller dishes at reduced rates.

### Service

As eating is a leisurely pastime in France, service can be slow. In small restaurants do not expect rapid attention: there may be only one waiter and dishes are cooked to order.

### Wheelchair Access

Wheelchair access to many restaurants is restricted. In summer, this will be less of a problem at establishments with outside terraces. Even so, when booking ahead, ask for a conveniently situated table.

### Smoking

Smoking is banned in all public places in France, with restaurant and bar owners facing heavy fines if they do not adhere to

the rules. Outdoors, there may be a special section of the terrace set aside for smokers.

### Picnics

Picnicking is the best way to enjoy the wonderful fresh produce, bread, cheeses and *charcuterie* from Provence's enticing markets and shops. Picnic areas along major roads are well marked and furnished with tables and chairs; those along country lanes are better still.

### Recommended Restaurants

The restaurants recommended on pages 208–17 include some of the best in Provence. They have been chosen for their reliably good food and service, with the aim of presenting a wide range of cuisine and price ranges in the region's most visited cities, towns, villages and countryside. Many rural restaurants are attached to hotels but serve a predominantly non-residential clientele. These often offer good value for money and are mostly the focus of local social activity.

Among the listings are entries marked as "DK Choice". These are restaurants that have been selected for one or more exceptional features, whether it is the superb quality of the cuisine, the fine atmosphere, a beautiful setting or spectacular views.



Château Eza in the *village perché* of Eze (see p209)



## The Flavours of Provence

The cooking of Provence is known as *cuisine du soleil* ("the cuisine of the sun") with good reason. Famous for its abundance of glorious, sun-ripe fruit and vegetables, it is also healthy with plenty of fresh fish and seafood and fine-quality, lean meat from mountain pastures. Cheeses tend to be made with goats' milk. Good produce is enhanced by key ingredients: olive oil, garlic and aromatic herbs. Local markets are a colourful feast of seasonal produce: tomatoes, aubergines (eggplants), peppers and courgettes (zucchini), and freshly picked cherries, melons, lemons and figs. Most of all, though, Provence is the land of olives and of rich green olive oil.



Olives and olive oil



Scented, sun-ripened Cavailon melons in a Provençal market

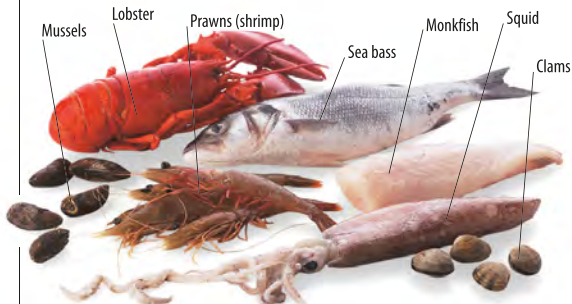
### Vegetables

In Provençal cooking, vegetables play a leading role. They may be served raw as crudités with *aioli* (garlic mayonnaise) or *tapenade* (puréed anchovies, olives and capers). Tomatoes and courgettes (zucchini) are often stuffed in the Niçois style, with minced meat, rice and herbs. Small violet artichokes come with a sauce of lemon and

butter, or sautéed with bacon. A favourite soup is the robust *soupe au pistou*, beans and vegetables laced with a sauce of basil, pine nuts and garlic. *Ratatouille* is a fragrant stew of vegetables cooked with olive oil, garlic and herbs. Popular salads include *salade niçoise* and *mesclun*, a regional mixture of leaves, including rocket, lamb's lettuce, dandelion leaves and chervil.

### Mediterranean Fish

The fish of the Mediterranean is highly prized, culminating in the famous *bouillabaisse*. A wide range of fish is caught, including rockfish, *rascasse* (scorpion fish), red mullet, sea bream, John Dory, monkfish and squid. Around Nice, the main catch is sardines and anchovies. Most are best enjoyed simply grilled with herbs, like the classic *loup* (sea



Selection of Mediterranean seafood available in Provence

### Provençal Dishes and Specialities



Fresh figs

Provence has produced several renowned dishes, of which *bouillabaisse* is the most famous. The ingredients of this fish stew vary from place to place, though Marseille claims the original recipe. A variety of local seafood (always including *rascasse*, or scorpion fish) is cooked in stock with tomatoes and saffron. The fish liquor is traditionally served first, with croûtons spread with *rouille*, a spicy mayonnaise, and the fish served afterwards. Once a fishermen's supper, it is now a luxury item you may need to order 24 hours in advance. A simpler version is *bourride*, a garlicky fish soup. Rich red wine stews, known as *daubes*, are another speciality, usually made with beef, but sometimes tuna or calamari. Other classics include *ratatouille* and *salade niçoise*.



**Bouillabaisse** Fish often found in this Provençal classic includes monkfish, snapper and conger eel.



Dried spices and herbs on sale at the market in Nice

bass) with fennel. Seafood includes mussels (*moules*), tiny crabs, giant prawns (*gambas*) and sea urchins (*oursins*). Look out for trout from the Alpine streams north of Nice and freshwater eels in the Camargue. Popular fish dishes include *soupe de poissons* (fish soup), octopus cooked Provençal style with white wine, tomatoes and herbs, and the famous *brandade de morue*, a speciality of Nîmes, a purée of salt cod, cream, potatoes and olive oil.

### Meat and Game

Lamb is one of the popular meats, especially that of Sisteron, where it is grazed on high mountain pastures, resulting in delicately herb-flavoured flesh. Beef is most often served as a *daube*, named after the pot-bellied

terracotta dish (*daubière*) in which it is gently cooked for hours. Another speciality is *boeuf gardien*, the bull's-meat stew of the Camargue, served with nutty local red rice. Game from the mountains and woods includes wild rabbit, hare and wild boar. Regional *charcuterie* features *caillettes* (cakes of chopped pork and



Display of the famous and delicious *saucissons d'Arles*

liver with spinach and juniper berries) and the *saucisson* of Arles, once made from donkey but now usually pork.

### Fruit and Honey

Elaborate desserts are rare, since there is so much sweet ripe fruit for the picking. Cavaillon melons are among the best in France, and the famous lemons of Menton are celebrated in an annual festival. Candied fruit has been produced in Apt since the Middle Ages. Local honeys are scented with chestnut, lavender or rosemary.

### ON THE MENU

**Beignets des fleurs de courgette** Courgette (zucchini) flower fritters.

**Fougasse** Flat olive oil bread often studded with olives.

**Ratatouille** Stew of aubergine (eggplant), tomatoes, courgettes (zucchini) and peppers.

**Salade Niçoise** Lettuce with hard-boiled egg, olives, green beans, tomatoes and anchovies.

**Socca** Chickpea (garbanzo) pancakes, a speciality of Nice.

**Tarte Tropicaine** St-Tropez's indulgent sponge cake stuffed with *crème patissière*.

**Tourte des blettes** Pie of chard, raisins and pine kernels.



### Artichauts à la barigoule

Small violet artichokes are stuffed with bacon and vegetables, cooked in wine.



**Loup au fenouil** A sea bass is stuffed with fennel twigs and baked with white wine or grilled over more twigs.



**Boeuf en daube** Beef is marinated in red wine, onions and garlic, then stewed with orange peel and tomato.

## What to Drink in Provence

The region covered by this book could not encompass a more varied and enticing range of wines. To the north, the stony, heat-baked soil of the southern Rhône nurtures intense, spicy red wines, the best of which is Châteauneuf-du-Pape. In the south, the Mediterranean coast produces a range of lighter, fresh and fruity whites and rosés, as well as some delicious red wines. Especially good are the dry white wines of seaside Cassis and reds or rosés from the tiny fine wine pocket of Bandol. In the past, some Provençal wines had a reputation for not “travelling” well, but the introduction of modern wine-making techniques and more suitable grape varieties are fast improving quality. Here, we suggest a selection of wines to look out for on local menus.



Two bottle styles distinctive of the region's wines

### White Wines

Grenache blanc grapes are often blended with other grape varieties to give a rich, bright flavour and crisp acidity to Provençal white wine. Those listed below are perfect with the region's delicious seafood.

#### Recommended Whites

Clos Ste-Magdeleine  
Cassis

Château Val Joannis  
Côtes du Luberon

Domaine St-André-de-Figuière  
Côtes de Provence

Domaines Gavoty  
Côtes de Provence



White Mas de Rey



A fine white  
Châteauneuf-du-Pape

### Wine Areas of Provence

Wine-producing areas are concentrated in the southwest of the region, where vineyards cluster on the rocky hillsides (côtes). Les Arcs is a good base for a Côtes de Provence wine tour (see pp112–13).

### Rosé Wines

Provençal rosé is no longer just a sweetish aperitif wine in a skittle-shaped bottle. Grape varieties like Syrah give a full flavour and more body. Tavel is a typical example – dry and weighty enough to accompany Provençal flavourings such as garlic and herbs. Bandol's *vin gris* is also highly regarded.

#### Recommended Rosés

Château Romassan  
Bandol

Commanderie de Bargemone  
Côtes de Provence

Commanderie de Peyrassol  
Côtes de Provence

Domaine Maby  
Tavel

Domaines Gavoty  
Côtes de Provence



Domaine Louu  
rosé (gris) wine



Terraced vineyards on the coast above Cassis



## Red Wines

At its best, Châteauneuf-du-Pape produces heady, intense wines to accompany the most robust meat dishes. Bandol also makes superb, long-lived red wines. For a lighter alternative, choose a Provençal or Côtes du Rhône red. Wines from one of the named Rhône villages should be of superior quality – or seek out reds from reliable producers in, for example, Les Baux-de-Provence, or the Côtes du Luberon.



A spicy Châteauneuf-du-Pape



A Château de Beaucastel red



Fine wine from Château Val Joanis

## Recommended Reds

- Château de Beaucastel
- Châteauneuf-du-Pape
- Château du Trignon
- Sablet, Côtes du Rhône
- Château Val Joanis
- Côtes du Luberon
- Château de Pibarnon
- Bandol
- Domaine des Alysses
- Coteaux Varois
- Domaine Font de Michelle
- Châteauneuf-du-Pape
- Domaine Tempier
- Bandol



The grape harvest for Côtes de Provence red wine



A light Muscat de Beaufort

### Key to Wine Areas

- Bandol & Côtes de Provence
- Bellet
- Cassis
- Costières de Nîmes
- Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence
- Coteaux de Piervert
- Coteaux Varois
- Côtes de Provence
- Côtes de Ventoux
- Côtes du Luberon
- Côtes du Rhône

## Fortified Wines

In *vins doux naturels* (naturally sweet wines) fermentation is stopped before all the sugar has turned to alcohol, and the wine is then lightly fortified with spirit. Delicious as a chilled apéritif, with desserts or instead of a liqueur, most are based on the exotically scented Muscat grape and range from cloyingly sweet to lusciously fragrant. Others are based on the red Grenache grape.



Typical Muscat bottle shape



The stony, sun-reflecting soil of the Rhône valley

## Where to Eat and Drink

### The Riviera and the Alpes Maritimes

#### ANTIBES: Aubergine € Provençal Map E3

7 rue Sade, 06600

Tel 04 93 34 55 93 Closed Tue  
Lots of aubergines (eggplants), as the name implies, but also many other excellent Provençal dishes. Good home-made desserts.

#### ANTIBES: Chez Helen € Bistro Map E3

35 rue des Revennes, 06600

Tel 04 92 93 88 52 Closed Sun  
Everything in this organic and vegetarian restaurant – a rare sight in Provence – is made from local produce. Inventive main dishes and *salades composées*.

#### ANTIBES: Le Nacional €€ Contemporary Map E3

61 Pl Nacional, 06600

Tel 04 93 61 77 30 Closed Sun,  
Mon lunch (Sep–Jun)  
Stylish place serving a wide choice of beef cuts such as Black Angus American and beef tartare cut. Impressive list of French wines.

#### ANTIBES: Le Vauban €€ Provençal Map E3

7 bis rue Thuret, 06600

Tel 04 93 34 33 05 Closed Tue  
Excellent good-value cooking in this simple-looking restaurant. Try the venison with cranberry sauce or Rossini-style beef fillet steak.

#### BAR-SUR-LOUP: L'École des Filles €€ Bistro Map E3

380 ave Amiral de Grasse, 06620

Tel 04 93 09 40 20 Closed Mon,  
Thu lunch & Sun dinner  
Located in a former village girls' school; offers inventive cooking with an emphasis on seafood.

#### BEAULIEU-SUR-MER: Le Petit Darkoum € Moroccan Map F3

18 blvd General Leclerc, 06310

Tel 04 93 01 48 59 Closed Mon & Tue  
Refined cuisine from Morocco's south with dishes such as kebabs, tagines and couscous royale served amidst a delightful decor.

#### BIOT: Les Terrailleurs €€€ Haute Cuisine Map E3

11 route chemin Neuf, 06410

Tel 04 93 65 01 59 Closed Wed & Thu; mid-Oct–Nov  
Enjoy culinary delights such as lobster bisque, truffles and *foie gras* with excellent Provençal wines at this sumptuous restaurant.

#### BREIL-SUR-ROYA: Le Flavie € Provençal Map F3

17 blvd Jean-Jaurès, 06540

Tel 04 93 54 65 74 Closed Thu; Fri lunch; Nov–mid-Dec  
Cosy and cheerful café that serves delectable stews, roasts and grills. as well as fresh salads and desserts.

#### CAGNES-SUR-MER: Fleur de Sel €€ Bistro Map E3

85 montée de la Bourgade, 06800

Tel 04 93 20 33 33 Closed Apr–Sep:  
Wed; Oct–Mar: Wed or Thu  
Lovely Haut-de-Cagnes is the lofty setting for this restaurant serving exceptionally refined cooking. Great value set menus.

#### CAGNES-SUR-MER: Château Le Cagnard €€€ Haute Cuisine Map E3

54 rue Sous Barri, 06800

Tel 04 93 20 73 21 Closed Mid-Mon–Apr: Mon & Tue; Oct–mid-Mar: Sun–Wed  
Boasts a scrumptious menu with roast pigeon, langoustines and more. The terrace offers splendid views of the Mediterranean Sea.

#### Price Guide

Prices are based on a three-course meal for one with half a bottle of house wine, and include tax and service charges.

€	up to €40
€€	€40 to €60
€€€	over €60

#### CANNES: L'Assiette Provençale € Provençal Map E4

9 quai Saint-Pierre, 06400

Tel 04 93 38 52 14 Closed Mon  
Popular restaurant in the port with a good-value menu that includes oyster platters and dishes such as courgette (zucchini) blossoms, duck and snails.

#### CANNES: Angolo Italiano €€ Italian Map E4

18 rue du Commandant Andre, 06400

Tel 04 93 39 82 57 Closed Mon  
Near the Croisette. Neapolitan-run place with Italian *charcuterie* and cheeses, a range of pasta dishes, grilled meats and seafood on the menu.

#### CANNES: Le Pastis €€ Bistro Map E4

28 rue du Commandant André, 06400

Tel 04 92 98 95 40 Closed Sun  
Good for both casual lunches and dinners. Pastas, salads, sandwiches and omelettes are served over a counter or in booths like an American diner.

#### CANNES: La Cave €€€ Provençal Map E4

9 blvd de la République, 06400

Tel 04 93 99 79 87 Closed Mon  
lunch, Sat lunch & Sun  
A favourite with both locals and visitors for its upmarket versions of Provençal dishes such as *aïoli aux légumes*, stuffed vegetables and sardines. Excellent wine list.

#### CANNES: La Palme d'Or €€€ Haute Cuisine Map E4

73 la Croisette, 06400

Tel 04 92 98 74 14 Closed Sun–Tue;  
Jan & Feb  
Exquisitely fashionable restaurant of the famous Hôtel Martinez. A favourite with celebrities. Boasts two Michelin stars. Superb food and an exquisite wine list.

#### CANNES: Plage L'Ondine €€€ Seafood Map E4

64 la Croisette, 06400

Tel 04 93 94 23 15 Closed Wed (off season); mid-Nov–mid-Dec  
Right on the beach, Plage L'Ondine offers the perfect setting to enjoy specialities such as grilled fish and lobster at outdoor tables. Excellent wine list.



Tables on the charming terrace of Les Terrailleurs, Biot



Fine cured meats displayed in the *salumeria* at La Trattoria, Monaco

**COURMES: Auberge de Courmes** €  
**Provençal** Map E3  
*3 rue des Platanes, 06620*  
**Tel** 04 93 77 64 70 **Closed** Mon  
 This gracious village inn overlooking the Gorges du Loup offers succulent meat dishes and home-made *clafoutis* for dessert.

**EZE: La Gascogne Café** €  
**Bistro** Map F3  
*151 ave de Verdun, 06360*  
**Tel** 04 93 41 18 50  
 Friendly restaurant in the Hôtel du Golf offering innovative dishes with an Italian-Provençal twist.

**EZE: Château Eza** €€€  
**Haute Cuisine** Map F3  
*Rue de la Pise, 06360*  
**Tel** 04 93 41 12 24 **Closed** Mon & Tue (Jan-Mar)  
 Delicate and imaginative dishes, garnished with flowers, are served in this Michelin-starred restaurant with splendid Riviera views.

**GRASSE: La Bastide St Antoine** €€€  
**Haute Cuisine** Map E3  
*48 ave Henri-Dunant, 06130*  
**Tel** 04 93 70 94 94  
 Enjoy a feast of unique colours and aromas worthy of the perfume capital in an attractive, flower-filled courtyard.

**JUAN-LES-PINS: Ti Toques** €  
**Bistro** Map E4  
*9 ave Louis Gallet, 06160*  
**Tel** 04 92 90 25 12 **Closed** Sun & Mon  
 Hidden on a back street, Ti Toques serves delicious meat dishes with plenty of options for vegetarians. Great range of Belgian beers.

**LA TURBIE: Café de la Fontaine** €  
**Brasserie** Map F3  
*4 ave Général de Gaulle, 06320*  
**Tel** 04 93 28 52 79  
 The bistro at the Hostellerie Jérôme offers the exceptional cooking of chef Bruno Cirino for bargain prices. The menu features traditional Provençal dishes.

**LA TURBIE: Hostellerie Jérôme** €€€  
**Haute Cuisine** Map F3  
*20 rue Comte de Cessole, 06320*  
**Tel** 04 92 41 51 51 **Closed** Mon & Tue (Sep-Jun); Dec-Mar  
 Renowned chef Bruno Cirino presides over this Michelin-starred establishment. The daily menu depends on what is available in the local markets.

**MANDELIEU-LA-NAPOULE: Côté Place** €  
**Provençal** Map E4  
*21 pl de la Fontaine, 06210*  
**Tel** 04 93 47 59 27 **Closed** Sun  
 Unpretentious and popular, Côté Place serves dishes from around the Mediterranean: Moroccan tagines, Spanish seafood and Italian *saltimbocca*. All satisfying and fabulously done.

**MANDELIEU-LA-NAPOULE: La Brocherie** €€  
**Seafood** Map E4  
*11 ave Henri Clews, 06210*  
**Tel** 04 93 49 80 73  
 A memorable menu with five seafood starters and all the fish you need: oysters, shellfish platters and mixed grills. Situated right on the quay.

**MENTON: Coté Sud** €  
**Italian** Map F3  
*15 quai Bonaparte, 06500*  
**Tel** 04 93 84 03 69  
 Elegant restaurant with a stylish white decor and exquisitely presented dishes. Serves delicious pizzas, seafood and pasta dishes. Warm, friendly welcome.

**MENTON: Le Martina** €€  
**Italian** Map F3  
*11 pl du Cap, 06500*  
**Tel** 04 93 57 80 22 **Closed** Wed; Jan  
 Le Martina offers a wide choice of antipasti, risotto and pasta dishes, as well as excellent seafood. Good children's menu.

## DK Choice

**MENTON: Le Mirazur** €€€  
**Haute Cuisine** Map F3  
*30 ave Aristide Briand, 06500*  
**Tel** 04 92 41 86 86 **Closed** Mon & Tue; mid-Dec-mid-Feb  
 A visual and culinary delight, Le Mirazur offers some of the most aesthetically flamboyant dishes ever seen. Chef Mauro prepares colourful combinations of meat and seafood made with herbs and vegetables freshly picked from the restaurant's garden. Savour the meals with superb wine and magnificent views of Menton and the sea.

**MONACO: Maya Bay** €€  
**Asian** Map F3  
*24 ave Princesse Grace, 98000*  
**Tel** 00 377 97 70 74 67 **Closed** Sun & Mon  
 Thai cooking with a French touch at this stylish eatery. Plenty of *nems* and dumplings. A separate Japanese restaurant serves *teppan-yaki* and sushi.

**MONACO: Le Louis XV** €€€  
**Haute Cuisine** Map F3  
*Hôtel de Paris, pl du Casino, Monte-Carlo, 98000*  
**Tel** 00 377 98 06 88 64 **Closed** lunch; Tue & Wed; Dec, mid-Feb-Mar  
 Capital of Alain Ducasse's culinary empire for more than 25 years, this splendid restaurant in the Hôtel de Paris serves haute cuisine.

**MONACO: La Trattoria** €€€  
**Italian** Map F3  
*Sporting Monte Carlo, ave Princesse Grace, Monte-Carlo, 98000*  
**Tel** 00 377 98 06 71 71 **Closed** Oct-mid-May  
 Choose from a selection of Italian favourites, including elaborate antipasti, mini pizzas and prosciutto. Spectacular sea views.

**MOUGINS: Resto des Arts** €  
**Provençal** Map E3  
*Rue du Maréchal-Foch, 06250*  
**Tel** 04 93 75 60 03 **Closed** Sun & Mon (off season)  
 Trendy and artistic place that serves simple, good cooking. Best for grilled meats and stews.

**MOUGINS: La Place de Mougins** €€€  
**Haute Cuisine** Map E3  
*Pl du Commandant Lamy, 06250*  
**Tel** 04 93 90 15 78 **Closed** Mon & Tue  
 Stylish restaurant on the village square offering ultra-refined cuisine with unusual combinations of ingredients. Good-value lunch menus.



Splendid dining room at Le Louis XV in the Hôtel de Paris, Monaco



**NICE: L'Acchiardo** €  
Provençal Map F3  
38 rue Droite, 06300  
Tel 04 93 85 51 16 Closed Sat & Sun; Aug  
Set in the heart of Nice's Old Town. Delicious food in a great atmosphere and Provençal wine directly from the barrel.

**NICE: Les Amoureux** €  
Italian Map F3  
46 blvd Stalingrad, 06300  
Tel 04 93 07 59 73 Closed Sun & Mon  
This pizzeria boasts the best Neapolitan pizza on the Riviera, with the perfect crust. The menu also offers other Italian specialities. Reservations recommended.

**NICE: Chez Palmyre** €  
Provençal Map F3  
5 rue Droite, 06300  
Tel 04 93 85 72 32 Closed Sun  
An institution since the 1920s. There are only six tables in a tiny retro dining room that serves real Niçois home cooking. Always packed so be sure to book ahead.

**NICE: Au Moulin Enchanté** €€  
Bistro Map F3  
1 rue Barbéris, 06300  
Tel 04 93 55 33 14 Closed Sun & Mon  
A local haunt outside the tourist zone. Delicious fare with a wide choice of meat and fish mains. Good value lunch menu.

**NICE: Le Bistrot d'Antoine** €€  
Bistro Map F3  
27 rue de la Préfecture, 06300  
Tel 04 93 85 29 57 Closed Sun & Mon  
An ancient favourite in the Vieille Ville, revived by a young couple. Perfect traditional cooking; impeccable service. Reservations recommended.

**NICE: La Merenda** €€  
Provençal Map F3  
4 rue Raoul Bosio, 06300  
Tel 04 93 85 51 16 Closed Sat & Sun  
Michelin star chef Dominique Le Stanc prepares authentic regional classics. The place doesn't have any telephone. Friendly service.

**NICE: Le Chantecler** €€€  
Haute Cuisine Map F3  
37 promenade des Anglais, 06000  
Tel 04 93 16 64 00 Closed Sun & Mon; Jan  
Located in the Hotel Négresco. Opulent 19th-century dining room; offers a menu lavishly punctuated with truffles and caviar. Famous wine cellar.

**NICE: Flaveur** €€€  
Classic French Map F3  
25 rue Gubernatis, 06000  
Tel 04 93 62 53 95 Closed Sat lunch, Sun & Mon  
Run by a dynamic trio, this bistro-style restaurant offers classic dishes marked by a distinct yet judicious touch of exotic spices and herbs.

**PEILLON: L'Authentique** €€€  
Provençal Map F3  
2 pl Auguste Arnulf, 06440  
Tel 04 93 79 91 17 Closed Wed  
Elegant Niçois cooking served on a shaded terrace with fine views. Locally sourced ingredients and many vegetarian options.

**ROQUEBRUNE-CAP-MARTIN: Au Grand Inquisiteur** €€  
Classic French Map F3  
15 & 18 rue du Château, 06190  
Tel 04 93 35 05 37 Closed Mon  
An intimate, family-run place at the heart of the village. The menu features traditional dishes made with quail, *escargots* and venison.

**ST-JEAN-CAP-FERRAT: Le Pirate** €€  
Seafood Map F3  
Nouveau Port, 06230  
Tel 04 93 76 12 97 Closed Nov-Mar dinner  
Perfect setting on the picturesque port and an appetizing menu. Choose from a variety of grilled fish and seafood risottos.

**ST-MARTIN-VESUBIE: L'Ô à la Bouche** €  
Classic French Map F2  
Le Boréon, 06450  
Tel 04 93 02 98 42 Closed mid-Nov-mid-Dec  
Quality cooking in the mountains with a chance to catch your own trout. Also a brasserie offering burgers, fondues and raclette.

