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lonely planet

A scenic view of a French village built on a hillside. The houses have red-tiled roofs and light-colored walls. A stone bridge with two large arches spans a river in the foreground. The buildings and bridge are reflected in the water. The sky is blue with some clouds.

# France

# 4 easy-to-use sections

## 1

### PLAN YOUR TRIP

Your planning tool kit

Photos & suggestions to help you create the perfect trip.

## 2

### ON THE ROAD

Your complete guide

Expert reviews, easy-to-use maps & insider tips.

## 3

### UNDERSTAND

Get more from your trip

Learn about the big picture, to make sense of what you see.

## 4

### SURVIVAL GUIDE

Your at-a-glance reference

Vital practical information for a smooth trip.

## How to use this book



Look for these symbols to quickly identify listings:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Sights             |  Sleeping                |
|  Beaches            |  Eating                  |
|  Activities         |  Drinking                |
|  Courses            |  Entertainment           |
|  Tours              |  Shopping                |
|  Festivals & Events |  Information & Transport |

**All reviews** are ordered in our writers' preference, starting with their most preferred option. Additionally:

**Eating and Sleeping reviews** are ordered by price range (budget, midrange, top end) and, within these ranges, by writer preference.

These symbols and abbreviations give vital information for each listing:

- ★ Must-visit recommendation
-  Sustainable or green recommendation
- FREE** No payment required
-  Telephone number
-  Opening hours
-  Parking
-  Nonsmoking
-  Air-conditioning
-  Internet access
-  Wi-fi access
-  Swimming pool
-  Vegetarian selection
-  English-language menu
-  Family-friendly
-  Pet-friendly
-  Bus
-  Ferry
-  Tram
-  Train station
- M** Metro/MRT station
- S** Subway/S-Bahn/Skytrain station
- U** Underground/U-Bahn station
- B** BART station
-  Monorail
- apt apartments
- d double rooms
- dm dorm beds
- f family rooms
- q quad rooms
- r rooms
- s single rooms
- ste suites
- tr triple rooms
- tw twin rooms

For symbols used on maps, see the Map Legend.

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# France



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## PLAN YOUR TRIP

Welcome to France.....	6
France Map .....	8
France's Top Experiences .....	10
Need to Know .....	22
First Time France .....	24
What's New .....	26
Accommodation .....	28
Month by Month.....	30
Itineraries .....	34
Eat & Drink Like a Local .....	39
Family Travel .....	47
Activities .....	52
Regions at a Glance....	59



SEMUR-EN-AUXOIS P454



TRAIN DU MONTEVERVE P510

## ON THE ROAD

### PARIS ..... 67

### AROUND PARIS .... 187

Disneyland Resort Paris....	188
Versailles .....	190
Giverny.....	194
Fontainebleau .....	196
Vaux-le-Vicomte .....	198
Chantilly.....	199
Chartres.....	201

### LILLE, FLANDERS & THE SOMME .... 207

Lille.....	209
Flanders & Artois .....	216
Cassel .....	216
Arras.....	217
Lens .....	219
Côte d'Opale .....	219
Calais to Boulogne.....	219
Calais .....	221
Boulogne-sur-Mer .....	223
Le Touquet.....	225
Baie de Somme.....	226
Le Crotoy .....	226
St-Valery-sur-Somme .....	228

Somme Battlefields Memorials .....	229
Amiens .....	235
Compiègne .....	238
Laon .....	239

### NORMANDY..... 241

Seine-Maritime .....	243
Rouen .....	243
Dieppe .....	247
Côte d'Albâtre.....	249
Le Havre.....	252
Calvados .....	254
Bayeux .....	254
D-Day Beaches .....	257
Caen.....	262

Deauville .....	266
Trouville-sur-Mer .....	267
Honfleur.....	268
Manche.....	271
Cherbourg.....	271
Mont St-Michel.....	272

### BRITTANY..... 281

North Coast.....	283
St-Malo.....	283
Dinard.....	288
Cancale .....	290
Dinan .....	291
Paimpol .....	293
Finistère.....	294
Roscoff.....	294
Morlaix .....	296
Brest.....	297
Île d'Ouessant.....	299
Presqu'île de Crozon .....	301
Locronan .....	303
Quimper .....	304
Concarneau .....	306
Pont-Aven .....	308
Golfe du Morbihan .....	309
Carnac .....	309
Quiberon .....	312
Belle Île .....	313
Vannes .....	316
Eastern & Central Brittany .....	317
Josselin .....	318
Forêt de Paimpont.....	319
Rennes.....	320

### CHAMPAGNE..... 327

Reims .....	329
Marne .....	336
Montagne de Reims Champagne Route .....	336
Vallée de la Marne Champagne Route.....	337



# Contents

Côte des Blancs	
Champagne Route	339
<b>Épernay</b>	<b>341</b>
<b>Troyes</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>Côte des Bar</b>	
<b>Champagne Route</b>	<b>347</b>
Colombey-les-Deux-Églises	348
Essoyes	348
Les Riceys	349

## **ALSACE & LORRAINE** ..... 351

<b>Alsace</b>	<b>354</b>
Strasbourg	354
Route des Vins d'Alsace	362
Colmar	369
Massif des Vosges	374
Mulhouse	374
<b>Lorraine</b>	<b>376</b>
Nancy	376
Baccarat	381
Metz	382
Verdun	387
Romagne-sous-Montfaucon	390

## **THE LOIRE VALLEY** ..... 395

<b>Orléanais</b>	<b>399</b>
Orléans	399
<b>Blésois</b>	<b>402</b>
Blois	403
<b>Touraine</b>	<b>410</b>
Tours	410
Amboise	415
Villandry	417
Langeais	417
Azay-le-Rideau	418
Loches	419
Chinon	420
<b>Anjou</b>	<b>422</b>
Saumur	422

East of Saumur	426
Angers	428

## **BURGUNDY** ..... 435

<b>Côte d'Or</b>	<b>437</b>
Dijon	437
Côte d'Or Vineyards	443
<b>Yonne</b>	<b>456</b>
Auxerre	456
La Puisaye	459
Chablis	460
Tonnerre	462
Noyers-sur-Serein	462
Avallon	463
Vézelay	464
<b>Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan</b>	<b>466</b>
<b>Saône-et-Loire</b>	<b>468</b>
Autun	468
Tournus	469
Cluny	470
Mâcon	472

## **LYON & THE RHÔNE VALLEY** ... 477

<b>Lyon</b>	<b>479</b>
<b>North of Lyon</b>	<b>497</b>
Beaujolais	497
La Dombes	499
<b>South of Lyon</b>	<b>500</b>
Vienne	500
Valence	501
Gorges de l'Ardèche	503

## **FRENCH ALPS & THE JURA MOUNTAINS** ..507

<b>Savoie</b>	<b>510</b>
Chamonix	510
Megève/St-Gervais	518
Les Portes du Soleil	520
Évian-les-Bains	522
Annecy	523

Chambéry	528
Les Trois Vallées	531
Val d'Isère	534
Parc National de la Vanoise	537
<b>Dauphiné</b>	<b>539</b>
Grenoble	539
Bourg d'Oisans	545
Parc National des Écrins	546
Les Deux Alpes	547
Alpe d'Huez	549
Briançon	550
<b>The Jura Mountains</b>	<b>552</b>
Besançon	552
Parc Naturel Régional du Haut-Jura	558
Belfort	560

## **AUVERGNE** ..... 565

<b>Clermont-Ferrand</b>	<b>567</b>
Plateau de Gergovie	571
Royat	571
Riom	571
<b>Vichy</b>	<b>572</b>
<b>Pays d'Issoire</b>	<b>575</b>
<b>Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne</b>	<b>577</b>
Puy de Dôme	577
Orcival	578
Col de Guéry	578
Le Mont-Dore & La Bourboule	578
Besse-et-St-Anastaise	580
Monts du Cantal	581
Salers	582
Murøl & Lac Chambon	582
<b>Parc Naturel Régional Livradois-Forez</b>	<b>583</b>
Thiers	584
La Chaise-Dieu	585
<b>Le Puy-en-Velay</b>	<b>585</b>
<b>Haut-Lignon</b>	<b>590</b>

## ON THE ROAD

### **DORDOGNE, LIMOUSIN & LOT ... 593**

#### **Limousin ..... 595**

Limoges ..... 595

The Creuse ..... 602

Western Corrèze ..... 603

#### **The Dordogne ..... 603**

Périgueux ..... 604

Brantôme ..... 607

Bergerac ..... 608

Monpazier ..... 612

Cadouin & Le Buisson ... 614

Beynac, Castelnaud  
& Around ..... 615

Sarlat-la-Canéda ..... 617

The Vézère Valley ..... 621

Upper Dordogne Valley ... 625

#### **The Lot Valley ..... 628**

Cahors ..... 628

West of Cahors ..... 633

East of Cahors ..... 633

Figeac ..... 634

### **ATLANTIC COAST... 639**

#### **Nantes ..... 641**

Poitou ..... 647

La Rochelle ..... 649

Île de Ré ..... 653

Cognac ..... 656

Bordeaux ..... 657

Arcachon ..... 667

Cap Ferret ..... 668

### **FRENCH BASQUE COUNTRY ..... 673**

Bayonne ..... 674

Biarritz ..... 680

Guéthary ..... 685

St-Jean de Luz ..... 687

La Rhune ..... 690

Espelette ..... 691

St-Jean Pied de Port ... 692

St-Étienne

de Balgorry ..... 694

### **THE PYRENEES ... 699**

#### **Pau ..... 701**

#### **Lourdes ..... 705**

#### **Parc National des Pyrénées ..... 710**

Vallée d'Aspe ..... 711

Vallée d'Ossau ..... 713

Cauterets ..... 716

#### **Vallée des Gaves ..... 718**

#### **Vallée de Garonne ... 718**

Bagnères de Luchon ... 718

St-Bertrand

de Comminges ..... 719

#### **Vallée de l'Ariège ..... 720**

### **TOULOUSE AREA... 725**

#### **Toulouse ..... 727**

#### **Tarn ..... 735**

Castres ..... 735

Albi ..... 735

Cordes-sur-Ciel ..... 738

Najac ..... 739

Montauban ..... 739

#### **Armagnac ..... 740**

Condom & Around ..... 740

Lectoure ..... 742

Auch ..... 742

### **LANGUEDOC- ROUSSILLON ..... 745**

#### **Bas-Languedoc ..... 748**

Nîmes ..... 748

Uzès ..... 753

Montpellier ..... 755

Sète ..... 761

Bouzigues ..... 763

Agde ..... 764

Narbonne ..... 764

Béziers ..... 766

Carcassonne ..... 767

#### **Parc National des Cévennes ..... 771**

#### **Gorges du Tarn ..... 773**

#### **Grands Causses ..... 774**

#### **Roussillon ..... 776**

Perpignan ..... 777

Céret ..... 779

Têt Valley ..... 781

Côte Vermeille ..... 782

### **PROVENCE ..... 789**

#### **Marseille ..... 792**

#### **Aix-en-Provence ..... 808**

#### **The Camargue ..... 813**

Arles ..... 813

Camargue Wetlands ... 818

Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer ... 819

### **COVID-19**

We have re-checked every business in this book before publication to ensure that it is still open after the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the economic and social impacts of COVID-19 will continue to be felt long after the outbreak has been contained, and many businesses, services and events referenced in this guide may experience ongoing restrictions. Some businesses may be temporarily closed, have changed their opening hours and services, or require bookings; some unfortunately could have closed permanently. We suggest you check with venues before visiting for the latest information.



# Contents

## UNDERSTAND

<b>Les Alpilles</b> .....	<b>821</b>
St-Rémy-de-Provence .....	822
Les Baux-de-Provence .....	824
<b>Vaucluse</b> .....	<b>824</b>
Avignon .....	825
Villeneuve-lès-Avignon .....	831
Orange .....	832
Vaison-la-Romaine .....	833
Mont Ventoux .....	835
Carpentras .....	836
Fontaine-de-Vaucluse .....	837
<b>The Luberon</b> .....	<b>838</b>
Apt .....	838
Gordes & Around .....	840
Roussillon .....	841
Le Petit Luberon .....	842
Le Grand Luberon .....	844
<b>Alpes-de-Haute-Provence</b> .....	<b>845</b>
Pays de Forcalquier .....	846
Gorges du Verdon .....	847
<b>THE CÔTE D'AZUR &amp; MONACO</b> .....	<b>851</b>
<b>Nice</b> .....	<b>854</b>
<b>Cannes</b> .....	<b>865</b>
<b>Antibes</b> .....	<b>871</b>
<b>Mougins &amp; Mouans-Sartoux</b> .....	<b>874</b>
<b>Grasse</b> .....	<b>875</b>
<b>Vence</b> .....	<b>876</b>
<b>St-Paul de Vence</b> .....	<b>878</b>
<b>Corniche de l'Estérel</b> .....	<b>879</b>
Fréjus .....	880
<b>St-Tropez</b> .....	<b>881</b>
<b>Massif des Maures</b> .....	<b>884</b>
<b>Corniche des Maures</b> .....	<b>885</b>
<b>The Three Corniches</b> .....	<b>886</b>
Èze .....	886
La Turbie .....	887
<b>Monaco</b> .....	<b>887</b>

<b>Roquebrune-Cap Martin</b> .....	<b>894</b>
<b>Menton</b> .....	<b>895</b>
<b>CORSICA</b> .....	<b>899</b>
<b>The Northeast</b> .....	<b>901</b>
Bastia .....	901
Cap Corse .....	905
Nonza .....	906
St-Florent .....	907
<b>La Balagne</b> .....	<b>907</b>
L'Île-Rousse .....	907
Algajola .....	909
Calvi .....	909
<b>Northwest Corsica</b> .....	<b>911</b>
Porto .....	911
Ajaccio .....	913
<b>The South</b> .....	<b>916</b>
Sartène .....	916
Bonifacio .....	920
Porto-Vecchio .....	922
L'Alta Rocca .....	923
Zonza .....	923
<b>Corte</b> .....	<b>924</b>
Vallée de la Restonica .....	926
Vallée du Tavignano .....	926
Vizzavona .....	926

<b>History</b> .....	<b>928</b>
<b>The French</b> .....	<b>946</b>
<b>The French Table</b> .....	<b>950</b>
<b>The Arts</b> .....	<b>955</b>
<b>Architecture</b> .....	<b>962</b>
<b>Landscapes &amp; Wildlife</b> .....	<b>967</b>

## SURVIVAL GUIDE

<b>Directory A-Z</b> .....	<b>972</b>
<b>Transport</b> .....	<b>986</b>
<b>Language</b> .....	<b>998</b>
<b>Index</b> .....	<b>1008</b>

## SPECIAL FEATURES

<b>Normandy D-Day Sites</b> .....	<b>279</b>
<b>Breton Coast</b> .....	<b>325</b>
<b>Route des Vins d'Alsace</b> .....	<b>393</b>
<b>Châteaux of the Loire Valley</b> .....	<b>433</b>
<b>Medieval Art &amp; Architecture</b> .....	<b>474</b>

<b>Mountain Highs</b> .....	<b>563</b>
<b>Vézère Valley Cave Art</b> .....	<b>637</b>
<b>Wine, Glorious Wine</b> .....	<b>671</b>
<b>Basque Culture</b> .....	<b>697</b>
<b>Languedoc-Roussillon Architecture</b> .....	<b>787</b>
<b>Exploring Southern Corsica</b> .....	<b>919</b>

Right:  
Castelnau-la-  
Chapelle (p615)

## WELCOME TO France



*France has been my home for two decades – a testament to how fine French art de vivre (the art of living) is. From my Haute-Savoie house on Lake Geneva's shore, the Jura hills and un café in the wisteria-draped village bar are wake-up calls. Weekends of endless possibilities punctuate the gentle rhythm of village life: art museums in Lyon and Paris, Alpine hiking and skiing, cold-water swimming and paddleboarding on lakes, road trips to regions so different each could be another country.*

**By Nicola Williams, Writer**

[@tripalong](#) [@tripalong](#)

For more about our writers, see p1024

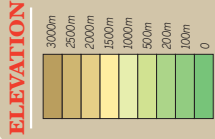
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# France



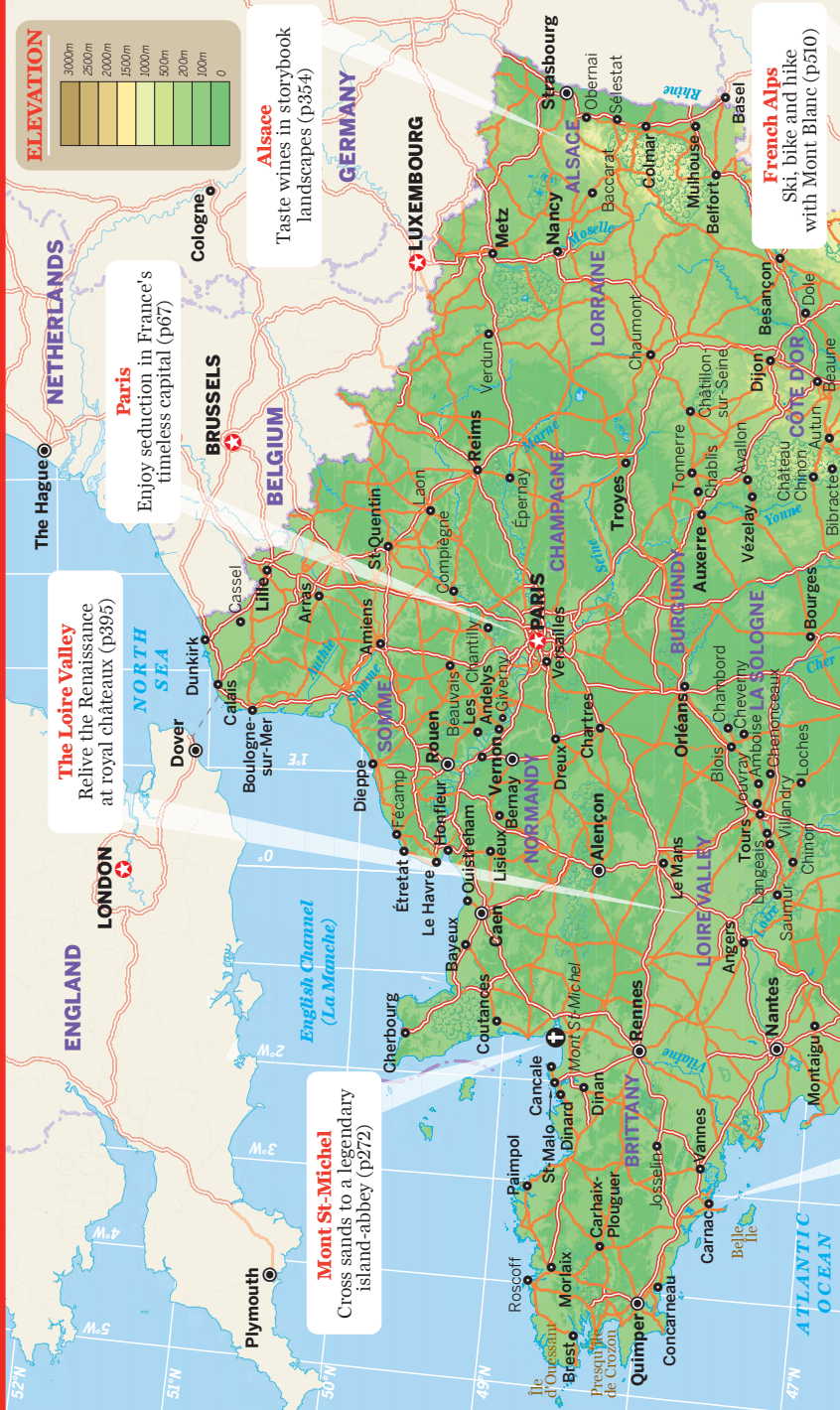
**Alsace**  
Taste wines in storybook landscapes (p354)

**French Alps**  
Ski, bike and hike with Mont Blanc (p510)

**The Loire Valley**  
Relive the Renaissance at royal châteaux (p395)

**Paris**  
Enjoy seduction in France's timeless capital (p67)

**Mont St-Michel**  
Cross sands to a legendary island-abbey (p272)







# France's Top Experiences



## 1 PARIS' ART DE VIVRE

Falling in love, romancing, call it what you will: a visit to the seductive French capital is a timeless experience and one that never tires. Be it sipping Champagne atop the iconic Eiffel Tower, lunching cheek by jowl in a neighbourhood bistro, or people-watching on a buzzing cafe pavement terrace, the *art de vivre* (art of living) in the City of Light is utterly irresistible.

JONATHAN SMITH/LOVEJ PLANET ©



## Feast on Art

With an illustrious artistic pedigree – Renoir, Rodin, Picasso, Monet, Manet, Dalí and Van Gogh are but some of the masters who have lived here over the years – Paris is one of the world's great art repositories. The incomparable Musée du Louvre is the ideal starting point. **p89**

Right: Musée du Louvre

MARINADA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

IMAGE: NAINSHAMAILO/GETTY IMAGES ©



## Play the Flâneur

Paris is peppered with grandiose Haussmann boulevards and elegant parks overflowing with graceful sculptures, ponds and fountains begging a city stroll. Jardin du Luxembourg is a Parisian favourite, or join savvy *flâneurs* waterside – along the Seine or hipster Canal St-Martin. **p125**

Above: Palais du Luxembourg

SHEHAL JEEVAN PILLAI/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



## Shop in Style

As one of the world's most fashionable trendsetters, Paris is the hot spot to shop. From celebrity-designer boutiques and flagship *haute couture* houses, to glorious art nouveau department stores, hip concept stores and teeny backstreet speciality shops, shopping here is a memorable experience. **p169**

Above: Galeries Lafayette



# 2 CHÂTEAUX LIFE

Nowhere does châteaux or castles quite like France – and fittingly, visitors are spoiled for choice. The country is strewn with châteaux of all shapes and sizes, from magnificent monuments inscribed as Unesco World Heritage treasures and open to visitors, to bijou fairytale castles squirrelled away in remote valleys, owned by the same family for generations and today welcoming hotel guests for dinner in their refined inner sanctum.

## Return to the Renaissance

If it's aristocratic pomp and architectural splendour you're after, linger in the regal Loire Valley. It was here, on the banks of France's last *fleuve sauvage* (wild river), that kings, queens, dukes and nobles built feudal castles and, during the Renaissance, lavish pleasure palaces with glittering cupolas, chapels and ballrooms. [p395](#)

Below: Château de Chenonceau







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## Fit for a King

If you only have time for one French château, make it Château de Versailles, a Unesco World Heritage-listed wonder near Paris. Musical fountain displays and equestrian shows only up the wow factor at the 700-room palace, created by Louis XIV in the mid-17th century. [p190](#)

Above left: Château de Versailles

## A Room with a View

Overnighting in a castle is a French dream come true – and an opportunity to experience château life at close quarters. Wine-growing regions like Burgundy and Bordeaux are peppered with 18th- and 19th-century châteaux. In Champagne, try Château Les Crayères. [p333](#)

Above right: Château de Foix

# 3 GORGEOUS VILLAGES

There is no humbler pleasure than exploring villages of gold stone, pink granite or whitewash – on foot, by bicycle or car. Cobbled lanes ensnare ornate stone fountains, flowery squares and ancient house façades laced with wisteria, vines or even chilli peppers hung up to dry in the late-summer sun. For the ultimate, go-slow, 'gorgeous village' experience, combine a village visit with a long lazy lunch al fresco.

## Surrounded by Vines

France's rich vineyards hide a bounty of pretty villages, and medieval Unesco-listed St-Émilion in the prestigious wine-growing region near Bordeaux is one of the finest. Pea-green vines surround it as far as the eye can see. [p665](#)

Belowright: St-Émilion



### Perched on a Hilltop

In Provence in southern France, the gloriously rural Luberon massif is lavishly strewn with *villages perchés* (hilltop villages): Bonnieux, Gordes and red-rock Roussillon are all pure brilliance. [p776](#)

Above: Roussillon



MARIA PAVLOVA/GETTY IMAGES ©

### With Sea View

On the glitzy, glam Côte d'Azur, medieval Èze fuses a stunning hilltop village with castle ruins, an exotic cactus garden and sweeping panoramas of the Med and glittering Monaco along the coast. [p886](#)

Right: Villefranche-sur-Mer



# 4 HISTORY AT LARGE



Pont du Gard (p752)

This country's historic repertoire is staggering – in volume and diversity. From relics left behind by France's oldest human inhabitants to emotive reminders of modern French history, sightseeing in the land of the Gauls is gargantuan and enriching. Museums and monuments abound countrywide, with some of the most fascinating historic sights at large in the open countryside – an idyllic bike ride to boot.

