

Welcome to Provence & the Côte d'Azur

Whether it's cruising the cliff-top roads, sunbathing on the beaches or browsing for goodies at the weekly market, Provence and the Côte d'Azur sum up the essence of France – sexy, sun-drenched and irresistibly seductive.

Lyrical Landscapes

Provence and the Côte d'Azur are made for explorers. One of the joys of travelling here is touring the back roads and soaking up the stunning variety of landscapes: fields of lavender, ancient olive groves, cliff-top roads, maquis-cloaked hills and even snow-tipped mountains. It's home to Europe's deepest canyon, oldest road and highest pass, all a dream come true for drivers – and then there's the Mediterranean itself, a bright mirror of blue reflecting back craggy cliffs, white beaches and endless skies. Take your time – getting there is half of the fun.

Artistic Legacy

It wasn't just the scenery that drew artists like Renoir, Chagall, Cézanne and Picasso here: it was the light, described by Matisse as 'soft and tender, despite its brilliance'. Whether you're gazing over a glittering seascape or watching a fiery sunset in the hills, a trip around this corner of France feels like stepping straight into an impressionist canvas. And with such a rich artistic legacy, it's no surprise that the region is home to a wealth of iconic art collections, not to mention studios where van Gogh, Cézanne and Renoir worked.

History Galore

Two thousand years ago, Provence was part of Roman Gaul, and the Romans left behind a fabulous legacy of monuments, structures and buildings – not to mention some of France's first vineyards. The area is littered with Roman remains, including amphitheatres in Nîmes, Arles and Orange, the magnificent Pont du Gard aqueduct and even whole towns near St-Rémy-de-Provence and Vaison-la-Romaine. Factor in a collection of prehistoric sites, medieval abbeys, elegant churches and art deco buildings, and Provence begins to feel like a living history book.

Gourmet Gastronomy

Wherever you end up in Provence, you certainly won't go hungry. Food is a central part of French life, but in Provence it becomes an all-consuming passion. Dominated by the hallowed ingredients of Mediterranean cooking – olive oil, wine, tomatoes and garlic – the region's cuisine is guaranteed to be a highlight, whether that's savouring a simple bowl of *soupe au pistou*, tasting olive oil on a farm, or indulging in a full-blown bowl of bouillabaisse on Marseille's harbourside. *Bon appetit.*



Why I Love Provence & the Côte d'Azur

By Oliver Berry, Author

For me, the pleasure of Provence is its diversity. In just a single day you can have a whole holiday's worth of experiences: breakfast on the beach, a morning exploring Nice's old town, lunch at a country *auberge* (inn), an afternoon touring the hills, a vineyard visit, an early-evening shot of pastis, a game of *pétanque* and then an unforgettable sunset over the foothills of the Alps. It was the first place in France I ever visited (at the tender age of two), and I've been coming back ever since. Somehow, I can't stay away for long.

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