**ST-PAUL DE VENICE: La Colombe d'Or** €€  
Provençal Map F3  
Pl du Général de Gaulle, 06570  
Tel 04 93 32 80 02 Closed Nov-Dec  
Legendary artists' retreat packed with original pieces of art. Simple but excellent Provençal cooking that still attracts the rich and famous. Superb wine list.

**STE-AGNÈS: Le Righi** €  
Provençal Map F3  
1 pl du Fort, 06500  
Tel 04 92 10 90 88 Closed Wed  
Enjoy good solid home cooking and amazing views at Le Righi. Try the ravioli, gnocchi, stewed boar and lamb cooked in hay.

**SOSPEL: La Cabraia** €  
Provençal Map F3  
1 pl de la Cabraia, 06380  
Tel 04 93 04 00 54 Closed Thu  
Located in the town centre, this cheery restaurant serves fresh fish,



Luxurious Regency-style decor at Le Chantecler in Le Négresco, Nice



Fresh vegetables from the chef's garden at Hostellerie Bérard, La Cadière d'Azur

home-made gnocchi and pasta dishes and gourmet desserts. Sit on the terrace to enjoy the sun.

**THÉOULE-SUR-MER: Jilali B** €€  
Seafood Map E4

16 rue Trayas, 06590

Tel 04 93 75 19 03 Closed Mon–Wed lunch; mid-Nov–Jan

Innovative seafood dishes with a touch of the exotic – spices, saffron and coconut. Splurge on the excellent *bouillabaisse*. Terrace with splendid sea views.

**TOUET-SUR-VAR: Chez Paul** €  
Classic French Map E3

4260 ave Général de Gaulle, 06710

Tel 04 93 05 71 03 Closed Wed; Sun–Tue dinner

A simple village inn offering tasty home-made fare: steaks, rabbit and game dishes. Pizzas and a good kids' menu too.

**VALBONNE: Lou Cigalon** €€€  
Haute Cuisine Map E3

6 blvd Carnot, 06560

Tel 04 93 12 01 61 Closed Sun, Mon & Thu

An elegant emerging restaurant, north of Cannes, with a hearty menu based around game dishes, duck and wild mushrooms.

**VENCE: La Litote** €€  
Bistro Map E3

5 rue de l'Évêché, 06140

Tel 04 93 24 27 82 Closed Mon

Relaxing and full of charm with tables under shaded lime trees, La Litote offers the perfect setting to enjoy inventive cooking from a rising young chef.

**VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-MER: La Mère Germaine** €€  
Seafood Map F3

9 quai Courbet, 06230

Tel 04 93 01 71 39 Closed mid-Nov–Christmas

A favourite on the port since 1938. The cuisine at La Mère Germaine revolves around dishes made from fish and shellfish. They take their *bouillabaisse* seriously.

**VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-MER: L'Oursin Bleu** €€  
Seafood Map F3

11 quai de l'amiral Courbet, 06230

Tel 04 93 01 90 12 Closed Jan

Combines traditional seafood recipes with new interpretations to create stylish dishes, rich in colour. There's a big aquarium in the foyer to enjoy while waiting.

## The Var and the Iles d'Hyères

**COGOLIN: Grain de Sel** €  
Bistro Map E4

6 rue du 11 Novembre, 83310

Tel 04 94 54 46 86 Closed Sun & Mon; late Nov–early Dec

Bright and cheerful bistro with an open kitchen. Deceptively simple Provençal dishes are packed with flavour. Outside tables in summer.

**COLLOBRIÈRES: La Petite Fontaine** €  
Provençal Map D4

1 pl de la République, 83610

Tel 04 94 48 00 12 Closed Mon; Feb, two weeks in Sep

Provençal home cooking with large portions and wonderful flavours. Try the *tarte à la provençale*. Superb wines.

## DK Choice

**FAYENCE: L'Escourtin** €€  
Provençal Map E3

159 Chemin de Notre Dame des

Cyprés, 83440

Tel 04 94 76 00 84

Closed Wed, Thu lunch

Set in an idyllic location within an ancient olive mill, L'Escourtin is part of the Hôtel Moulin de la Camandoule. The interiors are furnished with antiques and flowers. Authentic cuisine with game dishes, *foie gras* and fish in subtle sauces flavoured with fresh herbs and produce from the delightful garden.

**FAYENCE: Le Castellaras** €€€

Provençal Map E3

461 chemin de Peymeyan, 83440

Tel 04 94 76 13 80 Closed Mon & Tue; Jan–mid-Feb

A beautiful farmhouse where the chef combines lamb, veal and crayfish with local produce to create wonderful dishes. A flowery terrace with spectacular views. Côtes de Provence wines.

**FRÉJUS: Faubourg de Saigon** €  
Vietnamese Map E4

126 rue St-François de Paule, 83600

Tel 04 94 53 65 80 Closed Sun & Mon

Enjoy hearty portions of authentic, spicy Vietnamese dishes at this small, unassuming restaurant. Try spring rolls, the house speciality.

**HYÈRES: Grand Baie** €  
Seafood Map D4

5 pl du Belvédère, Giens, 83400

Tel 04 94 58 28 16

A terrace with a wonderful view over the bay and simple, first-rate seafood. There is also a good choice of grilled meats.

**HYÈRES: Ola Le Rêve** €  
Seafood Map D4

4 port la Gavine, 83400

Tel 04 94 38 59 34 Closed Mon & Tue

Located on the marina, this friendly place specializes in seafood cooked on the spot, such as squid or king prawns *à la plancha*.

**ÎLE DE PORQUEROLLES: L'Olivier** €€€  
Seafood Map D5

Île de Porquerolles Ouest, 83400

Tel 04 94 58 34 83 Closed Mon (except Jul & Aug); Oct–Apr

Located in the Hotel Le Mas du Langoustier, an island retreat, L'Olivier offers a unique culinary experience. The menu features mostly seafood, including lobster, langoustines and shellfish.

**LA CADIÈRE D'AZUR: Hostellerie Bérard** €€€  
Classic French Map C4

6 rue Gabriel-Péri, 83740

Tel 04 94 90 11 43 Closed Mon & Tue

Michelin-starred restaurant using produce from the chef's garden. French *haute cuisine*, cooked with sincerity. Also an informal bistro with an excellent seasonal menu.

**LE LAVANDOU: La Farigoulette** €€  
Seafood Map D4

1 ave du Capitaine Thorel, La

Fossette 83980

Tel 04 94 71 06 85

La Farigoulette offers inventive and colourful dishes. Especially good for seafood: *bouillabaisse*, grilled fish and lobster pasta.



Stylish dining terrace overlooking the Mediterranean at La Vague d'Or, St-Tropez

**ST-RAPHAËL: L'Étoile** €  
Provençal Map E4  
2170 route de la Corniche, 83700  
Tel 04 94 83 10 44 Closed Wed;  
mid-Nov–mid-Feb  
Welcoming, laid-back place with the perfect setting on the little Port de Boulouris. Good risottos and Provençal seafood.

**ST-RAPHAËL: Le Bouchon** €€  
Provençal Map E4  
Contemporary  
45 rue de la République, 83700  
Tel 04 94 53 89 18 Closed Sun & Mon  
Charming restaurant with tables under plane trees. A good place for *aubli façon pastorel* (an assortment of seafood and vegetables with garlic mayonnaise).

**ST-TROPEZ: Le Bistrot** €€  
St-Tropez Map E4  
Bistro  
3 pl des Lices, 83990  
Tel 04 94 97 11 33  
Trendy brasserie with low lighting and elegant interiors. The eclectic menu has something for everyone – grilled fish, steak tartare, sushi and spring rolls.

**ST-TROPEZ: Le Sporting** €€  
Bistro Map E4  
42 pl des Lices, 83990  
Tel 04 94 97 00 65  
Escape the excess of St-Tropez without leaving town in this local's refuge that serves good main dishes, as well as burgers, salads and omelettes.

**ST-TROPEZ: Au Caprice** €€€  
des Deux Map E4  
Provençal  
40 rue du Portail Neuf, 83990  
Tel 04 94 97 76 78 Closed Tue  
(except Jul & Aug); Sun–Wed winter;  
Nov–mid-Feb  
Cheerful ambience with candles and mirrors in an old Provençal house. Refined cuisine with dishes such as *foie gras terrine* with onion jam. Do not miss the *piña colada sorbet*.

**ST-TROPEZ: La Vague d'Or** €€€  
Haute Cuisine Map E4  
Plage de la Bouillabaisse, 83990  
Tel 04 94 55 91 00 Closed early  
Oct–late April  
Luxurious Michelin-starred restaurant in Hotel Résidence de la Pinède. Chef Arnaud Donckele creates elegant dishes using exotic ingredients such as Barolo vinegar and chestnut honey.

**TOULON: Le Chantilly** €  
Brasserie Map D4  
15 pl Pierre Puget, 83000  
Tel 04 94 09 32 92 Closed Sun  
Running since 1907, this retro-style bistro opens its doors early and offers classic dishes as well as more cutting-edge options with organic salmon and chicken. Good vegetarian menu, too.

**TOULON: La Lampa** €  
Brasserie Map D4  
117 quai de la Sinse, 83000  
Tel 04 94 03 06 09  
Set on the quay with outside tables offering fine views. Good for a light lunch of salads and *moules-frites*, as well as something more ambitious such as grilled fish and meat dishes.

## Bouches-du-Rhône and Nîmes

**AIGUES-MORTES: Le Bistrot Paiou** €  
Bistro Map A4  
1 rue du 4 Septembre, 30220  
Tel 04 66 71 44 95  
The chef's specials at this small bistro change daily, depending on fresh produce from the market. The modest but well-chosen wine list features local winemakers.



Tranquil park setting at Le Mas d'Entremont, Aix-en-Provence

**AIGUES-MORTES: Le Dit-Vin** €  
Bistro Map A4  
6 rue du 4 Septembre, 30220  
Tel 04 66 53 52 76  
Chic restaurant and tapas bar, and a wine cellar visible through the floor. Don't miss the delicious *bouillabaisse*. Pretty garden setting and attentive staff.

**AIX-EN-PROVENCE: Brasserie Leopold** €  
Brasserie Map C4  
2 ave Victor-Hugo, 13100  
Tel 04 42 26 01 24  
This Art Deco classic is great for a full-scale meal, snack or just a drink. The menu features regional cuisine and traditional brasserie fare including *sauerkraut*.

**AIX-EN-PROVENCE: Le Formal** €€  
Gastronomic Map C4  
32 rue Espriat, 13100  
Tel 04 42 27 08 31 Closed Sun & Mon; late Aug–early Sep  
Refined culinary works of art, with plenty of truffles, served in a contemporary designed vaulted cellar. Good value lunch menus.

**AIX-EN-PROVENCE: Le Mas d'Entremont** €€  
Provençal Map C4  
315 route d'Avignon, 13090  
Tel 04 42 17 42 42 Closed Nov–mid-Mar  
Enjoy fine dishes such as roasted wild prawns with citrus fruits and fillet of Montbéliard beef at this hotel-restaurant in the middle of a park. Excellent Provençal wines.

**AIX-EN-PROVENCE: L'Esprit de la Violette** €€€  
Contemporary Map C4  
10 ave de la Violette, 13100  
Tel 04 42 23 02 50 Closed Sun & Mon  
Chef Marc de Passorio creates interesting flavour combinations with local produce. Set in a mansion-style house with lovely gardens outside of town.

**ARLES: La Grignotte** €  
Provençal Map B3  
6 rue Favorin, 13200  
Tel 04 90 93 10 43 Closed Sun  
Cheerful and unpretentious place. Try the fish soup and bull stew with Camargue rice and a carafe of house wine.

**ARLES: La Gueule du Loup** €€  
Provençal Map B3  
39 rue des Arènes, 13200  
Tel 04 90 96 96 69 Closed Sun, Mon  
lunch; mid-Jan–mid-Feb  
Charming restaurant with a handful of tables in a former family home. Serves exquisite Provençal fare. Superb desserts.



**ARLES: L'Atelier de Jean-Luc Rabanel** €€€  
Gastronomic Map B3  
7 rue des Carmes, 13200  
Tel 04 90 91 07 69 **Closed Mon & Tue**  
Michelin star chef Jean-Luc Rabanel creates exquisite artistic masterpieces based on organic produce from his garden. Book well in advance.

**ARLES: La Chassagnette** €€€  
Organic Map B3  
Le Sambuc, 13200  
Tel 04 90 97 26 96 **Closed Tue, Wed; Feb, Nov & Christmas week**  
Chef Armand Arnal runs France's most famous organic restaurant surrounded by lush gardens near the Camargue. There is a special vegetarian menu as well.

**ARLES: Chez Bob Provençal** €€€  
Map B3  
Route du Sambuc, Villeneuve Gageron 13200  
Tel 04 90 97 00 29 **Closed Mon & Tue**  
Relish regional specialities while sitting in the eclectically decorated dining room or the pleasant terrace. Reserve at least a week in advance.

**ARLES: Lou Marques** €€€  
Gastronomic Map B3  
9 Blvd Lices, 13200  
Tel 04 90 52 52 52  
Elegant restaurant located in the characterful Hôtel Jules César, with a garden terrace and classic Provençal dishes. Excellent value lunch menus.

**CASSIS: Le Grand Bleu** €€  
Seafood Map C4  
12 quai les Baux, 13260  
Tel 04 42 01 23 23 **Closed Wed**  
Informal portside restaurant specializing in simply prepared fresh seafood at affordable prices. The service is warm and friendly.

**CASSIS: La Villa Madie** €€€  
Gastronomic Map C4  
Ave Revestel, Anse de Corton, 13260  
Tel 04 96 18 00 00 **Closed Mon & Tue; Jan–mid-Feb**  
Enjoy idyllic views over the Mediterranean along with spectacular seafood at this Michelin-starred restaurant. Alternatively, try its less expensive La Petite Cuisine bistro.

**LES BAUX-DE-PROVENCE: Le Café des Baux** €€  
Provençal Map B3  
Rue du Trenca, 13520  
Tel 04 90 54 52 69 **Closed Nov–Mar**  
Hip restaurant run by award-winning pastry chef Pierre Walter. The savoury dishes are a culinary delight as well.



A view of the excellent wine cellar at Le Julien, Marseille

**LES BAUX-DE-PROVENCE: L'Oustau de Baumanière** €€€  
Gastronomic Map B3  
Chemin Départementale 27, Le Val d'Enfer, 13520  
Tel 04 90 54 33 07 **Closed Jan–Mar**  
Popular with celebrities, this superb restaurant in a gorgeous setting boasts two Michelin stars and a private heliport. Inventive cuisine using exquisite ingredients.

**MARSEILLE: Beach Café** €  
Classic French Map C4  
214 quai du Port, 13002  
Tel 04 91 91 55 40 **Closed Mon; two weeks at Christmas**  
Informal outdoor terrace and a menu comprising tasty salads, meats, fish, snacks and lots of ice cream choices. Perfect for kids.

**MARSEILLE: Le Boucher** €  
Steakhouse Map C4  
10 rue de Village, 13006  
Tel 04 91 48 79 65 **Closed Sun & Mon; Aug, Easter**  
Secret restaurant for meat lovers hidden behind the façade of a butcher shop. Traditional recipes and succulent *entrecôtes* for two. Delicious home-made fries.

**MARSEILLE: Toinou** €  
Seafood Map C4  
3 cours Saint-Louis, 13001  
Tel 04 91 33 14 94  
The place for seafood platters; features the freshest of oysters, mussels and prawns served with crusty bread and white wine.

**MARSEILLE: Le Julien** €€  
Classic French Map C4  
114 rue Paradis, 13006  
Tel 04 91 37 06 22 **Closed Sat lunch, Sun, Mon dinner**  
Friendly place specializing in French classics such as veal sweetbreads with morels and *baba au rhum*. Wide-ranging menu; great desserts.

**MARSEILLE: La Table du Fort** €€  
Bistro Map C4  
8 rue Fort Notre Dame, 13007  
Tel 04 91 33 97 65 **Closed Sat lunch, Sun–Mon lunch; Jul**  
Charming restaurant run by a young couple. Serves beautifully prepared seafood, poultry and meat dishes, plus scrumptious desserts. Reservations essential.

**MARSEILLE: Vinonéo** €€  
Classic French Map C4  
6 pl Daviel, 13002  
Tel 04 91 90 40 26 **Closed Sun;**  
*Mon–Wed dinner*  
Cool, contemporary cuisine by a winemaker. Features hot dishes, cold meats and cheese platters. Great wine pairings by the glass.

## DK Choice

**MARSEILLE: L'Epuisette** €€€  
Seafood Map C4  
158 rue du Vallon des Auffes, 13007  
Tel 04 91 52 17 82 **Closed Sun & Mon; one week in Mar**  
A glass dining room overlooking the turquoise sea is L'Epuisette's unbeatable setting. This elegant restaurant has been in business for decades and from the calm and relaxing atmosphere to the charming staff, everything is perfect. The cuisine includes heavenly *bouillabaisse*, lobster tagine and other seafood delicacies. Extensive wine list and gorgeous desserts.

**MARSEILLE: Le Petit Nice – Passédat** €€€  
Seafood Map C4  
Anse de Maldormé, Corniche du Président J F Kennedy, 13007  
Tel 04 91 59 25 92 **Closed Sun & Mon**  
This hotel-restaurant boasts three Michelin stars. Relish chef Gerard Passédat's sublime *bouillabaisse*, seafood and wonderful desserts.

**MARTIGUES: Le Cabanon**

de Maguy €  
Provençal Map B4

2 quai des Anglais, 13500

Tel 04 42 49 32 51 Closed Sun & Mon; three weeks in Jan

Feast on delicious duck breast in honey and rosemary, aubergine caviar and fish soup in a relaxed atmosphere. Delightful terrace.

**MAUSSANE-LES-ALPILLES:****La Fleur de Thym**

Provençal Map B3

15 ave de la Vallée des Baux, 13520

Tel 04 90 54 54 00 Closed Sat lunch, Sun dinner (Sep–Jun), Mon; Dec

One of the best bargains around Les Baux. Limited but excellent menu. Charming atmosphere and friendly service.

**MAUSSANE-LES-ALPILLES:****Le Clos St-Roch**

Mediterranean €€  
Map B3

87 ave de la Vallée des Baux, 13520

Tel 04 90 98 77 15 Closed Wed & Thu

Head for the patio in the walled courtyard in the summer or for the indoor fireplace in the winter, and enjoy the modern Mediterranean-inspired cuisine.

**NÎMES: Au Flan Coco**

Classic French €  
Map A3

21 rue du Grand Couvent, 30900

Tel 04 66 21 84 81 Closed Sun & Mon

Set in a medieval convent; offers huge salads, classic mains and tasty *pat' à coco* (potato pie). The takeaway menu is ideal for picnics.

**NÎMES: Au Plaisirs des Halles**

Provençal €  
Map A3

4 rue Littré, 30000

Tel 04 66 36 01 02 Closed Sun & Mon

Sleek, contemporary ambience to match the cuisine. Try the shrimp and scallop tempura or the local speciality, *brandade*. Exceptional regional wine list.

**NÎMES: Le Vintage**

Bistro €  
Map A3

7 rue de Bernis, 30000

Tel 04 66 21 04 45 Closed Sun, Mon

(except Jul & Aug)

Cosy restaurant and wine bar with a menu that features *foie gras*, duck and steaks. Shaded outdoor tables.

**NÎMES: Alexandre**

Gastronomic €€€  
Map A3

2 rue Xavier Tronc, Garons, 30128

Tel 04 66 70 08 99 Closed Sep–Jun:

Sun dinner, Mon & Tue; Jul–Aug: Sun

& Mon; mid-Feb–mid-Mar; 2 weeks in summer.

An unforgettable dining experience in a lovely garden setting. Sublime food and enchanting desserts from the Michelin-star chef Michel Kayser.



Shaded outdoor terrace overlooking the garden at Alexandre, Nîmes

**NÎMES: Vincent Croizard**

Gastronomic €€€  
Map A3

17 rue des Chassaintes, 30900

Tel 04 66 67 04 99 Closed Sun

dinner–Tue lunch; Sun & Mon (Jul–Sep)

Ring a doorbell to enter this chic restaurant hidden on a narrow street. Chef Vincent Croizard prepares an exquisite parade of little dishes.

**ST-RÉMY-DE-PROVENCE:****La Cantina**

Italian €  
Map B3

18 blvd Victor Hugo, 13210

Tel 04 90 90 90 60 Closed Mon & Tue;

mid-Feb–mid-Mar, mid-Nov–early Dec

Informal and relaxed trattoria specializing in thin crust pizzas and pasta dishes. Good selection of Italian wines. Perfect for kids.

**ST-RÉMY-DE-PROVENCE:****La Medina**

Moroccan €  
Map B3

34 blvd Mirabeau, 13210

Tel 04 32 62 86 74 Closed Wed

A nice change of pace, this quiet restaurant offers excellent tagines, couscous and a variety of French dishes. Pleasant summer terrace and garden.

and garden.

**ST-RÉMY-DE-PROVENCE:****Comptoir 36**

Bistro €€  
Map B3

36 ave Marechal Juin, 13210

Tel 04 90 94 41 12 Closed Sun;

three weeks in Jan

Young chefs Lisa and Rudy

prepare delectable food from

fresh, locally sourced produce at

this modern bistro and wine bar.

Regular live music.

**SAINTE-MARIES-DE-LA-MER:****El Campo**

Spanish €  
Map A4

13 rue Victor Hugo, 13460

Tel 04 90 97 84 11 Closed Wed,

except in Jul and Aug

Lively restaurant with a great

service. *Paella* is a speciality, but

there are plenty of other options.

Live Flamenco and Gipsy Kings-

style guitar music in the evenings.

**SAINTE-MARIES-DE-LA-MER:****L'Estelle en Camargue**

Gastronomic €€€  
Map A4

D38 route du Petit-Rhône, 13460

Tel 04 90 97 89 01 Closed Mon

(except Jul & Aug); mid-Nov–Mar

Sit in a Mediterranean garden and

enjoy a feast of seasonal delicacies.

The menu also includes a variety

of seafood and creamy desserts.

**SALON-DE-PROVENCE:****La Salle à Manger**

Provençal €€  
Map B3

6 rue du Marechal-Joffre, 13300

Tel 04 90 56 28 01 Closed Sun & Mon

Rococo dining room with a patio

for summer months. Famous for

delectable desserts, with over

40 varieties to choose from.

**VERS-PONT-DU-GARD:****La Petite Gare**

Classic French €€  
Map A3

435 route d'Uzès, 30210

Tel 04 66 03 40 67 Closed Sun & Mon

Contemporary and creative

versions of tasty classics served



The graceful façade of La Petite Gare, Vers-Pont-du-Gard



The elegant Edouard Loubet restaurant in the Bastide de Capelongue hotel, Bonniex

in an old train station or outside under century-old plane trees. Good value lunch menus.

#### VERS-PONT-DU-GARD:

**Les Terrasses** €€  
Provençal Map A3

La Begude, 400 route du Pont-du-Gard, 30210

Tel 04 66 63 91 37 Closed Nov–Easter

Enjoy delicious, locally sourced food against the backdrop of the aqueduct – a spectacle by night when the bridge is illuminated.

#### VILLENEUVE-LÈS-AVIGNON: La

**Guinguette du Vieux Moulin** €€  
Seafood Map B3

5 rue du Vieux Moulin, 30400

Tel 04 90 94 50 72 Closed Sun–Wed dinner; Oct–Mar

Lively and atmospheric riverside restaurant specializing in grilled sardines and other fish dishes. Hosts frequent events and music. Also has a summer pontoon.

#### VILLENEUVE-LÈS-AVIGNON:

**Le Prieuré** €€€  
Gastronomic Map B3

7 pl du Chapitre, 30400

Tel 04 90 15 90 15 Closed Mon; Nov–Mar

This gorgeous hotel-restaurant is set in a 14th-century priest's residence and offers sophisticated seasonal cuisine.

## Vaucluse

**AVIGNON: L'Épice and Love** €  
Provençal Map B3

30 rue des Lices, 84000

Tel 04 90 82 45 96 Closed Sun

Wonderfully romantic restaurant, run with *joie de vivre* by a superb chef who bases her meals on

the market ingredients available. Reservations recommended.

**AVIGNON: Le 75** €€  
Classic French Map B3

75 rue Guillaume Puy, 84000

Tel 04 90 27 16 00 Closed Sun

This *hôtel particulier* features Mediterranean-inspired classic dishes with a modern twist, much like the colourful decor in the 19th-century dining room.

**AVIGNON: L'Essentiel** €€  
Gastronomic Map B3

2 rue Petite Fusterie, 84000

Tel 04 90 85 87 12 Closed Sun & Mon

The minimalist beige-and-cream decor of this 17th-century building sets the scene for the authentic, skillfully-prepared food.

**AVIGNON: La Fourchette** €€  
Provençal Map B3

17 rue Racine, 84000

Tel 04 90 85 20 93 Closed Sat & Sun

Quirky, much-loved bistro with its own take on the regional classics, with lots of seafood and excellent cheeses. Booking essential.

**AVIGNON: Christian Etienne** €€€  
Provençal Map B3

10 rue Mons, 84000

Tel 04 90 86 16 50 Closed Sun & Mon

Masterchef Christian Etienne offers superb seasonal menus in a 14th-century dining room. Good value set lunch menu.