## Mysterious Megaliths

Pedalling past open fields in Carnac, dotted with the world's greatest concentration of mysterious megaliths, begs the question: what inspired these gigantic menhirs, dolmens, cromlechs, tumuli and cairns to be built? [p309](#)

## Romans at Work

Learn about Roman engineering at the Pont du Gard near Nimes. View the huge 52-arch aqueduct from its 275m-long upper tier, afloat a canoe on the Gard River, or while daredevil diving and jumping from rocks nearby. [p752](#)

## Remember WWII

A trip to Normandy's D-Day beaches is an emotional journey. Endless stretches of gold sand and breeze-blown buffs bear silent testimony to the human price paid for France's liberation from Nazi tyranny in 1944. [p257](#)



# 5 CULINARY ADVENTURES

Food is of enormous importance to the French and their daily culinary agenda takes no prisoners – buttery croissants for breakfast, a bistro lunch, an early evening *apéro* (aperitif). But French gastronomy goes far deeper than simply eating exceedingly well. Its experiential nature means there's always something new to observe or taste. Be it flipping crêpes in Brittany or truffle hunting in the Dordogne, the culinary adventure is endless.



PROCHASSION FREDERIC/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



MINI STUBNO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



## Dine at a Bouchon

The chequered red-and-white tablecloths, cheek by jowl tables and retro decor are endearing. But it's the feisty piggy-part cuisine that makes *bouchons* (traditional bistros) in Lyon unique. [p490](#)

Top left: *Bouchon*, Lyon

## Explore Champagne

Gastronomy's tippie of choice. The Champagne region boasts big-name houses in Reims and Épernay, but much of its finest liquid gold is created by passionate, small-scale winegrowers. [p327](#)

Bottom left: Vineyards, Montagne de Reims Champagne Route ([p336](#))

## Shop at the Market

No region is so market-must as Provence. Fish in Marseille, syrupy Cavaillon melons or earthy winter truffles: market stalls in Aix-en-Provence and Antibes heave with temptation. [p789](#)

Above right: Aix-en-Provence market ([p811](#))

# 6 WINE COUNTRY



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MAREDDITA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

The most wonderful aspect of French wine culture is its open invitation to taste in situ. Be it swilling, sniffing, sipping and spitting (optional) with vignerons (wine growers) in small wine cellars, partaking in a guided flight at larger wine-producing estates or urban wine shops and wine bars, or enjoying carefully paired vintages over dinner in a neobistro or restaurant, *dégustation* (tasting) is the key to understanding French wine country.

## Road Trip in Alsace

Pair wine tasting with quaint half-timbered villages, mist-wrapped hilltop castles and storybook vistas along the Route des Vins d'Alsace, a driving itinerary through vines in northeast France. [p362](#)

Top: Vineyards, Montagne de Reims Champagne Route ([p336](#))

## Bordeaux Masterclass

The Médoc, St-Émilion and Cognac – all around Bordeaux – set every connoisseur's heart aflutter. Learn about wine-growing culture in these wine-growing regions at Bordeaux' decanter-shaped La Cité du Vin. [p657](#)

Bottom: La Cité du Vin, Bordeaux

## Toast a Festival

Wine festivals in France are a dime a dozen, and one of the grandest is Beaune's Vente aux Enchères des Vins des Hospices de Beaune. During the three-day fest, wines from Burgundy's Côte d'Or region are auctioned. [p451](#)



# 7 OFF-GRID ESCAPES

Solitude is sweet and there's ample opportunity in rural France to stray well off the beaten track, leaving the crowds far behind. Traditionally rural regions like the Auvergne, Dordogne, Limousin, Lot, the Jura and French Basque Country all hide peaceful villages and hamlets, from where you can walk for miles along gentle hiking trails without meeting another soul.

## Trek on Horseback

End-of-the-world Camargue is one of France's last true coastal wildernesses. Explore pink-hued salt pans, sandy beaches and flamingo-speckled marshlands on horseback at the remote Domaine de la Palisade. [p818](#)

Top right: Flamingos, Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue



## Paddle Through Green Venice

Paddling by canoe, kayak or even stand-up paddleboard through the peaceful and serene, bird-filled wetland of the protected Marais Poitevin in western France is the last word in tranquility. [p648](#)

Above: Marais Poitevin

## Bathe in the Forest

Recharge your batteries with a bewitching forest escape, far from Brittany's coastal crowds, in Forêt de Paimpont. This is thought to be the spot where King Arthur received his magic sword. [p319](#)

Bottom right: Forêt de Paimpont



# 8 RIVIERA HIGH LIFE



Above: St-Tropez (p881)

Cinematic images of Grace Kelly, Alfred Hitchcock and Monaco's royal family are impossible to ignore on the Côte d'Azur – Europe's most mythical coastline and hottest seaside spot where the only way to live life is with glitz and razzmatazz. Luxury palace hotels, drop-dead-gorgeous beaches and bags of chic dining ops on the sand only add to the glamour.

## Drive Coastal Roads

A dramatic trio of corniches (coastal roads) provide dramatic views of the coast between Nice and Monaco. Keep your eyes firmly on the road – this is where Grace Kelly met her untimely fate. [p886](#)

## Hobnob Beachside

Stars and celebrities have loved the glam, golden sands of Plage de Pampelonne ever since a pouting, sexy Brigitte Bardot rocked up in St-Tropez in the 1950s. Town and beach have been sizzling hot ever since. [p882](#)

## Flutter in Monte Carlo

Living the dream in Monaco, the world's second-smallest country squished on the coast near Nice, inevitably translates as having a little flutter in Monte Carlo's lavish Belle Époque casino. [p890](#)

# 9 BEACH CAPERS

From white-chalk cliff to red rock, pebbly cove to golden-sand strip, France's 3427km-long coastline is dramatically diverse. Explore on a windswept *sentier du littoral* (coastal trail), scented with sea salt and herbal scrub; admire your surrounds from the comfort of a sunlounger on a sand or pebble beach; or marry the traditional 'sun, sand and sea' experience with one of France's top sights or nautical activities.



SHEN MAO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



ELINXXIV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



## Scale a Sand Dune

The Atlantic Coast's Dune du Pilat is a 'mountain' to be climbed – and romped down at speed. The coastal panorama atop Europe's largest sand dune is a stunner, and getting to it is equally memorable. [p666](#)

Top left: Dune du Pilat

## Hit the Surf

Backed by dunes, Les Landes is the Atlantic Coast's surfers' secret. Chilling with hipsters over sunset cocktails in Guéthary – a chic surf spot further south along the coast – is also fun. [p685](#)

Bottom left: Les Landes beach (p680)

## Walk to an Island

The dramatic play of tides on Normandy's abbey-island of Mont St-Michel is magical. Feel its history as you make your way, bare-foot across rippled sand, to this stunning architectural ensemble. [p272](#)

Above right: Mont St-Michel

# 10 IN THE WILD



/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

NEIRRYV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## Get High in the Pyrenees

An eye-popping panorama of the Pyrenees rewards from the sky-top observatory atop Pic du Midi. The other Pyrenees hot spot for big bold vistas is Cirque de Gavarnie, a natural amphitheatre ringed by Pyrenean peaks. [p718](#)

Top: Pic du Midi viewpoint



NATALIWA NAZAROVA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## Alpine Action

Skiing and hiking in Chamonix, the birthplace of mountaineering in the French Alps, rewards with breathtaking Mont Blanc views. Or embark on a cable-car ride of a lifetime above 3800m aboard the Télécabine Panoramique Mont Blanc. [p510](#)

Bottom: Chamonix

## Climb an Extinct Volcano

From the windswept summit of Puy de Dôme in the rural Auvergne, a surreal landscape of grassy, dormant volcanoes unfolds. The 40km-long chain of green lava domes are Unesco-listed and riddled with hiking trails. [p577](#)

France is blessed with a kaleidoscope of natural landscapes, some wilder than others. In the French Alps and Pyrenees, low-lying hills and lost valleys swiftly nose-dive up high to snowy mountain peaks, icy lakes and blue-hued glaciers above 3000m. Well-marked walking trails, cable cars and some fantastic vintage mountain railways ensure communing with the wild is accessible to all.



# Need to Know

For more information, see Survival Guide (p971)

## Currency

Euro (€)

## Language

French

## Visas

Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days for travellers from 62 non-EU countries.

## Money

ATMs at every airport, most train stations and on every second street corner in towns and cities. Visa, MasterCard and Amex widely accepted.

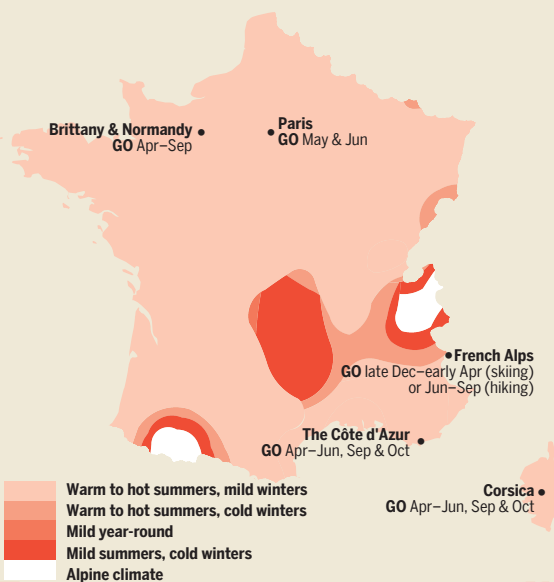
## Mobile Phones

European and Australian phones work, but only American cells with tri-band or other international capabilities are compatible; check with your provider before leaving home. Use a French SIM card to call with a cheaper French number.

## Time

Central European Time (GMT/UTC plus one hour)

## When to Go



## High Season

(Jul & Aug)

- ➔ Queues at big sights and on roads.
- ➔ Christmas, New Year and Easter equally busy.
- ➔ Late December to March is high season in Alpine ski resorts.
- ➔ Book accommodation and restaurants in advance.

## Shoulder

(Apr-Jun & Sep)

- ➔ Accommodation rates drop in southern France and other hot spots.
- ➔ Spring brings warm weather, flowers and local produce.
- ➔ The *vendange* (grape harvest) is reason to visit in autumn.

## Low Season

(Oct-Mar)

- ➔ Prices up to 50% lower than high season.
- ➔ Sights, attractions and restaurants open fewer days and shorter hours.
- ➔ Hotels and restaurants in rural regions (like the Dordogne) close.



## Useful Websites

**Explore France** ([www.france.fr](http://www.france.fr))  
Official country website.

**France 24** ([www.france24.com](http://www.france24.com))  
French news in English.

**Lost in Cheeseland** ([www.lostincheeseland.com](http://www.lostincheeseland.com)) Food, life and travel in Paris and beyond by Paris-based American writer Lindsey Tramuta; with links to her fantastic podcast The New Paris.

**David Lebovitz** ([www.davidlebovitz.com](http://www.davidlebovitz.com)) American pastry chef in Paris and author of several French cookbooks; insightful postings and great France-related articles shared on his Facebook page.

**French Word-a-Day** (<http://french-word-a-day.typepad.com>) Fun language learning.

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com/france](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/france)) Destination information, hotel reviews, traveller forum and more.

## Important Numbers

France country code	☎33
International access code (to call abroad from France)	☎00
Europe-wide emergency	☎112
Ambulance (SAMU)	☎15
Police	☎17

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.64
Canada	C\$1	€0.68
Japan	¥100	€0.76
NZ	NZ\$1	€0.59
UK	UK£1	€1.16
USA	US\$1	€0.84

For current exchange rates see [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

## Daily Costs

**Budget:**  
**Less than €130**

- ➔ Dorm bed: €18–30
- ➔ Double room in a budget hotel: €60–90
- ➔ Admission to many attractions first Sunday of month: free
- ➔ Lunch *menus* (set meals): less than €20
- ➔ Public transport: €1–7.50

**Midrange: €130–220**

- ➔ Double room in a midrange hotel: €90–190
- ➔ Lunch *menus* in gourmet restaurants: €20–40
- ➔ Car hire: €35–80

**Top End:**  
**More than €220**

- ➔ Double room in a top-end hotel: €190–350
- ➔ Top restaurant dinner: *menu* €65, *à la carte* €100–150
- ➔ Opera tickets: €15–150

## Opening Hours

**Banks** 9am–noon and 2–5pm  
Monday to Friday or Tuesday to Saturday

**Bars** 7pm–1am

**Cafes** 7am–11pm

**Clubs** 10pm–3am, 4am or 5am  
Thursday to Saturday

**Restaurants** Noon–2.30pm and 7–9pm or later six days a week

**Shops** 10am–noon and 2–7pm  
Monday to Saturday; longer, and including Sunday, for shops in defined ZTIs (international tourist zones)

## Arriving in France

**Aéroport de Charles de Gaulle** (p986; Paris) RER trains, buses and night buses to the city centre €6 to €18; taxi €50 to €60, 15% higher evenings and Sundays.

**Aéroport d'Orly** (p986; Paris) Orlyval then RER trains, buses and night buses to the city centre €9.50 to €12.10; T7 tram to Villejuif–Louis Aragon then metro to centre €3.80; taxi €30 to €40, 15% higher evenings and Sundays.

## Getting Around

Transport in France is comfortable, quick, usually reliable and reasonably priced.

**Train** Run by the state-owned SNCF (p995), France's rail network is truly first-class, with extensive coverage of the country and frequent departures.

**Car** Meander away from cities (where parking is challenging) and a car comes into its own. Mooching along peaceful country lanes, past vineyards and fruit orchards, is one of France's greatest joys. Hire wheels at airports and train stations.

**Bus** Cheaper and slower than trains. Useful for more remote villages that aren't serviced by trains.

**Bicycle** Certain regions – the Loire Valley, the Luberon in Provence and Burgundy – beg to be explored by two wheels and have dedicated cycling paths, some along canal tow-paths or between orchards and vineyards.

For much more on getting around, see p988



# First Time France

For more information, see **Survival Guide (p971)**

## Checklist

- ➔ Check passport validity and visa requirements
- ➔ Arrange travel insurance
- ➔ Check airline baggage restrictions
- ➔ Book accommodation; reserve big-name restaurants
- ➔ Buy tickets online for the Louvre, Eiffel Tower and other top sights
- ➔ Download France-related travel apps and music

## What to Pack

- ➔ Two-pin travel plug (electrical adapter)
- ➔ Sunscreen, sunhat and sunglasses (southern France)
- ➔ Rainproof jacket and umbrella (northern France)
- ➔ Pocketknife with corkscrew (pack this in your checked-in luggage)
- ➔ Walking shoes – for hiking paths and cobbled streets
- ➔ Light scarf (to cover bare shoulders in churches)
- ➔ An adventurous appetite

## Top Tips for Your Trip

- ➔ Almost every village and town has a weekly morning market brimming with fruit, veg and other regional produce – and there's no finer opportunity for mingling with locals! Take your own shopping bag or basket.
- ➔ To get the best out of a French road trip, avoid autoroutes (highways) and main roads. Opt instead for back roads and country lanes that twist past farms, châteaux, vineyards and orchards – scenic routes are highlighted in green on road maps (print and digital) published by French cartographer Michelin ([www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com)).
- ➔ For authentic local dining experiences, avoid restaurants that tout a *menu touristique* or display a sample meal of plastic food on the pavement outside. While it might be tempting to favour restaurants with a menu in English, the very best (and best-loved by locals) rarely offer a translation.

## What to Wear

- ➔ Paris sports a mixed bag of styles; smart-casual is the way to go. In the south, no bikini tops or bare male chests *s'il vous plaît*, unless you're on the beach.
- ➔ Countrywide, dress up for nicer midrange restaurants, clubs and bars.
- ➔ On the coast, some municipalities in Corsica and the Côte d'Azur have (contested) burkini bans in place – check local rules.

## Sleeping

Advance reservations are essential in high season.

**B&Bs** Enchanting properties with maximum five rooms.

**Camping** Wild and remote, to brash resorts with pools, slides etc.

**Hostels** New-wave hostels equal lifestyle spaces with private rooms.

**Hotels** Hotels embrace every budget and taste.

See p28 for more accommodation information.

## Budgeting Tricks

**Eat cheap** Lunchtime *formules* (two courses) and *menus* (three courses) in restaurants are a snip of the price of evening dining.

**Discount admission** City museum passes provide cheaper admission to sights; free admission first Sunday of month in many cities.

**Savvy sleeping** It's cheaper for families staying in hotels to ask for a double room with extra bed rather than a triple. Families of four or more will find self-catering accommodation cheaper.

**Picnic perfection** With its bucolic scenery and outstanding produce, France is picnic paradise. Buy a baguette from the *boulangerie* (bakery) and fill it with Camembert, pâté or charcuterie (cold meats). Finish sweet with macarons (Paris), buttery *kouign amann* (Breton butter cake), cherries (southern France) or – for blue-blooded gourmets – Champagne and Reims' *biscuits roses*.

## Bargaining

With the exception of the odd haggle at the market, little bargaining goes on in France.

## Tipping

**Hotels** €1 to €2 per bag is standard; gratuity for cleaning staff completely at your discretion.

**Bars** No tips for drinks served at bar; round to nearest euro for drinks served at table.

**Restaurants** For decent service 10%.

**Tours** For excellent guides, €1 to €2 per person.

ELENA DJODJIC/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



Bois de Vincennes (p111), Paris

## Eating

In cities there are a multitude of places to eat and an extraordinary range of cuisines to choose from – the French Table (p950) is a banquet. To dine fine and eat local, book ahead, particularly for weekend dining. In rural France, the same goes for *bonnes tables* (literally 'good tables') and Sunday lunch, always a feisty, afternoon-long affair.

**Restaurants and bistros** Range from unchanged for a century to contemporary minimalist; urban dining is international, rural dining staunchly French.

**Brasseries** Open from dawn until late, these casual eateries are great for dining in between standard meal times.

**Cafes** Ideal for breakfast and light lunch; many morph into bars after dark.

## Etiquette

**Conversation** Use the formal *vous* when speaking to anyone unknown or older than you; the informal *tu* is reserved for close friends, family and children.

**Churches** Dress modestly (cover shoulders).

**Drinks** Asking for *une carafe d'eau* (free jug of tap water) in restaurants is acceptable. Never end a meal with a cappuccino or cup of tea. Play French and order *un café* (espresso).

**French kissing** Exchange *bisous* (cheek-skimming kisses) – at least two, but in some parts of France it can be up to four – with casual acquaintances and friends.

# What's New

In true French fashion, modern-day challenges keep the country's movers, shakers and culinary creatives on their toes – with awe-inspiring results. Despite severe economic hardship caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and domestic challenges to France's long-standing tradition of separating religious and state affairs, the exciting openings continue apace.

## Olympic Relocations

Preparations are well underway for Paris to host the Summer Olympics in 2024. While the art-nouveau gallery Grand Palais readies itself as an Olympic venue, a temporary Grand Palais will set up next to the Eiffel Tower on the Parc du Champ de Mars. The children's science museum Palais de la Découverte, meanwhile, relocates to Parc André Citroën.

## La Samaritaine

After 15 years of building and restoration work, to the tune of €750 million, the opening of historic Parisian department store La Samaritaine (p172) in 2021 will be nothing other than grand. Drool over the Seine-side building's exquisite art nouveau and art-deco features, including the glass-topped central

hall – all impeccably restored by Pritzker Prize-winning Japanese firm Sanaa.

## Grassroots Cuisine

Grassroots produce – seasonal, locally grown, invariably organic and freshly harvested – has never been so important in French cuisine. Chefs countrywide are working hard with small producers in their regions to elevate taste and quality to a new height (while supporting local economies). Proof of the pudding in Paris? The world's largest urban rooftop farm and restaurant, Le Perchoir Porte de Versailles (p160).

## Green Tourism

In the serenely remote and verdant Auvergne region in central France, eco-friendly wooden lodges at Volvic Organic Resort (p571) are a perfect example of how

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN FRANCE

*Nicola Williams, Lonely Planet writer*

One would imagine that the golden age of thinking has long passed for an enlightened country that gave the world bigwig philosophers like Descartes and Sartre. Think again. As France and the world grapple with the economic aftermath of the 2020–21 coronavirus pandemic, the French are facing serious challenges to the very bedrock of their constitution and country. *'La laïcité – c'est le ciment de la France unie'* ('the constitutional principle of secularism – it is the cement of unified France'), declared President Emmanuel Macron on 2 October 2020. Yet just a fortnight later in Paris, an 18-year-old Muslim student killed and beheaded school teacher Samuel Paty for showing cartoons portraying Muhammad during a class discussion on freedom of expression. Debate on the place of free speech and critical thinking in French society has raged ever since. A government probe into the presence of so-called 'Islamism' in French universities in early 2021 is only adding fuel to the fire – as is the far-left ideology of National Rally party leader Marine Le Pen, the biggest threat to France's incumbent pro-European president ahead of presidential elections in April 2022.



sustainable sleeping and dining options are rising to prominence in *la belle France*.

## High-Tech Renaissance

Amid a rapidly expanding raft of high-tech and aeronautical industries in Toulouse, the city's abandoned old airport zone in Montaudran is being gentrified – with giant mechanical spiders and minotaurs at Halle de la Machine (p731) and a reconstructed Samson 2A2 biplane at L'Envol des Pionniers (p731) illustrating Toulouse's role in developing the world's first airmail service in 1918.

## The Dragon of Calais

The biggest beast to take contemporary France by storm is Le Dragon de Calais ([www.compagniedudragon.com](http://www.compagniedudragon.com)), a fantastical, ferocious, 12m-tall mechanical dragon with fiery red eyes, mighty wings that flap and a 25m-long body. It spits fire, smoke and water, can run up to 4km/h – and is an absolute thrill to grab a ride on through this busy port city in northern France.

## Digital Art in Bordeaux

The innovative city of Bordeaux has landed itself yet another landmark museum in the edgy Bassins à Flot neighbourhood. At Les Bassins de Lumières (p662), floor-to-ceiling digital art projections cast a bewitching kaleidoscope of colour and sound on the thick concrete walls of a WWII submarine bunker.

## Contemporary Art & Gastronomy

Two of France's greatest loves – art and food – marry with the high-profile 2021 opening of the private contemporary-art collection of François Pinault inside Paris' former grain market and stock exchange, Bourse de Commerce (p96). The 18th-century rotunda will also host a destination restaurant by former triple-Michelin-starred chef Michel Bras.

## Chambord Afloat

Just when you thought sunset views of the Loire Valley's greatest Renaissance château at Chambord (p407) couldn't get any dreamier, hotel-restaurant Relais de Chambord (p409) – in the château's former kennels – has added a luxurious barge suite afloat the château moat to its four-star repertoire. Al fresco breakfast on deck is pure magic.

## LISTEN, WATCH & FOLLOW

For inspiration and up-to-date news, visit [www.lonelyplanet.com/france/articles](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/france/articles).

**Explore France** ([www.france.fr](http://www.france.fr)) French tourism board website, sharing inspiring Instagram snaps at @francefr.

**The Local** ([www.thelocal.fr](http://www.thelocal.fr)) English-language news coverage of France; also on Twitter @TheLocalFrance.

**The New Paris Podcast** ([www.lostincheese.land.com/podcast](http://www.lostincheese.land.com/podcast)) Tune into voices shaping contemporary Paris.

**France Montagne** ([www.france-montagnes.com](http://www.france-montagnes.com)) Digital escape to France's many glorious mountain ranges, with trip-planning info too.

## FAST FACTS

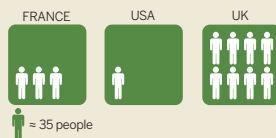
**Food trend** Shared plates & cocktail pairings

**Baguette consumption** 320 per second

**Coastline** 3427km

**Population** 67 million

### population per sq km



## Tattoos, Gin & Beer

The trend for curating local produce and botanicals to create unique artisan spirits and beer brews continues. New tipples to look for include Ahoy Gin ([www.ahoygin.com](http://www.ahoygin.com)), with a limited-edition tattoo by Bordeaux tattoo artist Lil'B inside each glass bottle; and mod-British ales mixed with live blues at microbrewery Bière de la Bastide (p614) in the Dordogne.

