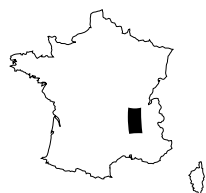


# Lyon & the Rhône Valley



Gourmets, eat your heart out: Lyon is the gastronomic capital of France, with lavish piggy-driven dishes, delicacies to savour, and a bounty of eating spaces. Be it an old-fashioned bistro with checked tablecloths and slipper-shuffling grandma or smart, minimalist space with state-of-the-art furnishings and chic city-slicker crowd, this French cuisine king thrills. Throw two mighty rivers, majestic Roman amphitheatres and elegant Renaissance architecture into the pot and the city will have you captivated. Most travellers turn up here unexpectedly (for business or en route south from Paris), are pleasantly surprised and instantly yearn to return.

Plumb at the crossroads to central Europe and the Atlantic, the Rhineland and the Mediterranean, the Rhône Valley has been the envy of many a soul for centuries. Ensnaring the Rhône River on its 813km-long journey from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean, the valley forges downstream from Lyon past Gallo-Roman ruins at Vienne (of jazz festival fame), nougat-making workshops in Montélimar and an extraordinary wealth of centuries-old Côtes du Rhône vineyards from which some of France's most respected reds are born.

Design-driven St-Étienne with its no-frills airport is a handy gateway to this region. For action-seeking souls, the green 'n' wild Gorges de l'Ardèche, which bring the River Ardèche tumbling to the gates of Provence and Languedoc, promise adventure by the kayakload.

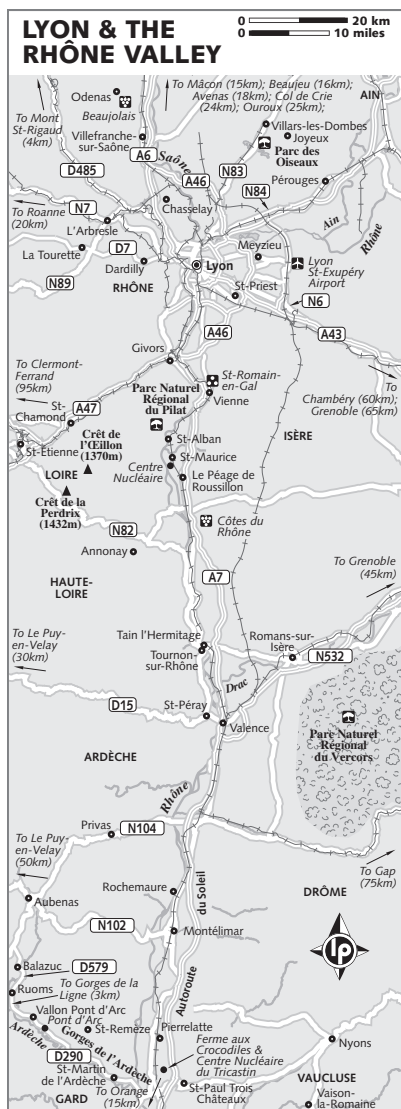
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Breakfast on oysters and a glass of crisp white Côtes du Rhône on a pavement terrace in village-like **Croix Rousse** (p503)
- Stroll the city: gorge on medieval and Renaissance architecture under the beady eyes of gargoyles and other cheeky stone characters in **Vieux Lyon** (p501) and cool down afterwards in Daniel Buren's polka-dot fountains on the **presqu'île** (p502)
- Enjoy twinkling views of **Fourvière** (p502) lit at night; next day hike (or ride the funicular) up the 'hill of prayer' for a stunning panorama of the city and its two rivers
- Feast on trotters, ears and other piggy parts in a traditional Lyonnais **bouchon** (p508)
- Learn the secret of French cuisine with France's only female three-starred Michelin chef at Anne-Sophie Pic's state-of-the-art cookery school in **Valence** (p519)
- Revel in the romance of a bygone era: pedal from A to B, eat frogs' legs and sleep in a 1920s *roulotte* (traditional caravan) in wine-rich **Beaujolais** (p517);
- Overdose on outdoor action in the racy white waters of the **Gorges de l'Ardèche** (p520)



■ POPULATION: 5,646,000

■ AREA: 43,698 SQ KM



## LYON

pop 467,400

Commercial, industrial and banking powerhouse for the past 500 years, grand old Lyon (Lyons in English) is the focal point of a prosperous urban area of almost two million people, France's second-largest conurbation where international police agency Interpol has

been headquartered since 1989. Outstanding art museums, a dynamic cultural life, a busy clubbing and drinking scene, not to mention a thriving university and fantastic shopping, lend the city a distinctly sophisticated air.

Green parks, riverside paths, a wonderfully successful city bicycle scheme and a historical old town sufficiently precious to be protected as a Unesco World Heritage Site ensure a bounty of discoveries – on foot or bicycle – for the first-time visitor, while adventurous gourmets (particularly those with a penchant for piggie parts) can indulge their wildest gastronomic fantasies in a dining scene that is chic, sharp and savvy.

## History

In 43 BC the Roman military colony of Lugdunum (Lyon) was founded. It served as the capital of the Roman territories known as the Three Gauls under Augustus, but had to wait until the 15th century for fame and fortune to strike: with the arrival of moveable type in 1473, Lyon became one of Europe's foremost publishing centres, with several hundred resident printers contributing to the city's extraordinary prosperity. By the mid-18th century, the city's influential silk weavers – 40% of Lyon's total workforce – transformed what had already been a textiles centre since the 15th century into the silk-weaving capital of Europe.

A century on, Lyon had tripled in size, boasting a population of 340,000 people and 100,000 weaving looms (40,000 of which were in the hilltop neighbourhood of Croix Rouse). A weaver spent 14 to 20 hours a day hunched over his loom breathing in silk dust, two-thirds were illiterate and everyone was paid a pittance. Strikes in 1830–31 and 1834 only resulted in the death of several hundred weavers.

In 1870 the Lumière family moved to Lyon, and sons Louis and Auguste shot the first moving picture – of workers exiting their father's photographic factory – in 1895. Cinema's birth was an instant winner.

During WWII some 4000 people (including Resistance leader Jean Moulin) were killed and 7500 others deported to Nazi death camps under Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie (1913–91), the 'butcher of Lyon'. Nazi rule ended in September 1944, when the retreating Germans blew up all but two of Lyon's 28 bridges. A Lyon court sentenced Barbie to death in absentia in 1952