**AVIGNON: La Mirande** €€€  
Gastronomic Map B3

4 pl de la Mirande, 84000

Tel 04 90 14 20 20 Closed Tue & Wed; mid-Jan–mid-Feb

Dine indoors in an aristocratic setting or outside on the shaded terrace. Dazzling menu by a top chef and friendly service.

**AVIGNON: La Vieille Fontaine** €€€  
Haute Cuisine Map B3

12 pl Crillon, 84000

Tel 04 90 14 76 76 Closed Sun &

Mon; mid-Feb–mid-Mar

Beautifully appointed restaurant in the Hotel d'Europe. Savour chef Mathieu Desmarest's creative cuisine. Excellent wines.

**BONNIEUX: Un p'tit Coin de Cuisine** €

Bistro Map C3

Pl Gambetta, 84480

Tel 09 81 64 85 81 Closed Mon, Sun lunch

Smart bistro with a short but delicious menu. Extensive list of Côte du Rhône wines.

**BONNIEUX: Edouard Loubet** €€€  
Haute Cuisine Map C3

Les Claparèdes, chemin des

Cabanes, 84480

Tel 04 90 75 89 78 Closed Wed;

Dec–Mar (except holiday period)

Housed in the stunning Bastide de Capelongue hotel. The Michelin-star chef prepares delicious locally sourced dishes.

**CADENET: Auberge La Fenière** €€€  
Haute Cuisine Map C3

D943 Route de Lourmarin, 84160

Tel 04 90 68 11 79 Closed Mon &

Tue; Jan

Lovely inn with superb seafood and vegetable creations from one of Provence's top chefs, Reine Sammut. Holds regular concerts.

**CARPENTRAS: Chez Serge** €€  
Bistro Map B3

90 rue Cottier, 84200

Tel 04 90 63 21 24

Trendy decor and a creative menu featuring fresh fish, truffles and wild mushrooms. Extensive wine list with a focus on local vineyards.





The bright entrance of La Mère Germaine, Châteauneuf-du-Pape

**CAVAILLON: Restaurant Prévot** €€€  
**Provençal** Map B3  
 353 av du Verdun, 84300  
 Tel 04 90 71 32 43 Closed Sun & Mon; mid-Feb–mid-Mar

A stylish culinary treat by Chef Jean Jacques Prévot. Fabulous ingredient-based seasonal menu – asparagus (spring); melons (summer); mushrooms (autumn) and black truffles (winter).

**CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE: La Sommellerie** €  
**Bistro** Map B3  
 2268 route de Roquemaure, 84230  
 Tel 09 70 35 60 29 Closed Mon from Oct–Mar, Sat lunch, Sun dinner  
 Located in a 17th-century sheep-fold, offers exceptional dinners focusing on regional Côtes du Rhône wines. A superlative three-course *gourmand* menu for €40.

**CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE: La Mère Germaine** €€  
**Provençal** Map B3  
 3 rue Commandant Lemaître, 84230  
 Tel 04 90 22 78 34 Closed Wed from Sep–Mar  
 Surrounded by vineyard views, this restaurant features classic Provençal dishes and outstanding regional wines. Good value lunch.

**GIGONDAS: Les Florets** €  
**Bistro** Map B2  
 Route des Dentelles, Chemin des Florets, 84190  
 Tel 04 90 65 85 01 Closed Wed & Thu lunch  
 Les Florets offers artful dishes well complimented by local wines. Diners enjoy enchanting views of the Dentelles de Montmirail from its terrace.

**GORDES: Restaurant Pèir** €€€  
**Haute Cuisine** Map C3  
 La Bastide de Gordes, Rue de la Combe, 84220  
 Tel 04 90 72 12 12 Closed Mon, Tue; Jan–Apr  
 A luxury hotel with uninterrupted views of the Luberon, where the

famous Chef Pierre Gagnaire conjures up top-level Mediterranean-style cuisine. There's also a more affordable bistro with an identical view.

### DK Choice

**LAGARDE D'APT: Le Bistrot de Lagarde** €€  
**Bistro** Map C3

Route Départemental 34, 84400  
 Tel 04 90 74 57 23 Closed Mon & Tue; early Dec–Mar

A former missile bunker at 1,100 m (3,609 ft) up a switch-back road is the setting for Le Bistrot de Lagarde. Chef Lloyd Tropeano creates extraordinary dishes using local saffron and other carefully sourced ingredients. The menu changes every three weeks.

**LAURIS: La Cuisine d'Amélie** €  
**Bistro** Map C3

Domaine de Fontenille, 84360  
 Tel 04 13 98 00 00 Closed Wed, Thu, Fri lunch; Jan–early Feb

Part of a boutique hotel surrounded by a lovely park, the menu at this quirky bistro has no particular order – just choose the dishes you want and share them around. For those willing to splurge, there is also a gastronomic restaurant.

**L'ISLE-SUR-LE SORGUE: Le Vivier** €€  
**Provençal** Map B3

800 cours Fernande Peyre, 84800  
 Tel 04 90 38 52 80 Closed Mon; Fri & Sat lunch; Sun dinner

Superb fresh food on a magical riverside terrace. Try the pigeon pie with cèpe mushrooms.

**MENERBES: Café Veranda** €  
**Bistro** Map C3

Av Marcellin-Poncet, 84560  
 Tel 04 90 72 33 33 Closed Mon lunch; Sun & Tue dinner  
 A welcoming dining room and terrace with views over

the hills. Enjoy creative European cooking along with locally sourced wines. Friendly service.

**PERNES-LES-FONTAINES: Coté Jardin** €  
**Classic French** Map B3

221 quai de Verdun, 84210  
 Tel 04 32 80 93 32 Closed Oct–mid-Apr

Enjoy generous salads and grilled meats while sitting in a pretty garden or on the terrace in the shade of plane trees. Superb home-made ice creams.

**SEGURET: Le Mesclun** €  
**Bistro** Map B2

Rue des Poternes, 84110  
 Tel 04 90 46 93 43 Closed Wed; Sun & Tue dinner (Sep–Jun)

Charming terrace with lovely views of the Rhône valley and sophisticated fare that draws on Asian, Caribbean and Mexican cuisines. Good children's menu.

**SERIGNAN-DU-COMTAT: Le Pré du Moulin** €€€  
**Provençal** Map B2

Cours Joël Esteve/Route de Sainte-Cécile les Vignes, 84830

Tel 04 90 70 14 55 Closed Mon, Sun dinner (Sep–Jun)

Dine under giant plane trees on refined delicacies such as lobster ravioli with chicory and dill in this stylish hotel-restaurant. Vintage Rhône valley and Gigondas wines.

**VAISON-LA-ROMAINE: Moulin à Huile** €€€  
**Provençal** Map B2

1 quai du Maréchal Foch, 84110  
 Tel 04 28 31 70 63 Closed Sun

dinner, Mon–Wed; mid-Dec–mid-Jan  
 Housed in a 12th-century oil mill, this restaurant offers excellent Provençal cuisine, with a truffle-based menu in season and good vegetarian and vegan options as well. Alfresco dining on terrace-balcony.

## Alpes-de-Haute-Provence

**CASTELLANE: Auberge du Teillon** €  
**Bistro** Map D3

Route Napoléon le Garde, 04120  
 Tel 04 92 83 60 88 Closed Mon, Sun dinner; Nov–Mar

Pleasant country inn famed for its hand-smoked Norwegian salmon, *foie gras*, scallop and morel risotto, millefeuille and local cheeses. Friendly atmosphere. Book ahead.



L'Olivier restaurant, Digne-les-Bains

**CHÂTEAU-ARNOUX: La Bonne Etape** €€€  
Haute Cuisine Map D2

Chemin du Lac, 04160

Tel 04 92 64 00 09 Closed Mon &amp; Tue; Jan–mid-Feb, late Nov

Elegant inn specializing in dishes with a personal touch using fresh local produce, especially lamb and seafood. Superb wine list.

**DIGNE-LES-BAINS: L'Olivier** €  
Bistro Map D2

1 rue des Monges, 04000

Tel 04 92 31 47 41 Closed Sun dinner, Mon &amp; Tue

Delightful family-run restaurant with tasty seafood and meat main courses in a pretty alfresco setting.

**DIGNE-LES-BAINS: Villa Gaïa** €  
Provençal Map D2

24 route de Nice, 04000

Tel 04 92 31 21 60 Closed Nov–mid-Apr

Simple and delicious seasonal fare with fresh vegetables from the garden – sautéed coriander and lemon lamb. By reservation only.

**FORCALQUIER: Le 9** €  
Bistro Map C3

9 av Jean Giono, 04300

Tel 04 92 75 03 29 Closed Tue, Wed (in winter); Jan &amp; Feb

Enjoy simple, fresh dishes with lovely views from the garden and

terrace. Do not miss the venison sautéed with cranberries.

**FORCALQUIER: Aux 2 Anes** €  
Bistro Map C3

3 pl Saint-Michel, 04300

Tel 04 92 75 04 36

Closed Mon dinner, Tue; Jan

Friendly, unpretentious

and intimate, with outdoor tables and delectable Provençal dishes. Excellent, good-value set menu.

**MOUSTIERS-STE-MARIE: Ferme Ste Cécile** €  
Bistro Map D3

Rte des Gorges du Verdon

Tel 04 92 74 64 18 Closed Mon, Sun

dinner; Nov–Mar

Bucolic setting and excellent

value on tasty dishes using spelt, partridge, veal and seafood. Good wines. Shaded summer

terrace. Book ahead.

**DK Choice**

**MOUSTIERS-STE-MARIE: La Treille Muscate** €  
Provençal Map D3

Pl de l'Eglise, 04360

Tel 04 92 74 64 31 Closed Wed, Thu (in winter); Jan

Set under the crags, with a shaded terrace near a waterfall, this warm and welcoming

restaurant is the perfect setting for some exceptional Provençal

cuisine. The menu includes specialities such as lamb shank

braised in honey, stuffed baby

vegetables and an utterly

mouthwatering penne with

mushrooms and foie gras. Reservations recommended.

**MOUSTIERS-STE-MARIE:**

**La Bastide de Moustiers** €€€  
Provençal Map D3

Chemin de Quinson, 04360

Tel 04 92 70 47 47 Closed Tue &amp; Wed; Jan–Feb

Superb, fresh cuisine. The menu here changes daily, based on the

herbs and ingredients plucked that day in the Bastide's fine

vegetable garden and orchards. Book "Le salon de Amoureux"

for a romantic dinner.

**ROUGON: Le Mur D'Abeilles** €  
Crêperie Map D3

D955 – La route du Grand

Canyon, 04120

Tel 04 92 83 76 33 Closed Nov–Mar

Great stop for lunch while visiting the Grand Canyon. Spectacular

views, delightful picnic tables

and delicious, generous-sized

savoury and sweet crêpes. Drinks and ice cream are served as well.

**STE-CROIX DU VERDON:**

**Le Comptoir** €  
Classic French Map D3

Le Village, 04500

Tel 04 92 73 74 62 Closed Nov–Easter

This traditional restaurant boasts a beautiful terrace overlooking

the lake. Serves huge salads, grilled fish and meats, and

moules-frites. Perfect for lunch. Good children's menu.

**VALENSEOLE: Hostellerie**

**de la Fuste** €€  
Provençal Map D3

Route d'Oraison, 04210

Tel 04 92 72 05 95 Closed Mon, Sun dinner

Elegant country inn featuring

dishes prepared from home-grown

vegetables, seafood and succulent meats on a terrace shaded by plane trees.



The magnificent dining room of La Bonne Etape, Château-Arnoix

## Cafés, Bars and Casual Eating

In rural areas the world over the local bar is the centre of village life, and nowhere is this more true than in Provence. Everywhere you go you will find lively watering holes, often with outside terraces or gardens. Most bars and cafés double as lunchtime restaurants, serving straightforward daily specials at reasonable prices. Snacks are not really a part of French life but nearly all bars will make you a traditional *baguette* sandwich or a *croque monsieur* (toasted ham and cheese sandwich). Drinking is a subject close to Provençal hearts – *pastis*, the aniseed spirit synonymous with Marseille, is the region's lifeblood. In many country towns, you will see the locals sitting outside sipping *pastis* from the early morning onwards, along with strong black coffee. Lunchtime tipples include ice-cold rosé, which makes the perfect accompaniment to a sun-filled day.

### Cafés

There is little distinction between cafés and bars in Provence and most serve alcohol all day. In the country, village cafés will often close around 8pm. In larger towns, many places stay open much later – popular Marseillais and Niçois bars close when the last person leaves. Many stay open all night, serving breakfast to the diehards as dawn breaks. A lot of cafés are also *tabacs* (tobacconists) selling cigarettes, tobacco, sweets and stamps.

While most Provençal cafés are simple places, where decor is restricted to the local fire brigade calendar and fashion to a hunting jacket and boots, there are several stylish exceptions. No visit to Aix is complete without an hour or two spent sipping coffee on the cours Mirabeau, one of the places in Provence to see and be seen. On the Côte d'Azur, chic cafés abound. In Cannes, **Restaurant Carlton** is the place to spot film stars during the festival. In Nice, the cafés on the cours Saleya are the hub of day- and nightlife, while Monaco boasts the crème de la crème, **La Brasserie du Café de Paris**.

### What to Eat

Most Provençal cafés serve breakfast although, in village establishments, this will just be a couple of slices of *baguette*

and coffee. More elaborate affairs are served in towns, with fresh orange juice, warm croissants and jam. Café lunches usually include a *plat du jour* (dish of the day) and a dessert, along with a quarter litre of wine. These can be great bargains, costing little more than €17. For more basic lunches, sandwiches, omelettes and salads can be ordered. Evening meals are usually the reserve of restaurants, although in rural areas, the local bar will also serve dinner, normally a variant on the lunchtime menu.

### What to Drink

Since Roman days, when the legionnaires introduced wine to the region, drinking has been a favoured pastime in Provence. Cold beer seems to surpass the fruit of the vine in the hearts of most farmers, as village bars are filled with locals downing *pressions* (half-pint glasses of beer). More potent tipples include *pastis*, a 90 per cent proof nectar flavoured with aniseed, vanilla and cinnamon, and *marc*, a brandy distilled from any available fruits. Soft drinks such as *un diabolito* (fruit syrup mixed with lemonade) and *orange pressée* (freshly squeezed orange juice) are also popular. As in most Mediterranean lands, coffee is a way of life – *un café* is a cup of strong and black espresso. If you want

white coffee, ask for *un café crème*. For filter or instant coffee order *un café filtre* or *un café américain*. Tea is served black unless you ask for milk or lemon. Herbal teas are also available, known as *tisanes* or *infusions*.

### Bars

In most towns you will find a handful of bars that only serve beer and miscellaneous alcohol, rather than the more diverse range offered by cafés. These bars are lively in true Mediterranean style. Student centres such as Nice, Marseille and Aix contain British-style pubs, offering a large selection of European bottled and draught beer. Some have live bands, such as **Wayne's Bar** and **De Klomp** in Nice.

More upmarket bars are found in the plush hotels of the Côte d'Azur. Here, in *belle époque* splendour, you can sip champagne listening to jazz piano, string quartets or opera singers. Among the most impressive are the bars of the Carlton and Martinez hotels in Cannes, Le Négresco in Nice, **Le Bar** at the Grand Hôtel in St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat and the Hermitage in Monte-Carlo (see *Where to Stay*, pp194–201).

### Picnic and Take-Away Food

You are never far from food in Provence. The traditional street food of Provence is the *pan bagnat*, a thick bun filled with crisp salad Niçoise and doused in olive oil. Pizza is a local favourite, and every small town has its pizza van, where your choice is cooked to order. A particularly Provençal form of pizza is *pissaladière*, an onion pizza coated with anchovies and olives. In Nice, the number one snack is *socca*, thick crêpes made from chickpea flour (see pp204–5).

The French love picnics, and the *Provençaux* are no exception. French alfresco eating is often complex – families set out tables, chairs, barbecues and portable fridges.



To service this penchant for portable dining, Provençal villages have specialist shops offering ready-to-eat food. *Boulangeries* and *pâtisseries* serve everything from fresh croissants to quiches and a dazzling array of cakes and tarts. Nearly all *boulangeries* provide delicious, freshly made baguette sandwiches.

In the main towns, specialist butchers called *traiteurs* pro-vide ready-made dishes, such as salads, cold meats and roast chicken, sold in cartons according to weight. **Au Flan Coco** in Nîmes and **Bataille** in Marseille are fine examples. Most supermarkets also have similar delicatessen counters. *Charcuteries* specialize in pork dishes, particularly pâtés and sausages. For traditional spicy sausages much prized in the Camargue, head to the **Maison Genin** in Arles.

The best place to buy picnic food is the local market. Every town in Provence has its market, some daily, like Aix-en-Provence, some just once or twice a week. No Provençal picnic is complete without French bread – the *baguette* is the mainstay of the country and Provence is no exception. The only difference is that the region boasts numerous local breads, incorporating traditional ingredients. *Pain aux olives* is found almost everywhere, often in the form of *fougasse*, a flat, lattice-like loaf. Alternatively, this may contain anchovies (*pain aux anchois*), or spinach (*pain aux épinards*) and there is a sweet version flavoured with almonds. Wholemeal or brown bread is an anathema to the traditional Provençaux, although many bakeries now produce it – ask for *pain aux*

*ceréales*. The nearest to healthy bread is *pain de campagne*, a sturdier baguette made with unrefined white flour. One of the finest *boulangeries* in the region is **Le Four à Bois**, in the old quarter of Nice, where the same recipes have been used for generations.

*Boulangeries* are found in every village and usually have a good selection of *pâtisseries*, cakes and tarts. Provençal ingredients are combined to make these delights, such as honey, almonds and fruit – try those at **Béchar** in Aix-en-Provence. For those with an even sweeter tooth, these same ingredients are used in the handmade chocolates and candied fruit. *Calissons* (an almond-paste sweet) and *suce-miel* (honey-based candy) are very popular. Two of the best shops are **Puyricard** in Aix and **Auer** in Nice.

## DIRECTORY

### Cafés

#### AIX-EN-PROVENCE

##### Brasserie Les Deux Garçons

53 cours Mirabeau.  
Tel 04 42 26 00 51.

#### CANNES

##### Restaurant Carlton

58 la Croisette.  
Tel 04 93 06 40 06.

#### EZE

##### Château Eza

Rue de la Pise.  
Tel 04 93 41 12 24.

#### MONACO

##### La Brasserie du Café de Paris

Le Casino, place du Casino.  
Tel 00 377 98 06 76 23.

#### NICE

##### Le Grand Café de Turin

5 place Garibaldi.  
Tel 04 93 62 29 52.

#### NÎMES

##### Le Café Olive

22 blvd Victor Hugo.  
Tel 04 66 67 89 10.

#### ST-PAUL DE VENÇE

##### Café de la Place

1 place du Général de Gaulle.  
Tel 04 93 32 80 03.

#### ST-TROPEZ

##### Brasserie des Arts

5 place des Lices.  
Tel 04 94 40 27 37.

##### Le Café de Paris

Le Port, 15 quai de Suffren.  
Tel 04 94 97 00 56.

##### Senequier

Quai Jean Jaurès.  
Tel 04 94 97 20 20.

### Bars and Pubs

#### AVIGNON

##### Pub Z

58 rue de la Bonneterie.  
Tel 04 88 07 20 16.

#### CANNES

##### 3.14

5 rue François Einesy.  
Tel 04 92 99 72 09.

#### JUAN-LES-PINS

##### Pam-Pam

137 blvd Wilson.  
Tel 04 93 61 11 05.

#### MARSEILLE

##### Le Bar de la Marine

15 quai de Rive Neuve.  
Tel 04 91 54 95 42.

##### La Part des Anges

33 rue Sainte.  
Tel 04 91 33 55 70.

#### MONACO

##### Flashman's

7 ave Princesse Alice.  
Tel 00 377 93 30 09 03.

#### NICE

##### De Klomp

6 rue Mascoinat.  
Tel 09 82 34 14 21.

##### Les Trois Diabes

2 cours Saleya.  
Tel 06 62 27 47 17.

##### Wayne's Bar

15 rue de la Préfecture.  
Tel 04 93 13 46 99.

#### NÎMES

##### La Grande Bourse

2 blvd des Arenes.  
Tel 04 66 67 68 69.

#### ST-JEAN-CAP-FERRAT

##### Le Bar

Grand Hôtel de Cap-Ferrat, 71 blvd du Général de Gaulle.  
Tel 04 93 76 50 50.

#### VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-MER

##### Le Cosmo Bar

11 pl Amélie Pollaris.  
Tel 04 93 01 84 05.

### Picnic and Take-Away Food

#### AIX-EN-PROVENCE

##### Béchar

12 cours Mirabeau.

##### Puyricard

7-9 rue Rifle-raffe.

#### ARLES

##### Maison Genin

11 rue des Porcelles.

#### MARSEILLE

##### Bataille

18 rue Fontange.

##### Le Four des Navettes

136 rue Sainte.

#### NICE

##### Auer

7 rue St-François-de-Paule.

##### Le Four à Bois

35 rue Droite.

#### NÎMES

##### Au Flan Coco

21 rue du Grand Couvent.

# SHOPS AND MARKETS

Shopping in Provence is one of life's great delights. Even the tiniest village may be home to a potter or painter, or you may arrive on market day to find regional produce – artichokes, asparagus, wild mushrooms – still fresh with the dew from the surrounding fields. Larger towns are packed with individual boutiques selling anything from dried flowers to chic baby clothes, and the fashion-conscious will always be able to find an avenue or two

of famous names in which to window-shop. If the idea of cramming fresh foodstuffs into your luggage to take back home proves too daunting, Provence has perfected the fine art of packaging its produce, with the bottles, jars and boxes often works of art in themselves. This section provides guidelines on opening hours and the range of goods with a Provençal flavour to be found in the many stores and markets.



A butcher and a store selling household goods in a village in Provence

## Opening Hours

Food shops open at around 8am and close at noon for lunch, a break that may last for up to three hours. After lunch, most shops stay open until 7pm, sometimes even later in big towns. Bakers often stay open until 1pm or later, serving tasty lunchtime snacks. Most supermarkets and hypermarkets stay open throughout lunchtimes.

Non-food shops are open 9am–7pm Mon–Sat, but most will close for lunch. Many are closed on Monday mornings.

Food shops and newsagents open on Sunday mornings but almost every shop is closed on Sunday afternoon. Small shops may close for one day a week out of high season.

## Larger Shops

Hypermarkets (*hypermarchés* or *grandes surfaces*) can be found on the outskirts of every sizeable town: look out for the signs indicating the *Centre Commercial*. Among the largest are Casino, Auchan, E.LeClerc and Carrefour. Discount petrol is usually sold at 24-hour petrol pumps where you need a pin card and chip to pay.

Supermarkets selling clothes and sundries (*supermarchés*), such as Monoprix and Champion, are usually found in town centres. Most of the upscale department stores (*grands magasins*), such as Galeries Lafayette and Printemps are located in cities.

## Specialist Shops

One of the great pleasures of shopping in Provence is that specialist food shops still flourish despite the presence of large supermarkets. The bread shop (*boulangerie*) is usually combined with the *pâtisserie* selling cakes and pastries. The cheesemonger (*fromagerie*) may also be combined with a shop selling other dairy produce (*laiterie*), but the *boucherie* (butcher) and the *charcuterie* (delicatessen) tend to be separate shops. A *traiteur* sells prepared foods. For dry goods and general groceries, you will need to go to an *épicerie*.

Cleaning products and household goods are sold at a *droguerie* and hardware at a *quincaillerie*. Booksellers (*librairies*) in the main towns sometimes sell English books.

## Markets

This guide gives the market days for every town featured. To find out where the market is, ask a passer-by for *le marché*. Markets are morning affairs, when the produce is super-fresh – by noon the stall-holders will already be packing up and the best bargains will have sold out hours ago. By French law, price tags must state the origin of all produce: *du pays* means local.

*Les marchés de Provence* were immortalized in song by Gilbert Bécaud, and rightly so. In a country famed for its markets, these are among the best. Some are renowned – cours Saleya (see p88) in Nice and the food and flower markets of Aix (see p152), for example, should not be missed. Others take more searching out, such as the truffle markets of the Var. Try Aups (see p108) on a Thursday during truffle season, from November to February.



Enjoying a drink next to a flower shop in Luberon, Vaucluse



Bags of dried herbs on display in the market of St-Rémy-de-Provence

## Regional Specialities

The sunshine of Provence is captured in its distinctive, vividly coloured fabrics, known as *indiennes*. Many shops sell them by the metre; others, such as **Mistral – Les Indiennes de Nîmes** and **Souleïado** also make them into soft furnishings, cowboy shirts and boxer shorts.

Throughout Provence, working olive mills churn out rich, pungent oil, which is also used to make the chunky blocks of soap, *savon de Marseille*. Tins and jars of olives, often scented with *herbes de Provence*, are widely available, as are bags of the herbs themselves. Bags of lavender, and honey from its pollen, are regional specialities; local flowers appear in other forms too, from dried arrangements to scented oils, or perfumes from Grasse (see p71).

Traditional sweets (*confiseries*) abound, using regional fruits

and nuts: almond *calissons* from Aix, fruity *berlingots* from Carpentras and *fruits confits* from Apt are just a few.

## Local Wines

Provence is not one of the great wine regions of the world, but its many vineyards (see pp206–7) produce a wide range of pleasant wines and you will see plenty of signs inviting you to a *dégustation* (tasting). You will usually be expected to buy at least one bottle. Wine co-operatives sell the wines of numerous smaller producers. Here you can buy wine in five- and ten-litre containers (*en vrac*). This wine is “duty free” but, with vineyards such as Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Beaugues-de-Venise, wise buyers will drink *en vrac* on holiday and pick up bargains in fine wine to bring home.