## Forget the Stars

France's smorgasbord of celebrity chefs are forever conjuring up new projects. In Montpellier super-chef twin brothers Jacques and Laurent Pourcel have ditched the Michelin-starred gastronomy for Terminal #1 (p759), a chill gourmet bistro with open kitchen in an industrial-chic former factory.

# Accommodation

Find more accommodation reviews throughout the On the Road chapters (from p65)

## PRICE RANGES

The following price ranges refer to a double room in high season, with private bathroom (any combination of toilet, bathtub, shower and washbasin), excluding breakfast unless otherwise noted. Breakfast is assumed to be included at a B&B. Where half-board (breakfast and dinner) and full board (breakfast, lunch and dinner) is included, this is mentioned with the price.

€ less than €90 (less than €130 in Paris; less than €150 in Monaco)

€€ €90–190 (€130–250 in Paris; €150–300 in Monaco)

€€€ more than €190 (more than €250 in Paris; more than €300 in Monaco)

## Accommodation Types

**B&Bs** For charm and a heartfelt welcome, *chambres d'hôte* trump. Most common in rural areas, they have up to five rooms and prices include breakfast.

**Camping** Be it a Mongolian yurt, a tree house or canvas beneath stars, camping is in vogue. Thousands of well-equipped campgrounds dot the country. Most open March or April to October.

**Homestays** Brush up on your *français* by staying with a French family in a rented room, with access to the bathroom and kitchen.

**Hostels** Funky to threadbare, most hostels these days are design-driven, modern spaces with 'dorms' maxing out at six beds and private ensuite doubles.

**Hotels** Rated with one to five stars, hotels cover the whole gambit of styles and comfort levels, from train-station dive to glittering palace. Breakfast is rarely included in the rates.

**Refuges** Marked on hiking and climbing maps, *refuges* (mountain huts) offer dorm beds in basic cabins located on walking trails; most close in winter.

**Rental accommodation** If you're staying for more than a few days or travelling *en famille* or in a group, renting a furnished studio, apartment or villa is an economical alternative.

## Best Places to Stay

### Best on a Budget

One- and two-star hotels, old-school hostels and *chambres d'hôte* in rural areas tend to offer the best value for those on a budget: flashier, design 'hostels' in big towns and cities are not necessarily cheap. In hotels, check the price of breakfast – it might be cheaper to head to the local neighbourhood cafe for a coffee and croissant.

- ➔ Hôtel du Dragon (p138), Paris
- ➔ Hostel Meyerbeer Beach (p859), Nice
- ➔ Vertigo Vieux-Port (p799), Marseille
- ➔ Detective Hôtel (p251), Étretat
- ➔ La Boulangerie (p246), Rouen
- ➔ Le Hüb (p542), Grenoble

### Best for Families

Countrywide, France has some superb accommodation options for families. Facilities in family-orientated hotels in towns and cities might include a kids' playroom with games or table football in the lobby, while countryside hotels and *chambres*

*d'hôte* can mean a garden for the kids to run wild in, swings, a swimming pool, boules pitch, a family dog or rabbits and pigs to pet...

- ➔ Hôtel de Londres (p424), Saumur
- ➔ La Villa de Jade (p314), Belle Île
- ➔ A Pignata (p924), Levie
- ➔ Hôtel du Clos (p876), Grasse
- ➔ Les Cabanes d'Orion (p878), St-Paul-de-Vence
- ➔ Cacharel Hotel (p821), Stes-Marie-de-la-Mer

## Best for Solo Travellers

Hotels offering cheaper, single rooms to solo travellers are a rare pearl these days; with the exception of Paris and the odd other big city, single travellers have no choice but to pay for a double room (occasionally with a single supplement). Those keen to socialise with other guests should opt for a *chambre d'hôte*, where breakfast and often dinner is served around a shared table, or a hostel with often-buzzing communal lounge and co-working spaces.

- ➔ Les Piaules (p136), Paris
- ➔ Hôtel Crayon (p134), Paris
- ➔ Osteria di l'Orta (p925), Corte
- ➔ Le Clos de l'Abbaye (p470), Cluny
- ➔ La Cour Berbisey (p440), Dijon
- ➔ Grand Hôtel des Alpes (p515), Chamonix

## Best Châteaux & Historic Mansions

Dreamy hotels in authentic châteaux and *demeures* (18th- and 19th-century mansions) can be found countrywide: key regions include the Loire Valley, the Dordogne, the Lot and Champagne. Around Bordeaux, a handful of prestigious wine-growers are opening up the châteaux and other historic outbuildings on their vineyard estates to guests, providing a precious opportunity to experience French château life on the ground.

- ➔ Château Les Crayères (p333), Reims
- ➔ Château de Beaulieu (p424), Saumur
- ➔ Château Cordeillan-Bages (p665), Pauillac
- ➔ Château Troplong-Mondot (p666), St-Émilion
- ➔ Hôtel Demeure Les Mouettes (p915), Ajaccio
- ➔ Domaine de Fontenille (p840), Luberon



Château Les Crayères (p333), Reims

## Booking

Advance booking is essential for peak-season stays countrywide: over Easter and in July and August, plus Christmas and February for popular ski resorts in the French Alps and the Pyrenees.

**Lonely Planet** ([lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://lonelyplanet.com/hotels)) Find independent reviews, as well as recommendations on the best places to stay – and then book them online.

**Bienvenue à la Ferme** ([www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com](http://www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com)) Farmstay accommodation options for a taste of French rural life.

**Cabanes de France** ([www.cabanes-de-france.com](http://www.cabanes-de-france.com)) Tree-house options between branches all over France.

**Gîtes de France** ([www.gites-de-france.com](http://www.gites-de-france.com)) Handles some of the most charming *gîtes ruraux* (self-contained holiday cottages) in rural areas.

**Les Collectionneurs** ([www.chateauxhotels.com](http://www.chateauxhotels.com)) Châteaux and other historic properties, now boutique hotels, with a thousand tales to tell.

**Samedi Midi** ([www.samedimidi.com](http://www.samedimidi.com)) Country, mountain, seaside... Choose your *chambre d'hôte* by location or theme (romance, golf, design, cooking courses).

# Month by Month

## TOP EVENTS

### Festival d'Avignon.

July

### Fête du Citron.

February

### Fête des Lumières.

December

### Festival de Cannes.

May

### Monaco Grand Prix.

May

## January

With New Year festivities done and dusted, head to the Alps. Crowds on the slopes thin out once school's back, but January remains busy. On the Mediterranean, mild winters are wonderfully serene in a part of France that's mad busy the rest of the year.

### Vive le Ski!

Grab your skis, hit the slopes. Most resorts in the Alps, Pyrenees, Jura and Auvergne open mid- to late December, but January is the start of the ski season in earnest. Whether a purpose-built station or Alpine village, there's a resort to match every mood and moment. (p53)

### Truffle Season

No culinary product is more aromatic or decadent than black truffles. Hunt them in the Dordogne and Provence – the season runs late December to March, but January is the prime month.

## February

Crisp, cold weather in the mountains – lots of china-blue skies now – translates as ski season in top gear. Alpine resorts get mobbed by families during the February school holidays and accommodation is at its priciest.

### Nice Carnival

Nice makes the most of its mild climate with this crazy Lenten carnival. As well as parade and costume shenanigans, merrymakers pelt each other with blooms during the legendary flower battles. Dunkirk in northern France celebrates Mardi Gras with equal gusto. (p859)

### Citrus Celebrations

Menton on the French Riviera was once Europe's biggest lemon producer, hence its exotic Fête du Citron.

These days it has to ship in a zillion lemons from Spain to sculpt into gargantuan carnival characters. (p896)

## March

The ski season stays busy thanks to ongoing school holidays (until mid-March) and warmer temperatures. Down south, spring ushers in the bullfighting season and Pâques (Easter).

### Féria d'Arles

In France's hot south, four days of open-air dancing, music and concerts al fresco enliven the Féria d'Arles, a flamboyant street festival held at Easter in Arles to open the town's highly controversial bullfighting season. (p816)

## April

Dedicated ski fiends can carve glaciers in the highest French ski resorts until mid-April or later at highest altitudes. Then it's off with the ski boots and on with the hiking gear as peach and almond trees flower pink against a backdrop of snowcapped peaks.



## Fête de la Transhumance

During the ancient Fête de la Transhumance in April or May, shepherds walk their flocks of sheep up to green summer pastures; St-Rémy-de-Provence's fest is the best known. Or head to villages in the Pyrenees and Auvergne to witness this transit. (p823)

## May

**There is no lovelier month to travel in France, as the first melons ripen in Provence and outdoor markets burst with new-found colour. Spring is always in.**

### May Day

No one works on 1 May, a national holiday that incites summer buzz, with *muguets* (lilies of the valley) sold at roadside stalls and given to friends for good luck. In Arles, Camargue cowboys prove their bull-herding and equestrian skills at the Fête des Gardians. (p815)

### Fêtes de Jeanne d'Arc

Orléans residents have celebrated the liberation of their city by Joan of Arc since 1430. Festivities include a four-day medieval market, costume parades, concerts and, on 8 May, a cathedral service and military parade (including tanks). (p401)

### Festival de Cannes

In mid-May, film stars and celebrities walk the

red carpet at Cannes, Europe's biggest cinema extravaganza. (p867)

### Monaco Grand Prix

How fitting that Formula One's most glamorous rip around the streets is in one of the world's most glam countries at Monaco's Formula One Grand Prix. (p890)

### Pèlerinage des Gitans

Roma flock to the Camargue on 24 and 25 May and again in October for a flamboyant fiesta of street music, dancing and dipping their toes in the sea. (p820)

## June

**As midsummer approaches, the festival pace quickens alongside a rising temperature gauge, which tempts the first bathers into the sea. Looking north, nesting white storks shower good luck on farmsteads in Alsace.**

### Fête de la Musique

Orchestras, crooners, buskers and bands fill the streets with free music during France's vibrant nationwide celebration of music on 21 June ([www.fetedela-musique.culture.fr](http://www.fetedela-musique.culture.fr)).

### Paris Jazz Festival

No festival better evokes the brilliance of Paris' interwar jazz age than this annual fest in the Parc Floral de Paris. (p131)

## July

**If lavender's your French love, now is the time to catch it flowering in Provence. But you won't be the only one. School's out for the summer, showering the country with tourists, traffic and too many *complet* (full) signs strung in hotel windows.**

### Bastille Day

Join the French in celebrating the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789 – countrywide there are fireworks displays, balls, processions, parades and lots of hoo-ha all round.

### Tour de France

The world's most prestigious cycling race ends on av des Champs-Élysées in Paris on the third or fourth Sunday of July, but you can catch it for two weeks before all over France – the route changes each year but the French Alps are a hot spot. (p132)

### Festival d'Avignon

Rouse your inner thespian with Avignon's legendary performing-arts festival. Street acts in its fringe fest are as inspired as those on official stages. (p828)

### Jazz à Juan

Jive to jazz cats in Juanles-Pins at this mythical Riviera music fest, which has been around for 50-odd years. Jazz à Juan requires tickets, but the fringe 'Off' part of the music festival does not. (p873)

## August

It's that crazy summer month when the French join everyone else on holiday. Paris, Lyon and other big cities empty, traffic jams at motorway toll booths test the patience of a saint, and temperatures soar. Avoid. Or don your party hat and join the crowd!

### ★ Festival Interceltique de Lorient

Celtic culture is the focus of the Festival Interceltique de Lorient, when hundreds of thousands of Celts from Brittany and abroad flock to Lorient to celebrate just that. (p311)

### 🍷 Route du Champagne en Fête

There's no better excuse for a flute or three of bubbly than during the first weekend in August when Champagne toasts its vines and vintages with the Route du Champagne en Fête. Free tastings, cellar visits, music and dancing. (p347)

### ★ Hestiv'Òc

Ramp up the summer with four days of revelry in the Pyrenean town of Pau, featuring performances and music on stages in the centre of town ([www.hestivoc.com](http://www.hestivoc.com)). The best feature: it's entirely *gratuit* so won't cost you a single centime. (p701)

## September

As sun-plump grapes hang heavy on darkened vines



EDDY DAL/GETTY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



HARRIET BROCKEY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Top: Fête des Lumières (p486), Lyon

Bottom: Fête du Citron (p896), Menton

and that August madness drops off as abruptly as it began, a welcome tranquillity falls across autumnal France. This is the start of France's *vendange* (grape harvest).



### Braderie de Lille

The mountains of empty mussel shells engulfing the streets after three days of mussel-munching have to be seen to be believed. Then there's the real reason for visiting Lille on the first weekend of September – its huge flea market is Europe's largest. (p211)



### Rutting Season

Nothing beats getting up at dawn to watch mating stags, boar and red deer at play. Observatory towers are hidden in thick forest around Château de Chambord. (p407)

## October

The days become shorter, the last grapes are harvested and the first sweet chestnuts fall from trees. With the changing of the clocks on the last Sunday of the month, there's no denying it's winter.



### Nuit Blanche

In one last-ditch attempt to stretch out what's left of summer, museums, monuments, cultural spaces, bars and clubs rock around the clock during Paris' so-called White Night, aka one fabulous long all-nighter! (p132)

## November

It's nippy now. Toussaint (All Saints' Day) on 1 November ushers in the switch to shorter winter opening hours for many sights. Many restaurants close two nights a week, making dining out on Monday a challenge in some towns.



### Beaujolais Nouveau

At the stroke of midnight on the third Thursday in November the first bottles of cherry-red Beaujolais Nouveau are cracked open – and what a party it can be in Beaujolais, Lyon and other places nearby! (p497)



### Vente aux Enchères des Vins des Hospices de Beaune

The grandest of the many wine fests in Burgundy's

prestigious Côte d'Or, this three-day extravaganza sees the Hospices de Beaune hold a private auction of wine, with the proceeds going to charity. (p451)

## December

Days are short and it's cold everywhere bar the south of France. But there are Christmas school holidays and festive celebrations to bolster sun-deprived souls, not to mention some season-opening winter skiing in the highest-altitude Alpine resorts from mid-December.



### Fête des Lumières

France's biggest and best light show, on and around 8 December, transforms the streets and squares of Lyon into an open stage. (p486)



### Alsatian Christmas Markets

Visitors meander between fairy-light-covered craft stalls, mug of *vin chaud* (warm mulled wine) in gloved hand, at Alsace's traditional pre-Christmas markets.

# Itineraries



10  
DAYS

## Essential France

For a taste of quintessential France, follow this 10-day 'best of' itinerary.

No place screams 'France!' more than **Paris**. Spend two days in the capital, allowing time for café lounging, bistro lunches and strolls along the Seine and Canal St-Martin. Next day, enjoy Renaissance royalty at **Château de Chambord** and **Château de Chenonceau** in the Loire Valley. Or spend two days in Normandy, marvelling at the Gothic cathedral in **Rouen**, the **Bayeux** tapestry, sea-splashed **Mont St-Michel** and – if modern history rocks your boat – the **D-Day** landing beaches.

On day five, zoom south for world-class cave art in the **Vézère Valley**. Key sites lie around Les Eyzies-de-Tayac-Sireuil and Montignac. Or base yourself in Sarlat-la-Canéda, showcasing medieval architecture and a fabulous food market. On day seven, experience 12 hours in **Bordeaux**, not missing wine tasting in its stunning La Cité du Vin, the seafaring Musée de la Mer et de la Marine and a light show at Les Bassins de Lumières. Next day, drive three hours to walled **Carcassonne**, Roman **Nîmes** and the **Pont du Gard**. Finish on the Riviera with a casino flutter in Grace Kelly's **Monaco**, a portside aperitif in Brigitte Bardot's **St-Tropez** and a stroll in Henri Matisse's **Nice**.





**2**  
WEEKS

## The Channel to the Med

A coast-to-coast trip along France's 3427km of coastline, handsomely spread along the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, uncovers a wealth of dramatically contrasting sea-scapes, port cities and quaint villages.

Step off the boat in **Calais** and be seduced by cliffs, sand dunes and beaches on the spectacular **Côte d'Opale**. Speed southwest, lunching on fish in **Dieppe**, visiting **Rouen** cathedral and cliffside **Étretat** en route to your overnight stop: your choice of the pretty Normandy seaside resorts of **Honfleur**, **Trouville-sur-Mer** or **Deauville**. Spend two days here: seafood-shopping on Trouville-sur-Mer's waterfront and hobnobbing with Parisians on Deauville's chic boardwalk are essentials.

Devote day three to Normandy's D-Day landing beaches. Start with the Caen-Normandie Mémorial in **Caen**, the best single museum devoted to the Battle of Normandy, then follow a westward arc along the beach-laced coast, taking in the caisson-strewn sands at **Arromanches-les-Bains**, gun installations at **Longues-sur-Mer** and the 7km-long stretch of 'Bloody **Omaha**'. Come dusk, revive spent emotions over scallops and *calvados* (apple-flavoured brandy). Or, skip the beaches and go for the stunning representation of 11th-century warfare embroidered across 70m of tapestry in **Bayeux**. Day four and iconic **Mont St-Michel** and its sandy bay beckon. End the week in Brittany with a flop in an old-fashioned beach tent in **Dinard** and a bracing stroll on spectacular headlands around **Camaret-sur-Mer**.

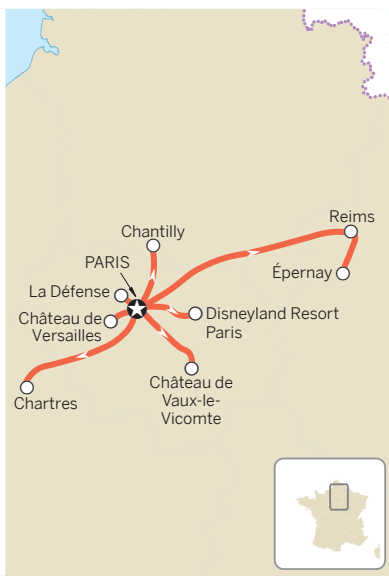
Week two begins with a long drive south to **La Rochelle** for a seafood feast. Spend a night here, continuing the gourmet theme as you wend your way south through Médoc wine country to **Bordeaux**. Next morning, stop in La Ville Rose, **Toulouse**, through which runs the undisputed queen of canals, Canal du Midi, and/or **Carcassonne** before hitting the Med. The Camargue – a wetland of flamingos, horses and incredible birdlife – is a unique patch of coast to explore and Van Gogh thought so too. Follow in his footsteps around **Arles**, before continuing onto the ancient, enigmatic and totally fascinating port city of **Marseille**.



## 1 WEEK Brittany to Bordeaux

For an exhilarating dose of Breton culture, Atlantic sea air and outstanding wine full of southern sun, there is no finer trip.

It starts fresh off the boat in **St-Malo**, a walled city with sturdy Vauban ramparts. Linger a day in this attractive port. Walk across at low tide to Île du Grand Bé and lap up great views atop a 14th-century tower in pretty St-Servan. Motor along the Côte d'Émeraude next day, stopping in seaside town **Dinard** en route to Breton port **Roscoff**, 200km west. Devote day four to discovering Brittany's famous cider and megaliths around **Carnac**, the enchanting medieval town of **Vannes** overlooking the island-studded Golfe du Morbihan, and the turreted medieval castle in **Josselin**. Push south along the Atlantic Coast, stopping in **Nantes** if you like big cities or continuing to the peaceful waterways of the **Marais Poitevin**. **Bordeaux** is your final destination for day six, from where a bevy of Bordeaux wine-tasting trips tempt. End the journey atop Europe's highest sand dune, **Dune du Pilat**, near oyster-famed **Arcachon**.



## 1 WEEK A Week Around Paris

What makes the capital **Paris** even more wonderful is the extraordinarily green and nonurban journey of Renaissance châteaux and sparkling wine that unfurls within an hour of the city.

Day one has to be France's grandest castle, **Château de Versailles**, and its vast gardens. Next day, feast on France's best-preserved medieval basilica and the dazzling blue stained glass in **Chartres**, a train ride away. Small-town **Chantilly** is a good spot to combine a laid-back lunch with a Renaissance château, formal French gardens and – if you snagged tickets in advance – an enchanting equestrian performance. On the fourth day, train it to **Reims** in the heart of Champagne. Scale its cathedral for dazzling views before tucking into Champagne tasting. Dedicated bubbly aficionados can hop the next day to **Épernay**, France's other great Champagne city. On day six, enjoy a lazy start then catch an afternoon fountain show at **Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte**, followed by a candlelit tour of the château. End the week with a look at futuristic **La Défense** or, for those with kids, **Disneyland Resort Paris**.



## 5 DAYS Along the Loire Valley

For five days of aristocratic pomp and architectural splendour near **Paris**, head to the château-studded Loire Valley – a superb Unesco World Heritage destination.

Begin in regal **Blois**. Maximise the limited time you have by joining an organised château tour: queen of all castles **Château de Chambord** and charmingly classical **Château de Cheverny**, with its dramatic hound-packed kennels, are a great combo. On day three, follow France's longest river southwest to **Amboise**, final home of Leonardo da Vinci. Build some *dégustation* (tasting) of local **Vouvray** wines in vineyards into your itinerary en route to bourgeois **Tours**. From here, **Château de Chenonceau** is beautifully strung across the Cher River 34km east. End your trip with France's elite riding school in **Saumur** and the movingly simple abbey church **Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud**, or push on northwest to **Angers** with its massive black-stone fortress and Apocalypse Tapestry. Château de Verrières in Saumur is a befitting overnight address in this château-rich neck of the woods.



## 6 DAYS Burgundy & Beyond

Red-wine lovers can enjoy the fruits of Burgundy with this motoring tour.

Begin in Roman river port **Auxerre**, 170km southeast of Paris. Explore its abbey and Gothic cathedral, and cycle along tow-paths. On day two, consider an easy bike ride to a wonderful piece of Cistercian architecture in **Pontigny**, 25km north. Stay overnight or push on to **Chablis**, where more bike rides and gentle hikes between Burgundy vineyards await – allow ample time to taste the seven *grands crus* of this well-known winemaking town. Next day, meander south to the picture-postcard village of **Noyers-sur-Serein**, then head east to the breathtaking, Unesco-listed **Abbaye de Fontenay**, before winding up for the night in **Semur-en-Auxois**, 25km south. **MuséoParc Alésia**, where Julius Caesar defeated Gaulish chief Vercingétorix in 52 BCE, is not far from here. On the last day, discover **Dijon** and its beautiful medieval and Renaissance buildings. From here, should you have more time, take a road trip through the winemaking area of **Côte d'Or** to **Beaune**, or south to **Lyon** in the Rhône Valley and beyond to the rugged **Gorges de l'Ardèche**.





## 10 DAYS The South of France

For sun, sea and celebrity action, hit France's hot south.

Start in **Nice**, star of the coastline that unfurls in a pageant of Belle Époque palaces. Drive along the Riviera's trio of legendary **corniches** (coastal roads) – the views are mind-blowing – and on day three train it to glitzy **Monaco**. Motor southwest next, breaking for a stroll on the red-rock **Corniche de l'Estérel** en route to fishing port **St-Tropez**, where million-dollar yachts jostle for space with street artists. Rise early next morning for the place des Lices market and spend the afternoon on sandy Plage de Pampelonne. Day six is a toss-up between a dramatic drive along the **Corniche des Maures** to **Bormes-les-Mimosas** or a boat trip to **Îles d'Hyères**. Head inland next to **Aix-en-Provence**, a canvas of graceful 19th-century architecture and stylish cafes. From Aix, it's a hop and a skip to **Ventabren**, where lunch or dinner al fresco at Dan B is what eating in Provence is all about. Devote your last two days to the wild **Gorges du Verdon**, Europe's largest canyon, two hours' drive northeast, or gentle **Luberon** with its photogenic hilltop villages.



## 5 DAYS Summer in the Alps

A trip to the French Alps often translates as a week of skiing in one place. Yet take time to explore the region after the snow has melted and you'll be pleasantly surprised. Warm up with old-town ambling, lakeside strolling and warm-weather swimming in fairy-tale **Annecy**, a beautiful medieval town just 45km from Geneva, Switzerland. On day two, shift to **Chamonix** at the foot of Mont Blanc, Europe's highest peak: ride a cable car up to the **Aiguille du Midi** or, if the sky is not crystal-clear, ride a cog railway up to the **Mer de Glace** glacier. Yet more unforgettable views of Mont Blanc seduce along hiking trails in the chic, picturesque Alpine villages of **St-Gervais** and **Megève**. Let the adrenaline rip, or push on via the ancient Savoyard stronghold of **Chambéry** to the **Parc National de la Vanoise**, where spectacular mountain biking in **Les Trois Vallées** will please the most jaded outdoor junkie. A fitting finale to your Alpine foray is the stunning drive through the **Parc National des Écrins** to **Briançon**, perhaps the loveliest of all the medieval villages in the French Alps, famous for its Vauban fortifications.