Marseille’s anise-flavoured aperitif *pastis* is an evocative, if acquired, taste.

## Arts and Crafts

Many of the crafts now flourishing in Provence are traditional ones that had almost died out 50 years ago. The potters of Vallauris owe the revival in their fortunes to Picasso (see pp76–7) but, more often, it is the interest of visitors that keeps a craft alive. From the little pottery *santons* of Marseille to the flutes and tambourines of Barjols, there is plenty of choice for gifts and mementos. Many towns have unique specialities. Biot (see p78) is famous for its bubbly glassware, Cogolin for pipes and carpets and Salernes for hexagonal terracotta tiles.



Works by local artists sold on the harbour at St-Tropez

## DIRECTORY

### Regional Specialities

#### AVIGNON

##### Souleïado

19 rue Joseph Vernet.  
Tel 04 90 86 32 05.  
One of several branches.

#### GRASSE

##### Huilerie Ste-Anne

138 route de Draguignan.  
Tel 04 93 70 21 42.

##### Parfumerie Fragonard

20 blvd Fragonard.  
Tel 04 92 42 34 34.  
[www.fragonard.com](http://www.fragonard.com)

##### Parfumerie Galimard

73 route de Cannes.  
Tel 04 93 09 20 00.  
[www.galimard.com](http://www.galimard.com)

#### NICE

##### Alziari

14 rue St-François-de-Paule.  
Tel 04 93 62 94 03.  
Olive press.

#### NÎMES

##### Mistral – Les Indiennes de Nîmes

2 blvd des Arènes.  
Tel 04 66 21 69 57.

### Arts and Crafts

#### COGOLIN

##### Fabrique de Pipes Courrieu

58–60 ave G Clemenceau.  
Tel 04 94 54 63 82.

##### Manufacture des Tapis de Cogolin

Tel 04 94 55 70 65.

#### MARSEILLE

##### Ateliers Marcel Carbonel

47–49 rue Neuve Ste-Catherine.  
Tel 04 91 54 26 58.

##### [www.santonsmarcelcarbonel.com](http://www.santonsmarcelcarbonel.com)

Workshop and museum.

#### VALLAURIS

##### Céramiques

Dominique N B  
Ave Maréchal Juin.  
Tel 04 93 64 02 66.

### English Language Bookshops

#### ANTIBES

##### Antibes Books

13 rue Georges Clemenceau.  
Tel 04 93 61 96 47.

#### AIX-EN-PROVENCE

##### Book in Bar

4 rue Joseph Cabassol.  
Tel 04 42 26 60 07.

#### CANNES

##### Cannes English Bookshop

11 rue Bivouac Napoléon.  
Tel 04 93 99 40 08.

#### MARSEILLE

##### Librarie Internationale Maurel

95 rue de Lodi.  
Tel 04 91 42 63 44.

#### MONTPELLIER

##### Le Bookshop

8 rue du Bras de Fer.  
Tel 04 67 66 22 90.



## What to Buy in Provence

Best buys to be found in Provence are those that reflect the character of the region – its geographical blessings of bountiful produce and its historic traditions of arts and crafts. While the chic boutiques of St-Tropez or Cannes may rival Paris in predicting the latest fashion trend, your souvenirs of Provence should be far more timeless. The evocative scents, colours and flavours they offer will help to keep your holiday memories alive throughout the darkest winter months, and longer – at least until your next visit.



Lavender, one of the perfumes of Provence

### The Scents of Provence

Provençal lavender is used to perfume a wide range of goods, but most popular are pretty fabric sachets full of the dried flowers.

Bath times can be heady with the scent of local flowers and herbs, captured in delightful bottles, and Marseille's famous olive oil soaps.



Orange water from Vallauris



Linden-scented bubble bath



Dried lavender, packed in Provençal fabrics



Olive oil savons de Marseille



Mallow-scented bubble bath



### Glassware

Glassblowing is a modern Provençal craft. At Biot (see p78) you can watch glassblowers at work, as well as buy examples of their art to take home.

### Pottery

Look for traditional tiles, cookware and storage jars made from *terre rouge*, formal china of Moustiers faïence (see p190) or artworks of grès clay.



### Terracotta Santons

Provençal Christmas cribs are peopled with these gaily painted traditional figures. Most crafts shops offer a good choice of characters.



### Olive Wood

As rich in colour and texture as its oil, the wood of the olive can be sculpted into works of art or turned into practical kitchenware.



### Hunting Knives

The huntsmen's shops of Provence are an unexpected source for the perfect picnic or kitchen knife, safe yet razor sharp.



### Provençal Fabrics

Using patterns and colours dating back centuries, these traditional prints are sold by the metre or made up into fashionable items.

## The Flavours of Provence

No-one should leave Provence without at least a jar of olives or a bottle of olive oil, but consider also easy-to-pack tins, jars and boxes of preserved fruits, scented honey or savoury purées – prettily packaged, they make ideal gifts.



Almond sweetmeats, the speciality of Aix-en-Provence



Candied chestnuts or marrons glacés



Virgin olive oil



Goats' cheese, wrapped in chestnut leaves



Tuna packed in olive oil



Basil flavoured olive oil



Puréed salt cod or brandade de morue



Almond and orange conserve



Lavender honey and hazelnut confit

# ENTERTAINMENT IN PROVENCE

Provence offers a wealth of cultural options to visitors. Barely a month goes by without some major festival (see pp36–9 & pp228–9). Events take place all year round, with first-class dance, opera and jazz in Nice and Marseille, rock concerts in Toulon, theatre in Avignon and blockbuster art shows in Nice, Antibes, Monaco and Aix-en-Provence. Nightlife tends to be restricted to the

fashionable coastal resorts, like Juan-les-Pins and St-Tropez, where clubs and bars often stay open all night. In winter, things are quieter, but the small bars and cafés of Marseille, Nîmes and Nice remain open and full of life. Provence's most common entertainment is free – locals spend much of their time enjoying the fresh air, walking and playing *pétanque*, or Provençal bowls.

## Practical Information

Information about what's on in Provence is fairly localized, with tourist offices providing listings of various events. Most large towns publish a weekly paper that outlines the best of each week's events. Local papers can also provide details of important festivals and sporting events. *Le Provençal* serves western Provence, while *Nice Matin* and its derivatives cover the east of the region. You can purchase regional newspapers and magazines at newsagents and *tabacs*.

The large English-speaking community in Provence has its own radio station, Riviera Radio, which broadcasts from Monte-Carlo in English on 106.3 FM and 106.5 FM. English-language publications such as *The Riviera Times* and *The Riviera Reporter* include event listings and websites.

## Buying Tickets

Depending on the event, most tickets can be bought on the door, but for blockbuster

concerts, particularly during the summer months, it is best to reserve in advance. Tickets can be purchased at branches of the **FNAC** and **Carrefour** chains in major towns.

Theatre box offices are open from approximately 11 am until 7 pm seven days a week and will usually accept credit card bookings over the telephone.

As a last resort, if you haven't booked in advance, tickets to popular concerts can be bought from touts at the venue doors on the night. However, they will be much more expensive and possibly counterfeit.

## Opera and Classical Music

Music is everywhere in Provence, from small village churches to the *belle époque* opera houses of Marseille, Toulon and Nice. The **Opéra de Nice** is one of the best in France, and the **Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra** features many illustrious conductors. Classical and

jazz festivals are held throughout the summer in major cities.

Every year on 21 June, the *Fête de la Musique* is held throughout France. Amateur and professional musicians alike set up their stages in villages and towns and perform. Take in as many different "concerts" as you can to enjoy an impressive range of genres.

## Rock and Jazz

These days Provence is a major venue on most world tours, with big stadium performances at Toulon's **Zenith-Oméga** or Marseille's soccer stadium, **Le Nouveau Stade-Vélodrome**. The **Nice Festival du Jazz** in the Cimiez arena (see p88) is one of the

world's best. It was here that Miles Davis gave one of his last performances among the Roman walls and olive groves. Also popular is the **Jazz à Juan** festival in Juan-les-Pins, which has included Ray Charles and the jazz debut of classical violinist Nigel Kennedy.



Classical cello



Leonard Cohen performing at the Nice Festival du Jazz

## Theatre

Going to the theatre in Provence can be as formal or as relaxed as you choose. A trip to a big theatre can involve dressing up, special *souper* (late dinner) reservations at a nearby restaurant and pricey champagne during the interval. On the other hand, a visit to a smaller theatre can be cheap and casual, with a real feeling of intimacy and immediacy.



Marseille is the centre of theatre in Provence and boasts one of France's top theatrical companies, the **Théâtre National de la Criée**. Various smaller companies stage innovative plays, many of which end up in Paris. Avignon is also famous for its **Théâtre des Carmes**, the main venue for the **Festival d'Avignon** (see p229). There is also a "fringe" festival, the **Avignon Le Off**, with its own directors and box office.

## Spectator Sports

With its superb weather and glamorous reputation, the regions of Provence and the Côte d'Azur are ideal venues for some of France's top sporting events. The gruelling **Tour de France** passes through the area each July, while the Monte-Carlo and Nice tennis tournaments attract the best players. The **Grand Prix de Monaco** (see p36) is one of the highlights of the Formula 1 motor-racing season, and horse-racing enthusiasts can visit the **Hippodrome de la Côte d'Azur** track at Cagnes-sur-Mer between December and March.

Provence boasts two of the top soccer teams in France – **Olympique de Marseille** and **AS Monaco FC**, known as the millionaires' club. Rugby is also popular in Provence, with top-class clubs in Nice and Toulon.

## Dance

Marseille's eclectic mixture of nationalities and styles has led



The Open Tennis Championships in Monte-Carlo

to highly original and powerful dance productions.

The National Ballet Company is based at the Ecole de Danse in Marseille. Companies such as the **Bernardines** sometimes take their productions to Paris, while **La Friche La Belle de Mai**, located in an old tobacco

factory, is a popular venue for experimental performance and music.

The new **Centre Chorégraphique National** in Aix-en-Provence is an exciting addition to the Provençal dance scene.



View over the harbour in Monaco to the glittering casino

## Gambling

The French Riviera is famed for its opulent casinos. If you are 18 and over you can play in most resorts. Monaco has the coast's most popular casino – **Le Casino** – where you have to pay an entrance fee and show an ID card before you can start gambling. Other casinos worth visiting for architecture and atmosphere are Cannes' **Casino Croisette** and **Casino Ruhl** in Nice. Even if you are not a high-roller, there is always a dazzling array of slot machines.



## Bullfighting

The annual *ferias*, or bullfighting festivals, are always dramatic occasions. The traditional bullfight of Provence is the *course à la cocarde*, which starts with an *abrivado* when the bulls are chased through the town to the local arena. The bull enters the ring with a red *cocarde*, or rosette, tied to its horns, which the *razeteurs*, or matadors, try to snatch, providing riveting but goreless entertainment. At the end of the season, the bullfighter with the most rosettes receives fame and adulation, as well as cash.

Sometimes bullfights will end in death in the full-blooded Spanish-style *corrida*, but this is usually only in the main arenas in Nimes and Arles (see p36), and it will always be advertised first. In one session there are usually six bullfights, of which two may be advertised as *mise à mort* (to the death).

Bullfighting poster for the 1992 Nimes feria by Francis Bacon

## Cinema

The small port of La Ciotat is where Louis Lumière shot the world's first motion picture, and Marcel Pagnol (*see p157*) laid the foundations for modern French cinema from his studios in Marseille. The French are very supportive of *la Septième Art*, as they refer to film, and there are plenty of local, independent cinemas. If your language skills won't stretch to watching a French film, look out for cinemas that show films in their *V.O. (Version Originale)* – that is, screened in their original language. *V.F. (Version Française)* denotes a dubbed screening in French.

Popcorn or other snacks are available, but it tends to be the foreigners that snack their way through a movie. However, there are some French cinemas that have bars and restaurants attached, so that you may dissect the movie while enjoying a meal or a drink afterwards.

As the fame of Cannes (*see pp72–3*) reflects, film festivals are taken seriously by the French. Cannes itself is a maelstrom of media hype, old-school glamour and shiny new cash. It is an amazing experience if you can get tickets to any of the films or parties, but these are notoriously difficult to get as they are by invitation only.

## Discotheques and Nightclubs

During the summer, the main towns of Provence boogie all night long. The music is far from trend-setting, usually following styles set the previous year in New York and London, but the dancers are chic and the prices high. A handful of clubs such as **Jimmy'Z** in Monaco and **Les Caves du Roy** in St-Tropez cater for the jet set, while **Kiss Club** in Juan-les-Pins and **Gotha Club** in Cannes serve a younger crowd. The dress code is usually smart, and trainers are almost always forbidden.

## Children's Entertainment

Provence offers the traditional attractions of beach and sea, although small children may better appreciate them in smaller resorts. Alternatives include aqua parks like **Marineland** and **Aqualand**, zoos and aquariums. There are also numerous adventure parks for rock-climbing, cycling and zip-lining, such as the **Canyon Forest** at Villeneuve-Loubet and **Coudou Parc** at Six-Fours-les-Plages. Marseille has **Préau des Accoules**, the only children's museum in the region. In the bigger towns, museums and theatres may organize activities (ask at the tourist office). Smaller towns and villages will have playgrounds or a square where your offspring can play with other children while you relax in a café. For more action, there are plenty of sporting activities, such as biking, canoeing, tennis, horse-riding and fishing.

## DIRECTORY

### Buying Tickets

#### Carrefour

[spectacles.carrefour.fr](http://spectacles.carrefour.fr)

#### Marseille

Carrefour Tasso, 4 pl du 4 sept.

#### Nice

Carrefour Nice Notre-Dame, 17–19 ave des Embrois.

#### FNAC

Tel 08 92 68 36 22.

[fnacspectacles.com](http://fnacspectacles.com)

#### Avignon

19 rue de la République.

#### Marseille

Centre Commercial Bourse, 12 cours Belsunce.

#### Nice

40–46 ave Jean Médecin.

### Opera and Classical Music

#### AIX-EN-PROVENCE

##### Grand Théâtre de Provence

380 ave Max Juvénale.

Tel 04 42 91 69 70.

[lestheatres.net](http://lestheatres.net)

#### MARSEILLE

##### Opéra Municipal

2 rue Molière.

Tel 04 91 55 11 10.

[opera.marseille.fr](http://opera.marseille.fr)

#### MONACO

##### Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra

Auditorium Rainier III, Blvd Loius II, BP 197

Tel 00 377 98 06 28 28.

[opmc.mc](http://opmc.mc)

#### NICE

##### Forum Nice Nord

10 blvd Comte de Falicon.

Tel 04 93 84 24 37.

[forumnienord.com](http://forumnienord.com)

##### Opéra de Nice

4–6 rue St-François-de-Paule. Tel 04 92 17 40 00.

[opera-nice.org](http://opera-nice.org)

##### Salle-Grappelli – CEDAC de Cimiez

49 ave de la Marne.

Tel 04 97 13 55 13.

[salle-grappelli-nice.org](http://salle-grappelli-nice.org)

#### TOULON – OLLIOULES

##### Châteauvallon

Tel 04 94 22 02 02.

[chateauvallon.com](http://chateauvallon.com)

##### Festival de Musique Classique

Tel 04 94 93 55 45.

[festivalmusique-toulon.com](http://festivalmusique-toulon.com)

##### Opéra de Toulon

Bldv de Strasbourg.

Tel 04 94 93 03 76.

[operadetoulon.fr](http://operadetoulon.fr)

#### Rock and Jazz

#### AIX-EN-PROVENCE

##### Hot Brass Club

1857 chemin d'Eguilles-Célony. Tel 04 42 21 05 57.

##### Le Scat

11 rue de la Verrerie.

Tel 04 42 23 00 23.

#### JUAN-LES-PINS

##### Jazz à Juan

Office de Tourisme, 60 chemin des Sables, Antibes.

[jazzajuan.com](http://jazzajuan.com)

#### MARSEILLES

##### Espace Julien

39 cours Julien.

Tel 04 91 24 34 10.

[espace-julien.com](http://espace-julien.com)

##### L'Intermédiaire

63 pl Jean-Jaurès.

Tel 06 87 87 88 21.

##### Le Nouveau Stade Vélodrome

3 blvd Michelet.

Tel 04 86 09 50 34.

##### Le Pelle-Mêle

8 pl aux Huiles.

Tel 04 91 54 85 26.

#### NICE

##### Festival du Jazz

Pl Massena, Theatre de Verdure Tel 04 97 13 40 42.

[nicejazzfestival.fr](http://nicejazzfestival.fr)

##### Theatre des Oiseaux

6 rue d'Abbaye.

Tel 04 93 80 21 93.

#### TOULON

##### Zenith-Oméga

Bld Commandant Nicolas.

Tel 04 94 22 66 77.

[zenith-omega-toulon.com](http://zenith-omega-toulon.com)

## DIRECTORY

## Theatre

## AVIGNON

## Avignon Le Off

Tel 04 90 85 13 08.

[www.avignonleoff.com](http://www.avignonleoff.com)

## Festival d'Avignon

Espace St-Louis, 20 rue  
Portail Boguier.

Tel 04 90 27 66 50.

[www.festival-avignon.com](http://www.festival-avignon.com)

## Théâtre des Carmes

6 place des Carmes.

Tel 04 90 82 20 47.

[www.theatredescarmes.com](http://www.theatredescarmes.com)

## MARSEILLE

## Théâtre du Merlan

Avenue Raimu. Tel 04 91

11 19 20. [www.merlan.org](http://www.merlan.org)Théâtre National  
de la Criée

30 quai de Rive-Neuve.

Tel 04 91 54 70 54.

[www.theatre-lacriee.com](http://www.theatre-lacriee.com)

## NICE

## Théâtre de l'Alphabet

19 rue Delille.

Tel 06 60 89 10 04.

[www.theatrenice.fr](http://www.theatrenice.fr)

## Théâtre de la Semeuse

2 montée Auguste Kerl.

Tel 04 93 92 85 08.

[www.lasemeuse.asso.fr](http://www.lasemeuse.asso.fr)

## Spectator Sports

## CAGNES-SUR-MER

Hippodrome de la  
Côte d'Azur

Tel 04 92 02 44 44.

[www.hippodrome-cotedazur.com](http://www.hippodrome-cotedazur.com)

## MARSEILLE

## ASPTT Tennis

Tel 04 84 25 56 03.

[www.marseille.asptt.com](http://www.marseille.asptt.com)

## Olympique de Marseille

[www.om.net](http://www.om.net)

## MONACO

## AS Monaco FC

[www.asmonaco.com](http://www.asmonaco.com)

## Grand Prix de Monaco

[www.acm.mc](http://www.acm.mc)

## NICE

Ligue de la Côte  
d'Azur Tennis

Tel 04 97 25 76 80.

## Tour de France

[www.letour.fr](http://www.letour.fr)

## Dance

## AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Centre Chorégraphique  
National

530 ave Mozart.

Tel 04 42 93 48 00.

## MARSEILLE

## Bernardines

17 blvd Garibaldi. Tel 04

91 24 30 40. [www.theatre-bernardines.org](http://www.theatre-bernardines.org)

## La Friche la

## Belle de Mai

41 rue Robin. Tel 04 95 04

95 95. [www.lafriche.org](http://www.lafriche.org)

## Gambling

## CANNES

## Casino Croisette

1 espace Lucien Barrière.

Tel 04 92 98 78 00.

[www.lucienbarriere.com](http://www.lucienbarriere.com)

## MONACO

## Le Casino

Place du Casino.

Tel 00 377 98 06 21 21.

[www.casinomontecarlo.com](http://www.casinomontecarlo.com)

## NICE

## Casino Ruhl

1 promenade des Anglais.

Tel 04 97 03 12 22.

## Bullfighting

## ARLES

## Arènes d'Arles

Rond-point des Arènes.

Tel 08 91 70 03 70.

[www.arenes-arles.com](http://www.arenes-arles.com)

## NÎMES

## Les Arènes

Blvd des Arènes.

Tel 08 91 70 14 01.

[www.arenedenimes.com](http://www.arenedenimes.com)

## Cinema

## AIX-EN-PROVENCE

## Le Mazarin

6 rue Laroque.

Tel 04 42 38 78 82.

## AVIGNON

## Utopia Cinéma

4 rue des Escaliers Sainte

Anne. Tel 04 90 82 65 36.

## CANNES

## Cannes Film Festival

[www.festival-cannes.com/fr](http://www.festival-cannes.com/fr)

## MARSEILLE

## Cinéma Le Chambord

283 ave du Prado.

Tel 04 91 25 70 06.

## MONTE-CARLO

## Le Sporting d'Hiver

Place du Casino.

Tel 00 377 98 06 17 17.

## NICE

## Cinémathèque

3 esplanade Kennedy.

Tel 04 92 04 06 66.

## Mercury Cinéma

16 place Garibaldi.

Tel 04 93 55 37 81.

## NÎMES

## Le Sémaphore

25a rue Porte de France.

Tel 04 66 67 83 11.

Discotheques and  
Nightclubs

## AIX-EN-PROVENCE

## Le Mistral

3 rue Frédéric Mistral.

Tel 04 42 38 16 49.

## AVIGNON

## Les Ambassadeurs Club

27 rue Bancasse.

Tel 04 90 86 31 55.

## CANNES

## Gotha Club

Palm Beach Point Croisette,

Pl Franklin Roosevelt.

Tel 04 93 45 11 11.

## Le Bâoli

Port Canto, La Croisette.

Tel 04 93 43 03 43.

## HYÈRES

## Le Gossip

15 ave du Docteur Robin,

Hyères. Tel 04 94 48 84 53.

## L'Instant

RD 559, Quartier St Nicholas,

La Londe-les-Maures.

Tel 06 42 59 18 67.

## JUAN-LES-PINS

## Kiss Club

5 ave George Gallice.

Tel 06 30 71 46 18.

## Le Village

Carrefour de la nouvelle

orleans. Tel 04 92 93 90 00.

## MARSEILLE

## The Trolleybus

24 quai de Rive-Neuve,

Vieux Port. Tel 04 91 54

30 45.

## MONACO

## Jimmy'Z

26 ave Princesse Grace.

Tel 00 377 98 06 36 36.

[www.fr.jimmyzmonte-carlo.com](http://www.fr.jimmyzmonte-carlo.com)

## La Rascasse

Quai Antoine 1er.

Tel 00 377 98 06 16 16.

## NICE

## High Club/Studio 47

45 promenade des Anglais.

Tel 07 81 88 42 04.

## ST-RAPHAËL

## La Réserve

Promenade René Coty.

Tel 06 27 13 88 99.

## ST-TROPEZ

## Les Caves du Roy

Palace de la Côte d'Azur,

Ave du marechal foch.

Tel 04 94 56 68 00.

[www.lescavesduroy.com](http://www.lescavesduroy.com)

## Papagayo

Résidence du Port.

Tel 04 94 97 95 96.

Children's  
Entertainment

## Aqualand

RN 98, 83600 Fréjus.

Tel 04 94 51 82 51.

[www.aqualand.fr](http://www.aqualand.fr)

## Canyon Forest

Parc des Rives du Loup,

26 rte de Grasse Villeneuve-

Loubet. Tel 04 92 02 88 88.

[www.canyonforest.com](http://www.canyonforest.com)

## Coudou Parc

34 rue de la République,

Six-Fours-les-Plages.

Tel 06 63 77 02 06.

[www.coudouparc.com](http://www.coudouparc.com)

## Marineland

RN 7, 06600 Antibes.

Tel 08 92 42 62 26.

[www.marineland.fr](http://www.marineland.fr)

## Museum of

## Oceanography and

## Aquarium

Ave St Martin, Monte-Carlo.

Tel 00 377 93 15 36 00.

## Park Zoologique de

## Fréjus

Le Capitou, Fréjus.

Tel 04 98 11 37 37.

## Préau des Accoules

## (Children's Museum)

29 montée des Accoules,

Marseille. Tel 04 91 91 52 06.



## Festivals in Provence

Festivals in Provence are very much part of the way of life. They are not staged purely for the benefit of visitors and tourism, but more to continue the seasonal celebrations that are deeply rooted in tradition. Many *fêtes* are based on pagan rites while others are celebrations of historic occasions – only a few have been hijacked by fun-loving holiday-makers on the coast. Here is a selection of the best festivals from each of the *départements*.



One of the spectacular floats in the procession at the Nice Carnival

### The Riviera and the Alpes Maritimes

The brilliant explosion of fireworks at the Carnaval de Nice above the Baie des Anges is one of the most popular images of Nice (see pp84–9). It is the largest pre-Lent carnival in France, and crescendos on Shrove Tuesday with fireworks and the immolation of King Carnival, *Sa Majesté Carnaval*.

Carnival festivities, held in all Catholic countries, are based on the pagan celebrations of the death of winter and the birth of spring and life. It is a time of feasting (*mardi gras* means “fat Tuesday”) before the fasting of Lent (*carne vale* is Latin for “farewell to meat”).

Festivities begin three weeks before Mardi Gras, when the king is wheeled out into the streets. During the two weekends between then and his departure, the colourful, flower-decked floats of the procession parade along the 2-km (1-mile) route round Jardin Albert I, amid confetti battles, bands and mounted escorts.



Carnival characters in the streets of Nice

By the 19th century, the Nice Carnival had developed into little more than a chalk and flour battle. The floats did not appear until 1873, inspired by the local artist, Alexis Mossa, who also resurrected the figure of King Carnival. Since then, great effort and time has been put into making the costumes.