Croque monsieur (toasted ham-and-cheese sandwich) and croque madame (with added egg)

## Plan Your Trip

# Eat & Drink Like a Local

Indulging in France's extraordinary wealth of gastronomic pleasures is reason alone to travel here – cruising around inspires hunger, gastronomic adventure and experimental know-how. Take time to delve into local culinary traditions, with both taste buds and hands, and you'll be rewarded with a far richer and tastier travel experience.

## The Year in Food

Feasting happens year-round, and what's cooking changes with the seasons.

### Spring (March–May)

Markets burst with asparagus, artichokes and fresh goat's cheese, Easter cooks up traditional lamb for lunch and the first strawberries redden.

### Summer (June–August)

Melons, cherries, peaches, apricots, figs, garlic and tomatoes brighten markets. Breton shallots are hand-harvested, and on the coast, foodies gorge on seafood and shellfish.

### Autumn (September–November)

The Camargue's nutty red rice is harvested. Normandy apples go into France's finest cider and chestnuts fall in the Ardèche, Cévennes and Corsica. Mushrooming and the game season begin.

### Winter (December–February)

Nets are strung beneath silvery groves in Provence and Corsica to catch olives. Pungent markets in the Dordogne and Provence sell black truffles, and in the Alps, skiers dip into cheese fondue. Christmas means Champagne and oysters, foie gras, chestnut-stuffed turkey and yule logs.

## Food Experiences

### Meals of a Lifetime

**Restaurant Guy Savoy** (p154) Triple-Michelin-starred Paris flagship of Guy Savoy at home in the neoclassical Monnaie de Paris.

**La Table de Pavie** (p667) Twin-Michelin-starred gastronomy by celebrity chef Yannick Alléno in the wine-rich town of St-Émilien.

**La Fleur de Sel** (p270) A celebration of Normandy's culinary riches prepared by a talented Honfleur native.

**L'Oustau de Baumanière** (p824) Legendary hotel-restaurant with three Michelin stars in Les Baux-de-Provence.

**Flaveur** (p862) Food becomes art at this double-Michelin-starred restaurant in Nice.

**Ma Table en Ville** (p472) Sensational traditional Burgundian cooking.

## Cheap Treats

**Croque monsieur** Toasted ham-and-cheese sandwich; cheesy *croques madames* are egg-topped.

**Chestnuts** Served piping hot in paper bags on street corners in winter.

**Socca** Chickpea-flour pancake typical for Nice on the Côte d'Azur.

**Pan bagnat** Crusty Niçois tuna sandwich dripping in fruity green olive oil.

**Flammekueche** (*tarte flambée* in French) Alsatian thin-crust pizza dough topped with sour cream, onions and bacon.

**Ice cream** By the best *glaciers* (ice-cream makers) in France: Berthillon (p151) in Paris, Glaces Geronimi (p915) and Raugi (p903) in Corsica; La Martinière (p655) in St-Martin-de-Ré. Myrtle, chestnut, lavender, artichoke or Camembert ice, anyone?

**Crêpes** Large, round, thin sweet pancakes cooked at street-corner stands while you wait.

**Galettes** Savoury, usually gluten-free crêpes, made with buckwheat flour and typically served with *fromage* (cheese) and *jambon* (ham).

**Pissaladière** Traditional Niçois 'pizza' topped with salty anchovies and sweet caramelised onions.

**Beignets au brocciu** Corsican deep-fried doughnuts, sweet or savoury, filled with the island's local cream cheese.

**Gougères** Utterly irresistible, cheesy pastry puffs typical for Burgundy, usually served with an aperitif but delicious as a cheap snack too.

## Dare to Try

**Andouillette** Big fat sausage made from minced pig intestine; try it in Troyes or Lyon, France's gastronomic heart and known for its piggy cuisine.

**Oursins** (sea urchins) Caught and eaten west of Marseille in February.

**Époisses de Bourgogne** Create a stink with France's undisputed smelliest cheese from Burgundy.

**Escargots** (snails) Eat them in Burgundy, shells stuffed with garlic and parsley butter, and oven-baked.

**Cuisses de grenouilles** (frogs' legs) Catching wild frogs and frog farming have been outlawed in France since 1980, but frogs' legs are imported from Southeast Asia, ensuring this French culinary tradition is alive and kicking.

**Foie** (liver) Die-hard aficionados in the Dordogne eat fresh fattened duck or goose liver, raw and chilled, with a glass of sweet Monbazillac wine.

**Pieds de cochon** (pig trotters) Just that, or go for the oven-baked trotters of a *mouton* (sheep) or *veau* (calf).

**Presskopf** Alsatian head cheese or brawn, made with a calf or pig's head.

**Beuchelle à la tourangelle** Old-world dish from Tours in the Loire Valley, combining calf sweetbreads and kidneys with cream and mushrooms.

## Local Specialities

Gourmet appetites know no bounds in France, paradise for food lovers with its varied cuisine, markets and local gusto for dining well. Go to Burgundy for hearty wine-based cooking, Brittany and the Atlantic Coast for seafood, and the Basque Country for a slice of Spanish spice.

### Normandy

Cream, apples and cider are the essentials of Norman cuisine, which sees mussels simmered in cream and a splash of cider to make *moules à la crème normande* and tripe thrown in the slow pot with cider and vegetables to make *tripes à la mode de Caen*. Creamy Camembert is the local cow's-milk cheese, and on the coast *coquilles St-Jacques* (scallops) and *huîtres* (oysters) rule the seafood roost. Apples are the essence of the region's main tipples: tangy cider and the potent *calvados* (apple-flavoured brandy), exquisite straight or splashed on apple sorbet.

### Burgundy

Vine-wealthy Burgundy honours a culinary trinity of beef, red wine and Dijon mustard. Begin with *oeufs en meurette* (wine-poached eggs) or snails, traditionally served by the dozen and oven-baked in their shells with butter, garlic and parsley. Savour *bœuf bourguignon* (beef marinated and cooked in young red wine with mush-

rooms, onions, carrots and bacon), followed by the pick of Burgundy AOC cheeses.

Wine tasting in the Côte d'Or vineyards, source of world-famous Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune wines, is obligatory when in Burgundy; laid-back Irancy, less known around the globe but much-loved by locals, is an insider favourite.

### The Dordogne

This southwest region is famous for its indulgent black truffles and poultry, especially ducks and geese, who are typically force-fed to ensure suitably fattened livers to go into foie gras (literally 'fattened liver'). *Pâté de foie gras* (duck- or goose-liver pâté) is served straight or flavoured with Cognac and truffles. *Confit de canard* and *confit d'oie* are duck or goose joints cooked very slowly in their own fat. Snails are another speciality, and can also be stuffed with foie gras. Walnuts from the region's abundant walnut groves go into *eau de noix* (caramel-coloured walnut liqueur).

### Lyon

Lyon is dubbed France's gastronomic capital. And while it doesn't compete with Paris when it comes to the variety of international cuisine, it certainly holds its own when it comes to titillating taste buds with the unusual and inventive. Take the age-old repertoire of feisty, often pork-driven dishes served in the city's legendary *bouchons* (small bistros): breaded fried tripe, big fat *andouillettes* (pig-intestine sausage), silk-weaver's brains (a herbed cheese spread, not brains at all) – there is no way you can ever say Lyonnais cuisine is run of the mill. A lighter, less meaty speciality is *quenelle de brochet*, a poached dumpling made of freshwater fish (usually pike) and served with sauce Nantua (a cream and freshwater-crayfish sauce).

Equally fine is the Lyonnais wine list where excellent Côtes de Rhône reds vie for attention with local Brouilly and highly esteemed Mâcon reds from nearby Burgundy. In *bouchons*, local Beaujolais is mixed with a dash of blackcurrant liqueur to make a blood-red *communard* aperitif.

### Alsace

No Alsatian dish is more classic than *choucroute alsacienne* or *choucroute garnie* – sauerkraut flavoured with juniper berries





Andouillette (pig-intestine sausage)

and served hot with sausages, bacon, pork and/or ham knuckle. It's meaty, Teutonic and served in *winstubs* (traditional Alsatian taverns). *Wüdele braisé au pinot noir* (ham knuckles braised in wine) also come with sauerkraut. Crack open a bottle of light citrusy sylvaner, crisp dry Alsatian riesling or full-bodied pinot noir to accompany either, and round off the filling feast with a *tarte alsacienne*, a scrumptious custard tart made with local fruit such as mirabelles (sweet yellow plums) or *quetsches* (a variety of purple plum). Beer might be big in Alsace but it's a big no-no when it comes to sauerkraut. Sweet teeth will adore Alsatian gingerbread and *kougelhoppf* (sugared, ring-shaped raisin cake).

## Provence & the Côte d'Azur

Cuisine in this sun-baked land is laden with tomatoes, melons, cherries, peaches, olives, Mediterranean fish and Alpine cheese. Farmers gather at the weekly market to sell their fruit and vegetables, woven garlic plaits, dried herbs displayed in sturdy coarse sacks, and olives stuffed with a multitude of edible sins. *À la Provençal* still means anything with a generous dose

of garlic-seasoned tomatoes, while a simple *filet mignon* sprinkled with olive oil and rosemary fresh from the garden makes the same magnificent Sunday lunch it did generations ago.

Yet there are exciting culinary contrasts in this region, which see fisherfolk return with the catch of the day in seafaring Marseille; grazing bulls and paddy fields in the Camargue; lambs in the Alpilles; black truffles in the Vaucluse; cheese made from cow's milk in Alpine pastures; and an Italianate accent to cooking in seaside Nice.

Bouillabaisse, Marseille's mighty meal of fish stew, is Provence's most famous contribution to French cuisine. The chowder must contain at least three kinds of fresh saltwater fish, cooked for about 10 minutes in a broth containing onions, tomatoes, saffron and various herbs, and eaten as a main course with toasted bread and *rouille* (a spicy red mayonnaise of olive oil, garlic and chilli peppers). The fish stew *bourride* is similar to bouillabaisse but has fewer ingredients, a less prescriptive recipe, and often a slightly creamier sauce. It's customarily served with *aïoli*.



Kir royale (Champagne with blackcurrant liqueur)

When in Provence, do as the Provençaux do: drink pastis. An aniseed-flavoured, 45%-alcohol drink, it was invented in Marseille by industrialist Paul Ricard in 1932. Amber-coloured in the bottle, it turns milky white when mixed with water. An essential lunch or dinner companion is a chilled glass of the region's irresistibly pink, AOC Côtes de Provence rosé wine.

## Brittany

Brittany is a paradise for seafood lovers (think lobster, scallops, sea bass, turbot, mussels and oysters from Cancale) as well as kids, thanks to the humble crêpe and *galette*, an ancient culinary tradition that has long ruled Breton cuisine. Pair a sweet wheat-flour pancake or savoury buckwheat *galette* with *une bolée* (a stubby terracotta goblet) of apple-rich Breton cider, and taste buds enter gourmet heaven. Royal Guillevic and ciders produced by the Domaine de Kervéguen are excellent quality, artisanal ciders to try. If cider is not your cup of tea, order a local beer like Coreff or nonalcoholic *lait ribot* (fermented milk). *Chouchen* (hydromel), a fermented honey liqueur, is a typical Breton aperitif.

Cheese is not big, but *la beurre de Bretagne* (Breton butter) is. Traditionally sea-salted and creamy, a knob of it naturally goes into crêpes, *galettes* and the most outrageously buttery cake you're likely to ever taste in your life – *kouign amann* (Breton butter cake). Bretons, unlike the rest of the French, even butter their bread. Butter handmade by Jean-Yves Bordier – buy it at his shop in St-Malo (p288) – ends up on tables of top restaurants around the world.

Seaweed is another Breton culinary curiosity, and 80% of French shallots are grown here.

## Languedoc-Roussillon

No dish better evokes Languedoc than *casoulet*, an earthy cockle-warming stew of white beans and meat that fires passionate debate. Everyone knows best which type of bean and meat hunk should be thrown in the *cassole*, the traditional earthenware dish it is cooked and brought to the table in. Otherwise this region's trademark cuisine *campagnarde* (country cooking) sees fisherfolk tending lagoon oyster beds on the coast, olives being pressed in gentle hills inland, blue-veined 'king of cheeses' ripening in caves in Roquefort, geese and gaggles of ducks fattening around Toulouse, sheep munching in salty marsh meadows around Montpellier, and mushrooms growing in forests.

In Uzès, *croquignoles* (shortbread biscuits adorned with a sweet almond or hazelnut and covered in orange syrup after baking) are a sweet treat. A Spanish accent gives cuisine in neighbouring Roussillon a fiery twist of exuberance.

## French Basque Country

Among the essential ingredients of Basque cooking are the deep-red Espelette chillies that add bite to many dishes, including the dusting on the signature *jambon de Bayonne*, the locally prepared Bayonne ham. Eating out in this part of France near Spain is a delight thanks to its many casual *pintxo* (tapas) bars serving garlic prawns, spicy chorizo sausages and other local dishes tapas-style. Wash the whole lot down with a glass of local cider (*sidrea* in Basque), lighter and more sparkling than ciders in northern France, best poured in a glass at arm's length. *Izarra* is a much-loved herbal liqueur.



Top: Escargots à la Bourguignonne (snails with garlic butter and parsley)

Bottom: Pissaladière (onion pizza topped with black olives and anchovies)



Basques love cakes, especially *gâteau basque* (cake filled with cream or cherry jam). Then there's Bayonne chocolate...

## Corsica

The hills and mountains of the island of Corsica have always been ideal for raising stock, and the dense Corsican underbrush called the maquis is made up of shrubs mixed with wild herbs. These raw materials come together to create aromatic trademark Corsican dishes like *stufatu* (fragrant mutton stew), *premonata* (beef braised with juniper berries) and *lonzo* (Corsican sausage cooked with white beans, white wine and herbs).

## How to Eat & Drink

It pays to know what and how much to eat, and when – adopting the local culinary pace is key to savouring every last exquisite moment of the French day.

## When to Eat

**Petit déjeuner (breakfast)** The French kick-start the day with a *tartine* (slice of baguette smeared with unsalted butter and jam) and *un café* (espresso), long milky *café au lait* or – especially for kids – hot chocolate. In hotels you get a real cup but in French homes, coffee and hot chocolate are drunk from a cereal bowl – perfect bread-dunking terrain. Croissants (eaten straight, never with butter or jam) are a weekend treat along with brioches (sweet breads), *pains au chocolat* (chocolate-filled croissants) and other *viennoise-rie* (sweet baked goods).

**Déjeuner (lunch)** A meal few French would go without. The traditional main meal of the day, lunch translates as a starter and main course with wine, followed by an espresso. Sunday lunch is a long, languid affair taking several hours. Indeed, a fully fledged, traditional French meal – *déjeuner* or *dîner* – can comprise six courses, each accompanied by a different wine. Standard restaurant times are noon to 2.30pm.

**Aperitif** The *apéro* (predinner drink) is sacred. Urban cafes and bars get packed out from around 5pm onwards as workers relax over a chit-chat-fuelled *kir* (white wine sweetened with blackcurrant syrup), glass of red or beer. Come weekends, a leisurely noon-time *apéro* before lunch is equally acceptable.

**Goûter** An afternoon snack, devoured with particular relish by French children. A slab of milk chocolate inside a wedge of baguette is a traditional favourite.

**Dîner (dinner)** Traditionally lighter than lunch, but a meal that is increasingly treated as the main meal of the day. Standard restaurant times are 7pm to 10.30pm.

## Where to Eat

**Auberge** Country inn serving traditional fare, often attached to a small hotel.

**Ferme auberge** Working farm that cooks up meals from local farm products; usually only dinner and frequently only by reservation.

**Bistro** (also spelled *bistrot*) Anything from a pub or bar with snacks and light meals to a small, fully fledged restaurant.

**Neobistro** Trendy in Paris and other large cities where this contemporary take on the traditional bistro ranges from checked-tablecloth tradition to contemporary minimalism.

**Brasserie** Much like a cafe except it serves full meals, drinks and coffee from morning until 11pm or later. Typical fare includes *choucroute* (sauerkraut) and *moules frites* (mussels and fries).

**Restaurant** Born in Paris in the 18th century, restaurants today serve lunch and dinner five or six days a week.

**Buffet** (or *buvette*) Kiosk, usually at train stations and airports, selling drinks, filled baguettes and snacks.

**Cafe** Basic light snacks as well as drinks.

**Crêperie** (also *galetterie*) Casual address specialising in sweet crêpes and savoury *galettes* (buckwheat crêpes).

**Salon de thé** Trendy tearoom often serving light lunches (quiche, salads, cakes, tarts, pies and pastries) and green, black and herbal teas.

**Table d'hôte** (literally 'host's table') Some of the most charming B&Bs serve *table d'hôte* too, a delicious homemade meal of set courses with little or no choice.

**Winstub** Cosy wine tavern in Alsace serving traditional Alsatian cooking and local wines.

**Estaminet** Flemish-style eatery of Flanders and *le nord*, cooking up regional fare.





Apple cider

## Etiquette

**Table reservations** To snag a table in the best addresses, especially at weekends, book a table well in advance by telephone or email.

**Bread** Order a meal and within seconds a basket of fresh bread will be brought to the table. Butter is rarely an accompaniment, and when it is (occasionally in top-end addresses), it will be *doux* (unsalted). Except in upmarket places, don't expect a side plate – simply put it on the table. In bistros and other casual diners, it's perfectly acceptable to mop up what's left of the sauce on your plate with a bread chunk.

**Water** Asking for *une carafe d'eau* (jug of tap water) is acceptable. Should bubbles be your cup of tea, ask for *de l'eau gazeuze* (some fizzy mineral water). Perrier is the most popular French brand.

**Coffee** Never end a meal with a cappuccino, *café au lait* or cup of tea, which, incidentally, never comes with milk in France. Play French and order *un café* (espresso).

## Menu Decoder

**Carte** Menu, listed in the order you'd eat it: starter, main course, cheese, dessert.

**Menu A** Two- or three-course meal at a fixed price. It's by far the best-value dining and most bistros and restaurants chalk one on the board. Lunch *menus* – usually incredibly good value – occasionally include a glass of wine and/or coffee; dinner *menus* in gastronomic restaurants sometimes pair a perfectly matched glass of wine with each course.

**À la carte** Order your pick from the menu (as opposed to choosing a fixed *menu*).

**Formule** A cheaper lunchtime option comprising a main plus starter or dessert.

**Plat du jour** Dish of the day.

**Menu dégustation** Fixed-price tasting *menu* of five to seven modestly sized courses.

**Amuse-bouche** A complimentary savoury morsel intended to excite and ignite taste buds, served in gastronomic restaurants at the start of a meal.

**Entrée** Starter, appetiser.

**Plat** Main course.

**Fromage** Cheese, accompanied with fresh bread; always served before dessert.

**Dessert** Just that, served after cheese.



Jardin du Luxembourg (p124), Paris

## Plan Your Trip

# Family Travel

Be it the capital, cities or rural hinterland, France spoils families with its rich mix of cultural sights, outdoor activities, festivals and entertainment – some paid for, some free – for children of all ages. With advance planning savvy parents will find creative kid appeal in almost every sight in France, blockbuster must-sees included.

## Keeping Costs Down

### Sleeping

Book family-friendly addresses with interconnecting or family rooms well in advance.

### Eating Out

Restaurants have a *menu enfant* (children's menu) for under-12-year-olds – typically a green salad, *steak haché* (beef burger with no bun) with fries, and ice cream. Free bread accompanies every meal; teething babies love the *quignon* (knobbly end bit).

### Drinks

Skip pricey fizzy drinks: order a free *carafe d'eau* (jug of tap water) with meals and *un sirop* (fruit syrup diluted with water) in cafes – grenadine and mint are favourites. Countrywide, fill up water bottles at water fountains marked *eau potable*.

### Sightseeing

Many sights are free to children under 18 – in general, kids under five don't pay. Some museums offer family tickets, worth it once you're two adults and two kids.

### Activities

Most cost extra, but walking, beaches, and sledging, ice-skating and snowshoeing in ski resorts are free or cost little. Pick up brochures outlining family walks at tourist offices.

## Children Will Love

### Gastronomic Thrills

**Ladurée, Paris** (p140) Cakes too beautiful to eat in a historic tearoom.

**La Cité du Vin, Bordeaux** (p657) Grape-juice tasting.

**Moutarderie Fallot, Beaune** (p450) Hand-mill mustard seeds with stone.

**Musée du Champignon, Saumur** (p425) Mushroom farm in a cave.

**L'Atelier du Chocolat, Bayonne** (p679) Watch chocolate being made in this Basque chocolate factory and museum.

**Roquefort Société, Roquefort** (p776) Taste 'mouldy' cheese after a visit to the cheese-maturing cellars dug into the Languedoc hillside.

## Wildlife Watching

**Parc National de la Vanoise, French Alps** (p537) Come face to face with ibex, chamois and cuddly, kid-pleasing marmots.

**Parc National du Mercantour** (p846) and **Les Loups du Gévaudan** (p774) See wolves living in semi-freedom.

**NaturOparC, Hunawihr** (p367) Discover the springtime joy of hatching storks in Alsace.

**Réserve de Bisons d'Europe, Mende** (p774) Watch European bison at close quarters.

**Maison des Vautours, Haut-Languedoc** (p776) Watch vultures soar through mountain skies in the wild Grands Causses; the Parc National des Pyrénées (p710) and Gorges du Verdon (p847) in Provence are other spots vultures love.

## Stuff for Science & Tech Fans

**Les Machines de l'île de Nantes** (p641) Fly on a heron or ride a house-sized mechanical elephant at this fantastical workshop.

**Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, Paris** (p115) Sign up for a hands-on science workshop at the capital's leading science museum (from three years).

**Cité de l'Automobile** (p375) and **Cité du Train** (p375) Enter wannabe-mechanic heaven at these two Mulhouse museums.

**L'Aventure Michelin, Clermont-Ferrand** (p567) Map-making, shiny cars, flashy TV screens and lots of interactive displays geared towards kids.

**Halle de la Machine, Toulouse** (p731) Ride a 9m-tall mechanical minotaur.

**Cité de l'Espace** (p731) and **L'Envol des Pionniers** (p731) Fly in space on an Apollo mission simulator or aboard the world's first airmail flight in Toulouse.

## Hands-On History & Culture

**Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris** (p124) Time-travel to 1920s Paris: chase vintage sailboats with a stick like Parisian kids did a century ago.

**MuséoParc Alésia, Burgundy** (p453) Relive the battle between Julius Caesar and Vercingétorix at Alésia in 52 BCE at this first-class museum.

**Chantier Médiéval de Guédelon, Burgundy** (p459) Play medieval builders for real at this medieval construction site.

**Romagne '14–'18, Lorraine** (p390) Learn about WWI on battlefields near Verdun with an excellent guided walk for kids.

**Château de Chambord, Loire Valley** (p407) Search for virtual golden coins on a HistoPad (tablet computer) treasure hunt.

## Best Free Stuff

**Fort St-Jean, Marseille** (p792) Crazy about castles? No fortress is finer to explore.

**Route des Vins d'Alsace** (p362) Watch fairy tales come to life before your eyes in half-timbered, castle-topped villages.

**Miroir d'Eau, Bordeaux** (p657) Frolicking bare-foot in the world's largest reflecting pool. Fountain dipping is also big in Lyon (place des Terreaux), Dijon (place de la Libération) and Paris (place de la République).

**Dune du Pilat, Atlantic Coast** (p666) Run wild on the largest 'sandcastle' any child is ever likely to see.

**Festival Off, Avignon** (p828) World-class freebie festival that kids love; Lyon's Fête des Lumières (p486) and the Carnaval de Nice (p859) are other memorable favourites.

## Region by Region

### Paris

Interactive museums, choice dining for all tastes and budgets, Seine boat rides and beautiful parks make the capital a top family choice. Visit the Eiffel Tower (p76) at night to ensure a twinkling hit.