Meanwhile, the whole town is *en fête*, and parties and balls are held in hotels and public venues all night long. Visitors should book well in advance to secure accommodation.

### The Var and the Iles d'Hyères

A number of festivals in the region feature the firing of muskets, reminiscent of ancient witch-scaring rites. Spectacular volleys are set off into the air in St-Tropez (see pp122–6) for the biannual *bravade*, commemorating two significant events.

The first one takes place on 16–18 May and is a religious procession devoted to the town's patron, Saint Torpès, He was a Roman soldier in the

service of the emperor, Nero. In AD 68, Torpès converted to Christianity and was martyred by decapitation. His body was placed in a boat along with a hungry dog and a cockerel. Miraculously, the saint's body was untouched. The vessel was washed up onto the shores of southern France, on the spot where St-Tropez stands today.

The May *bravade* honours his arrival. Celebrations begin with the blessing of a lance by the town's priest in the Eglise de St-Tropez. From here, the saint's gilded wooden bust is taken and carried around the flag-decked town in a terrific flurry of musket volleys. The procession winds down to the beach, and the sea is blessed for safely conveying the saint.

The second *bravade* takes place on 15 June and is honoured with earth-shattering fusillades and military parades. It marks the anniversary of the day in 1637, when the local militia saw off a Spanish fleet, about 22 vessels strong, after an attempt to capture four ships of the Royal French fleet.



La bravade procession in St-Tropez, honouring the town's patron saint

### Bouches-du-Rhône and Nîmes

Europe's largest Romany festival, the Pèlerinage des Gitans in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer (see p142), is a simple yet very moving occasion. At the end of May, usually 24th–26th, Romanies from all over the continent gather to pay their respects to the patron saint of



Procession of the saints down to the sea in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer

gypsies, Saint Sarah, known as the Black Madonna. This takes place in the picturesque town of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

The pilgrimage is a colourful occasion, brightened by traditional Arlesian costumes and *gardian* cowboys. The object of their veneration is Saint Sarah, the Ethiopian servant. As legend has it, she arrived on the shores of the Camargue by boat. Also on board was Mary Magdalene, and the saints Mary Jacobe (sister of the Virgin Mary) and the elderly Mary Salome (mother of the apostles Saint James and Saint John). Sarah and the Marys decided to stay in the town and they built an oratory on which the fortified church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Mer was built. The saints started to preach the gospel and the town became known as the "Mecca of Provence".

Saint Sarah stands serene and excessively robed in the crypt. On the two nights and days of celebration in May, she is remembered with a Mass and all-night vigil. The next day, the statues of the saints are borne down to the sea where the Camargue cowboys take their horses, neck-deep, into the water and the Bishop of Arles blesses the sea.

After the statues have been returned to the church, the great folk festival begins, with rodeos, bull-running, horse racing, Arletan dancing and all manner of entertainment. The *gardians* return for a smaller celebration of Mary Salome in October, when there is a procession around the church.

## Vaucluse

The Papal city of Avignon (*see pp170–72*) is a splendid setting for the foremost arts festival in Provence, the Festival d'Avignon. Theatre, music, dance and film are all covered in the month-long programme which runs from July to early August. More than a quarter of a million visitors travel to Avignon every year to attend the largest arts festival in France. It is advisable to reserve hotels and tickets in advance to avoid disappointment (*see pp226–7 for reservations*).

The festival was established in 1947 by the late Jean Vilar whose aim was to bring theatre to the masses. He devised a number of productions to be staged in the courtyard of the Papal Palace and his Théâtre



Lavender from the festival in Digne

National Populaire still performs every year. Other venues include the theatres and cinemas, where films are shown all day, the opera house and churches.

Since the 1960s, the fringe-style Avignon Le Off, brings some 1,415 events to over 100 venues including many specially set-up theatres. Amateur performers can be seen for free in the main square outside the opera, the place de l'Horloge.

## Alpes-de-Haute-Provence

Provence's most particular flower has its festival, the Corso de la Lavande, in the mountain spa town of Digne-les-Bains (*see p184*).

The colourful event, which lasts for four days, takes place in August and celebrates the harvesting of the crop. There are jars and pots of honey and all kinds of lavender produce for sale in the town, and events centre on the main street, boulevard Gassendi.

The climax of the festival comes on the last day when the flower-decked floats, representing a variety of themes, parade through the streets, accompanied by music, dancing and cheering. Preceding the floats is a municipal truck spraying the roads with litres of lavender water leaving the whole town heady with the distinctive, sweet perfume.



Lively street performers at the summer Festival d'Avignon

# SPECIALIST HOLIDAYS AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Everything is on offer from sun and sea bathing to skiing and extreme sports in this extraordinarily varied region of France. Watersports are extremely popular and sailing boats can be rented in most towns. For windsurfing, the experienced will want to head for Brutal Beach, just west of Toulon, although boards can be rented at most coastal resorts. Some of the best diving in the whole of the Mediterranean is around

the Iles d'Hyères. There are also plenty of opportunities for canoeing and whitewater rafting in the Verdon and Gard inland. Opportunities for walking, cycling, mountain-biking and horse riding are endless. The Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre publishes the widely available *Topo Guides*, which give descriptions of the tracks with details of overnight stops and transport.

## Arts and Crafts

The **French Institute** is a good resource for courses in learning French combined with other activities. Students can undertake a French-speaking holiday by working part time on the restoration of historic sites with **Union Rempart** (Union pour la Réhabilitation et Entretien des Monuments et du Patrimoine Artistique).

You can also learn sculpting on a weekend course in a beautiful rural setting. Contact **Provence Verte** for details.

Several specialist tour operators organize dedicated painting holidays. For information, contact the **Maison de la France** tourist board.

## Cookery Courses

An extensive range of gastronomic courses providing training in regional or classical cuisine is available. These courses are often combined with visits to markets to learn how to source the best

ingredients. The **Hostellerie Bérard** in La Cadière d'Azur runs excellent cookery courses and workshops.

Olive oil is the lifeblood of Mediterranean cuisine and many olive oil producers offer visits to their *moulins*, such as **Château Virant** in Lançon de Provence. The Olive Tree route in Canton de Levens takes you to see oil presses in action.

For lovers of figs, the family-run specialist, **Les Figuières du Mas de Luquet**, is the perfect place to learn about this delicious delicacy.

## Lavender Fields and Vineyards

The regions of Provence most associated with the growing and processing of lavender are around Le Mont Ventoux, the Luberon and the Provençal Drôme. **Musée de la Lavande**, located in Lagarde d'Apt, organizes guided walking tours of a lavender field on a family-run lavender farm.

There are also plenty of opportunities in the whole of the region for *dégustations*. If you are looking to combine a trip to Les-Baux-de-Provence, Les Alpilles or St Rémy-de-Provence with a visit to vineyards, contact the **Les Vignerons des Baux**. For *dégustations* and tours of the wines of the Luberon, contact **Les Vins Luberon**.



A cookery course in progress at Hostellerie Bérard

## Perfumery and Aromatherapy Courses

In Grasse, perfume initiation courses allow perfume lovers to create their own *eau de toilette* with the help of a "master perfumer". These courses are available at **Le Studio des Fragrances** at Galimard. The **Perfume Workshop** at Molinar also offers courses. The other major perfumery is **Fragonard**, where aroma-synergy workshops are on offer. These courses allow participants to learn the virtues and benefits of plants and essential oils. Lessons are given by professional aromatherapists and plant experts.

## Extreme Sports

The exciting sport of snow-kiting is skiing with a stunt kite to help with the jumps. Join the best snow-kites on the Col du Lautaret between the Grave, the Meije peak and Serre Chevalier. For an even more extreme sport, try a different kind of diving – under ice. Other



Beautiful, aromatic lavender fields in Châteauneuf-du-Pape





A game of *pétanque* in full swing, this is still a favourite pastime in the region

favourite sports include paragliding (*parapente*) and hang gliding (*deltaplane*). For more information, contact the **Fédération Française de Vol Libre**. Gliding (*vol à voile*) is popular in the southern regions, where the climate is warm and the thermals are also good. For details of gliding clubs, contact the **Fédération Française de Vol à Voile**.

### Bird-Watching

The Camargue is a twitcher's paradise. The information centre at the **Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue** provides detailed information on bird-watching. It also organizes walks within the area and has a glassed-in section, where it is possible to observe birds through binoculars. For more information contact the tourist board in Arles (see pp148–50) or the tourist office in Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer (see p141).



Bee-eater, common in Provence

### Pétanque/Boules

An emblem of Provençal life, this favourite game of the local men is rarely played by women. Somewhat similar to bowls, it is played with small metal balls on any dusty ground surface. Although the rules are simple, it can be very competitive with a touch of ferocity, making it interesting to watch.

### Canoeing

Canoeing is popular in the huge Lac de Ste-Croix in the National Regional Park of Verdon. The most famous route is the 24 km (15 miles) paddle down the

Gorges du Verdon from Carrejuan Bridge to Lac de Ste Croix, which usually takes two days to cover. La Palud sur Verdon is the best base for whitewater rafting and kayaking on the rapids. For less challenging canoeing, try the River Sorgue, starting from the base of the high cliffs of Fontaine-de-Vaucluse. For more information, contact the **Fédération Française de Canoë-Kayak**.

### Canyoning

The Grand Canyon du Verdon, Europe's largest canyon, can be visited by raft or on foot. It has now become a centre for adventure sports. The **Castellane Tourist Office** provides lists of companies offering canyoning, rafting and other outdoor trails.

### Fishing

Fishing is a highly popular sport on permitted lakes and rivers. Local tourist offices and fishing shops can help you obtain a licence. You can experience bountiful sea-fishing in the Mediterranean, with catches that include bass, sardines, grey mullet, and crustaceans, such as crayfish and lobster. Night-fishing is becoming increasingly popular too.

### Golf and Tennis

There's a great variety of golf in the area, from high-altitude courses to links facing the sea, or clinging to the fringes of cliffs. Overall, there are around 30 courses, mainly in the Bouches-du-Rhône and the Var

and of these, over 20 are 18-hole courses. Some of the best are located at the Frégate course, St Cyr, St Raphaël's Golf de l'Estérel and, close to Avignon, the Golf De Châteteaublanc. Most offer lessons provided by resident experts.

The Provence Golf Pass gives access to 13 courses in the five departments, including five green fees. For golf addicts and occasional golfers alike, this is an excellent way to sample the courses available. For comprehensive information, contact the **Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Tourist Board** or the **Fédération Française de Golf**, which can supply a list of courses in France.

Most of the resorts and towns have their own tennis courts that are open to the public. Many of these are traditional Mediterranean clay courts.

Tennis lovers converge at Monte-Carlo in April, when the International Tennis Championships come here for the Monte-Carlo Open tournament for male players.



Canoeing in the Gorges du Verdon, an exhilarating experience

## Horse Riding

Although the wetland area of Camargue is famous for its hardy white horses, said to be direct descendants of pre-historic horses (see p140), the whole region – from coast to mountain to rural areas – is extremely popular with horse lovers. For a detailed list of pony-trekking and riding opportunities, contact the **Ligue Régionale de Provence de Sports Équestres**.

## Naturism

The largest and oldest naturist colony in the region is the easternmost of the Hyères islands, the Ile du Levant. It covers half the stretch of the 8-km (5-miles) long island. For more information on other locations where you can bare it all, contact the **Fédération Française de Naturisme**.

## Skiing

The most important skiing areas are in the Maritime Alps, at the meeting point of the Alps and Provence. The main resorts, Auron, Isola 2000 and Valberg (see p100) are only a few hours from the coast, making it entirely possible to combine skiing and beach pleasures in a single day. In the north of the region in the Alpes de Haute-Provence are the ski resorts of Pra Loup and Chabanon. For more information, contact the **Fédération Française de Ski** in Annecy or the **Fédération Française de la Montagne et de l'Escalade**.

## Spa Breaks

Set in the hilltop village of Gordes, one of France's prettiest villages, is the Daniel Jouvance spa, **La Bastide de Gordes**. It is undoubtedly an ideal spot for relaxing breaks.

In the picturesque, gastronomic village of Mougins, **Le Mas Candille** is an elegant, individual hotel, complemented by a Japanese-style Shiseido spa. For the ultimate in luxury, visit the **Thalazur** spa in Antibes.

## Walking, Climbing and Cycling

Long-distance walking and climbing trails are known as Grandes Randonnées (GR) and shorter trails as Petites Randonnées (PR). Some trails are also open to mountain bikes and horses.

Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon offers some excellent cycling and walking trails. The information centre, **Maison du Parc**, provides a list of hikers' accommodation and details of two dozen walking trails. The Camargue has many trails and walking paths. "Sentier Littoral", a splendid coastal path from St-Tropez, covers 35 km (22 miles) to Cavalaire. You can even break the journey at Ramatuelle. An excellent French book, *Promenez-vous à Pied – Le Golfe de St-Tropez* has details of 26 walks in the area.

Perhaps the most spectacular trail in the whole of Provence is the GR 9, which crosses the Luberon range and the Monts du Vaucluse.

For tough rock climbing, try the Buoux cliffs in the Luberon, or one of the 933 routes in the Gorges du Verdon. The creeks, *calanques*, between Cassis and Marseille are utterly picturesque. Easier ascents can be found in the Dentelles de Montmirail, despite the craggy rock faces. The area boasts excellent vineyards, such as Gigondas, Vacqueyras and Beaumes-de-Venise in which to enjoy a *dégustation* after a climb.

The **Comité Départemental de la Randonnée Pédestre** located in Cagnes-sur-Mer, is equipped with detailed information. For details of trails in the region, contact the **Fédération Française de Randonnée Pédestre**.

Cycling tours of the lush green Luberon in Vaucluse are great for people of all ages. In the upper Var, Figinières is famous for mountain-biking, while the Alps of Haute-Provence boast around 1,500 km (900 miles) of marked tracks. For detailed information, contact the **Fédération Française de Cyclisme**.

## Water Sports

Most coastal resorts have excellent facilities for both experienced and amateur sailors. Iles d'Hyères has some top-class sailing schools, in the tiny island of Bendor and the Porquerolles, the largest of the French Riviera islands.

For windsurfing, the reliable winds of the Bouches-du-Rhône and the Var make for favourable conditions. Other good locations include the Camargue, where the lively Mistral wind blows, at Port St-Louis and Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. The wind-surfing regatta in St-Tropez in July is a particularly glamorous event, which is always exciting and very well attended.

Scuba diving is popular, thanks to sparkling water, an ample sprinkling of underwater wrecks and a wealth of marine life. It is especially good in Marseille and the Iles d'Hyères and Cavalaire. The little island of Port-Cros has a special underwater "Discovery Trail". St-Raphaël is also a leading diving centre, with several World War II shipwrecks off the coast.

For more on scuba diving, contact the **Fédération Française d'Études et de Sports Sous-Marins** in Marseille.

The most picturesque stretch of the Rhône passes through Avignon and Arles, otherwise known as the "Cities of Art and History", and the Camargue – home to wild horses, bulls and flamingos. Several companies organize boat trips or river cruises in floating hotels. For details, contact the tourist information centres in Arles, Avignon, Les Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer or Port St Louis du Rhône.

The *calanques* can be visited by boats from Marseille and Cassis. Contact **Les Amis de Calanques** for more details.

Many beaches are privately owned and entry is by fee. Catamarans, dinghies, water-skiing and surfing equipment are all on offer.

For detailed information, contact the national sailing school, **Fédération Française de Voile**.

## DIRECTORY

### Arts and Crafts

#### French Institute

17 Queensberry Place,  
London SW7 2DT.

Tel 020 7871 3515.  
w institut-francais.org.uk

#### Maison de la France

Lincoln House, 300 High  
Holborn, London WC1V  
7JH. Tel 020 70 616 600.

w au.france.fr

#### Provence Verte

Office de Tourisme,  
83170 Brignoles.

Tel 04 94 72 04 21.  
w la-provence-verte.net

#### Union Rempart

1 rue des Guillemites,  
75004 Paris. Tel 01 42 71  
96 55. w rempart.com

### Cookery

#### Château Virant

Route de St Chamas, 13680  
Lançon de Provence.

Tel 04 90 42 44 47.  
w chateauvirant.com

#### Hostellerie Bérard

83740 La Cadière d'Azur.  
Tel 04 94 90 11 43.

w hotel-berard.com

#### Les Figuières du Mas de Luquet

Chemin du Mas de la  
Musique, Mas de Luquet,  
13690 Graveson.

Tel 04 90 95 72 03.  
w lesfiguieres.com

### Lavender Fields and Vineyards

#### Les Vignerons des Baux

Tel 04 90 92 25 01.  
w lesvinsdesbaux.com

#### Les Vins Luberon

Bvd de Rayol, 84160  
Lourmarin.

Tel 04 90 07 34 40.  
w vins-luberon.fr

#### Musée de la Lavande

Route de Gordes,  
84220 Coustellet.

Tel 04 90 76 91 23.  
w museedelalavande.com

### Perfumery and Aromatherapy

#### Fragonard

Blvd Fragonard, 06130  
Grasse.

Tel 04 92 42 34 34.  
w fragonard.com

#### Le Studio des Fragrances

5 rte de Pegomas,  
06131 Grasse.

Tel 04 93 09 20 00.  
w galimard.com

#### Perfume Workshop

60 blvd Victor Hugo,  
06130 Grasse.

Tel 04 92 42 33 21.  
w molinard.com

### Extreme Sports

#### Fédération Française de Vol Libre

4 rue de Suisse,  
06000 Nice.

Tel 04 97 03 82 82.  
w federation.ffvl.fr

#### Fédération Française de Vol à Voile

55 rue des Petites Ecuries,  
75010 Paris.

Tel 01 45 44 04 78.  
w ffvv.org

### Bird-Watching

#### Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue

Mas du Pont de Rousty,  
13200 Arles.

Tel 04 90 97 10 82.  
w parc-camargue.fr

### Canoeing

#### Fédération Française de Canoë-Kayak

87 quai de la Marne,  
94340 Joinville-le-Point.

Tel 01 45 11 08 50.  
w ffck.org

### Canyoning

#### Castellane Tourist Office

Rue Nationale, Castellane.

Tel 04 92 83 61 14.  
w castellane.org

### Golf and Tennis

#### Fédération Française de Golf

68 rue Anatole France,  
92300, Levallois Perret.

Tel 01 41 49 77 00.  
w ffgolf.org

#### Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Tourist Board

62-64 le Canabière,  
Marseille. Tel 04 91 56 47  
00. w tourismepaca.fr

### Horse Riding

#### Ligue Régionale de Provence de Sports Equestres

298 avenue du Club  
Hipppique, 13090 Aix-en-  
Provence. Tel 04 42 20 88 02.

w provence-equitation.com

### Naturism

#### Fédération Française de Naturisme

5 rue Regnault, 93500  
Pantin. Tel 01 48 10 31 00.

w ffn-naturisme.com

### Skiing

#### Fédération Française de la Montagne et de l'Escalade

8 quai de la Marne, 75019  
Paris. Tel 01 40 18 75 50.

w ffme.fr

#### Fédération Française de Ski

50 avenue des Marquisats,  
Annecy. Tel 04 50 51 40  
34. w ffs.fr

### Spa Breaks

#### Hôtel Baie des Anges

770 chemin des Moyennes  
Bréguières, 06600 Antibes.

Tel 04 92 91 82 00.  
w thalazur.fr

#### La Bastide de Gordes

Le Village, 84220 Gordes.

w bastide-de-gordes.com

#### Le Mas Candille

Boulevard Clément  
Rebuffet, 06250 Mougins.

Tel 04 92 28 43 43.  
w lemascandille.com

### Walking, Climbing and Cycling

#### Comité Départemental de la Randonnée Pédestre

7 rue de l'Hotel de Ville,  
Cagnes-sur-Mer.

Tel 09 51 05 19 23.  
w cdrp06.org

#### Fédération Française de Cyclisme

1 rue Laurent Fignon,  
78180 Montigny les  
Brettonneux.

Tel 08 11 04 05 55.  
w ffc.fr

#### Fédération Française de Randonnée Pédestre

64 rue du Dessous des  
Berges, 75013 Paris.

Tel 01 44 89 93 93.  
w ffrandonnee.fr

#### Maison du Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon

60 place Jean Jaurès,  
84404 Apt.

Tel 04 90 04 42 00.  
w parcduluberon.fr

### Water Sports

#### Fédération Française d'Etudes et de Sports Sous-Marins

24 quai Rive-Neuve,  
13284 Marseille.

Tel 04 91 33 99 31.  
w ffesm.fr

#### Fédération Française de Voile

17 rue Henri Bocquillon,  
75015 Paris.

Tel 01 40 60 37 00.  
w ffvoile.com

#### Les Amis de Calanques

4 quai Amiral Canteaume,  
La Ciotat.

Tel 06 09 33 54 98.  
w visite-calanques.fr







# SURVIVAL GUIDE

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# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The peak holiday period for Provence runs from the middle of June until the end of August. During this time, the coastal areas in particular are very crowded. However, the region offers a range of activities throughout the year to suit all tastes: skiing slopes in the winter, golden beaches in the summer, excellent modern art museums, fine Roman ruins, traditional festivals and superb food

and wine. Tourist offices are excellent sources of general information and accommodation advice (see also pp194–5). The main branches in Provence are listed opposite. Shops and banks tend to close between noon and 3pm, so take advantage of this to enjoy a long, leisurely lunch, bearing in mind an old local saying: “Slow in the mornings, and not too fast in the afternoons.”



Enjoying a relaxed lunch on a vine-shaded terrace

## When to Go

During high season in Provence, local businesses in tourist areas hope to make their whole year's profit, and set their prices higher accordingly. The coast in particular can get very busy so to avoid the crowds, head for the hills of upper Provence or the hills of the Var and Vaucluse.

Provence is at its best in May and September when the weather is still warm, but there are fewer visitors. The winter months can offer some sunny days, but beware of the cold mistral wind that can sweep through the area. A few festivals, such as the Nice Carnival and the Lemon Festival in Menton, are cleverly timed so as to attract off-season tourists, and skiing is usually possible between mid-November and April (see p100).

## What to Take

Apart from prescription drugs, you should find everything you need in local shops. People dress quite casually, but you should take care to be respectful when visiting churches, and some restaurants have a more formal dress code.

## Visas and Passports

Currently there are no visa requirements for EU nationals or for tourists from the US, Canada, Australia or New Zealand staying in France for under three months. After that a residency permit (*carte de séjour*) is required. Visitors

from other countries should ask for visa information from their local French authorities. Like most EU countries (but not the UK and Ireland) France is part of the Schengen agreement for shared border controls. When you enter the Schengen area through any of the member states, your 90-day stay will be valid for all of them, even if you travel between several countries.

## Travel Safety Advice

Visitors can get up-to-date travel safety information from the **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** in the UK, the **State Department** in the US and the **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade** in Australia.

## Customs Information

Visitors from outside the European Union can claim back the sales tax (*TVA*) levied on French goods if they spend more than €175 in one shop on the same day. To claim your refund, obtain an export sales form (*bordereau de vente à l'exportation*) and take your goods out of the EU within three months of the date of purchase. The form should be signed by both the retailer and

yourself. Hand it in to customs officials when you leave the EU, and they will give you a set of forms that you should send back to the shop. The refund will then be sent on to you or credited to your bank card. Exceptions for this *détaxe* rebate are food and drink, medicines, tobacco, cars and motorbikes.

There are no restrictions on the quantities of duty-paid and VAT-paid goods one is allowed to take from one EU country to another as long as they are for personal use and not for resale; you may be asked to prove this if your goods exceed the recommended amounts: 10 litres of spirits, 90 litres of wine, 110 litres of beer and 800 cigarettes.

Non-EU nationals arriving in the European Union may bring in the following: up to 4 litres of wine and 1 litre of spirits (or 2 litres of drink less than 22° proof); up to €430 worth of perfume, coffee or tea and up to 200 cigarettes. Visitors under 17 may not import or export duty-free alcohol or tobacco, even as gifts. In general, personal goods (such as a car or a bicycle)



The tourist office at Monieux, Vaucluse



may be imported to France free of duty and without any paperwork as long as they are for personal use and not for resale. A brochure called *Voyagez en Toute Liberté*, available from the **Centre des Renseignements des Douanes**, has further details.

Special rules apply for the import and export of plants, medicines, animals, weapons and art objects. Be sure to consult your own or French customs before travelling.

## Tourist Information

Most large towns have a tourist office (*Office de Tourisme* or *Syndicat d'Initiative*); in smaller villages, it is the town hall (*mairie*) that provides information. Tourist offices will supply free maps and details of local events and accommodation; they will also book hotel rooms on your behalf.

## Etiquette

The French rituals of politeness apply in Provence too. When introduced to a new person, it is correct to shake hands. In shops, say *bonjour* before asking what

you want, *merci* when you receive your change and *au revoir* when you depart. In supermarkets, the cashier will not say *bonjour* to you until they have finished with the previous customer. The usual greeting among friends of both sexes is generally two or three kisses on the cheeks.

In smaller communities, any efforts made by English speakers to communicate in French and show a real interest in the area will be met with encouragement.

## Opening Times

Opening hours for museums are usually 9am–noon and 2–5:30pm, but they vary according to the season, with longer hours being kept from May to September. Most museums close one day a week: national museums on Mondays and municipal ones on Tuesdays. Many museums also close for all of November.

Most businesses open from 8 or 9am until noon and from 2 or 3pm to 6 or 7pm. Banks are open 8:30am–noon and 1:30–4:30pm Monday to Friday and sometimes on Saturday mornings. Department stores,



The beautifully decorated façade of the Musée Matisse in Nice

supermarkets, tourist offices and some sights may remain open during the lunch break.