### Lille, Flanders & the Somme

Varied family interests are met with the Baie de Somme's wildlife-filled estuaries, the Côte d'Opale's (p219) activity-packed seaside resorts, and – for older kids – sombre WWI memorials, cemeteries and museums (p230).

### Normandy

Beaches, boats and some great stuff for history-mad kids and teens. At Mont St-Michel (p273), skip the formal guided tour and hook up with a walking guide to lead you and the children barefoot across the sand to the abbey.



Fort St-Jean (p792), Marseille

### Brittany

More beaches, boats, pirate-perfect islands and bags of good old-fashioned outdoor fun. Enough said.

### Champagne

Don't dismiss grown-up Champagne outright – rent bicycles to turn vineyard touring into a family bike ride instead.

### Alsace & Lorraine

Learning about WWI on battlefields near Verdun (p388) is the main lure here for older kids and teens. Spotting storks is another pastime.

### The Loire Valley

Châteaux, medieval to Renaissance, riddle this valley – the best have activities for kids and stage *son et lumière* (sound-and-light) shows. Cycling trails are abundant.

### Burgundy

Wine tasting and canal-boating aside, history-focused highlights include



Chantier Médiéval de Guédelon (p459) and the MuséoParc Alésia (p453).

## Lyon & the Rhône Valley

Playgrounds by the river, traditional puppet shows (p495) and December's Fête des Lumières (p486) boost Lyon's charm as a family-friendly city.

## French Alps & the Jura Mountains

Winter in this mountainous region translates as one giant snowy playground – for all ages. Les Gets (p520), Avoriaz (car-free), La Clusaz (p523), Chamrousse and Le Grand Bornand (p523) are popular family ski resorts.

## Auvergne

Old-fashioned outdoor exploration is the attraction of this overtly rural, gently mountainous region with, unexpectedly, volcano-themed amusement park Vulcania (p577).

## The Dordogne, Limousin & the Lot

Caves hiding prehistoric art (p625) in the Vézère Valley and sailing along a river in a cave at Gouffre de Padirac (p626) are highlights. Otherwise, it's wild river swimming, boating and countryside lounging.

## Atlantic Coast

Sandy beaches, the car-free island of Île de Ré (p653) and Europe's biggest sand dune (p666) make this coastal region a massive family destination.

## French Basque Country

Families with older children cannot resist uber-cool Biarritz (p680) and nearby world-famous surf resorts that make this wind-ripped stretch of sandy coast so famous.

## The Pyrenees

It's mountains all the way here, be it for family hikes or ski days. When shorter legs tire, mountain train Le Train Jaune (p782) enchants.

# Kids' Corner

## Say What?

Hello.

Bonjour.  
bon-zhoor

Goodbye.

Au revoir.  
o-rer-vwa

Thank  
you.

Merci.  
mair-see

My name  
is ...

Je m'appelle ...  
zher ma-pel ...

## Did You Know?

- France is nicknamed 'the hexagon' because of its six-sided shape.
- Époisses de Bourgogne and Vieux Boulogne are France's stinkiest cheeses.

## Have You Tried?



**Tête de veau**  
Calf's head

## Toulouse Area

Toulouse is a city for budding young astronauts and pilots: the space and aviation exhibits and simulators at Cité de l'Espace (p731) and L'Envol des Pionniers (p731) are sensational.

## Languedoc-Roussillon

Sandy Mediterranean beaches and a diverse inland collection of amazing natural sights – caves (p775), vultures (p776), European bison (p774), dinosaurs (p763), donkey treks – spoil families.

## Provence

Sizzling-hot family spot: sea kayaking in the Calanques (p807); Pont du Gard (p752) canoeing and river jumping; snorkelling safaris and cycling on the island of Porquerolles (p891); horseback adventures with Real McCoy cowboys in the flamingo-strewn Camargue (p818).

## The Côte d'Azur & Monaco

A vibrant arts scene and a beach-laced shore riddled with seafaring activities please kids of all ages. Monaco's family stunner is its fish-filled Musée Océanographique (p890).

## Corsica

Sailing, kayaking, walking, biking or simply dipping your toes or snorkel mask in clear turquoise waters: life on this island is fairy-tale *belle* (beautiful).

## Good to Know

Look out for the  icon for family-friendly suggestions throughout this guide.

**Babies** Supermarkets and pharmacies (closed Sunday) sell infant formula, soy and cow's milk, nappies (diapers) and jars of baby food. Only coffee shops and restaurants serving weekend brunch tend to have a changing station. Most hotels supply baby cots (free) and a child's bed (€15 to €50 a night).

**Prams and strollers** France's cobbled streets, metro stairs and hilltop villages were not built with pushchairs (strollers) in mind. Some museums, notably Château de Versailles, don't let pushchairs in. Bring a sling.

**Parks and playgrounds** Every town has at least one *terrain de jeux* (playground), usually in the main park.

**Goûter** In France, *goûter* or an afternoon snack around 4.30pm is sacrosanct. Bakeries serve cakes and pastries, or go local: buy a baguette, rip off a chunk and pop chocolate inside.

**Dining** Restaurants don't open before 7.30pm, making cafes, crêperies and brasseries offering all-day dining a good bet for early eaters. High chairs are occasionally available; bring your own canvas screw-on.

**Museums** Many organise creative *ateliers* (workshops; €5 to €20) for children aged five to 14 on weekends and Wednesday afternoons, when French children don't have school.

**Car seats** Rental companies supply them at a price. Children under 10 years or less than 1.40m in height must be strapped in an appropriate car seat.

**Public transport** Bus tickets are one price for everyone. SNCF train fares are half-price for children (4 to 11 years). Public-sharing electric scooters (over 12) and Vélib bikes (over 14) are fun Paris options.

## Useful Resources

**Lonely Planet Kids** ([www.lonelyplanetkids.com](http://www.lonelyplanetkids.com)) Loads of activities and great family travel blog content.

**Book: Brick City Paris** ([shop.lonelyplanet.com](http://shop.lonelyplanet.com)) LEGO® fans can discover the city's landmarks recreated in amazing detail – and make their own quick-build projects. Ages eight and up.

**Familiscope** ([www.familiscope.fr](http://www.familiscope.fr)) Definitive family-holiday planner.

**Baby-Friendly Boltholes** ([www.babyfriendlyboltholes.co.uk](http://www.babyfriendlyboltholes.co.uk)) London-based enterprise sourcing charming and unique family accommodation.



Mont Blanc, Chamonix (p510)

## Plan Your Trip

# Activities

From Alpine glaciers, rivers and canyons to the volcanic peaks of the Massif Central – not to mention 3427km of coastline stretching from Italy to Spain and from the Basque Country to the Straits of Dover – France's spirit-lifting landscapes beg outdoor escapes. Or move inside and try your hand at perfumery, knife-making or another traditional French craft.

## Best Outdoor Experiences

### Best Off-Piste Descent

Whoop as you make a 2800m vertical descent on La Vallée Blanche in Chamonix – it's the ride of a lifetime.

### Best Long-Distance Hike

Scale the wildest heights of the Pyrenees on the GR10, taking you from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic.

### Best Cycling

Cruise past turreted châteaux and trace the curves of France's longest river in the Loire Valley.

### Best Surf

Grab your board and hit the fizzing surf on the Atlantic Coast. Hossegor and Capbreton, north of Bayonne in French Basque Country, are big-wave heaven.

### Best Kayaking & Canyoning

Make a splash in the astonishingly turquoise water of the Gorges du Verdon, Europe's largest canyon.

higher you go, the more snow-sure the resort and the longer the season. Crowds and room rates skyrocket during school holidays (Christmas, February half-term, Easter), so avoid these times if you can. There is summer glacier skiing in two resorts: Les Deux Alpes and Val d'Isère (Espace Killy) from roughly mid-June to August.

## Where to Go

Two of the world's largest ski areas are in France – Les Portes du Soleil, with 650km of runs, and Les Trois Vallées, with 600km of runs – as well as Europe's highest resort, Val Thorens (p534), at 2300m. Crowned by Mont Blanc, Chamonix skiing is the stuff of legend, especially the do-before-you-die La Vallée Blanche (p512), a high-level 2.8km off-piste descent. Speed is of the essence in the glacier-licked free-rider favourites of Les Deux Alpes (p547) and Val d'Isère (p534), as well as Alpe d'Huez (p549), where the brave can tackle Europe's longest black run, the 16km La Sarenne.

Beginners and intermediates will find tamer skiing and boarding in the Pyrenees and Le Mont-Dore in Massif Central. Cross-country (*ski de fond*) is big in the thickly forested Jura, the host of the famous Transjurassienne race (p552).

## Ski Passes

Prices for ski passes (*forfaits*) covering one or more ski areas vary according to the popularity of the resort, but can be anything from €30 to €60 per day and €120 to €300 per week (six days). Passes are hands-free with a built-in chip that barriers detect, and can be pre-booked online – a wise idea if you want to beat the slope-side queues. Children usually pay half-price and kids under five ski for free (proof of age required).

## Information

**Where to Ski and Snowboard** ([www.wheretoskiandsnowboard.com](http://www.wheretoskiandsnowboard.com)) Up-to-the minute guide to the slopes.

**If You Ski** ([www.ifyouski.com](http://www.ifyouski.com)) Resort guides, ski deals and the low-down on ski hire and schools.

**Météo France** ([www.meteofrance.com](http://www.meteofrance.com)) Weather and daily avalanche forecast during the ski season.

## Skiing & Snowboarding

Just whisper the words 'French Alps' to a skier and watch their eyes light up. These mountains are the crème de la crème of European skiing, with the height edge, Mont Blanc views and more phenomenal pistes than you could ever hope to ski in a lifetime. Return time and again and you'll still never ski them all!

## When to Go

The ski season goes with the snow, generally running from some time in mid- to late December to around mid-April: the



**France Montagnes** ([www.france-montagnes.com](http://www.france-montagnes.com)) Official website of French ski resorts, with guides, maps, snow reports and more.

**École du Ski Français** (ESF; [www.esf.net](http://www.esf.net)) The largest ski school in the world, with first-class tuition. Search by region.

**Club Alpin Français** (French Alpine Club; [www.fcam.fr](http://www.fcam.fr)) Umbrella organisation for local mountain sports clubs, with experienced guides in all manner of winter sports.

## Walking & Hiking

The French have been die-hard hikers for centuries, due no doubt to the sheer variety of their country's landscape – Alpine mountains, flamingo-pink wetlands, cliff-laced coastal paths, cavernous gorges, mythical forests – that begs deeper exploration on foot. Some of Europe's most inspirational trails are here and communing with the wild is not hard to do.

### When to Go

There is some form of walking available year-round in France. Spring and autumn are great seasons to hike in Corsica and on the Côte d'Azur, which swelter in summer. The season is short and sweet in the Alps, running from mid-June to early October.

### Where to Go

Hikers have a high time of it in the Alps, with mile after never-ending mile of well-marked trails. Lifts and cable cars take the sweat out of hiking here in summer. Chamonix (p510) is the trailhead for the epic 10-day, three-country Tour de Mont Blanc, but gentler paths, such as the Grand Balcon Sud (p513), also command Mont Blanc close-ups. Some of the finest treks head into the more remote, glacier-capped wilds of the Parc National des Écrins (p546), with 700km of trails – many following old shepherd routes – and the equally gorgeous Parc National de la Vanoise (p537).

But the Alps are tip-of-the-iceberg stuff. Just as lovely are walks threading through the softly rounded heights of the Vosges and through the forest-cloaked hills of the Jura spreading down to Lake Geneva. The extinct volcanoes in the Auvergne, interwoven with 13 *grandes randonnées* (long-distance footpaths), and the mist-shrouded



Aiguille du Midi (p510), Chamonix

peaks and swooping forested valleys of the Parc National des Pyrénées (p710) offer fine walking and blissful solitude. In the Cévennes, you can follow in Robert Louis Stevenson's footsteps on the GR70 Chemin de Stevenson (p772) from Le Puy to Alès – with or without a donkey.

Corsica is a hiker's paradise – the GR20, the 15-day trek that crosses the island north to south, is one of France's most famous, but there are dozens of shorter, easier walks. Or combine walking with swimming on the *sentiers littoraux* (coastal paths) in Alpes-Maritimes. More bracing hikes await on the GR21 skirting the chalky cliffs of the Côte d'Albâtre in Normandy, the Côte d'Opale's GR120 taking in the colour-changing seascapes of the English Channel, and Brittany's Presqu'île de Crozon with 145km of signed trails woven around rocky outcrops and clear ocean views.

### Trail Information

Local tourist offices have mountains of information on walking in their area. They can put you in touch with local hiking guides, and set you up with short walk-



Gorges du Verdon (p847)

ing itineraries in their neck of the woods. Tourist offices often sell walking guides and books. Some helpful online resources:

**Grande Randonnée** ([www.grande-randonnee.fr](http://www.grande-randonnee.fr)) A good source of information (in French) on France's long-distance footpaths.

**GR-Infos** ([www.gr-infos.com](http://www.gr-infos.com)) Information in English on France's long-distance footpaths.

**Parcs Nationaux de France** (French National Parks; [www.parcsnationaux.fr](http://www.parcsnationaux.fr)) First port of call if you are planning a visit to one of France's six hiking-rich national parks.

**Parcs Naturels Régionaux de France** (French Regional Nature Parks; [www.parcs-naturels-regionaux.fr](http://www.parcs-naturels-regionaux.fr)) Has the low-down on walking and hiking in France's 48 regional nature parks.

## Maps & Guides

**Fédération Française de Randonnée Pédestre** ([www.ffrandonnee.fr](http://www.ffrandonnee.fr)) Publishes detailed French-language topo guides – trail booklets of major routes with topographic maps.

**IGN** ([www.ign.fr](http://www.ign.fr)) Publishes reliable, well-written topographic trail guides; buy them at tourist offices and in bookshops.

**Guides RandOxygène** (<https://randoxygene-departement06.fr>) An excellent resource for hiking in southern France's Alpes-Maritime *département* (administrative region); its maps and guides are both indispensable.

**Pyrandonnées** ([www.pyrandonnees.fr](http://www.pyrandonnees.fr)) Walking in the Pyrenees.

## Cycling

Be it family-friendly pedalling along canals and through apple orchards and vineyards or powering it with the hardcore set along high-altitude coastal paths, cycling in the region is big and varied.

## When to Go

Slip into a bicycle saddle to maximise breezes when the heat turns up. Summer is prime time for road cycling on the coast and mountain biking – *vélo tout terrain* (VTT) – in the French Alps and Pyrenees, with the season running from mid-June to September. Elsewhere, there's some form of cycling available year-round, be it



Cycling in the Pyrenees (p699)

KINETIXO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

in vine-ribboned valleys or along France's great waterways.

## Where to Go

France is fabulous freewheeling country, with routes leading along its lushly wooded valleys and mighty rivers begging to be explored in slow motion. The options are boundless, but among the best are the soothingly lovely, château-studded Loire Valley where **Loire à Vélo** ([www.loireavelo.fr](http://www.loireavelo.fr)) maintains 800km of signposted routes from Cuffy to the Atlantic; the peaceful towpaths shadowing the 240km, Unesco-listed Canal du Midi, many of which form part of the stunning **Canal des 2 Mers en Vélo** ([www.canaldes2mersavelo.com](http://www.canaldes2mersavelo.com)) cycling route linking the Atlantic with the Med via canals; and Provence's 236km **Autour du Luberon** *véloroute* (bike path) linking one gold-stone village to another. Pair wine tasting with a pedal through the vines in Burgundy ([www.burgundy-by-bike.com](http://www.burgundy-by-bike.com)), Bordeaux, the Beaujolais region, the southern Rhône Valley or the Route des Vins d'Alsace. Bicycle trails also criss-cross

the sun-baked Île de Ré, dangling off the Atlantic Coast.

Naturally, if you're up for a challenge, the gruelling inclines and exhilarating descents of the Alps and Pyrenees will appeal. Resorts such as Alpe d'Huez (p549), Morzine (p520) and Les Deux Alpes (p547) are downhill mountain-bike heaven, as is the Parc National des Pyrénées (p710), where ski stations open up to mountain bikers in summer with *sentiers balisés* (marked trails) and obstacle-riddled bike parks for honing technique. Most cable cars let you take your bike for free or a nominal fee with a valid lift pass. Provence is another popular mountain-biking region.

## Véloroutes & Voies Vertes

With a vast network of cycling paths designed especially for cyclists, France is pure two-wheeling joy. *Véloroutes* are designated cycling paths while *voies vertes* (green ways) stretch for thousands of kilometres along old canal towpaths, disused logging roads, decommissioned railway lines and so on. *Voies vertes* are open to walkers and horse riders as well as cyclists, and many sections are paved to ensure a silky-smooth ride.

A growing number of *pistes cycables* (cycling lanes) link neighbouring towns and villages, and rural France enjoys an extensive network of secondary and tertiary roads with relatively light traffic.

In the French Alps and Pyrenees, road cyclists labour up gruelling, hairpin-laced *cols* (mountain passes) and down exhilarating bone-chilling descents. Tackling these hills with a mountain bike or even an electric bike (increasingly widespread) might be seen as the soft option, but it sure is easier on the leg muscles.

## Maps & Itineraries

Local tourist offices are the obvious first port of call for route maps and itineraries.

**Freewheeling France** ([www.freewheelingfrance.com](http://www.freewheelingfrance.com)) Comprehensive site covering routes and nearby accommodation, bike hire and tours, and loads of practical tips.

**Union Touristique Les Amis de la Nature** ([www.amis-nature.org](http://www.amis-nature.org)) Details on local, regional and long-distance *véloroutes* (cycling routes) around France.

**Fédération Française de Cyclisme** (French Cycling Federation; [www.fcc.fr](http://www.fcc.fr)) Going strong since 1881, this is the authority on competitive cycling and mountain biking in France, including freeriding, cross-country and downhill.

**VeloMap** ([www.velomap.org](http://www.velomap.org)) For free Garmin GPS cycling maps.

**Véloroutes et Voies Vertes** ([www.af3v.org](http://www.af3v.org)) The inside scoop on 250 signposted *véloroutes* and *voies vertes* for cycling, plus an interactive map to pinpoint them.

## Information

**Discover France by Bike** ([www.francevelotourisme.com](http://www.francevelotourisme.com)) One-stop resource for itineraries and cycling routes in every region in France.

**Alsace à Vélo** ([www.alsaceavelo.fr](http://www.alsaceavelo.fr)) Comprehensive resource on pedalling along Alsace's numerous wine trails.

**Travelling Bretagne by Bike** (<https://cycling.britanytourism.com>) Cycling routes and tours and reams of practical advice on cycling in Brittany.

**La Provence à Vélo** ([www.provence-a-velo.fr](http://www.provence-a-velo.fr)) Tip-top route resource for cyclists in Provence; lots of suggested routes covering the Mont Ventoux area.

**Vélo Loisir Provence** ([www.veloloisirprovence.com](http://www.veloloisirprovence.com)) Superb cycling resource, detailing a range of colour-coded road and mountain-bike routes around the Luberon, Verdon and other areas.

## Adventure & Water Sports

### Kayaking & Canoeing

Kayaking and canoeing are available up and down the country, with some of the best options (including the looking-glass Lake Annecy) in the French Alps, the Vézère Valley, the Dronne, the River Gard and the Gorges de l'Ardèche. Startlingly turquoise water and sheer, forest-cloaked cliffs make the Gorges du Tarn and Gorges du Verdon highly scenic spots for a paddle. Sea kayakers prefer the ragged, cove-indented Parc National des Calanques and Corsica's islet-speckled waters. Expect to pay around €15 for kayak or canoe rental per day, and €25/50 for a half-/full-day excursion.



Kayaking in Calanque d'En Vau (p807), Parc National des Calanques



## ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES

Sick of eating cheese, strolling between vines or pedalling breathlessly up one Alpine *col* (mountain pass) too many? Try your hand at one of these lesser-known activities:

**Perfumery** The Provençal town of Grasse is the spot to test your *nez* (nose) during a perfume-making workshop at Fragonard (p875) or **Galimard** (☎04 93 09 20 00; www.galimard.com; 73 rte de Cannes; workshops from €55; ☀9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm).

**Knife-making** Learn how to craft your very own traditional knife with skilled craftspeople at Robert David Coutellerie (p584) in the tiny town of Thiers in rural Auvergne.

**Factory tours** Meet the makers firsthand. See how sardines are tinned at Conserverie La Belle-Iloise (p312) in Brittany; or how traditional *dragées* (sugared almonds) are made in Verdun (p389) or *fruits confits* (candied fruits) in Apt (p839).

**Arts and crafts** In the capital, budding fashion designers of all ages can make their very own Paris-chic bag at a **Kasia Dietz** (www.kasiadietzworkshops.com; workshops €115-150; ☀by reservation) bag-making workshop.

**Beer brewing** Forget wine. Brewing your very own French beer is the new *grand cru*. La Beer Fabrique (p130) in Paris is a good place to start.

**French table decoration, embroidery, backstage cabaret tours...** You name it, you can pretty much do it with Meeting the French (p131), an inspired grassroots organisation that puts curious visitors in touch with on-the-ground creatives.

## Surfing & Kitesurfing

The wave-thrashed, wind-lashed Atlantic coast – Arcachon and Cap Ferret, for instance – and Capbreton in the French Basque Country, make surfers swoon. You'll find some of Europe's best surf in ocean-battered Biarritz and nearby Hossegor, which hosts the 10-day Quiksilver Pro France on the ASP World Surfing Tour in late September and early October. Group lessons are available everywhere for around €45. For surf spots and schools, visit [www.surfingfrance.com](http://www.surfingfrance.com).

Kitesurfers, meanwhile, catch breezes on the French Riviera and Corsica (around Porto-Vecchio), where outfits offer courses as well as equipment rental.

## Stand-Up Paddleboarding

Grab a board, bring along your balance and a Zen mind, and away you go – cruising on a stand-up paddleboard across glittering Alpine lakes (Lake Annecy is a scenic favourite), around island fortresses in the Atlantic and from one *calanque* (rocky outlet) to another in the Med. Rent boards for fun along the Promenade des Anglais in Nice on the Côte d'Azur, or sign up for a more serious ocean encounter on the Atlantic Coast with **Antioche Kayak** (☎06 63 20 51 44; [www.antioche-kayak.com](http://www.antioche-kayak.com); Port Sud, Fouras;

kayak/stand-up paddle board per hour €12/13, lessons per hour from €25) near La Rochelle; in Corsica with **Bonif' Kayak** (☎06 27 11 30 73; [www.bonifacio-kayak.com](http://www.bonifacio-kayak.com); Plage de Piantarella; kayak rental per hour/day from €12/30, excursions adult/child from €35/25) or Club Nautique d'Île Rousse (p908); or in Sète with Kayak Med (p762). Life jackets and waterproof containers are generally provided. Expect to pay around €15 per hour for board rental and from €25 per hour for tuition.

## Canyoning & White-Water Rafting

For a thrill, little beats throwing yourself down a foaming river in a raft or a waterfall while rappelling – cue white-water rafting and canyoning. Canyoning operators are found in mountainous, ravine-riddled areas from the French Alps to Aiguilles de Bavella (p923) in Corsica.

White-water rafting is another sure-fire way to get the heart pumping. France's most scenic options on this front include the cliff-flanked limestone wilderness of the Gorges de l'Ardèche and the mind-blowingly spectacular Gorges du Verdon, Europe's largest canyon, where you can also hydrospeed and gorge-float. A half-day outing for either activity will set you back around €50.

# Regions at a Glance

Few appreciate quite how varied France is. The largest country in Europe after Russia and Ukraine, hexagon-shaped France is hugged by water or mountains along every side except its northeastern boundary – an instant win for lovers of natural beauty, the coast and great outdoors. Winter snow sports and summer hiking and biking rule the Alps in eastern France and the Pyrenees, which lace the 450km-long border with Spain in the southwest. For *très belle* beach holidays, the coastal regions of Normandy and Brittany (northern France), the Atlantic Coast (with oyster-rich islands and waves for surfers), Corsica, and the French Riviera (Côte d'Azur), Provence and Languedoc-Roussillon on the hot Mediterranean deliver every time. Then there's food and wine, most exceptional in Burgundy, Provence, the Dordogne and Rhône Valley.



## Paris

**Food**  
**Art**  
**Shopping**

### Bistro Dining

Tables are jammed tight, chairs spill onto busy pavements outside, dishes of the day are chalked on the blackboard, and cuisine is simple and delicious. Such is the timeless joy of bistro dining in the capital.

### Museums & Galleries

All the great masters star in Paris' priceless portfolio of museums. But not all the booty is stashed inside: buildings, metro stations, parks and other public art give *Mona Lisa* a good run for her money.

### Fashion & Flea Markets

Luxury fashion houses, edgy boutiques, Left Bank designer-vintage and Europe's largest flea market: Paris really is the last word in fabulous shopping.

p67



## Around Paris

**Châteaux**  
**Cathedrals**  
**Green Spaces**

### A Taste of Royalty

Château de Versailles has to be seen to be believed. Fontainebleau, Chantilly and Vaux-le-Vicomte are other fabled addresses in French royalty's little black book.

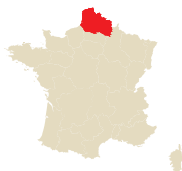
### Sacred Architecture

An architectural heavyweight near Paris is Chartres' cathedral, one of Western architecture's greatest achievements, with stained glass in awesome blue – at its most dazzling on sunlit days.

### Urban Green

Parisians take air in thick forests outside the city: Forêt de Fontainebleau, an old royal hunting ground, is a hot spot for rock climbing and family walks. Chantilly means manicured French gardens and upper-class horse racing.

p187



## Lille, Flanders & the Somme

Architecture  
History  
Coastline

### Flemish Style

Breaking for a glass of strong local beer between old-town meanders around extravagant Flemish Renaissance buildings is a high-light of northern France. Lille and Arras are the cities to target if you have limited time.

### Gothic to WWI

Amiens evokes serene contemplation inside one of France's most awe-inspiring Gothic cathedrals, and emotional encounters in WWI cemeteries.

### Coastal Capers

Hiking along the Côte d'Opale – a wind-buffed area of white cliffs, gold sand and ever-changing sea and sky – is dramatic and beautiful, as is a Baie de Somme bicycle ride past lounging seals.

p207



## Normandy

Food  
Coastline  
Battlefields

### Calvados & Camembert

This coastal chunk of northern France is a pastoral land of butter and soft cheeses. Its exotic fruits: Camembert, cider, fiery *calvados* (apple-flavoured brandy) and super-fresh seafood.

### Cliffs & Coves

Chalk-white cliff to dune-lined beach, rock spire to pebble cove, coastal path to tide-splashed island-abbey Mont St-Michel: few coastlines are as inspiring.

### D-Day Beaches

Normandy has long played a pivotal role in European history. But it was during WWII's D-Day landings that Normandy leaped to global importance. Museums, memorials, cemeteries and endless stretches of soft golden sand evoke that dramatic day in 1944.

p241



## Brittany

Food  
Walking  
Islands

### Crêpes & Cider

These two Breton culinary staples are no secret, but who cares? Devouring caramel-doused buckwheat pancakes in the company of homemade cider is a big reason to visit Brittany.

### Wild Hikes

With its wild dramatic coastline, islands, medieval towns and thick forests laced in Celtic lore and legend, this proud and fiercely independent region promises exhilarating walks.

### Breton Beauties

Brittany's much-loved islands, dotted with black sheep and crossed with craggy coastal paths and windswept cycling tracks, are big draws. Don't miss dramatic Île d'Ouessant or the very aptly named Belle Île.

p281



## Champagne

Champagne  
Walking  
Drives

### Bubbly Tasting

Gawp at a Champagne panorama from atop Reims' cathedral, then zoom in close with serious tasting at the world's most prestigious Champagne houses in Reims and Épernay.

### Vineyard Trails

Nothing quite fulfils the French dream like easy day hikes through neat rows of vineyards, exquisite picture-postcard villages bedecked in flowers and a gold-stone riverside hamlet right out of a Renoir painting.

### Majestic Motoring

No routes are more geared to motorists and cyclists than the Champagne Routes, fabulously picturesque and well-signposted driving itineraries taking in the region's wealthy winemaking villages, hillside vines and traditional cellars.

p327



## Alsace & Lorraine

**Battlefields**  
**City Life**  
**Villages**

### Emotional Journeys

Surveying the dazzling symmetry of crosses on the Verdun battlefields is painful. Memorials, museums, cemeteries, forts and an osuary mark out the journey.

### Urban Icons

From the sublime (Strasbourg's cathedral) to the space-age (Centre Pompidou in Metz), this northeast chunk of France steals urbanite hearts with its city squares, architecture, museums and Alsatian dining.

### Chocolate-Box Villages

There is no lovelier way of getting acquainted with this part of France than travelling from hill-top castles to half-timbered villages framed by vines – with your foot light on the pedal. Slow is the pace.

**p351**



## The Loire Valley

**Châteaux**  
**History**  
**Cycling**

### Royal Architecture

Endowed with dazzling structural and decorative gems from medieval to Renaissance and beyond, the Loire's lavish châteaux sweep most visitors off their feet.

### Tempestuous Tales

This region is a dramatic storyteller: through spectacular castles, fortresses, tapestries and court paintings, political intrigue and sex scandals of medieval and Renaissance France fabulously unfold.

### Riverside Trails

The River Loire is France's longest, best-decorated river. Pedalling riverside along the flat from château to château is one of the valley's great joys – not to mention tasting the fruits of the vineyards that fan out from its banks.

**p395**



## Burgundy

**Wine**  
**History**  
**Outdoors**

### Reds & Whites

Meander between vines and old-stone villages along Burgundy's *grand cru* (wine of exceptional quality) vineyard route. But this region is not just about Côte d'Or reds. Taste whites in Chablis and Mâcon also.

### Medieval Past

Nowhere is Burgundy's past as one of medieval Europe's mightiest states evoked more keenly than in the dashing, handsomely capital Dijon. Complete the medieval history tour with abbeys Cluny and Cîteaux, Fontenay, Tournus, Vézelay and Autun.

### Great Outdoors

Hiking and biking past vineyards or cruising in a canal boat is the good life. Pedal the towpath to gloriously medieval Abbaye de Fontenay, open a bottle of Chablis and savour the best of Burgundy.

**p435**



## Lyon & the Rhône Valley

**Food**  
**Roman Sites**  
**Cycling**

### Famous Flavours

No city in France excites taste buds more than Lyon. Savour local specialities in a checked-tablecloth *bouchon* (small bistro), washed down by local Côtes de Rhône wine poured from a Lyonnais *pot* (bottle).

### Roman Remains

Not content with lavishing two majestic amphitheatres on Lyon (catch a concert al fresco after dark during Les Nuits de Fourvière – magical!), the Romans gifted the Rhône Valley with a third in jazz-famed Vienne.

### Two-Wheel Touring

Pedalling between vineyards in Beaujolais country or around lakes swamped with bird-life in La Dombes is a simple pleasure of valley life.

**p477**





## French Alps & the Jura Mountains

**Food**  
**Outdoors**  
**Farmstays**

### Culture & Cuisine

Fondue is the tip of the culinary iceberg in this Alpine region, where cow's milk flavours dozens of cheeses. Around chic Lake Annecy, chefs woo with wild herbs and lake perch.

### Adrenaline Rush

Crowned by Mont Blanc (4807m), the French Alps show no mercy in their insanely challenging ski trails and mountain-bike descents. Did we mention Europe's longest black downhill piste and the world's highest zip line?

### Back to Nature

Feel the rhythm of the land with an overnight stay on a farm. Bottle-feed calves, collect the eggs, eat breakfast in a fragrant garden or before a wood-burning stove, and feel right at home.

**p507**



## Auvergne

**Volcanoes**  
**Architecture**  
**Outdoors**

### Volcanic Landscape

The last volcano erupted in 5000 BCE but their presence is still evident: mineral waters bubble up from volcanic springs in Vichy and Volvic; volcanic stone paints Clermont-Ferrand black; and ancient craters pocket rich green hills in the Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne.

### Belle Époque

A string of early-20th-century spa towns including Vichy and La Bourboule add understated elegance to this region's otherwise provincial bow.

### Hiking & Skiing

Walking is the best way to explore this unique landscape – an uncanny, grass-green moonscape of giant molehills crossed with trails. Then there are the little-known ski slopes of Le Mont-Dore.

**p565**



## The Dordogne, Limousin & the Lot

**Food**  
**Hilltop Towns**  
**Cruises**

### Mouth-Watering Markets

Black truffles, walnuts and more... Gourmets, eat your heart out in this fertile part of central and southwest France, where the fruits of the land are piled high at a bevy of atmospheric weekly markets.

### Mighty Bastides

Dordogne's prized collection of 13th-century fortified towns and villages is a joy to explore, with uplifting valley views from the top of these cliff-top *bastides*. Start with Monpazier and Domme.

### Meandering Waterways

Be it aboard a canoe, raft or *gabarre* (traditional flat-bottomed boat), cruising quietly along the region's rivers is an invitation to see *la belle France* at her most serene.

**p593**



## Atlantic Coast

**Port Towns**  
**Wine**  
**Outdoors**

### Town Life

Make a hip dining rendezvous in an old banana-ripening warehouse in Nantes, or take in bright-white limestone arcades and islands in the fortified port of La Rochelle, and brilliant art museums in wine-rich Bordeaux.

### Wonderful Wines

France's largest winegrowing region, Bordeaux, encompasses the Médoc with its magnificent châteaux and medieval hamlet of St-Émilion.

### Rural Retreats

Paddling emerald-green waterways in the Marais Poitevin, pedalling sun-baked Île de Ré and wandering between weathered, wooden oyster shacks in Arcachon Bay is what this tranquil region is all about – slowing the pace right down.

**p639**



## French Basque Country

**Food**  
**Activities**  
**Culture**

### Culture & Cuisine

With its fiestas, traditional *pelota* (ball games), tapas and famous Bayonne ham, this exuberant Basque region beneath the mist-soaked Pyrenees feels very close to neighbouring Spain.

### Surf's Up

Riding waves in the glitzy beach resort of Biarritz or on surfer beaches in Les Landes is a good reason to visit this sun-slicked coastal region, snug in France's most southwestern corner.

### A Timeless Pilgrimage

For centuries pilgrims have made their way across France to the quaint walled town of St-Jean Pied de Port, and beyond to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Do the same, on foot or by bicycle.

**p673**



## The Pyrenees

**Outdoors**  
**Scenery**  
**History**

### Mountain Adventures

Make Parc National des Pyrénées your playground. Vigorous hikes to lofty heights, good-value downhill skiing and racy white-water sports will leave you wanting more.

### Jaw-Dropping Views

France's last wilderness has rare flora and fauna, snow-kissed peaks, vulture-speckled skies, waterfalls and lakes. Top views include those from Pic du Jer, Pic du Midi, Lescun, Cirque de Gavarnie, Lac de Gaube and pretty much every valley going.

### Rare & Holy Cities

That same elegance that saw well-to-do 19th-century English and Americans winter in Pau still attracts guests today. Then there is sacred Lourdes, a provincial pilgrim city.

**p699**



## Toulouse Area

**Food**  
**History**  
**Cruises**

### Cassoulet & Armagnac

In Toulouse be sure to try *cassoulet* (rich bean, pork and duck stew), a classic dish found simmering on the stove in most local kitchens. Begin the experience with an aperitif and end with an Armagnac brandy.

### Towns with Tales

Red-brick Toulouse's historic mansions, quintessential fortified town Montauban, Gothic Albi, Moissac's Romanesque abbey: this compact region is packed with historical tales and historic architecture.

### Canal du Midi

Pop a cork out of a bottle of Vin de Pays d'Oc and savour the go-slow, lush-green loveliness of the Canal du Midi. Stroll or pedal its towpaths, soak in a spa or simply rent a canal boat and drift.

**p725**



## Languedoc-Roussillon

**Culture**  
**Roman Sites**  
**Outdoors**

### Catalan Culture

Roussillon is a hot, dusty, lively region, long part of Catalonia at the eastern end of the Pyrenees. Celebrate a traditional fiesta in Perpignan, and modern art and *sardane* (Catalan folk dance) in Céret.

### Aqueducts & Amphitheatres

Nîmes' amphitheatre and the gracefully arched Pont du Gard are two of the Roman Empire's best-preserved sites. Catch a show in Nîmes, canoe on the Gard.

### Footpaths & Waterways

Try canoeing beneath the Pont du Gard, cycling towpaths to Carcassonne, boating the Canal du Midi, climbing up to Cathar fortresses, donkey trekking in the Cévennes, or hiking gorges in Haut-Languedoc.

**p745**



## Provence

**Food**  
**Villages**  
**Modern Art**

### Markets & Wine

Sip pastis (aniseed-flavoured aperitif) over *pétanque* (boules, a variant of bowls), spend all evening savouring bouillabaisse (fish stew), mingle over buckets of herbs and marinated olives at the market, hunt truffles, and taste Bandol reds and Côtes de Provence rosé.

### Sensual Sauntering

Travelling *à la provençal* is a sensual journey past scented lavender fields and chestnut forests, through apple-green vineyards and olive groves, and around markets, chapels and medieval villages.

### Avant-Garde

Provence itself is an art museum and has the roll call to prove it: Matisse, Renoir, Picasso, Cézanne, Van Gogh and Signac all painted and lived here.

**p789**



## The Côte d'Azur & Monaco

**Seaside Resorts**  
**Glamour**  
**Coastline**

### Coastal Queen

Urban grit, old-world opulence, art that moves and a seaside promenade everyone loves – Nice, queen of the French Riviera, will always be belle of the seaside ball.

### Party Time

Enjoy the Riviera high life: trail film stars in Cannes, watch Formula One, meet high society in Monaco, guzzle champers in St-Tropez, frolic in famous footsteps on beaches, dine between priceless art, dance until dawn...

### Magnificent Scenery

With its glistening sea, idyllic beaches and coastal paths, this part of the Med coast begs wonderful walks. Cicadas sing on Cap Ferrat, while the sun turns the Massif de l'Estérel a brilliant red.

**p851**



## Corsica

**Drives**  
**Hiking**  
**Boat Trips**

### Postcard Home

Corsican coastal towns are impossibly picturesque – alley-woven Bastia, Italianate Bonifacio, celeb-loved Île Rousse, chichi Calvi – but it's the hair-raising coastal roads that wend their way past medieval Genoese watchtowers that scream, 'Send a postcard home!'

### Great Outdoors

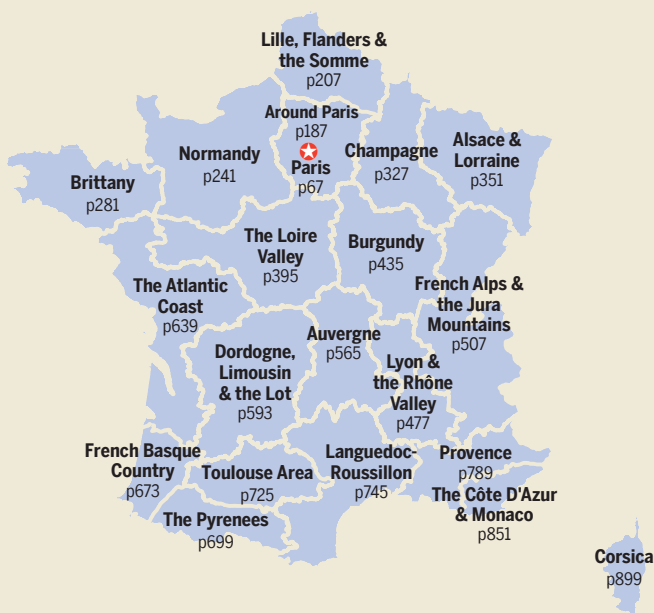
Hiking high-altitude mountain trails once the preserve of bandits and *bergers* (shepherds) is a trail-junkie favourite, as are the cliff-hanging Gorges de Spelunca and beautiful pink, ochre and ginger Calanques de Piana.

### The Big Blue

Nowhere does the Med seem bluer. Hop on deck in Porto, Bonifacio, Calvi or Porto-Vecchio for a boat excursion, or view sapphire waters through a mask while diving and snorkelling.

**p899**

# On the Road





## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

2.2 million

### POPULATION PER SQ KM

21,014

### BEST MARKET

Marché Bastille  
(p149)

### BEST BISTRO

Le Bistrot Paul Bert  
(p150)

### BEST BOUTIQUE HOTEL

Hôtel Particulier  
Montmartre (p136)



### WHEN TO GO

#### Mid-Jul–Aug

Peak tourist season  
but many restaur-  
ants, bars and  
smaller shops close  
for summer holidays.

#### Sep–Oct

Cultural life in  
full swing with  
events such as the  
'all nighter' Nuit  
Blanche.

#### Nov–Mar

Wintry weather with  
few crowds.





# Paris

**P**aris' cityscapes are instantly recognisable – the wrought-iron Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe guarding the glamorous Champs-Élysées, lamplit bridges spanning the Seine, cafes spilling onto wicker-chair-lined terraces. Dining is a quintessential part of any Parisian experience, whether at intimate restaurants, Michelin-starred temples of gastronomy, *boulangeries* (bakeries) or lively street markets filled with fresh produce. Shopping is also a key draw in this stylish city, from vintage fashion through to emerging designers and *haute couture* houses. And Paris is one of the world's great art repositories, with priceless treasures showcased in palatial museums, contemporary galleries and innovative multimedia spaces.

## INCLUDES

History .....	69	Sleeping .....	132
Sights .....	69	Eating .....	140
Activities .....	126	Drinking & Nightlife .....	156
Courses .....	127	Entertainment .....	165
Tours .....	131	Shopping .....	169
Festivals & Events .....	131		



## Paris Highlights

- 1 Eiffel Tower** (p76)  
Ascending at dusk for the best views of the City of Light.
- 2 Musée Rodin** (p117)  
Indulging in a Parisian moment in the sculpture-filled gardens of this romantic art museum.
- 3 Sainte-Chapelle** (p113)  
Taking in the magical sparkle of stained glass in the sun.
- 4 Jardin du Luxembourg** (p124)  
Lounging with locals in the city's most popular park.
- 5 Musée Marmottan Monet** (p82)  
Marvelling in peace at Monet masterpieces in one of Paris' least sung museums.
- 6 Cimetière du Père Lachaise** (p105)  
Paying respects at the world's most visited cemetery.
- 7 Basilique du Sacré-Cœur** (p102)  
Admiring the city of Paris laid out at your feet.
- 8 Shakespeare & Company** (p175)  
Attending a reading at this fabled bookshop and literary gathering place.

## History

Paris was born in the Seine in the 3rd century BCE, when the Parisii tribe of Celtic Gauls settled on what is now the Île de la Cité. Centuries of conflict between the Gauls and Romans ended in 52 BCE, and in 508 CE Frankish king Clovis I made Paris the seat of his united Gaul kingdom. In the 9th century, France was beset by Scandinavian Vikings. In the centuries that followed, these 'Norsemen' started pushing towards Paris, which had risen rapidly in importance. Construction had begun on the cathedral of Notre Dame in the 12th century, the Louvre was built as a riverside fortress around 1200, Sainte-Chapelle was consecrated in 1248 and the Sorbonne opened its doors in 1253.

Many of the city's most famous buildings and monuments were erected during the Renaissance at the end of the 15th century. But in less than a century, Paris was again in turmoil, as clashes between Huguenot (Protestant) and Catholic groups increased, culminating in the St Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572. Louis XIV (the Sun King) ascended the throne in 1643 at the age of five and ruled until 1715, virtually emptying the national coffers with his ambitious building and battling. His greatest legacy is the palace at Versailles. The excesses of Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette, in part led to an uprising of Parisians on 14 July 1789 and the storming of the Bastille prison – triggering the French Revolution.

Landmark sights like the 1889-completed Eiffel Tower emerged during the highly creative period known as *la belle époque* (the 'beautiful era'), which was cut short by WWI. After flourishing during the interwar period, the 1940 occupation of Paris under Nazi rule lasted until its liberation by allied forces and Free French units in 1944.

The year 1968 was a flashpoint, when Paris was rocked by student-led riots. In the later part of the 20th century, the cityscape was defined by *grands projets* – huge public edifices through which French leaders seek to immortalise themselves – such as 1978's Centre Pompidou, and 1989's Opéra de Paris Bastille and the Grande Pyramide at the Louvre.

While the 21st century has seen turbulent times, including terrorist attacks in 2015, protests by *gilets jaunes* ('yellow vests') against economic reforms and inequality from 2018, the devastating fire at Notre Dame in 2019 and pandemic lockdowns, the resilient French capital is looking ahead to 2024 when the city will host the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, and it's hoped Notre Dame's restoration will be complete.

## Sights

### Eiffel Tower & Western Paris

The Eiffel Tower may get top billing here, but it's the incredible assortment of museums

## PARIS IN ...

### Two Days

Kick off with a morning **river-cruise tour**, then concentrate on the most Parisian of sights and attractions: the **Louvre**, the **Eiffel Tower** and the **Arc de Triomphe**. In the late afternoon have a coffee or glass of wine on the av des Champs-Élysées before making your way to Montmartre for dinner. The following day take in such sights as the **Musée d'Orsay**, **Sainte-Chapelle**, **Conciergerie** or **Musée Rodin**. Dine in soulful St-Germain before hitting the Latin Quarter's jazz clubs.

### Four Days

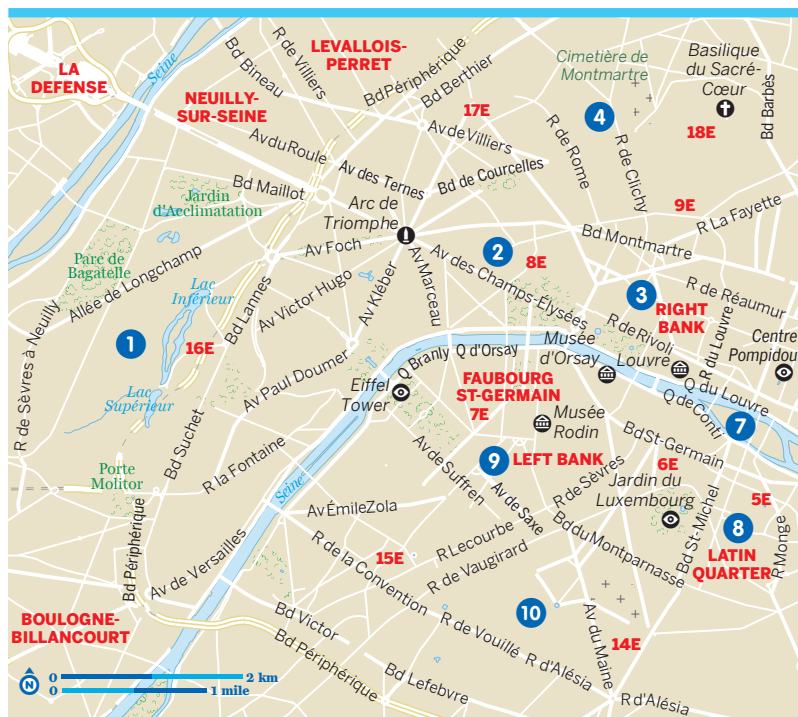
Be sure to visit at least one Parisian street market, such as the six-day-a-week **Marché d'Aligre**, and consider a cruise along **Canal St-Martin**, bookended by visits to the **Cimetière du Père Lachaise** and **Parc de la Villette**. By night, take in a concert, opera or ballet at the **Palais Garnier** or **Opéra Bastille**, and a bar and club crawl in Le Marais and its vibrant surrounds.

### One Week

With one week in the French capital, you can see a good many of the major sights covered in this chapter and take excursions further afield to areas around Paris such as **Versailles**.



## NEIGHBOURHOODS AT A GLANCE



### 1 Eiffel Tower & Western Paris (p69)

Home to very well-heeled Parisians, this grande dame of a neighbourhood is where you can get up close and personal with the city's symbolic tower as well as more contemporary architecture in the high-rise business district of La Défense just outside the *périphérique* (ring road) encircling central Paris.

### 2 Champs-Élysées & Grands Boulevards (p83)

Baron Haussmann famously reshaped the Parisian cityscape around the Arc de Triomphe, from which 12 avenues radiate like the spokes of a wheel, including the glamorous Champs-Élysées. To its east are gourmet shops garlanding the Église de la Madeleine and the Grands Boulevards' art nouveau department stores.