Restaurants often close one day a week, usually Monday; many will also close on Sunday evenings.

In winter, much of seaside Provence shuts down. Phone ahead to check what is open, because some establishments may be closed for months. Transport services may also be restricted out of season.

## DIRECTORY

### French Tourist Offices Abroad

#### Australia

25 Bligh St, Level 13, Sydney, NSW 2000. Tel (2) 9210 5400. [au.france.fr](http://au.france.fr)

#### Canada

1800 Ave MacGill College, Suite 1010, Montreal H3A 3J6. Tel (514) 288 2026. [au.france.fr](http://au.france.fr)

#### United Kingdom

300 High Holborn, London WC1 VJH. Tel (0207) 061 6600. [au.france.fr](http://au.france.fr)

#### USA

825 Third Ave 29th Floor, New York, NY 10022. Tel (212) 838 7800. [au.france.fr](http://au.france.fr)

### Tourist Offices in Provence

**Aix-en-Provence**  
300 ave Giuseppe Verdi.

Tel 04 42 16 11 61. [aixenprovence.tourism.com](http://aixenprovence.tourism.com)

#### Arles

Blvd des Lices. Tel 04 90 18 41 20. [arlestourisme.com](http://arlestourisme.com)

#### Avignon

41 cours Jean-Jaurès. Tel 04 32 74 32 74. [avignon-tourisme.com](http://avignon-tourisme.com)

#### Cannes

Palais des Festivals, La Croisette. Tel 04 92 99 84 22. [cannes-destination.com](http://cannes-destination.com)

#### Draguignan

2 ave Lazare Carnot. Tel 04 98 10 51 05. [tourisme-dracenie.com](http://tourisme-dracenie.com)

#### Marseille

11 La Canebière. Tel 08 26 50 05 00. [marseille-tourism.com](http://marseille-tourism.com)

#### Monte-Carlo

2A Blvd des Moulins. Tel 00 377 92 16 61 16. [monte-carlo.mc](http://monte-carlo.mc)

#### Nice

5 promenade des Anglais. Tel 04 92 14 46 14. [nicetourism.com](http://nicetourism.com)

#### Nîmes

6 rue Auguste. Tel 04 66 58 38 00. [ot-nimes.fr](http://ot-nimes.fr)

#### St-Tropez

Quai Jean-Jaurès. Tel 08 92 68 48 28. [sainttropez-tourisme.com](http://sainttropez-tourisme.com)

### Travel Safety Advice

#### Australia

[dfat.gov.au](http://dfat.gov.au)  
[smartraveller.gov.au](http://smartraveller.gov.au)

#### United Kingdom

[gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

#### United States

[travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)

### Customs Information

#### Centre des Renseignements des Douanes

23 rue de l'Université, 75007 Paris. Tel 08 11 20 44 44. [douane.gouv.fr](http://douane.gouv.fr)

#### Marseille

48 ave R Schuman. Tel 09 70 27 83 83.

### Useful Websites

#### Anglo Info

[riviera.angloinfo.com](http://riviera.angloinfo.com)

#### Provence Web

[provenceweb.fr](http://provenceweb.fr)

#### Provence & Beyond

[beyond.fr](http://beyond.fr)



The striking Hôtel de Ville of Aix-en-Provence

### Admission Prices

Museum admission prices range from around €3 to €12. National museums are free the first Sunday of the month, and nearly all municipal museums offer free or discounted entry on Sundays.

The Carte Musée Côte d'Azur, which allows unlimited access to more than 50 museums in the region, can be purchased from participating museums, FNAC stores (see p226) and certain tourist offices (see p237). There is also the French Riviera Pass, which offers free access to many sights and has various discounts available; see <http://en.frenchrivierapass.com> for more details.

All permanent collections of national museums and monuments are free for EU card holders under 26 years of age.

Churches normally offer free admission, but a small charge may be levied to visit cloisters and chapels.

### Tipping and Taxes

Most restaurants include a service charge of 10–15 per cent as part of the bill, so there is no need to tip. In a bar or café, leave some small change. A small amount is usually given to taxi drivers, despite service being included. Hotel porters, hairdressers and tour guides will expect a tip of around €3.

### Travellers with Disabilities

Provence's narrow streets can make it a difficult area for

travellers with limited mobility. On the plus side, disabled parking spaces are plentiful (remember to bring your international orange disc with you), and wheelchairs and other useful equipment can be hired at pharmacies.

Wheelchair access is still rather limited, although newer buildings will have ramps and other facilities.

The train company SNCF has carriages designed to accommodate wheelchair users (see pp246–7), and taxi drivers are also obliged to take disabled people and guide dogs.

For more information, visit Access-Able Travel Source ([www.access-able.com](http://www.access-able.com)).

### Travelling with Children

Many hotels have family rooms, but if they don't you can ask them to add a cot or an extra bed. There may be an additional charge for this. If you are hiring a car and need child seats, be sure to book them in advance and ask for them to be fitted for you. Children are eligible for discounted train travel.

### Gay and Lesbian Travellers

There is a strong network of gay and lesbian venues in Provence; this includes bars, discos and beaches. For listings of gay-

friendly hotels and activities, visit the websites listed in the directory on the opposite page.

### Travelling on a Budget

Provence is not the cheapest region in France, but prices are much more reasonable out of season. Staying inland rather than in a seaside resort will also save money. Ask the local tourist office for advice on affordable accommodation, such as hostels and campsites. Travelling by public transport is cheaper than hiring a car, and along the coast this is a perfectly adequate option (see pp246–8 and p252).

Buying *cartes* of tickets for travel on public transport in major towns will also save money. Visiting attractions doesn't have to be costly either, as most museums have free days. Check to see if there are cheaper family tickets too. However,

most of the real pleasure of Provence can be experienced for free and consists of admiring the spectacular views of the Mediterranean and mountains,

swimming in the sea, walking on the beach and hiking in the hills and national parks.



International Student Identity Card

### Student Travellers

Students carrying a valid International Student Identification Card (ISIC) benefit from discounts of between 25 and 50 per cent at museums, theatres, cinemas and many of the public monuments.

The region's main university is split between Aix-en-Provence and Marseille; other large universities are located in Avignon and Nice. You will find the **Bureau Information Jeunesse** (BIJ) and the **Centre Régional Information Jeunesse** (CRIJ) in all university towns.

These organizations can provide a great deal of information about student life and a list of inexpensive accommodation options. For information on hostels in the main towns see page 196.

## Provence Time

Provence is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). It is in the same time zone as Italy, Spain and other western European countries. Standard time differences between Provence and other areas of the world may vary according to local summer alterations to the time.

The French use the 24-hour military clock rather than "am" and "pm".

## Electrical Adaptors

The voltage in France is 220 volts. British appliances of 240 volts can be used with an adaptor, while American 110 volts appliances will need a transformer (*transformateur*).

Plugs have two small round pins; heavier-duty installations have two large round pins. Some of the more upmarket hotels offer built-in adaptors for shavers. Multi-adaptors, useful because they have both large and small pins, can be bought at most airports before departure; standard adaptors can be purchased from department stores.



Façade of the Russian Orthodox church in Nice

## Religious Services

Provence is a strong Catholic region, with many religious services and festivals dating back 500 years. In recent decades, immigrants have brought increasing religious

diversification. Regular services in English are held at the Anglican churches in Nice and Marseille.

## Responsible Travel

Throughout France there has been a rapid growth in environmental awareness.

**Echoway** is one of the leading French ecotourism organizations, which encourages responsible travel. Provence has a long-running rural tourism network, with farmhouse accommodation available through the central **Gites de France**. There are also smaller organizations with a more defined ecological stance such as **Accueil Paysan**, which is a network of small-scale farmers practising low-impact, sustainable agriculture. Finally, there are hundreds of fully equipped campsites throughout Provence (see pp196–7).

Information on local green tourism (*tourisme vert* or *eco*) initiatives and activities can be found through *département* and local tourist offices. Many towns have weekly markets selling only organic and traditional produce (usually called a *marché bio*), which allow visitors to give back to the local community. If a town does not have a separate market dedicated to organic produce, there are often stalls within the main market that are exclusively *bio*, as is the case at Nice's market on the cours Saleya. Market days have been provided throughout the guide.

## Conversion Chart

### Imperial to metric

1 inch = 2.54 centimetres  
 1 foot = 30 centimetres  
 1 mile = 1.6 kilometres  
 1 ounce = 28 grams  
 1 pound = 454 grams  
 1 pint (UK) = 0.6 litre  
 1 gallon (UK) = 4.6 litres

### Metric to imperial

1 millimetre = 0.04 inch  
 1 centimetre = 0.4 inch  
 1 metre = 3 feet 3 inches  
 1 kilometre = 0.6 mile  
 1 gram = 0.04 ounce  
 1 kilogram = 2.2 pounds

## DIRECTORY

### Travellers with Disabilities

#### Federation des Malades et Handicapés

17 blvd du General Leclerc,  
 95100 Argenteuil.  
 Tel 01 39 82 45 73.

#### Federation of the Blind & Visually Handicapped

Paris.  
 Tel 01 44 42 91 91.  
[w aveuglesdefrance.org](http://www.aveuglesdefrance.org)

#### Groupement pour l'Insertion des Personnes Handicapées Physiques

61 rue du Faubourg Poissonniere,  
 75009 Paris.  
 Tel 01 43 95 66 36.  
[w gihpnational.org](http://www.gihpnational.org)

#### Le soutien aux Parents d'Enfants Déficiants Visuels

[w apedv.fr](http://www.apedv.fr)

### Gay and Lesbian Travellers

#### La France Gaie et Lesbienne

[w france.qrd.org](http://www.france.qrd.org)

#### Gay Provence

[w gayprovence.org](http://www.gayprovence.org)

#### International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association

[w iglta.org](http://www.iglta.org)

### Student Information

#### Aix-en-Provence

BIJ, 37 bis blvd Aristide-Briand.  
 Tel 04 42 91 98 01.

#### Marseille

CRIJ, 96 La Canebière.  
 Tel 04 91 24 33 50.  
[w crijpa.fr](http://www.crijpa.fr)

#### Nice

CRIJ, 19 rue Gioffredo.  
 Tel 04 93 80 93 93.  
[w ijca.fr](http://www.ijca.fr)

### Responsible Travel

#### Accueil Paysan

[w accueil-paysan.com](http://www.accueil-paysan.com)

#### Echoway

[w echoway.org](http://www.echoway.org)

#### Gites de France

[w gites-de-france.com](http://www.gites-de-france.com)



## Personal Security and Health

On the whole Provence is a fairly safe place for visitors, however, it is wise to take a few precautions. Extra caution is required in the larger cities and along the Côte d'Azur, especially in Nice, which has a higher crime rate than Marseille. Car crime is prevalent along the coast, so make sure you never leave your valuables in a vehicle. You should also avoid groups of innocent-looking children who may, in fact, be skilled in the art of pickpocketing. Consular offices can be good sources of help in the event of an emergency (see the directory box opposite). Rural areas are usually very safe.

### Personal Property

Pickpockets are common in the tourist areas of the Côte d'Azur and in larger towns. In Nice, bag snatching is on the rise, but fortunately muggings are still rare. Take care of your belongings at all times. Do not carry much cash at any one time, and avoid carrying valuables with you when sightseeing.

Try not to park your car in remote areas, and use multi-storey car parks if you can. These are monitored by video cameras,

and parking there will also remove the risk of being towed away, which is a greater everyday issue than most car crime.

It is not advisable to sleep on the beach, since robberies and attacks have been known to take place there at night.

In the event of a theft, go to the nearest police station (*gendarmerie*) with your identity papers (and vehicle papers, if relevant). The report process (*procès-verbal*, or *PV*) may take time, but you will need a police statement for any



Policeman

Fireman

insurance claim you make. If your passport is stolen, contact the police and your nearest consulate (see opposite).

### Personal Safety

Certain train routes – for example the Marseille-Barcelona and Marseille-Ventimiglia (Italy) lines – have dubious reputations. Stay alert and keep the compartment door shut and your valuables close to you, especially if you are travelling at night.

Some tourists visiting the area during the summer, have been victims of road piracy, with their vehicle being rammed on the motorway to force them to stop. There are police stations at most motorway exits, so if you encounter any trouble, try to stay calm and keep going until the next exit.

### Legal Assistance

If your insurance policy is comprehensive (including a legal service in France), they will be able to help with legal advice on claims, such as accident procedure. If you are not insured, call your nearest consulate office.

### Women Travellers

Women should take the usual precautions: wearing their bag strapped across the body; being careful after dark; avoiding quiet, unfamiliar areas; locking the car doors when driving; and taking care on trains, especially sleepers.



Police car



Fire engine



Ambulance

For contraceptive advice, go to a GP or a gynaecologist (no referral is necessary); to find one, ask at a pharmacy or look in the Yellow Pages (*Pages Jaunes*). Pharmacies are also excellent sources of advice and can dispense the morning-after pill without a prescription.

## Outdoor Hazards

Forest fires are a major risk in Provence. High winds and dry forests mean that fire spreads rapidly, so be vigilant about putting out cigarette butts. Camp fires are banned in the region. If you witness a fire, contact the emergency services at once and keep well away.

The Mediterranean Sea is safe for swimming, although there can be strong currents off the Cap d'Antibes and the Camargue. Public beaches usually have a lifeguard and indicate safe areas for swimming; some display European blue flags as a sign of cleanliness. If you are stung by a jellyfish or sea urchin, seek advice from a pharmacy. If you are sailing, keep up to date with the weather reports, and carry ID and a radio or mobile phone.

Weather conditions in the mountains can change very quickly and without warning. In winter, be sure to advise the local authorities of your projected route; in summer, pack warm clothes and some provisions in case of sudden storms. Altitude sickness can occur in the southern Alps, so climb slowly, pausing regularly to acclimatize.

In the mountains behind Nice and Cannes, you may encounter the grey-brown Montpellier snake. Despite its size (up to 1.5 m/5 ft), it is very shy and will likely flee. Vipers also live in the region. Mosquitoes are common, and repellents and antitodes can be bought from supermarkets or pharmacies. The local lavender oil is an excellent repellent and a good

antiseptic treatment for mosquito bites and wasp stings if applied immediately. Occasionally hornets and scorpions can be a problem, so get into the habit of always checking shoes and clothing before getting dressed. Also check your bedding before going to sleep. Beware of the heat, especially with children, and seek immediate medical advice for heat stroke.

During the hunting season (Sep–Feb, especially on Sundays), wear brightly coloured clothes when out walking. Signs on trees usually denote hunting areas (*reserve du chasse*).



Fire-hazard poster

## Travel and Health Insurance

Check that your travel insurance is valid in France, and note that you will need extra insurance to cover winter sports. EU residents

are entitled to medical treatment with the European Health Insurance Card. You will need the doctor's and pharmacy receipts (*feuille de soins*) to apply for reimbursements.

## Medical Treatment

Pharmacists can diagnose and suggest treatments for simple conditions; they can be recognized by the green cross outside. There is usually one pharmacy open at night and at weekends. Hospital accident-and-emergency units will deal with accidents and unexpected illnesses. In rural areas, the *pompiers* (firefighters) are also trained paramedics and can be called in an emergency. In major cities, a 24-hour doctor service (*médecin de garde*) is available.

## Public Toilets

Modern automatic toilets are widely available in cities. You may also come across public toilets of the squat variety, in which case you might prefer to use the services in a café or department store.

## DIRECTORY

### Consulates

#### Australia

4 rue Jean Rey, 75015 Paris.  
Tel 01 40 59 33 00.  
www.france.embassy.gov.au

#### Ireland

69 ave Roi Albert, La Californie,  
06400 Cannes.  
Tel 06 77 69 14 36.  
www.embassyofireland.fr

#### UK

24 ave du Prado,  
Marseille.  
Tel 04 91 15 72 10.  
www.ukinfrance.fco.gov.uk

#### USA

12 place Varian Fry,  
Marseille.  
Tel 04 91 54 92 00.  
www.marseille.usconsulate.gov

### Emergency Numbers

#### AIDS Helpline

Tel 0800 84 08 00.

#### Ambulance (SAMU)

Tel 15.

#### Centre Anti-Poison (Marseille)

Tel 04 91 75 25 25.

#### Drugs/Tobacco/Alcohol Hotline

Tel 0800 23 13 13.

#### Fire (Sapeurs Pompiers)

Tel 18.

#### Police (Gendarmerie)

Tel 17.

#### Rape Hotline

Tel 0800 05 95 95.

#### SOS Médecins

Nice. Tel 08 10 85 01 01.

### Hospital Emergencies

#### Avignon

Hôpital Général Henri Duffaut,  
305 rue Raoul Follereau.  
Tel 04 32 75 33 33.  
www.ch-avignon.fr

#### Marseille

La Conception,  
147 blvd Baïlle.  
Tel 04 91 38 30 00.  
www.fr.ap-hm.fr

#### Nice

Hôpital St-Roch,  
5 rue Pierre-Devoluy.  
Tel 04 92 03 77 77.

## Banks and Local Currency

Visitors to Provence may change currency in a variety of locations, but it is always wise to arrive with at least a few euros. Credit cards are widely accepted for purchases and in restaurants, but if in doubt, ask in advance. Credit cards and bank cards can also be used to withdraw money, but check the charges levied by the credit card company first.

### Banks and Currency Exchange

Banks in big towns usually open from 8:30am to noon and from 1:30 to 4:30pm Monday to Friday and Saturday morning. They are closed during public holidays.

There is no limit to the amount of money you may bring into France, but if you wish to take more than €10,000 back to the UK, you should declare it on arrival. It is wise to carry large sums of money as travellers' cheques.

You will need your four-digit PIN code (*code confidentiel*) to withdraw money from ATMs (but check the charges levied for this service) and for payment in shops and restaurants. ATM instructions are usually given in

French, English and Italian.

Note that ATMs may run out of notes just before the weekend.

Travellers' cheques can be obtained from American Express, Thomas Cook or your bank. It is recommended that you have them issued in euros. American Express cheques are accepted in France; if they are exchanged at an AmEx office, no commission is charged. In the event of theft, travellers' cheques are replaced at once.

The most common credit cards in France, accepted even at motorway tolls, are Carte Bleue/Visa and Eurocard/MasterCard. Because of the high commissions charged, some Provençal businesses do not accept American Express.



### Banknotes and Coins

Euro bank notes have seven denominations. The €5 note is grey, the €10 is pink, the €20 is blue, the €50 is orange, the €100 is green, the €200 is yellow and the €500 is purple. There are eight coin denominations: €1 and €2 coins are silver and gold; those worth 50 cents, 20 cents and 10 cents are gold, while the 5-, 2- and 1- coins are bronze.



## DIRECTORY

### Foreign Banks

#### Cannes

Barclays, 8 rue Frédéric Amouretti.

Tel 04 92 99 68 00.

barclays.fr

#### Fréjus

Barclays, 68 Place de la Porte d'Hermès, Port Fréjus.

Tel 04 94 17 63 40.

#### Marseille

Barclays, 112–114 rue de Rome.

Tel 04 91 13 98 28.

#### Menton

Barclays, 39 avenue Félix Faure.

Tel 04 93 28 60 00.

#### Nice

Barclays, 2 rue Alphonse Karr.

Tel 04 93 82 68 00.

### Lost Cards and Travellers' Cheques

#### Visa

Tel 0800 90 1179.

#### MasterCard

Tel 0800 901 387.

#### American Express Cards and Cheques

Tel 0800 917 8047.



## Communications and Media

The main telephone company is France Télécom, while postal services are run by La Poste. Post offices (*bureaux de postes*) are identified by the blue-on-yellow “La Poste” sign. In small villages, the post office may be in the town hall (*mairie*). Internet access is readily available via Internet cafés, hotels and Wi-Fi.

### Mobile Phones

A mobile phone from another European country can be used in France, though you may need to inform your network in advance so that it can be enabled. US-based mobiles need to be tri-band to work in France.

International calls on mobile phones are expensive. As an alternative, replace your SIM card with a French card and number or pre-paid mobile and Internet cards, although you may need to get your phone unlocked to be able to do this. The main local providers are Orange France, Bouygues Télécom, SFR and Free. Note, however, that French top-up vouchers have strict expiry periods.

An easier and cheaper option is to use VoIP services such as Skype from your laptop, tablet or smartphone, which allow you to place a call or send messages using only an Internet connection.

With the rise in the use of mobile phones, public phone boxes (*cabines téléphoniques*) are becoming obsolete and are rarely found.

### Internet Access

Internet facilities are readily available. Most hotels offer Wi-Fi, while Wi-Fi hotspots can also be found in many cafés and restaurants. The larger towns such as Marseille and Nice provide for no-cost access in public places and may also have a few Internet cafés, although these have never been very popular in France. The major ports in Provence are all equipped with Wi-Fi. Airports usually offer complimentary Wi-Fi access as well.

### Postal Services

Postage stamps (*timbres*) can be purchased singly or in books (*albums*) of ten, 12 or 20 from post offices or *tabacs*.

Post office hours vary. The maximum hours are around 9am–5pm on weekdays, with a lunch break (noon–2pm), and 9am–noon on Saturdays.

To send letters from France, drop them into the yellow mail boxes. These often have two slots: one for the town you are in; the other for the surrounding *département* and other destinations.

### Newspapers and Magazines

In main cities and airports, international papers can often be bought on the day of publication. *The Connexion* is a monthly newspaper devoted to France, and Provence also has its own English-language publications. Most major towns have an English bookshop (see p221), often an invaluable source of information.

### Television and Radio

The subscription channel Canal+ broadcasts ABC American evening news at 7am daily. Sky News and CNN are available in many hotels. The Franco-German channel ARTE broadcasts programmes and films from all over the world, often in the original language with French subtitles. Listings indicate VO or VF (*Version Originale* or *Version Française*) for non-French films.

Riviera Radio broadcasts in English throughout the South of France on 106.3 and 106.5 FM stereo from Monte-Carlo. The station offers music and current



Mail boxes throughout France are a distinctive yellow

affairs, including BBC World Service programmes. *France Musique* (92.2 FM in Nice and 94.7 in Marseille) specializes in classical music, while *France Info* (105.2–105.8 FM) is a national rolling-news station.

## DIRECTORY

### Dialling Codes

#### Operator

Tel 12.


#### International calls

Tel 00 + country code.


#### Mobile phones

Tel 06 and 07 + number.

#### Mobile phone services

 [bouyguatelecom.fr](http://bouyguatelecom.fr)

 [free.fr](http://free.fr)

 [orange.fr](http://orange.fr)

 [sfr.fr](http://sfr.fr)

### Internet Cafés

#### Cannes

The Bird Phone,  
75 rue Georges Clemenceau.

Tel 04 93 99 80 34.

#### Digne-les-Bains

48 rue de l'Hubac.

Tel 04 92 32 00 19.

#### Nice

Cyber Massena, 9 rue Massena.

Tel 06 06 70 42 35.

### Postal Services

#### La Poste

 [laposte.fr](http://laposte.fr)

# TRAVEL INFORMATION

Situated at the crossroads between France, Spain and Italy, Provence is well served by international motorway and rail links. Nice airport is the most modern and the busiest of French airports outside Paris, handling 4 million visitors from all over the world annually. Marseille airport also welcomes

daily direct flights from most major European cities. For travelling across France, the TGV train is swift (see p246), while the motorail journey from channel ports takes 12 hours, but is effortless and dispenses with motorway tolls. The autoroutes are excellent, but do become crowded in mid-summer.

## Arriving by Air

The two main airports in Provence – Marseille and Nice, Côte d'Azur, which is the second biggest airport in France – are comfortable and modern.

**Marseille Provence** (or **Marseille-Marignane**) has national and international flights serving mainly business travellers, and a low-cost air terminal, MP2. It is useful for destinations in western Provence, such as Avignon and Aix-en-Provence.

Airport taxis to the centre of Marseille cost around €40 (€50 at night and on Sundays). There is also an airport bus to the main train station in Marseille (St-Charles), which leaves every 20 minutes. Car hire companies at the airport include Ada, Avis, Budget, Citer, Europcar and Hertz.

**Nice, Côte d'Azur** has two terminals, both of which take international and domestic flights. There is a shuttle bus between the buildings, but it is best to make sure you know

which terminal you will be using. Taxis to the centre of town cost €25–€30. Airport buses – No. 90 and No. 98 – run to and from the city centre station every 10 minutes. The No. 98 stops along the promenade des Anglais and the port, while the No. 99 turns off the promenade by Hotel Négresco and continues to the mainline train station. From May to October there are buses to Cannes and Vallauris every half hour, and to Monaco and Menton every hour. **Héli-Air Monaco** offers regular helicopter transits to Monaco, St-Tropez and Cannes, while **Azur Hélicoptère** also has many daily flights to these three cities. There are several car hire companies at Nice airport, including Avis, Budget, Enterprise, Europcar, Hertz and Sixt.

There are four other airports in or near Provence which operate international flights; these are Montpellier, Avignon, Nîmes and Toulon.

## Airline Details

Provence is the most easily accessible place by air in France after Paris. The vast majority of major European cities have daily direct flights to Provence. The British carriers – **British Airways**, **easyJet** and **Ryanair** – all run daily flights from London Heathrow, London Gatwick, Luton, Stansted or Manchester to Nice, Nîmes, Marseille, Montpellier or Toulon. A good option among low-cost airlines is **Flybe**, which flies to Nice from Manchester, Birmingham, Southampton and Exeter. The French national airline, **Air France**, has daily flights to and from Nice to Britain, Spain, Germany, Italy and North Africa.