### 3 Louvre & Les Halles (p89)

Paris' splendid line of monuments, the *axe historique* (historic axis; also called the grand axis), passes through the Tuileries gardens before reaching IM Pei's glass pyramid at the entrance to Paris' most monumental museum, the Louvre. Near the Forum des Halles shopping mall and park is the magnificent church Église St-Eustache.

### 4 Montmartre & Northern Paris (p99)

Montmartre's lofty views, wine-producing vines and hidden village squares have lured painters since the 19th century. Crowned by the Sacré-Cœur basilica, Montmartre is the city's steepest quarter, and its slinking streets lined with crooked ivy-clad buildings retain a fairy-tale charm. The grittier neighbourhoods of Pigalle and Canal St-Martin





are hotbeds of creativity with a trove of hip drinking, dining and shopping addresses.

## 5 Le Marais, Ménilmontant & Belleville (p104)

Fashionable bars and restaurants, emerging designers' boutiques, and thriving gay and Jewish communities all squeeze into Le Marais' narrow medieval lanes. Neighbouring Ménilmontant has some of the city's most happening nightlife, while hilly Belleville is vibrant and multicultural.

## 6 Bastille & Eastern Paris (p110)

Fabulous markets, intimate bistros and cutting-edge drinking and dancing venues make this neighbourhood one of the best places to discover the Parisians' Paris.

## 7 The Islands (p111)

Paris' geographic and spiritual heart is here in the Seine. The larger of the two inner-city islands, the Île de la Cité, is home to Notre Dame, being rebuilt after its devastating fire, and the exquisite stained glass of Sainte-Chapelle. Serene little Île St-Louis is graced with charming boutiques.

## 8 Latin Quarter (p114)

So named because international students communicated in Latin here until the French Revolution, it remains Paris' hub of academic life. This lively area is also home to museums and churches, plus a beautiful art deco mosque and botanic gardens.

## 9 St-Germain & Les Invalides (p117)

Literary buffs, antique collectors and fashionistas flock to this legendary part of Paris, where the presence of writers such as Sartre, de Beauvoir and Hemingway still lingers in historic cafes.

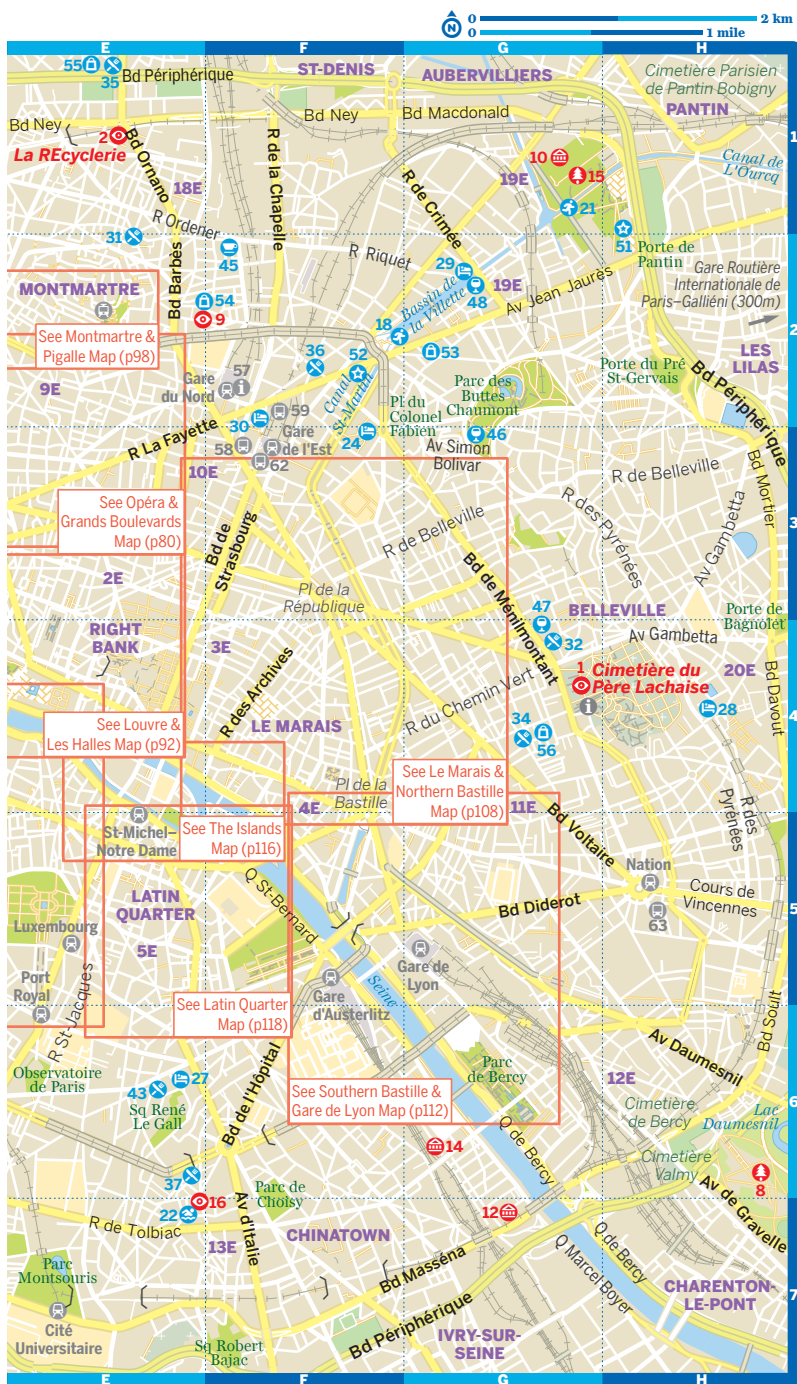
## 10 Montparnasse & Southern Paris (p121)

Fabled Montparnasse has brasseries from its mid-20th-century heyday and re-energised backstreets that buzz with local life. The 13e is the premium *arrondissement* (city district) for edgy street art.

## Greater Paris

PARIS





## Greater Paris

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cimetière du Père Lachaise.....G4
- 2 La REcyclerie.....E1
- 3 Les Catacombes.....D6
- 4 Musée Marmottan Monet.....A4

### 📍 Sights

- 5 Art 42.....D1
- 6 Ballon de Paris.....A5
- 7 Bois de Boulogne.....A3
- 8 Bois de Vincennes.....H6
- 9 Brasserie la Goutte d'Or.....E2
- 10 Cité des Sciences et de  
l'Industrie.....G1
- 11 Fondation Louis Vuitton.....A3
- 12 Galerie Itinérance.....G7
- 13 Jardin d'Acclimatation.....A2
- 14 La Fab.....G6
- Musée de la Libération de  
Paris – Musée du Général  
Leclerc – Musée Jean  
Moulin.....(see 3)
- 15 Parc de la Villette.....G1
- Parc Zoologique de Paris.....(see 8)
- 16 Puits Artésien de la Butte aux  
Cailles.....E7
- 17 Statue of Liberty Replica.....B5

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 18 Canauxrama.....F2
- 19 Lac Inférieur Boat Hire.....A3
- 20 Le Cordon Bleu.....B5
- 21 Paris Canal Croisières.....G1
- 22 Piscine de la Butte aux Cailles.....E7

### 📍 Sleeping

- 23 Arty Paris.....C6
- 24 Generator Hostel.....F3
- 25 Hôtel Carladez Cambronne.....C5
- 26 Hôtel Félicien.....A5
- 27 Hôtel Henriette.....E6
- 28 Mama Shelter.....H4
- 29 St Christopher's Canal.....G2
- 30 St Christopher's Gare du Nord.....F2

### 📍 Eating

- 31 Abattoir Végétal.....E2
- 32 Bøti.....G4
- 33 Brasserie Cézanne.....B3

- 34 Café Mirabelle.....G4
- 35 Chez Louise.....E1
- 36 La Bulle.....F2
- 37 La Butte aux Piafs.....E6
- 38 L'Accolade.....B6
- 39 L'Atelier B.....D6
- 40 Le Beurre Noisette.....B6
- 41 Le Grand Pan.....C6
- 42 Le Perchoir Porte de  
Versailles.....B6
- Le Petit Pan.....(see 41)
- 43 Simone Le Resto.....E6
- 44 Sweet Rawmance.....D6

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 45 Café Lomi.....F2
- 46 Le Pavillon Puebla.....G3
- 47 Micro Brasserie Balthazar.....G4
- 48 Paname Brewing Company.....G2
- 49 Poinçon.....D7
- Simone La Cave.....(see 43)
- 50 St James Paris.....B3

### 📍 Entertainment

- 51 Philharmonie de Paris.....H1
- 52 Point Éphémère.....F2

### 📍 Shopping

- 53 Belleville Brûlerie.....G2
- 54 Les Récupérables.....E2
- 55 Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen.....E1
- 56 Souffle Continu.....G4

### 📍 Information

- 57 Gare du Nord Welcome Desk.....F2

### 📍 Transport

- 58 Noctilien Bus 140 & 143  
Night Buses to Charles  
de Gaulle Airport.....F3
- 59 Noctilien Bus 140 & 143  
Night Buses to Charles  
de Gaulle Airport.....F2
- 60 OrlyBus to Orly Airport.....D6
- 61 Parking Pershing.....B2
- 62 RATP Bus 350 to Charles de  
Gaulle Airport.....F3
- 63 RATP Bus 351 to Charles de  
Gaulle Airport.....H5

that ensures repeat visitors. Most destinations are found on the Right Bank of the Seine. Further west is the Musée Marmottan Monet and the leafy expanse of the Bois de Boulogne. Northwest again, Paris' business district La Défense, begun in the 1950s, is a forest of skyscrapers.

### Eiffel Tower

See p76.

TOWER

### Parc du Champ de Mars

PARK

(Map p78; Champ de Mars, 7e; ☀️24hr; 🚶École Militaire, RER Champ de Mars–Tour Eiffel) Running southeast from the Eiffel Tower, the grassy Champ de Mars – an ideal summer picnic spot – was originally used as a parade ground for the cadets of the 18th-century **École Militaire**, the vast French-classical building at the southeastern end of the park, which counts Napoléon Bonaparte among its graduates.



From 2021 to 2024, the park will host a **temporary Grand Palais** while the original undergoes Olympic renovations.

Check for scheduled children's **puppet shows** (Map p78; ☎ 06 25 10 70 52; www.guignolduchampdemars.fr; allée du Général Marguerite, 7e; show €5; 🚶 École Militaire, RER Champ de Mars–Tour Eiffel).

## ★ Musée du Quai

### Branly – Jacques Chirac

MUSEUM

(Map p78; ☎ 01 56 61 70 00; www.quaibrany.fr; 37 quai Branly, 7e; adult/child €12/free, 1st Sun of month free; ☀ 10.30am–7pm Tue, Wed & Fri–Sun, to 10pm Thu, plus 10.30am–7pm Mon during school holidays; 🚶 Alma Marceau, RER Pont de l'Alma) A tribute to the diversity of human culture,

## WORTH A TRIP

### BOIS DE BOULOGNE

The 845-hectare **Bois de Boulogne** (Map p72; www.paris.fr/equipements/bois-de-boulogne-2779; bd Maillot, 16e; 🚶 Porte Maillot) owes its informal layout to Baron Haussmann, who, inspired by London's Hyde Park, planted 400,000 trees here in the 19th century. Along with various gardens and other sights, the park has 15km of cycle paths and 28km of bridle paths through 125 hectares of forested land.

Be warned that the area becomes a distinctly adult playground after dark, especially along the Allée de Longchamp running northeast from the Étang des Réservoirs (Reservoirs Pond), where prostitutes cruise for clients.

The Bois de Boulogne is served by metro lines 1 (Porte Maillot, Les Sablons), 2 (Porte Dauphine), 9 (Michel-Ange-Auteuil) and 10 (Michel-Ange-Auteuil, Porte d'Auteuil), and the RER C (Avenue Foch, Avenue Henri Martin). Vélib' stations are found near most of the park entrances, but not within the park itself.

**Jardin d'Acclimatation** (Map p72; ☎ 01 40 67 90 85; www.jardindacclimatation.fr; bd des Sablons, 16e; admission €5.20, per attraction €3; ☀ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, to 7pm Sat, Sun & school holidays; 🚶; 🚶 Les Sablons) Families adore this green, flowery amusement park on the Bois de Boulogne's northern fringe. There are swings, roundabouts, playgrounds, a paddling pool, a petting zoo and puppet shows several times per week (included in the admission fee), along with dozens of attractions, such as boat, pony and funfair rides, and a miniature train to/from Porte Maillot, which cost extra.

**Lac Inférieur** (Map p72; ☎ 06 95 14 00 01; Carrefour du Bout des Lacs; 1hr €12, plus deposit €50; ☀ noon–6pm mid–Mar–Oct; 🚶 Avenue Henri Martin) Rent an old-fashioned rowing boat to explore Lac Inférieur, the largest of Bois de Boulogne's lakes – romance guaranteed.

**Parc de Bagatelle** (rte de Sèvres à Neuilly, 16e; adult/child Apr–Sep €6/3, Oct–Mar €2.50/1.50; ☀ 9.30am–8pm Apr–Sep, shorter hours rest of year; 🚶 Porte Maillot) Few Parisian parks are as romantic as this, created as the result of a wager between Marie Antoinette and the Count of Artois. Irises bloom in May, roses between June and October, and – perhaps most magnificently of all – water lilies in August. The *pièce de résistance* is the château itself, built for the younger brother of Louis XVI in the 18th century.

**Pré Catelan** (Catelan Meadow; rte de Suresnes, 16e; ☀ 9.30am–8pm Apr–Oct, Jardin Shakespeare 2–4pm, shorter hours Nov–Mar; 🚶 Ranelagh) **FREE** These gardens squirrel away a wonderful Jardin Shakespeare where plants, flowers and trees mentioned in Shakespeare's plays are cultivated. Watch out for summer performances in the attached open-air theatre.

**Jardin des Serres d'Auteuil** (☎ 01 40 72 16 16; av de la Porte d'Auteuil, 16e; ☀ 8am–8.30pm summer, shorter hours rest of year; 🚶 Porte d'Auteuil) **FREE** Garden with impressive conservatories, which opened in 1898 and are home to a large collection of tropical plants, at the southeastern end of the park.

**Fondation Louis Vuitton** (Map p72; ☎ 01 40 69 96 00; www.fondationlouisvuitton.fr; 8 av du Mahatma Gandhi, 16e; adult/child €14/5; ☀ usually 11am–8pm Mon, Wed & Thu, 11am–9pm Fri, 10am–8pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 Les Sablons) Designed by Frank Gehry, this striking glass-panelled building hosts temporary shows like the MOMA in Paris, the Sergei Shchukin collection and Art/Africa. Check online for the latest exhibit. A **shuttle** (Map p86; 44 av Friedland, 8e; round trip €2; 🚶 Charles de Gaulle–Étoile) runs between the Arc de Triomphe and the museum during opening hours.





## TOP EXPERIENCE CLIMB THE EIFFEL TOWER

There are different ways to experience the Eiffel Tower, from a daytime trip to an evening ascent amid twinkling lights to a meal in one of its restaurants. And even though some seven million people come annually, few would dispute that each visit is unique – and something that simply has to be done when in Paris.

### Metal Asparagus

Named after its designer, Gustave Eiffel, the Tour Eiffel was built for the 1900 Exposition Universelle (World's Fair). It took 300 workers, 2.5 million rivets and two years of nonstop labour to assemble. Upon completion, the tower became the tallest human-made structure in the world (324m) – a record held until the 1930 completion of New York's Chrysler Building. A symbol of the modern age, it faced opposition from Paris' artistic and literary elite, and the 'metal asparagus', as some snidely called it, was originally slated to be torn down in 1909. It was spared only because it proved an ideal platform for the transmitting antennas needed for the newfangled science of radiotelegraphy.

### 1st Floor

Of the tower's three floors, the 1st (57m) has the most space but least impressive views. The glass-enclosed **Pavillon Ferrié** houses an immersion film along with a small cafe and souvenir shop, while the outer walkway features a discovery circuit to help visitors learn more about the tower's ingenious design. Check out the sections of glass flooring that provide a dizzying view of the ant-like people walking on the ground far below. This level also hosts the restaurant

### DON'T MISS

- ▶ 1st-floor Pavillon Ferrié
- ▶ 2nd-floor panorama
- ▶ Top-floor Champagne bar

### PRACTICALITIES

- ▶ Map p78
- ▶ ☎ 08 92 70 12 39
- ▶ [www.toureffel.paris](http://www.toureffel.paris)
- ▶ Champ de Mars, 5 av Anatole France, 7e
- ▶ adult/child lift to top €25.90/13, lift to 2nd fl €16.60/8.30, stairs to 2nd fl €10.40/5.20
- ▶ 🕒 lifts & stairs 9am-12.45am mid-Jun–Aug, lifts 9.30am-11.45pm, stairs 9.30am-6.30pm Sep–mid-Jun
- ▶ 🚇 Bir Hakeim, RER Champ de Mars–Tour Eiffel

**58 Tour Eiffel** (Map p78; [www.restaurants-toureffel.com](http://www.restaurants-toureffel.com); 🍴🚻). The 1st floor's commercial areas are powered by two sleek wind turbines within the tower.

## 2nd Floor

Views from the 2nd floor (115m) are the best – impressively high but still close enough to see the city below. Telescopes and panoramic maps pinpoint locations in Paris and beyond. Story windows give an overview of the lifts' mechanics, and the vision well allows you to gaze through glass panels to the ground. Also up here are toilets, a souvenir shop, a macaron bar and Michelin-starred restaurant **Le Jules Verne** (Map p78; ☎01 83 77 34 34; [www.restaurants-toureffel.com](http://www.restaurants-toureffel.com); 3-course weekday lunch menu €135, 5-/7-course menus €190/230; 🕒noon-1.30pm & 6-9.30pm).

## Top Floor

Views from the wind-buffed top floor (276m) stretch up to 60km on a clear day, though at this height the panoramas are more sweeping than detailed. Celebrate your ascent with a glass of bubbly (€13 to €22) from the Champagne bar (open 10.15am to 10.15pm). Afterwards peep into Gustave Eiffel's restored top-level office where lifelike wax models of Eiffel and his daughter Claire greet Thomas Edison.

## Ticket Purchases & Queuing Strategies

Visitors must pass through security at the bulletproof glass barriers surrounding the tower's base. The two entrances to the glass enclosure are on av Gustave Eiffel; the two exits are on quai Branly.

Ascend as far as the 2nd floor (either on foot or by lift), from where there's a separate lift to the top floor (closed during heavy winds). Pushchairs must be folded in lifts and bags or backpacks larger than aeroplane-cabin size aren't allowed. Note that the top floor and stairs aren't accessible to people with limited mobility.

Pre-purchasing tickets online gives you an allocated time slot and means you only have to queue for security. Print your ticket or show it on your phone. If you can't reserve your tickets ahead of time, expect lengthy waits for tickets in high season.

Stair tickets can't be reserved online. Buy them at the south pillar, where the staircase can also be accessed: the climb consists of 360 steps to the 1st floor and another 360 steps to the 2nd floor.

If you have reservations for either restaurant, you're granted direct post-security access to the lifts.

## NIGHTLY SPARKLES

Every hour on the hour, the entire tower sparkles for five minutes with 20,000 6-watt lights. They were first installed for Paris' millennium celebration in 2000 – it took 25 mountain climbers five months to install the current bulbs and 40km of electrical cords. For the best view of the light show, head across the Seine to the Jardins du Trocadéro.

**Sporting six different colours throughout its lifetime, the tower has been painted red and bronze since 1968. Work is underway to strip the previous 19 coats and apply the yellow-brown shade originally conceived by Gustave Eiffel, giving it a new golden hue in time for the 2024 Olympics.**

## MAN ON A WIRE

In 2017, French adventurer Nathan Paulin covered 670m between the tower and Trocadéro on a slackline at a maximum height of 70m, establishing the record for the world's longest urban slackline crossing while raising money for charity.



## Eiffel Tower Area & 16e

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine.....A1
- 2 Eiffel Tower.....B2
- 3 Hôtel des Invalides.....F3
- 4 Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac.....C1

### 📍 Sights

- 5 Église du Dôme.....F4
- 6 Île aux Cygnes.....A4
- 7 Musée de la Marine.....A1
- 8 Musée de l'Armée.....F3
- 9 Musée de l'Homme.....A1
- 10 Musée des Égouts de Paris.....D1
- 11 Palais de Chaillot.....A1
- 12 Parc du Champ de Mars.....C3

### 📍 Sleeping

- 13 Hôtel Le Comtesse.....E4

### 🍴 Eating

- 14 58 Tour Eiffel.....C2
- 15 Ducasse sur Seine.....B2
- 16 Le Cassenoix.....C4
- 17 Le Jules Verne.....B3
- 18 Les Deux Abeilles.....D2
- 19 Tomy & Co.....F2

### 🎭 Entertainment

- 20 Les Marionnettes du Champ de Mars.....D3
- 21 Théâtre National de Chaillot.....A1

### 🛍 Shopping

- 22 Cantin.....E3

this museum's highly inspiring overview of indigenous and folk art spans four main sections – Oceania, Asia, Africa and the Americas. An impressive array of masks, carvings, weapons, jewellery and more make up the body of the rich collection, displayed in a refreshingly unorthodox interior without rooms or high walls. Look out for excellent temporary exhibitions and performances.

### Palais de Chaillot

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p78; place du Trocadéro et du 11 Novembre, 16e; 🚶 Trocadéro) The two curved, colonnaded wings of this building (built for the 1937 International Expo) and central terrace afford an exceptional panorama of the **Jardins du Trocadéro**, Seine and Eiffel Tower. The eastern wing houses the standout **Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine** (📞01 58 51 52 00; www.citedelarchitecture.fr; 1 place du Trocadéro et du 11 Novembre, 16e; adult/child €8/free, 1st Sun of month free; 🕒11am-7pm Wed & Fri-Mon, to 9pm Thu),

devoted to French architecture and heritage, as well as the **Théâtre National de Chaillot** (📞01 53 65 31 00; www.theatre-chaillot.fr; 1 place du Trocadéro, 16e), staging dance and theatre. The **Musée de la Marine** (Maritime Museum; www.musee-marine.fr; 17 place du Trocadéro et du 11 Novembre, 16e), closed for renovations at the time of writing but due to open in spring 2022, and the **Musée de l'Homme** (Museum of Humankind; 📞01 44 05 72 72; www.museedelhomme.fr; 17 place Trocadéro et du 11 Novembre, 16e; adult/child €10/7; 🕒11am-7pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 Passy, Iéna) are housed in the western wing.

### Flame of Liberty Memorial

MONUMENT

(Map p86; place de l'Alma, 8e; 🚶 Alma Marceau) This bronze sculpture, a replica of the one topping the Statue of Liberty, was placed here in 1987 as a symbol of friendship between France and the USA. More famous is its location, above the place d'Alma tunnel where, on 31 August 1997, Diana, Princess of Wales, was killed in a car accident.

### ★ Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet

GALLERY

(Map p86; 📞01 56 52 54 33; www.guimet.fr; 6 place d'Iéna, 16e; adult/child €8.50/free, 1st Sun of month free; 🕒10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 Iéna) Connoisseurs of Japanese ink paintings and Tibetan thangkas won't want to miss the Musée Guimet, the largest Asian art museum in France. Observe the gradual transmission of both Buddhism and artistic styles along the Silk Road in pieces ranging from 1st-century Gandhara Buddhas from Afghanistan and Pakistan to later Central Asian, Chinese and Japanese Buddhist sculptures and art. Audioguides are free.

### Palais de Tokyo

GALLERY

(Map p86; 📞01 81 97 35 88; www.palaisdetokyo.com; 13 av du Président Wilson, 16e; adult/child €12/free; 🕒noon-9pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 Iéna) The Tokyo Palace, created for the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne (International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life), has no permanent collection. Instead, its shell-like interior of concrete and steel is a stark backdrop to interactive contemporary-art exhibitions and installations.

The art- and design-focused bookshop is fabulous, and its eating, drinking and entertainment options – including sustainably themed Mediterranean restaurant Les Grands Verres, with a compacted-earth bar, and basement nightclub Yoyo – are great.