There is a **Delta** flight from Nice to New York several times a week, and **Emirates** also flies to Nice from Dubai five times a week. From all other international departure



The main international terminal at Nice, Côte d'Azur airport



Departure hall at Marseille airport

points you will be required to change planes in Paris to reach Provence.

## Fares and Deals

The large number of low-cost airlines flying to Provence mean that there is a wide range of prices on offer. Fares are at their highest over the Easter period and in July and August. Make sure you check which airport you are flying to when booking, as some low-cost airlines use smaller airports that may be some distance from the city centre.

## Fly-Drive and Fly-Rail Package Holidays

Air France and SNCF offer combined fares for flight and train. You fly into Paris and then catch the train south. Good deals are available for the main destinations such as Avignon, Arles, Nice and Marseille. For notes on fly-drive packages see page 250.

There are also a wide variety of companies offering tailor-made package holidays in Provence, with flight, car hire and accommodation included in the cost.

## Green Travel

Travelling in France without using high-impact flights or long car drives is easier than in many countries thanks primarily to the high quality of public transport, and above all the SNCF rail network.

The French government has introduced an "Ecomobility" programme, which aims to encourage a reduction in car use by making it easier to transfer from SNCF trains to local buses, bikes or other transport (for more details, see [www.sncf.com](http://www.sncf.com)). This includes free-cycle schemes like the *LeVélo* in Marseille, *V'hello* in Aix-en-Provence and *Vélopop* in Avignon. There are cycle-hire shops in many towns and local tourist offices will be able to provide more information on cycle hire and routes in their area. There are also facilities for taking your bikes on SNCF trains (see p248). If you don't hike or cycle, however, exploring the countryside will still be difficult without a car, as local buses are often slow and infrequent.

## DIRECTORY

### Airport Information

#### Avignon-Provence

Tel 04 90 81 51 51.  
Airport to city 10 km  
(6 miles). Taxi €24.  
[www.avignon-aeroport.fr](http://www.avignon-aeroport.fr)

#### Marseille Provence

Tel 0820 811 414.  
Airport to city 25 km  
(17 miles). Shuttle bus  
€10, taxi €40.  
[www.marseille-aeroport.fr](http://www.marseille-aeroport.fr)

#### Montpellier Méditerranée

Tel 04 67 20 85 00.  
Airport to city 7 km  
(4 miles). Shuttle bus €8,  
taxi €15–€20.  
[www.montpellier.aeroport.fr](http://www.montpellier.aeroport.fr)

#### Nice, Côte d'Azur

Tel 0820 423 333.  
Airport to city 6 km (4 miles).  
Shuttle bus €4, taxi €25–€30.  
[www.nice.aeroport.fr](http://www.nice.aeroport.fr)

### Nîmes/Arles/ Camargue/ Cévennes

Tel 04 66 70 49 49.  
Airport to city 15 km  
(9 miles).  
Shuttle bus €5,  
taxi €25.  
[www.aeroport-nimes.fr](http://www.aeroport-nimes.fr)

### Toulon-Hyères

Tel 08 25 01 83 87.  
Airport to city 23 km  
(15 miles).  
Shuttle bus €1.40,  
taxi €40.  
[www.toulon-hyeres.aeroport.fr](http://www.toulon-hyeres.aeroport.fr)

### Airline Details

**Air France**  
UK Tel 0871 66 33 777.  
France Tel 3654.  
[www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com)

**British Airways**  
France Tel 0825 825 400.  
UK Tel 0844 493 0787.  
[www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com)

### Delta

France Tel 0892 702 609.  
US Tel 800 221 1212.  
[www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com)

### easyJet

France Tel 0820 420 315.  
UK Tel 0330 365 5000.  
[www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)

### Emirates

France Tel 0157 32 49 99.  
UK Tel 844 800 2777.  
[www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)

### Flybe

UK Tel 0371 700 2000.  
[www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com)

### Ryanair

France Tel 0892 562 150.  
UK Tel 0871 246 0000.  
[www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)

### Helicopter Services

#### Azur Hélicoptère

Tel 04 93 90 40 70.  
[www.azurhelico.com](http://www.azurhelico.com)

#### Héli-Air Monaco

Tel 00 337 92 05 00 50.  
[www.helairmonaco.com](http://www.helairmonaco.com)

### Discount Travel Agencies

#### Jancarther Voyages

7 cours Sextius.  
Tel 04 42 93 48 48.  
[www.voyages-jancarther.fr](http://www.voyages-jancarther.fr)

#### Thomas Cook Canebiere

9 rue du jeune.  
Tel 04 96 11 26 26.  
[www.thomascook.fr](http://www.thomascook.fr)

#### Trailfinders

194 Kensington High St,  
London W8 7RG.  
Tel 020 7938 3939.  
[www.trailfinders.com](http://www.trailfinders.com)



## Getting Around by Train

Travelling to Provence by train is fast and efficient. The French state railway, Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer (SNCF), is one of Europe's best equipped and most comfortable. The train journey from Paris to Avignon is almost as quick as by air – the TGV (*Train à Grande Vitesse*) takes only four hours. The Channel Tunnel provides a fast rail link via Calais between Provence and the UK, although not all of the route is high-speed.



The interior of Avignon TGV train station

### Train Stations

The main stations in the region are Marseille Gare St-Charles, Nîmes and Nice (Nice Ville av Thiers). All offer a range of facilities, including restaurants, shops, Wi-Fi and secure left luggage lockers. Keep in mind that trains in France are punctual and very rarely leave late.

### Main Routes

The main train routes to Provence from Northern Europe pass through Lille and Paris. In Paris you have to transfer to the Gare de Lyon –

the main Paris station serving the south of France. Tickets from London to Nice, Avignon and Marseille, via **Eurostar** or ferry, are all available from the **Rail Europe** office in New York or on their website. The Eurostar connects at Lille or Paris with TGVs to the rest of France. Passengers arriving by sea at Calais can catch the train to Paris and transfer on to the Corail overnight sleeper service to Nice.

From southern Europe, trains run to Marseille from Barcelona in Spain (5 hours) and Genoa in Italy (3 hours).

Within Provence and the Côte d'Azur, the coastal route between Nice and Marseille is often crowded, so it is best to reserve tickets in advance on this and other *Grandes Lignes*. In the Var and Haute Provence, railway lines are scarce, but SNCF runs bus services. The private rail service **Chemins de Fer de Provence** runs the Train des Pignes (see p185).

When purchasing a rail ticket – whether in France or abroad – it is also possible to pre-book a car (*Train + Auto*), bike (*Train + Vélo*) or hotel (*Train + Hôtel*) to await you at your destination.

Further information on rail travel is provided on the main SNCF website.

### Booking from Abroad

Tickets to and within France can be booked in the UK and US through Rail Europe and via [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com). Rail Europe also has information on prices and departure times. Reservations made abroad can be difficult to change once in France – you may have to pay for another reservation, or claim for a refund on your return.

### Booking in France

Ticket counters at all stations are computerized. There are also automatic ticket and

### The TGV Train

Trains à Grande Vitesse, or high-speed trains, travel at up to 300 km/hr (185 mph). There are five versions of TGV serving all areas of France and some European destinations. The Eurostar links Paris and London, the Thalys runs to Brussels. The TGV Méditerranée to Provence leaves from Paris Gare de Lyon. Other TGVs leave from Grenoble, Geneva and Lausanne. The trains' speed, comfort and reliability make them relatively expensive. Always reserve a seat.

Paris to Marseille now takes just three hours by TGV



reservation machines (with English instructions) on the concourse of main stations. For travel by TGV, Corail and Motorail a reservation is essential but can be made as little as five minutes before the train leaves, and up to 90 days in advance. Costs rise considerably at peak times. The international ticket and reservation system at Lille Europe station allows direct booking on services throughout the continent and the UK.

## Fares

TGVs have two price levels for 2nd class, normal and peak, and a single level for 1st class. The cost of the obligatory seat reservation is included in the ticket price. Tickets for other trains can be subject to a supplement and do not include the reservation charge of €3.

Discounts of 25 per cent are available for people travelling with children (*Découverte Enfant+*), for young people (*Découverte 12–25*), for the over-60s (*Découverte Senior*), for two people travelling together (*Billet Duo*), for return trips including a Saturday night (*Découverte Séjour*) and for advance booking (*Découverte J8* and *Découverte J30*).

For those spending a bit more time on French railways, the SNCF issues a *Carte Enfant+* and a *Carte Senior* giving reductions of up to 50 per cent. Rail Europe can supply these cards.

**Inter-Rail** cards allow unlimited travel in European countries excluding the one of issue. (See the Inter-Rail website for more information.)

**Eurail** passes are available to non-European residents and, in North America, France Railpass is another option.

## Types of Train

SNCF trains are divided into several different types. TGV trains are the flagships of the network, travelling on specially built track at around 300 kph

(185 mph). The classic Intercités trains running from city to city can be a good travelling option. Both TGVs and Intercités can be overnight sleepers. Reservations are obligatory for all services and can be made through Rail Europe or SNCF.

**AutoTrain** trains allow drivers to travel overnight with their car. The service runs from Paris Bercy to Avignon, Marseille, Toulon and Nice. Reservations are essential.

**TER** trains are regional services that usually stop at every station. Reservations are not required, and tickets are not normally available in advance. Route maps and information (in French only) are available at stations and on the TER website, see the directory box for details.



Picturesque view from the Train des Pignes

## Scenic Rail Routes

The private rail service **Chemins de Fer de Provence** runs the Train des Pignes, a 151-km (90-mile) ride from Nice to Dignes-les-Bains. This is a dramatic journey through tunnels and over viaducts, with magnificent views. The single-track railway from Nice to Cuneo in Italy via Peille, Sospel and Tende is also a spectacular ride through mountainous terrain. The Alpzur service runs in summer between Nice and Grenoble with a tourist steam train on the Puget-Théniers section; hikers can leave and rejoin the train after a day's walking. For more information see [cccp.traindespignes.free.fr](http://cccp.traindespignes.free.fr).

## DIRECTORY

### Information and Reservations

#### AutoTrain

[www.autotrain.uk.voyages-sncf.com/en](http://www.autotrain.uk.voyages-sncf.com/en)

#### Eurail

[www.eurail.com](http://www.eurail.com)

#### Eurostar

St Pancras International  
Pancras Road,  
London NW1.

**Tel** 08432 186 186.

Paris Gare du Nord,  
rue de Dunkerque,  
75010 Paris.

**Tel** 08 92 35 35 39.

[www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)

#### Eurotunnel

(Off junction 11a, M20,  
Folkestone).

**Tel** 08443 353 535 (France).

**Tel** 08 10 63 03 04.

[www.eurotunnel.com](http://www.eurotunnel.com)

#### Inter-Rail

[www.interrail.eu](http://www.interrail.eu)

#### Rail Europe USA

44 S. Broadway, White Plains,  
NY 10604, US.

**Tel** 1-800-622-8600  
(freephone in US).

[www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com)

#### SNCF

**Tel** 3635 (France).

**Tel** 00 33 892 35 35 35  
(Outside France).

[www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)

#### TER

[www.ter-sncf.com](http://www.ter-sncf.com)

### Private Railway

#### Chemins de Fer de Provence

**Tel** 04 97 03 80 80.

[www.trainprovence.com](http://www.trainprovence.com)

## Bicycles on Trains

Bicycles can be transported on the Eurostar, either as personal luggage if they fold to the size of a normal suitcase, or by advance reservation. You can transport your bike on nearly every single SNCF train, including the TGV. However, this service must be booked in advance, and in some cases your bicycle will be transported separately, and can take up to four days to arrive. Bikes may also be transported on local trains (indicated by a bicycle symbol in the timetable). The SNCF *train + velo* scheme allows you to reserve a rental bike at your destination station when you book your ticket, although be aware this option is only available on certain routes.

## Times and Penalties

Timetables change twice a year in May and September. Leaflets for the main routes are free, and can also be checked on the SNCF website. The Provence

Alpes Côte d'Azur region has an all-inclusive TER timetable, which includes coach travel.

You must time-punch your ticket in the yellow *composteur* machine at the platform entrance or pay a penalty on the train. This is very easy to do, simply insert your ticket and (if you have one) separate seat reservation face up and the machine will date-stamp them.

## Motorail

**Eurotunnel** rail shuttles vehicles between Folkstone and Calais in around 35 minutes. Once in France, **AutoTrain** will transport your car overnight from Paris to either Avignon, Marseille, Nice or Toulon, while you relax on a passenger train. The journey is not cheap, but it is a practical, stress-free way to avoid the long drive south. Typically, you can drop off your car any time during the day and then use a separate train to reach your destination, where you can pick up the car any time the following day. The automobiles



*Composteur* machines are found at the platform entrance

are carried in open railcars. Tickets must be booked at least five days in advance and include free parking at the terminals for the day before departure and the day after arrival of your vehicle.





## Travelling by Boat

There are few more enticing sights than the glittering Mediterranean of the southern Provençal coast. Almost every city along this stretch of water has a port with boats for hire. Ferry and boat companies operating to offshore islands are easy to find, and there are trips to Corsica from Marseille and Nice throughout the year. The other main waterways in Provence are the Rhône and Durance rivers, and the beautiful Camargue wetland. It is worth noting that the best way to get to St-Tropez in summer is by boat from Ste-Maxime or St-Raphaël. The town has no train station and the roads are usually very busy.

### Mediterranean Ports

Car ferries depart all year round from Marseille to Corsica (Bastia and Ajaccio) and, in summer, from Marseille to Propriano and Ile Rousse, operated by **Corsica Linea**.

**Corsica Ferries** depart from Nice and Toulon to Bastia and Ajaccio, as well as Sardinia, all year round.

Corsica Linea has crossings to North Africa every week from Marseille to Tunis or Algiers.

Regular ferries and boats to nearby islands operate from Bandol to the Ile de Bendor; from La Tour-Fondue to Porquerolles; from Port d'Hyères and Le Lavandou to Le Levant and Port-Cros; and from Cannes to the Iles de Lérins.

For a guide to all European ferry services, visit [www.ferrylines.com](http://www.ferrylines.com).

### Cruises and River Trips

The Mediterranean is famous as a cruise destination, and numerous companies operate on the south coast of France,



Some of the smaller, local boats moored in St-Tropez

stopping at St-Tropez, Villefranche, Marseille and Monaco. **Grand Bleu** has a good range of boats for hire for weekly river trips.

River travel is also an option in Provence with several cruise lines operating luxury river trips on the Rhône between Avignon and Lyon. **Croisieres Avignon-Mireio** offers lunch, dinner or sightseeing cruises from Avignon to a range of destinations. Or you can take daily cruises through the Camargue in a converted *péniche* – a traditional river cargo boat.



A privately owned motorboat from Cannes



Sailing out of a rocky inlet on the Provençal coast

### Sailing

Over 70 ports along the Provence coastline welcome yachts, and mooring charges vary. The Côte d'Azur ports are particularly expensive. Contact the **Fédération Française de Voile** for information on sailing clubs and where to hire boats.

## DIRECTORY

### Car Ferry

#### Corsica Ferries

Tel 0825 09 50 95.

[www.corsica-ferries.fr](http://www.corsica-ferries.fr)

#### Corsica Linea

Marseille.

Tel 0825 88 80 88.

[www.corsicalinea.com](http://www.corsicalinea.com)

### Cruises & River Trips

#### Croisieres Avignon-Mireio

Allée de l'Oulle, Avignon.

Tel 04 90 85 62 25.

[www.mireio.net](http://www.mireio.net)

#### Grand Bleu

Tel 09 50 81 95 78 or

06 69 16 24 24.

[www.grandbleuyatching.fr](http://www.grandbleuyatching.fr)

#### Les Péniches Isles de Stel

12 rue Amiral Courbet, 30220

Aigues-Mortes.

Tel 04 66 53 60 70.

[www.islesdestel.camargue.fr](http://www.islesdestel.camargue.fr)

### Sailing

#### Fédération Française de Voile

Tel 01 40 60 37 00.

[www.ffvoile.org](http://www.ffvoile.org)

## Getting Around by Road

France is a motorist's paradise and the main route to Provence is via an excellent, if expensive, autoroute (motorway) network. Provence is ideal for touring, with some of the most beautiful road routes in the world, including the stunning Grande Corniche above Nice, and the hilltop lanes of the Luberon (see pp174–5). Popular routes, especially the motorway and coastal roads along the Côte d'Azur, are always busy in high season.

### Getting to Provence

The quickest route south from Paris is the Autoroute du Soleil, the A6 motorway to Lyon, followed by the A7 to Marseille. Travellers from the UK and northern Europe should try to avoid driving through Paris, especially during the rush hour. The A26 runs from Calais to Troyes, where you can join the A5, which leads into the A6.

From Spain, the A8 motorway leads directly to Marseille and goes on to Nice and Italy.

In high season, the motorways get very crowded and if you have time it may be worth taking more minor (and attractive) roads. Try turning off the main road at Montélimar to travel to the Luberon via Nyons and Vaison-la-Romaine. Or exit

at Avignon, and head into the Luberon and on to Var.

For the adventurous, the Route Napoléon (N85) leads from Grenoble south across the Alps to Digne, and continues to Grasse. From Grasse, take the scenic D3 to Cannes, or the Route de Nice, which leads to Nice and its environs.

### Car Rental

Car rental in France can be expensive so it is worth checking out your options before you go. There are numerous special offers for pre-paid car rentals in the UK and USA.

Fly-drive options work well for small groups. SNCF offers train and car-rental deals with collection from several main stations (see pp246–7).

### Insurance and Breakdown Services

All car insurance policies in the EU automatically include third-party insurance cover that is valid in any EU country. However, the extent of cover provided beyond the legal minimum varies between companies, so it is best to check your policy before you travel. If you are bringing your car from outside the EU, you can purchase extra insurance cover from the **AA**, **RAC** and **Europ Assistance**. While driving in France you must carry in the car your driving licence, passport, the vehicle registration document and a certificate of insurance. A sticker showing the country of registration should be displayed near the rear number plate. The headlights of right-hand drive cars must be adjusted – kits are available at most ports.

Taking out breakdown cover is advisable. It can be arranged with your European insurance cover, or through a motoring organization such as the AA or RAC. There are also local services such as **Dépannage Côte d'Azur Transports**.

### Using the Autoroute Toll

When you join an autoroute, collect a ticket from the machine. This identifies your starting point on the autoroute. You do not pay until you reach an exit toll. You are charged according to the distance travelled and the type of vehicle used.

Gare de Péage  
de Fresnes

2000 m

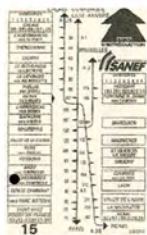
#### Motorway Sign

These signs indicate the name and distance to the next toll booth. They are usually blue and white; some show the tariff rates for cars, motorcycles, trucks and caravans.



#### Tollbooth with Attendant

When you hand in your ticket at a staffed tollbooth, the attendant will tell you the cost of your journey on the autoroute and the price will be displayed. You can pay with coins, notes or credit cards. A receipt is issued on request.



#### Automatic Machine

On reaching the exit toll, insert your ticket into the machine and the price of your journey is displayed in euros. You can pay either with coins or by credit card. The machine will give change and can issue a receipt.

## Rules of the Road

Remember to drive on the right. The *priorité à droite* rule applies, meaning that you must give way to any vehicle coming out of a side turning on the right, unless otherwise signposted. On main roads a yellow diamond sign indicates where you have right of way. The *priorité à droite* does not apply at roundabouts, meaning you have to give way to cars already on the roundabout. Flashing headlights mean the driver is claiming right of way.

Seatbelts are compulsory for front and back seats. Children under ten are not permitted to travel in front seats apart from in baby seats facing backwards. Overtaking when there is a single solid centre line is heavily penalized. In case of breakdown it is compulsory to carry one red warning triangle and a luminous vest in the car. The autoroutes have emergency telephones every 2 km.

## Speed Limits and Fines

Great efforts have been made to reduce road accidents in France, and there are now speed cameras at frequent intervals. Speed limits are:

- Motorways 130 km/hr (80 mph); 110 km/hr (68 mph) in rain.
- Dual carriageways 110 km/hr (68 mph); 50 km/hr (30 mph) in towns.
- Other roads 90 km/hr (56 mph).

Instant fines are issued for speeding and drink-driving. Driving with more than 0.5g of alcohol per litre of blood can also lead to severe fines, confiscation of your license, or even imprisonment.

## Fast Through Routes

There are three main motorways in Provence: the A7 from Lyon to Marseille, the A9 from Orange to Barcelona and the A8 from Marseille to Menton. The A54 cuts across the Camargue from Aix-en-Provence to Nîmes. The A8 is the most expensive stretch of toll motorway in France, but allows you to drive from Nice to Aix-en-Provence in under two hours.



The scenic road through the Grand Canyon du Verdon

## Country and Scenic Routes

One of the pleasures of touring Provence is turning off the main routes onto small country roads. The RN and D (*Route Nationale* and *Départementale*) roads are good alternatives to motorways. *Bison futée* ("crafty bison") signs indicate alternative routes to avoid heavy traffic, and are especially helpful during the French holiday periods, known as the *grands départs*. The busiest weekends are in mid-July, and at the beginning and end of August when French holidays start and finish.

Apart from the busy coastal roads, Provence is a wonderful place to drive around. Some of the best scenic routes include the famous Corniche roads between Nice and Menton, with splendid sea views, or a tour of the back country of the Massif des Maures (see pp120–21). The local tourist office should be able to provide you with more information and some maps.

## Maps

The best general map of Provence is the Michelin yellow map No. 245, at a scale of 1:200,000. IGN (Institut Géographique National) maps are more detailed. Town plans are usually provided free by tourist offices. In large towns you may need a more detailed map, published by Michelin or **Plans-Guides Blay-Foldex/Berlitz**. In the UK, **Stanfords** is famous for its range of maps.

## DIRECTORY

### Car Rental

#### Ada

[ada.fr](http://ada.fr)

#### Avis

[avis.co.uk](http://avis.co.uk)

#### Budget

[budget.com](http://budget.com)

#### Europcar

[europcar.co.uk](http://europcar.co.uk)

#### Hertz

[hertz.com](http://hertz.com)

### Insurance and Breakdowns

#### AA

[theaa.com](http://theaa.com)

#### Dépannage Cote d'Azur Transports

Tel 04 93 29 87 87.

[dcat-depannage.fr](http://dcat-depannage.fr)

#### Europ Assistance

[europ-assistance.com](http://europ-assistance.com)

#### RAC

[rac.co.uk](http://rac.co.uk)

### Traffic Information

#### Info Traffic

[infotrafic.com](http://infotrafic.com)

#### Les sociétés d'autoroutes

[autoroutes.fr](http://autoroutes.fr)

#### VINCI Autoroutes

[vinci-autoroutes.com](http://vinci-autoroutes.com)

### Maps

#### Espace IGN

107 rue de la Boétie, 75008 Paris.

Tel 01 43 98 80 00.

[ign.fr](http://ign.fr)

#### Plans-Guides Blay-Foldex/Berlitz

40–48 rue des Meuniers, 93108 Montreuil.

Tel 01 49 88 92 10.

[blayfoldex.com](http://blayfoldex.com)

#### Stanfords

12–14 Long Acre, London,

WC2E 9LP. Tel 020 7836 1321

[stanfords.co.uk](http://stanfords.co.uk)

### Bus and Coach Companies

#### Eurolines

London Victoria Coach Station.

UK Tel 08717 818 181.

France Tel 08 92 89 90 91.

[eurolines.fr](http://eurolines.fr)

[eurolines.co.uk](http://eurolines.co.uk)



## Parking

Parking in the big towns, particularly along the coast, is strictly regulated. If you are illegally parked, you may be towed away instantly to the police pound and face a substantial fine. Most Provençal towns have pay and display machines (*horodateurs*) and parking is often time limited. Many places offer free parking from noon to 2pm – ticket machines automatically allow for this. Ensure you have enough coins for the meter or purchase a parking card, which are available from the *tabacs*.

## Petrol

Petrol is relatively expensive in France, especially on autoroutes. Large supermarkets and hypermarkets sell petrol at a discount, however the pay booths may close over lunch and the automatic pumps only accept *carte bleue* (French bank cards). A map issued by French Government Tourist offices (*see p237*) indicates the cheaper petrol stations situated up to 2 km (just over a mile) from motorway exits. Unleaded petrol (*sans plomb*) and diesel fuel are found in all stations. LPG gas is also available, often on motorways. A map of locations stocking this fuel can be obtained from any LPG station in France. Note that in rural areas petrol stations can be hard to find, so ensure you have enough petrol for your journey.

As per the anti-pollution rules in place in France, Crit'Air ([www.certificat-air.gouv.fr](http://www.certificat-air.gouv.fr)) stickers should be displayed on the windscreen of your vehicle, and



Mountain bikes are ideal for exploring the Provençal countryside

high-pollution vehicles will be banned on peak pollution days. Paris was the first city to introduce this system, with other major French cities set to follow.

## Cycling

Cycling is one of the most pleasant ways to see Provence. Although there are few cycle lanes in towns in Provence, some cities, such as Arles, Avignon and Nîmes, have specified cycle routes. You can take bikes on certain trains – check the timetable first for the bike symbol (*see p248*). You can also reserve bicycles at several stations (*Train + Velo*). Rental shops can be found throughout the region, especially in the Luberon and in towns around the Camargue, which rent out mountain bikes (VTT). Bicycle theft is common along the Côte d'Azur – make sure you are fully insured before you go. Best of all, Provence is now following the initiative of Paris in introducing a free bike scheme in cities such as Marseille and Nice. Enquire at the tourist office for bike locations.

## Taxis

Prices vary from one part of Provence to another. The charges are predictably highest along the Côte d'Azur, where it's not uncommon to pay €30 for a 20-minute journey. Elsewhere the pick-up charge is usually around €2, and €0.60 or more for every kilometre. An extra charge will be made for any luggage. All taxis must use a meter, or a *compteur*.

Hailing a taxi is not customary in Provence – you must go to a taxi rank or book by phone.

## Hitchhiking and Carpooling

Hitchhiking is possible in France, although officially it is frowned upon. You are not supposed to hitch on the motorways and if you do you will be cautioned by the police. Carpooling schemes such as BlaBlaCar ([www.blablacar.fr](http://www.blablacar.fr)) are also becoming increasingly popular.

## Coach and Bus Travel

Coach travel used to be the cheapest way of getting to Provence, but reductions in air fares have now made it a less competitive option. It is, however, one of the more environmentally friendly ways to travel and will take you directly from city centre to city centre. **Eurolines** (*see p251*) coaches depart all year round from London to Nîmes, Toulon, Marseille, Aix-en-Provence and Avignon. The journey to Marseille takes about 23 hours from London.

Larger towns have a bus station but, otherwise, the bus services are limited. SNCF runs bus lines in northern Provence, and private companies run along the major motorways between towns and on some minor routes, such as the coastal road between Toulon and St-Tropez. Local bus services are notoriously erratic.

Long distance cut-rate coach companies such as Ouibus, Isilines and FlixBus are beginning to develop domestically, and operate routes linking major cities.



Taxis lined up for business at a taxi rank, Marseille

## Travelling in Cities

Apart from Marseille, which competes with Lyon for the title of second city of France, the towns and cities of Provence are small. The best way to get around is generally on foot, parking in most towns is strictly regulated, and in the summer months traffic can be very heavy. Marseille and Nice both have excellent public transport systems that are efficient and easy to use. Marseille and Nice also have bike rental schemes that are similar to the *Vélib* in Paris.

### Metro

The fastest way to get around Marseille is by **Méto**. The system has two lines, which meet at Gare St-Charles and Castellane stations. Méto 1 goes from the hospital La Fourragère in the east to La Rose in the northeast, passing through the Vieux Port on the way. Méto 2 runs roughly north to south, connecting the shipping port with Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde and Ste-Marguerite. Tickets can be bought from Méto stations, on buses or in *tabacs*. Trains run from 5am–10:30pm daily.

### Trams

The Marseille tram network consists of three lines, which together link the centre to areas to the north, south, east and west of the city. The lines meet at Noailles near Gare St-Charles. The best tickets to buy are the 24-hour or 72-hour passes, which give you unlimited travel on the metro, tram and bus.

In Nice some sections of the long-awaited tramway system are operational. The U-shaped Line 1 connects the northern and eastern neighbourhoods to the centre of the city, passing through Place Massena and the main railway station. Tickets can

be bought from machines or tram operators. A new tramway to the airport from the city centre is due to open in 2018.

### Buses

Although bus routes between towns in Provence can be slow and inadequate, within the towns the service is usually good. In Marseille an extensive bus network covers all of the city. Long-distance buses and airport shuttle buses leave from the *gare routière* (bus station) behind the main train station Gare St-Charles. There is a useful left-luggage facility (*consigne*) at both stations.

Nice has a good network of city buses including night buses. The Sunbus is a tourist service that runs daily and has multiple stops throughout the city. Tickets can be bought on board buses or from *tabacs*. Check the website of **Lignes d'Azur** for timetables.

### Taxis

There are taxi ranks on most main squares in towns and cities. You can also telephone for taxis; enquire at the tourist office or your hotel for local numbers. It is not usual practice to hail a taxi in the street.



Bicycles can be hired through the Le Vélo scheme in Marseille

### Cycling


Whether you bring your own bicycle or rent one, most of Provence's towns are small enough to cycle around. Marseille, Avignon and Aix-en-Provence have introduced bike-sharing schemes. Ask at a tourist office for further details and locations (*see p245*).

### Walking


Explore the towns on foot as much as you can. Apart from Marseille and Nice the main city-centre sights of Nîmes, Avignon or Aix-en-Provence can easily be seen in a walking tour.

## DIRECTORY

### Metro

**Méto (RTM) – Marseille**  
 [rtm.fr](http://rtm.fr)

### Buses


**Ligne d'Azur**  
 [lignedazur.com](http://lignedazur.com)

### Taxis

**Nice Taxi Riviera**  
 Tel 08 91 03 93 92.

**Taxi Radio Marseille**  
 Tel 04 91 02 20 20.

### Cycling

**Aix-en-Provence**  
 [aixpripvelo.com](http://aixpripvelo.com)

**Avignon**  
 [smoove-bike.com](http://smoove-bike.com)

**Marseille**  
 [levelo-mpm.fr](http://levelo-mpm.fr)

**Nice**  
 [velobleu.org](http://velobleu.org)



Marseille tram travelling along the Boulevard Longchamp

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# Phrase Book

## In Emergency

Help!	<b>Au secours!</b>	<i>oh sekoor</i>
Stop!	<b>Arrêtez!</b>	<i>aret-ay</i>
Call a doctor!	<b>Appelez un médecin!</b>	<i>apuh-lay uñ medsaũ</i>
Call an ambulance!	<b>Appelez une ambulance!</b>	<i>apuh-lay oon oñboo-loĩs</i>
Call the police!	<b>Appelez la police!</b>	<i>apuh-lay lah poh-lee</i>
Call the fire brigade!	<b>Appelez les pompiers!</b>	<i>apuh-lay leh poñ-peeyay</i>
Where is the nearest telephone?	<b>Où est le téléphone le plus proche?</b>	<i>oo ay luh tehlehfon luh ploo prosh</i>
Where is the nearest hospital?	<b>Où est l'hôpital le plus proche?</b>	<i>oo ay l'opeetal luh ploo prosh</i>

## Communication Essentials

Yes	<b>Oui</b>	<i>wee</i>
No	<b>Non</b>	<i>noñ</i>
Please	<b>S'il vous plaît</b>	<i>seel voo play</i>
Thank you	<b>Merci</b>	<i>mer-see</i>
Excuse me	<b>Excusez-moi</b>	<i>ekko-zay mwah</i>
Hello	<b>Bonjour</b>	<i>boñzhoor</i>
Goodbye	<b>Au revoir</b>	<i>oh ruh-vwar</i>
Good night	<b>Bonsoir</b>	<i>boñ-swar</i>
Morning	<b>Le matin</b>	<i>matañ</i>
Afternoon	<b>L'après-midi</b>	<i>l'apreh-meedee</i>
Evening	<b>Le soir</b>	<i>swar</i>
Yesterday	<b>Hier</b>	<i>eyehr</i>
Today	<b>Aujourd'hui</b>	<i>oh-zhoor-dwee</i>
Tomorrow	<b>Demain</b>	<i>duhmañ</i>
Here	<b>Ici</b>	<i>ee-see</i>
There	<b>Là</b>	<i>lah</i>
What?	<b>Quel, quelle?</b>	<i>kel, kel</i>
When?	<b>Quand?</b>	<i>koñ</i>
Why?	<b>Pourquoi?</b>	<i>poar-kwah</i>
Where?	<b>Où?</b>	<i>oo</i>

## Useful Phrases

How are you?	<b>Comment allez-vous?</b>	<i>kom-moñ talay voo</i>
Very well, thank you.	<b>Très bien, merci.</b>	<i>treh byañ, mer-see</i>
Pleased to meet you.	<b>Enchanté de faire votre connaissance.</b>	<i>oñshoñ-tay duh fehr votr kon-ay-sans</i>
See you soon.	<b>A bientôt.</b>	<i>a byañ-toh</i>
That's fine.	<b>Voilà qui est parfait.</b>	<i>vvalah kee ay parfay</i>
Where is/are...?	<b>Où est/sont...?</b>	<i>oo ay/soñ</i>
How far is it to...?	<b>Combien de kilomètres d'ici à...?</b>	<i>kom-byañ duh keelo-metr dee-see ah</i>
Which way to...?	<b>Quelle est la direction pour...?</b>	<i>kel ay lah deer-ek-soyñ poor</i>
Do you speak English?	<b>Parlez-vous anglais?</b>	<i>par-lay voo oñg-lay</i>
I don't understand.	<b>Je ne comprends pas.</b>	<i>zhuh nuh kom-proñ pah</i>
Could you speak slowly, please?	<b>Pouvez-vous parler moins vite, s'il vous plaît?</b>	<i>poo-vay voo par-lay mwah veet seel</i>
I'm sorry.	<b>Excusez-moi.</b>	<i>voo play ekko-zay mwah</i>

## Useful Words

big	<b>grand</b>	<i>groñ</i>
small	<b>petit</b>	<i>puh-tee</i>
hot	<b>chaud</b>	<i>show</i>
cold	<b>froid</b>	<i>frwah</i>
good	<b>bon</b>	<i>boñ</i>
bad	<b>mauvais</b>	<i>moh-veh</i>
enough	<b>assez</b>	<i>assay</i>
well	<b>bien</b>	<i>byañ</i>
open	<b>ouvert</b>	<i>oo-ver</i>
closed	<b>fermé</b>	<i>fer-meh</i>
left	<b>gauche</b>	<i>gohsh</i>
right	<b>droite</b>	<i>drwaht</i>
straight on	<b>tout droit</b>	<i>too drwah</i>
near	<b>près</b>	<i>preh</i>
far	<b>loin</b>	<i>lwañ</i>
up	<b>en haut</b>	<i>oñ oh</i>
down	<b>en bas</b>	<i>oñ bah</i>
early	<b>de bonne heure</b>	<i>duh bon-urr</i>
late	<b>en retard</b>	<i>oñ ruh-tar</i>
entrance	<b>l'entrée</b>	<i>l'on-tray</i>
exit	<b>la sortie</b>	<i>sor-tee</i>
toilet	<b>les toilettes,</b>	<i>twah-let,</i>
unoccupied	<b>les WC</b>	<i>vay-see</i>
no charge	<b>libre</b>	<i>leebr</i>
	<b>gratuit</b>	<i>grah-twee</i>

## Making a Telephone Call

I'd like to	<b>Je voudrais</b>	<i>zhuh voo-dreh</i>
place a long-distance call.	<b>faire un interurbain.</b>	<i>fehr uñ añter-oobañ</i>
I'd like to make a reverse-charge call.	<b>Je voudrais faire une communication</b>	<i>zhuh voodreh fehr oon kom-oonikah-soyñ</i>
I'll try again later.	<b>PCV.</b>	<i>peh-seh-veh</i>
Can I leave a message?	<b>Je rappellerai plus tard.</b>	<i>zhuh rapelery ploo tar</i>
Hold on.	<b>Est-ce que je peux laisser un message?</b>	<i>es-keh zhuh puh leh-say uñ mehsazh</i>
Could you speak up a little please?	<b>Ne quittez pas, s'il vous plaît.</b>	<i>nuh kee-tay pah seel voo play</i>
local call	<b>Pouvez-vous parler un peu plus fort?</b>	<i>poo-vay voo par-lay uñ puh ploo for</i>
	<b>la communi-cation locale</b>	<i>komoonikah-soyñ low-kal</i>

**Shopping**

How much does this cost?	<b>C'est combien s'il vous plaît?</b>	<i>say kom-byañ seel voo play</i>
Do you take credit cards?	<b>Est-ce que vous acceptez les cartes de crédit?</b>	<i>es-keh voo zaksept-ay leh kart duh-kreh dee</i>
Do you take travellers' cheques?	<b>Est-ce que vous acceptez les chèques de voyage?</b>	<i>es-kuh voo zaksept-ay leh shek duh vwayazh</i>
I would like ...	<b>Je voudrais...</b>	<i>zhuh voo-dray</i>
Do you have?	<b>Est-ce que vous avez?</b>	<i>es-kuh voo zavay</i>
I'm just looking.	<b>Je regarde seulement.</b>	<i>zhuh ruhgar suhlmoñ</i>
What time do you open?	<b>A quelle heure vous êtes ouvert?</b>	<i>ah kel urr voo zet oo-ver</i>
What time do you close?	<b>A quelle heure vous êtes fermé?</b>	<i>ah kel urr voo zet fer-may</i>
This one	<b>Celui-ci</b>	<i>suhl-wee-see</i>
That one	<b>Celui-là</b>	<i>suhl-wee-lah</i>
expensive	<b>cher</b>	<i>shehr</i>
cheap	<b>pas cher, bon marché</b>	<i>pah shehr, boñ mar-shay</i>
size, clothes	<b>la taille</b>	<i>tye</i>
size, shoes	<b>la pointure</b>	<i>pwañ-tur</i>
white	<b>blanc</b>	<i>bloñ</i>
black	<b>noir</b>	<i>nwahr</i>
red	<b>rouge</b>	<i>roozh</i>
yellow	<b>jaune</b>	<i>zhohwn</i>
green	<b>vert</b>	<i>vehr</i>
blue	<b>bleu</b>	<i>bluh</i>

**Types of Shop**

antique shop	<b>le magasin d'antiquités</b>	<i>maga-zañ doñteekee-tay</i>
bakery	<b>la boulangerie</b>	<i>booloñ-zhuree</i>
bank	<b>la banque</b>	<i>boñk</i>
book shop	<b>la librairie</b>	<i>lee-brehree</i>
butcher	<b>la boucherie</b>	<i>boo-shehree</i>
cake shop	<b>la pâtisserie</b>	<i>patee-sree</i>
cheese shop	<b>la fromagerie</b>	<i>fromazh-ree</i>
chemist	<b>la pharmacie</b>	<i>farmah-see</i>
dairy	<b>la crèmerie</b>	<i>krem-ree</i>
department store	<b>le grand magasin</b>	<i>grañ maga-zañ</i>
delicatessen	<b>la charcuterie</b>	<i>sharkoot-ree</i>
fishmonger	<b>la poissonnerie</b>	<i>pwasson-ree</i>
gift shop	<b>le magasin de cadeaux</b>	<i>maga-zañ duh kadoh</i>
greengrocer	<b>le marchand de légumes</b>	<i>mar-shoñ duh lay-goom</i>
grocery	<b>l'alimentation</b>	<i>alee-moñta-syañ</i>
hairdresser	<b>le coiffeur</b>	<i>kwafuhr</i>
market	<b>le marché</b>	<i>marsh-ay</i>
newsagent	<b>le magasin de journaux</b>	<i>maga-zañ duh zhoor-no</i>
post office	<b>la poste, le bureau de poste,</b>	<i>pohst, booroh duh</i>
shoe shop	<b>les PTT le magasin de chaussures</b>	<i>pohst, peh-teh-teh duh show-soor</i>
supermarket	<b>le super-marché</b>	<i>soo pehr-marshay</i>
tobacconist	<b>le tabac</b>	<i>tabah</i>
travel agent	<b>l'agence de voyages</b>	<i>l'azhoñs duh vwayazh</i>

**Menu Decoder**

l'agneau	<b>l'anyoh</b>	<i>lamb</i>
l'ail	<b>l'eye</b>	<i>garlic</i>
la banane	<b>banan</b>	<i>banana</i>
le beurre	<b>burr</b>	<i>butter</i>
la bière	<b>bee-yehr</b>	<i>beer</i>
le bifteck,	<b>beef-tek,</b>	<i>steak</i>
le steak	<b>stek</b>	
le boeuf	<b>buhf</b>	<i>beef</i>
bouilli	<b>boo-yee</b>	<i>boiled</i>
le café	<b>kah-fayle</b>	<i>coffee</i>
le canard	<b>kanar</b>	<i>duck</i>
le citron	<b>see-troñ</b>	<i>fresh lemon</i>
pressé	<b>press-eh</b>	<i>juice</i>
les crevettes	<b>kruh-vet</b>	<i>prawns</i>
les crustacés	<b>kroos-ta-say</b>	<i>shellfish</i>
cuit au four	<b>kweet oh foor</b>	<i>baked</i>
le dessert	<b>deh-ser</b>	<i>dessert</i>
l'eau minérale	<b>l'oh meeney-ral</b>	<i>mineral water</i>
les escargots	<b>leh zes-kar-goh</b>	<i>snails</i>
les frites	<b>freet</b>	<i>chips</i>
le fromage	<b>from-azh</b>	<i>cheese</i>
les fruits frais	<b>frwee fresh</b>	<i>fresh fruit</i>
les fruits de mer	<b>frwee</b>	<i>seafood</i>
le gâteau	<b>duh mer</b>	
la glace	<b>gah-toh</b>	<i>cake</i>
grillé	<b>glas</b>	<i>ice, ice cream</i>
le homard	<b>gree-yay</b>	<i>grilled</i>
l'huile	<b>omahr</b>	<i>lobster</i>
le jambon	<b>l'weel</b>	<i>oil</i>
le lait	<b>zhoñ-boñ</b>	<i>ham</i>
les légumes	<b>leh</b>	<i>milk</i>
la moutarde	<b>lay-goom</b>	<i>vegetables</i>
l'oeuf	<b>moo-tard</b>	<i>mustard</i>
les oignons	<b>l'uf</b>	<i>egg</i>
les olives	<b>leh zonyoñ</b>	<i>onions</i>
l'orange	<b>leh zoleev</b>	<i>olives</i>
pressée	<b>l'oroñzh</b>	<i>fresh orange</i>
le pain	<b>press-eh</b>	<i>juice</i>
le petit pain	<b>pan</b>	<i>bread</i>
poché	<b>puh-tee pañ</b>	<i>roll</i>
le poisson	<b>posh-ay</b>	<i>poached</i>
le poivre	<b>pwah-ssoñ</b>	<i>fish</i>
la pomme	<b>pwavr</b>	<i>pepper</i>
les pommes de terre	<b>pom</b>	<i>apple</i>
le porc	<b>pom-duh</b>	<i>potatoes</i>
le potage	<b>tehr</b>	
le poulet	<b>por</b>	<i>pork</i>
le riz	<b>poh-tazh</b>	<i>soup</i>
rôti	<b>poo-lay</b>	<i>chicken</i>
la sauce	<b>ree</b>	<i>rice</i>
la saucisse	<b>row-tee</b>	<i>roast</i>
sec	<b>sohs</b>	<i>sauce</i>
le sel	<b>sohsees</b>	<i>sausages, fresh</i>
le sucre	<b>sek</b>	<i>dry</i>
le thé	<b>sel</b>	<i>salt</i>
le toast	<b>sookr</b>	<i>sugar</i>
la viande	<b>tay</b>	<i>tea</i>
le vin blanc	<b>toast</b>	<i>toast</i>
le vin rouge	<b>vee-yand</b>	<i>meat</i>
le vinaigre	<b>vañ bloñ</b>	<i>white wine</i>
	<b>vañ roozh</b>	<i>red wine</i>
	<b>veenaygr</b>	<i>vinegar</i>

## Eating Out

Have you got a table?	<b>Avez-vous une table libre?</b>	<i>avay-voo oon tahbl leebr</i>
I want to reserve a table.	<b>Je voudrais réserver une table.</b>	<i>zhuh voo-dray rayzehr-vay oon tahbl</i>
The bill, please.	<b>L'addition, s'il vous plaît.</b>	<i>l'adee-syoñ seel voo play</i>
I am a vegetarian.	<b>Je suis végétarien.</b>	<i>zhuh swee veyzhay-tehryañ</i>
Waitress/waiter	<b>Madame, Mademoiselle/Monsieur</b>	<i>mah-dam, mah-dem wah zel/muh-syuh</i>
menu	<b>le menu, la carte</b>	<i>men-oo, kart</i>
fixed-price menu	<b>le menu à prix fixe</b>	<i>men-oo ah pree feeks</i>
cover charge	<b>le couvert</b>	<i>koo-vehr</i>
wine list	<b>la carte des vins</b>	<i>kart-deh vañ</i>
glass	<b>le verre</b>	<i>vehr</i>
bottle	<b>la bouteille</b>	<i>boo-tay</i>
knife	<b>le couteau</b>	<i>koo-toh</i>
fork	<b>la fourchette</b>	<i>for-shet</i>
spoon	<b>la cuillère</b>	<i>kwee-yehr</i>
breakfast	<b>le petit déjeuner</b>	<i>puh-tee deh-zhuh-nay</i>
lunch	<b>le déjeuner</b>	<i>deh-zhuh-nay</i>
dinner	<b>le diner</b>	<i>dee-nay</i>
main course	<b>le plat principal</b>	<i>plah prañsee-pal</i>
starter, first course	<b>l'entrée, le hors d'oeuvre</b>	<i>loñ-tray, or-duvvr</i>
dish of the day	<b>le plat du jour</b>	<i>plah doo zhoor</i>
wine bar	<b>le bar à vin</b>	<i>bar ah vañ</i>
café	<b>le café</b>	<i>ka-fay</i>
rare	<b>saignant</b>	<i>say-noñ</i>
medium	<b>à point</b>	<i>ah pwañ</i>
well done	<b>bien cuit</b>	<i>byañ kwee</i>

## Staying in a Hotel

Do you have a vacant room?	<b>Est-ce que vous avez une chambre?</b>	<i>es-kuh voo-zavay oon shambrr</i>
double room	<b>la chambre pour deux personnes, avec un grand lit</b>	<i>shambrr ah duh pehr-sonavek un gronñ lee</i>
with double bed	<b>la chambre à deux lits</b>	<i>shambrr ah duh lee</i>
twin room	<b>la chambre pour une personne</b>	<i>shambrr ah oon pehr-son</i>
room with a bath, shower	<b>la chambre avec salle de bains, une douche</b>	<i>shambrr avek sal duh bañ, oon doosh</i>
porter	<b>le garçon</b>	<i>gar-soñ</i>
key	<b>la clef</b>	<i>klay</i>
I have a reservation.	<b>J'ai fait une réservation.</b>	<i>zhay fay oon rayzehrva-syoñ</i>

## Sightseeing

abbey	<b>l'abbaye</b>	<i>l'abay-ee</i>
art gallery	<b>la galerie d'art</b>	<i>galer-ree dart</i>
cathedral	<b>la cathédrale</b>	<i>katay-dral</i>
church	<b>l'église</b>	<i>l'oygleez</i>
garden	<b>le jardin</b>	<i>zhar-dañ</i>
library	<b>la bibliothèque</b>	<i>beebleeo-tek</i>
museum	<b>le musée</b>	<i>moo-zay</i>
railway station	<b>la gare (SNCF)</b>	<i>gahr</i>
bus station	<b>la gare routière</b>	<i>(es-en-say-ef) gahr roo-tee-yehr</i>
tourist information	<b>les renseignements touristiques, le syndicat d'initiative</b>	<i>roñsayn-moñ office too-rees-teek, sandee-ka d'enee-syateev</i>
town hall	<b>l'hôtel de ville</b>	<i>lohtel duh veel</i>
private mansion	<b>l'hôtel particulier</b>	<i>lohtel partikoo-lyay</i>
closed for public holiday	<b>fermeture jour férié</b>	<i>fehrrmeh-tur zhoor fehree-ay</i>

## Numbers

0	<b>zéro</b>	<i>zeh-roh</i>
1	<b>un, une</b>	<i>urñ, oon</i>
2	<b>deux</b>	<i>duh</i>
3	<b>trois</b>	<i>trwah</i>
4	<b>quatre</b>	<i>katrr</i>
5	<b>cinq</b>	<i>sañk</i>
6	<b>six</b>	<i>sees</i>
7	<b>sept</b>	<i>set</i>
8	<b>huit</b>	<i>weet</i>
9	<b>neuf</b>	<i>nerf</i>
10	<b>dix</b>	<i>dees</i>
11	<b>onze</b>	<i>oñz</i>
12	<b>douze</b>	<i>dooz</i>
13	<b>treize</b>	<i>trehz</i>
14	<b>quatorze</b>	<i>katorz</i>
15	<b>quinze</b>	<i>kañz</i>
16	<b>seize</b>	<i>sehzh</i>
17	<b>dix-sept</b>	<i>dees-set</i>
18	<b>dix-huit</b>	<i>dees-weet</i>
19	<b>dix-neuf</b>	<i>dees-nerf</i>
20	<b>vingt</b>	<i>vañ</i>
30	<b>trente</b>	<i>tront</i>
40	<b>quarante</b>	<i>karofit</i>
50	<b>cinquante</b>	<i>sañkoñt</i>
60	<b>soixante</b>	<i>swasoñt</i>
70	<b>soixante-dix</b>	<i>swasoñt-dees</i>
80	<b>quatre-vingts</b>	<i>katrr-vañ</i>
90	<b>quatre-vingts-dix</b>	<i>katrr-vañ-dees</i>
100	<b>cent</b>	<i>soñ</i>
1,000	<b>mille</b>	<i>meel</i>

## Time

one minute	<b>une minute</b>	<i>oon mee-noot</i>
one hour	<b>une heure</b>	<i>oon urr</i>
half an hour	<b>une demi-heure</b>	<i>oon duh-mee urr</i>
Monday	<b>lundi</b>	<i>luñ-dee</i>
Tuesday	<b>mardi</b>	<i>mar-dee</i>
Wednesday	<b>mercredi</b>	<i>mehrrukh-dee</i>
Thursday	<b>jeudi</b>	<i>zhuh-dee</i>
Friday	<b>vendredi</b>	<i>voñdruh-dee</i>
Saturday	<b>samedi</b>	<i>sam-dee</i>
Sunday	<b>dimanche</b>	<i>dee-moñsh</i>