## Opéra & Grands Boulevards

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Palais Garnier ..... C6

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Galerie des Galeries ..... C6  
3 Musée National Gustave Moreau ..... D4

### 🏠 Sleeping

- 4 BVJ Opéra ..... C4  
5 Grand Hôtel Pigalle ..... D2  
6 Hôtel Amour ..... E3  
7 Hôtel Chopin ..... F6  
8 Hôtel des Grands Boulevards ..... G7  
9 Hôtel du Temps ..... G4  
10 Hôtel Joyce ..... C3  
11 Hôtel Vivienne ..... F7  
12 Hoxton ..... G7  
13 Le Pigalle ..... D2

### 🍴 Eating

- 14 Abri ..... H4  
15 Aspic ..... F3  
16 Chéri Charlot ..... F5  
17 Crêperie Pen-Ty ..... B1  
18 Django ..... E2  
Frenchie Pigalle ..... (see 5)  
19 Helmut Newcake ..... A6  
Lafayette Gourmet ..... (see 33)  
20 Le Bel Ordinaire ..... H5

- 21 Le Potager de Charlotte ..... G3  
22 L'Office ..... G5  
23 Mamou ..... D5  
24 Richer ..... G5

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 25 Le Rex Club ..... G7  
26 Le Rouge à Lèvres ..... G7  
27 Lipstick ..... D2

### 🎭 Entertainment

- 28 Le Grand Rex ..... G7  
29 Le Louxor ..... H1  
Palais Garnier ..... (see 1)  
30 Palais Garnier Box Office ..... B6

### 🛍 Shopping

- 31 À la Mère de Famille ..... F5  
32 Balades Sonores ..... G2  
Galeries Lafayette ..... (see 2)  
33 Galeries Lafayette – Home & Gourmet ..... B6  
34 Galeries Lafayette – Men's Store ..... B6  
Galeries Lafayette Fashion Show ..... (see 2)  
35 Hôtel Drouot ..... E6  
36 La Maison du Miel ..... A7  
37 Le Printemps ..... B6  
38 Thanks ..... F2

### Palais Galliera

MUSEUM

(Map p86; ☎ 01 56 52 86 00; www.palaisgalliera.paris.fr; 10 av Pierre 1er de Serbie, 16e; adult/child €14/free; ☀ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed, Sat & Sun, to 8pm Thu & Fri; 🚶 Léna) Paris' Fashion Museum warehouses some 200,000 outfits (spanning court costumes through to contemporary *haute couture* by designers such as Jean Paul Gaultier and accessories (including canes, umbrellas, fans and gloves) from the late 17th century to the present day. The sumptuous Italianate palace and gardens date from the mid-19th century.

### Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

GALLERY

(Map p86; ☎ 01 53 67 40 00; www.mam.paris.fr; 11 av du Président Wilson, 16e; ☀ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, to 10pm Thu; 🚶 Léna) **FREE** The permanent collection at Paris' modern-art museum displays works representative of just about every major artistic movement of the 20th and 21st centuries, with works by Modigliani, Matisse, Braque and Soutine. The real jewel, though, is the room hung with canvases by Dufy and Bonnard. Look out for cutting-edge temporary exhibitions

(not free). Download the free multilingual app online.

### Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris

MUSEUM

(Map p86; ☎ 01 44 31 64 00; www.museeysl.paris.com; 5 av Marceau, 16e; adult/child €10/7; ☀ 11am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, to 9pm Fri; 🚶 Alma-Marceau) Housed in the legendary designer's studios (1974–2002), this museum holds retrospectives of YSL's *avant-garde* designs, from early sketches to finished pieces. Temporary exhibitions give an insight into the creative process of designing a *haute couture* collection and the history of fashion throughout the 20th century. The building can only accommodate a small number of visitors at a time, so buy tickets online or expect to queue outside.

### ★ Musée Marmottan Monet

GALLERY

(Map p72; ☎ 01 44 96 50 33; www.marmottan.fr; 2 rue Louis Boilly, 16e; adult/child €12/8.50; ☀ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, to 9pm Thu; 🚶 La Murette) This museum showcases the world's largest collection of works by impressionist painter Claude Monet (1840–1926) – about 100 – as well as paintings by Gauguin, Sisley, Pissarro, Renoir, Degas, Manet and Berthe Mori-

sot. It also contains an important collection of French, English, Italian and Flemish illuminations from the 13th to 16th centuries. An audioguide costs €3.

## ◉ Champs-Élysées & Grands Boulevards

Strolling down the Champs-Élysées from the Arc de Triomphe will leave you in the museum-rich neighbourhood surrounding the unparalleled vistas of place de la Concorde. Just west of the square are three architectural beauties from fin-de-siècle Paris: the Grand Palais, Petit Palais and Palais de la Découverte. North of Concorde is place de la Madeleine, with its neoclassical Église de la Madeleine. Further east towards the Grands Boulevards is the legendary Palais Garnier, the city's 19th-century opera house.


### Arc de Triomphe

LANDMARK

See p84.

### Avenue des Champs-Élysées

STREET


(Map p86; 8e;  Charles de Gaulle-Étoile, George V, Franklin D Roosevelt, Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau) No trip to Paris is complete without strolling this broad, tree-shaded avenue lined with luxury shops. Named for the Elysian Fields ('heaven' in Greek mythology), the Champs-Élysées was laid out in the 17th century and is part of the *axe historique*, linking place de la Concorde with the Arc de Triomphe. It's where presidents and soldiers parade on Bastille Day, where the Tour de France holds its final sprint, and where Paris turns out for organised and impromptu celebrations.

Cars are banished on the first Sunday of the month and plans approved by Paris'

major in 2021 will transform the avenue into an 'extraordinary garden' by 2030.

### Place de la Concorde

SQUARE

(Map p86; 8e;  Concorde) Paris spreads around you, with views of the Eiffel Tower, the Seine and along the Champs-Élysées, when you stand in the city's largest square. Its 3300-year-old pink granite obelisk was a gift from Egypt in 1831. The square was first laid out in 1755 and originally named after King Louis XV, but its royal associations meant that it took centre stage during the Revolution – Louis XVI was the first to be guillotined here in 1793.


### Hôtel de la Marine

PALACE


(Map p86;  01 44 61 20 00; [www.hotel-de-la-marine.paris](http://www.hotel-de-la-marine.paris); 2 place de la Concorde, 8e; 90min grand tour adult/child €17/free; ☀ 10.30am-7pm Sat-Thu, to 10pm Fri, courtyard 9am-midnight daily;  Concorde) Built to house the Garde-Meuble de la Couronne (royal furnishings), the Hôtel de la Marine is one of two grand-scale palaces (along with the Hôtel de Crillon, now a luxury hotel) commissioned by Louis XV in the late 18th century to grace place de la Concorde. After the building was looted during the French Revolution, the French navy was headquartered here until 2015. Audioguide tours provide an insight into its history – prebook online.

### Pont Alexandre III

BRIDGE

(Map p86; btwn cours la Reine, 8e & quai d'Orsay, 7e;  Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau, Invalides) Built for the 1900 Exposition Universelle to link the Grand Palais and Petit Palais with Les Invalides on the Left Bank, this Beaux Arts-style single-span steel bridge – a listed historical monument – is emblazoned with cherubs and nymphs, with four 17m-high

## OLYMPIC RELOCATIONS

Paris' magnificent **Grand Palais** (Map p86; [www.grandpalais.fr](http://www.grandpalais.fr); 3 av du Général Eisenhower, 8e;  Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau), first built for the 1900 Exposition Universelle (World's Fair), will be a landmark venue of the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic games, and will close for renovations until 2024.

During this time, a **temporary Grand Palais** will be set up on the Parc du Champ de Mars (p74), adjacent to the Eiffel Tower. This 20m-high, 10,000-sq-metre building will also have an additional temporary structure added to the main structure each year in order to expand it to some 18,000 sq metres. The space will host headlining exhibitions and events, as well as the Olympic judo and wrestling competitions.

Also on the move is the children's science museum **Palais de la Découverte** ([www.palais-decouverte.fr](http://www.palais-decouverte.fr)), which is setting up a 770-sq-metre temporary home in the Parc André Citroën, 15e, until 2024. It will open to the public by registration on weekends and during school holidays.



TOP EXPERIENCE

## MARVEL AT THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

Napoléon's armies never did march through the Arc de Triomphe showered in honour, but the monument has nonetheless come to stand as the very symbol of French patriotism. It's not for nationalistic sentiments, however, that so many visitors huff up the narrow, spiralling staircase. Rather, it's the sublime panoramas from the top that make the arch such a notable attraction.

### History

The arch was first commissioned in 1806 in the style of a Roman triumphal arch, following Napoléon's victory at Austerlitz the year before. At the time, the victory seemed like a watershed moment that confirmed the tactical supremacy of the French army, but a mere decade later, Napoléon had already fallen from power and his empire had crumbled.

The Arc de Triomphe was never fully abandoned – simply laying the foundations, after all, had taken an entire two years – and in 1836, after a series of starts and stops under the restored monarchy, the project was finally completed. In 1840 Napoléon's remains were returned to France and passed under the arch before being interred at Invalides.

### Beneath the Arch

Beneath the arch at ground level lies the **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**. Honouring the 1.3 million French soldiers who lost their lives in WWI, the Unknown Soldier was laid to rest in 1921, beneath an eternal flame that is rekindled daily at 6.30pm.

### DON'T MISS

- ➔ Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
- ➔ The sculptures
- ➔ Viewing platform

### PRACTICALITIES

- ➔ Map p86
- ➔ [www.paris-arc-de-triomphe.fr](http://www.paris-arc-de-triomphe.fr)
- ➔ place Charles de Gaulle, 8e
- ➔ viewing platform adult/child €13/free, 1st Sun of month Nov-Mar free
- ➔ 🕒 10am-11pm Apr-Sep, to 10.45pm Oct-Mar
- ➔ 🚶 Charles de Gaulle-Étoile

Also here are a number of bronze plaques laid into the ground. Take the time to try and decipher some: these mark significant moments in modern French history, such as the proclamation of the Third French Republic (4 September 1870) and the return of Alsace and Lorraine to French rule (11 November 1918).

The most notable plaque is the text from Charles de Gaulle's famous London broadcast on 18 June 1940, which sparked the French Resistance to life: 'Believe me, I who am speaking to you with full knowledge of the facts, and who tell you that nothing is lost for France. The same means that overcame us can bring us victory one day. For France is not alone! She is not alone!'

## The Sculptures

The arch is adorned with four main sculptures, six panels in relief, and a frieze running beneath the top. Each was designed by a different artist; the most famous sculpture is the one to the right as you approach from the Champs-Élysées: *La Marseillaise* (Departure of the Volunteers of 1792). Sculpted by François Rude, it depicts soldiers of all ages gathering beneath the wings of victory, en route to drive back the invading armies of Prussia and Austria.

The higher panels depict a series of important victories for the Revolutionary and imperial French armies, from Egypt to Austerlitz, while the detailed frieze is divided into two sections: the *Departure of the Armies* and the *Return of the Armies*.

Don't miss the **multimedia section** beneath the viewing platform, which provides more detail and historical background for each of the sculptures.

## Viewing Platform

Climb the 284 steps to the viewing platform at the top of the 50m-high arch and you'll be suitably rewarded with magnificent panoramas over western Paris. From here, a dozen broad avenues – many of them named after Napoléonic victories and illustrious generals – radiate towards every compass point.

The Arc de Triomphe is the highest point in the line of monuments known as the *axe historique* (historic axis, also called the grand axis); it offers views that swoop east down the Champs-Élysées to the gold-tipped obelisk at place de la Concorde (and beyond to the Louvre's glass pyramid), and west to the skyscraper district of La Défense, where the colossal Grande Arche marks the axis's western terminus.

Lift access to the top is only for visitors with limited mobility and people with young children.

## ARCH ACROBATICS

On 7 August 1919, three weeks after the WWI victory parade, Charles Godefroy flew a biplane through the arch (14.5m wide) to honour the French pilots who had fought in the war. It was no easy feat: Jean Navarre, the pilot originally chosen to perform the flight, crashed his plane while practising and died.

**The military parade commemorating Bastille Day (14 July) kicks off from the arch, which is adorned by a billowing tricolour.**

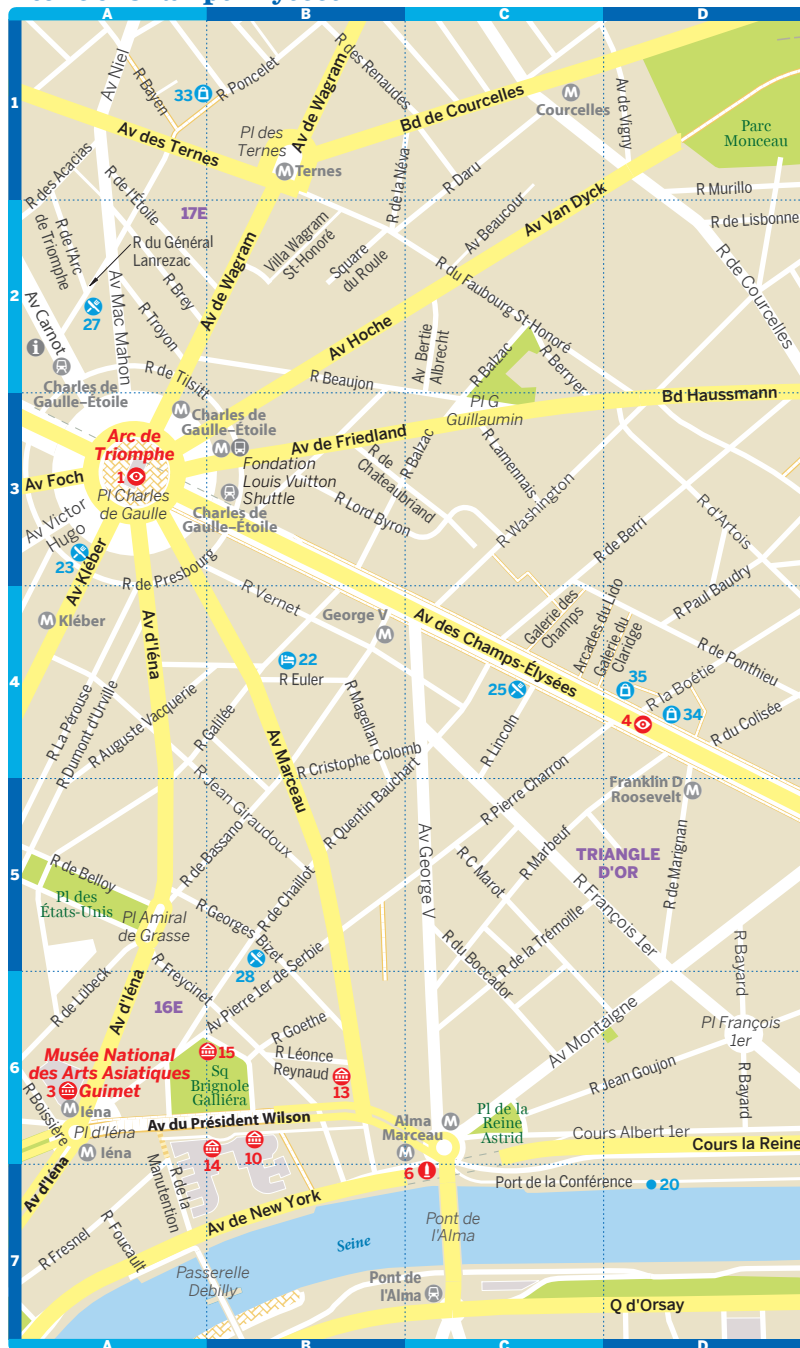
## ACCESS & TICKETS

Don't cross the traffic-choked roundabout above ground if you value your life! Stairs lead from the northern side of the Champs-Élysées to pedestrian tunnels (not linked to metro tunnels) that bring you out safely beneath the arch. Tickets to the viewing platform are sold in the tunnel (you can also pre-purchase them online).



## Étoile &amp; Champs-Élysées

PARIS





## Étoile & Champs-Élysées

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Arc de Triomphe ..... A3  
 2 Musée Jacquemart-André ..... E2  
 3 Musée National des Arts  
 Asiatiques Guimet ..... A6

### 📍 Sights

- 4 Avenue des Champs-Élysées ..... D4  
 5 Église de la Madeleine ..... H5  
 6 Flame of Liberty Memorial ..... C7  
 7 Grand Palais ..... E6  
 8 Hôtel de la Marine ..... H6  
 9 Jeu de Paume ..... H6  
 10 Musée d'Art Moderne de  
 la Ville de Paris ..... B6  
 11 Musée de l'Orangerie ..... H7  
 12 Musée Nissim de  
 Camondo ..... E1  
 13 Musée Yves Saint Laurent  
 Paris ..... B6  
 14 Palais de Tokyo ..... B6  
 15 Palais Galliera ..... B6  
 16 Parc Monceau ..... E1  
 17 Petit Palais ..... F6  
 18 Place de la Concorde ..... G6  
 19 Pont Alexandre III ..... F7

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 20 Bateaux-Mouches ..... D7

### 📍 Sleeping

- 21 Hôtel de Crillon ..... G5  
 22 Hôtel Ekta ..... B4

### 📍 Eating

- 23 Bustronome ..... A3  
 24 Grand Café Fauchon ..... H4  
 25 Ladurée ..... C4  
 26 Lasserre ..... E6  
 27 Le Hide ..... A2  
 28 Substance ..... B5

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 29 Bridge ..... F7  
 30 Honor ..... G5  
 Yoyo ..... (see 14)

### 📍 Entertainment

- 31 Kiosque Théâtre Madeleine ..... H4

### 📍 Shopping

- 32 Boutique Maille ..... H5  
 33 Fromagerie Alléosse ..... A1  
 34 Galeries Lafayette – Champs-Élysées ..... D4  
 35 Guerlain ..... D4  
 36 La Maison de la Truffe ..... H4  
 37 Laulière ..... H5  
 38 Patrick Roger ..... H5  
 39 Place de la Madeleine ..... H5

pylons topped with statues of gilded winged horses. From the bridge there are sensational views of the Eiffel Tower. Art nouveau lamps illuminate it at night.

### Petit Palais

GALLERY

(Map p86; ☎ 01 53 43 40 00; www.petitpalais.paris.fr; av Winston Churchill, 8e; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, temporary exhibitions to 9pm Fri; 🚶 Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau) **FREE** This architectural stunner was built for the 1900 Exposition Universelle, and is home to the **Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris** (City of Paris Museum of Fine Arts). It specialises in medieval and Renaissance *objets d'art*, such as porcelain and clocks, tapestries, drawings, and 19th-century French paintings and sculpture; there are also paintings by such artists as Rembrandt, Colbert, Cézanne, Monet, Gauguin and Delacroix. An audio-guide costs €5.

### Église de la Madeleine

CHURCH

(Church of St Mary Magdalene; Map p86; www.eglise-lamadeleine.com; place de la Madeleine, 8e; ☺ 9.30am-7pm; 🚶 Madeleine) Place de la Madeleine is named after the 19th-century neoclassical church at its centre, the Église

de la Madeleine. Constructed in the style of a massive Greek temple, 'La Madeleine' was consecrated in 1842 after almost a century of design changes and construction delays.

The church is a popular venue for classical-music concerts (some free); check the posters outside or the website for dates.

### ★ Palais Garnier

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p80; ☎ 08 92 89 90 90; www.operade.paris.fr; cnr rues Scribe & Auber, 9e; adult/child self-guided tours €14/10, guided tours €17/9.50; ☺ self-guided tours 10am-6pm mid-Jul-early Sep, to 4pm early Sep-mid-Jul, English-language guided tours 11am & 2.30pm; 🚶 Opéra) The fabled 'phantom of the opera' lurked in this opulent opera house, designed in 1860 by Charles Garnier (then an unknown 35-year-old architect). Reserve a spot on a 90-minute English-language guided tour, or visit on your own (audioguides available; €6). Don't miss the Grand Staircase and gilded auditorium with red velvet seats, a massive chandelier and Marc Chagall's ceiling fresco. Also worth a peek is the museum, with posters, costumes, backdrops, original scores and other memorabilia.

**Musée National Gustave Moreau** GALLERY  
(Map p80; ☎01 48 74 38 50; www.musee-moreau.fr; 14 rue de la Rochefoucauld, 9e; adult/child €7/free; ☀10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 🚫Trinité) Symbolist painter Gustave Moreau's former studio is crammed with 4800 of his paintings, drawings and sketches – although symbolism received more attention as a literary movement in France (Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud). A particular highlight is *La Licorne* (The Unicorn), inspired by *La Dame à la Licorne* (The Lady with the Unicorn) cycle of tapestries in the Musée National du Moyen Âge. Note that it's not accessible to wheelchair users as there's no lift.

## 🗨 Louvre & Les Halles

History and culture meet head on along the banks of the Seine in the 1er *arrondissement*, home to some of the most important sights for visitors to Paris, including the world-renowned Louvre and Centre Pompidou.

It was in this same neighbourhood that Louis VI created *halles* (markets) in 1137 for the merchants who converged on the city centre to sell their wares, and for more than 800 years they were, in the words of Émile Zola, the 'belly of Paris'. The wholesalers were moved lox, stock and cabbage out to suburban Rungis (p132) in 1971.

★ **Musée du Louvre** MUSEUM  
(Map p92; ☎01 40 20 53 17; www.louvre.fr; rue de Rivoli & quai des Tuileries, 1er; adult/child €15/free, 6-9.45pm 1st Sat of month free; ☀9am-6pm Mon, Thu, Sat & Sun, to 9.45pm Wed, Fri & 1st Sat of month; 🚫Palais Royal–Musée du Louvre) It isn't until you're standing in the vast courtyard of the Louvre, with sunlight shimmering through the glass pyramid and crowds milling about beneath the museum's ornate façade, that you can truly say you've been to Paris. Holding tens of thousands of works of art – from Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Greek antiquities to masterpieces by artists such as da Vinci (including his incomparable *Mona Lisa*), Michelangelo and Rembrandt – it's no surprise that this is one of the world's most visited museums.

The **Sully Wing** is at the eastern end of the complex; the **Denon Wing** stretches 800m along the Seine to the south; and the northern **Richelieu Wing** parallels rue de Rivoli. Long before its modern incarnation, the vast Palais du Louvre originally served as a fortress constructed by Philippe-Auguste

in the 12th century (medieval remnants are still visible on the lower ground floor, Sully); it was rebuilt in the mid-16th century as a royal residence in the Renaissance style. The Revolutionary Convention turned it into a national museum in 1793.

The paintings, sculptures and artefacts on display in the Louvre have been amassed by subsequent French governments. Among them are works of art and artisanship from all over Europe and priceless collections of antiquities. The Louvre's *raison d'être* is essentially to present Western art (primarily French and Italian, but also Dutch and Spanish) from the Middle Ages to about 1848 – at which point the Musée d'Orsay takes over – as well as works from ancient civilisations that formed the West's cultural foundations.

When the museum opened in the late 18th century it contained 2500 paintings and *objets d'art*; the 'Grand Louvre' project inaugurated by the late president François Mitterrand in 1989 doubled the museum's exhibition space, and both new and renovated galleries have opened in recent years devoted to *objets d'art* such as the crown jewels of Louis XV (Room 66, 1st floor, Apollo Gallery, Denon). The Islamic art galleries (lower ground floor, Denon) are in the restored Cour Visconti.

The richness and sheer size of the place can be overwhelming. However, there's an array of innovative, entertaining self-guided thematic trails (1½ hours; download trail brochures in advance from the website)

### WORTH A TRIP

#### CONTEMPORARY ARCH

La Défense's landmark edifice is the marble **Grande Arche de la Défense** (☎01 40 90 52 20; www.lagrandearchefr; 1 Parvis de la Défense; adult/child €15/7; ☀10am-7pm; 🚫La Défense Grande Arche), a cube-like arch built in the 1980s to house government and business offices. The arch marks the western end of the *axe historique* (historic axis), though Danish architect Johan-Otto von Sprekelsen deliberately placed the Grande Arche fractionally out of alignment. A lift whisks you up for spectacular views from the rooftop. Temporary photojournalism exhibits are held in the museum (included in the rooftop visit).

# The Louvre

## A HALF-DAY TOUR

Successfully visiting the Louvre is a fine art. Its complex labyrinth of galleries and staircases spiralling across three wings and four floors renders discovery a snakes-and-ladders experience. Initiate yourself with this three-hour itinerary – a playful mix of *Mona Lisa* – obvious and up-to-the-minute unexpected.

Arriving in the **1 Cour Napoléon** beneath IM Pei's glass pyramid, pick up colour-coded floor plans at an information stand, then ride the escalator up to the Sully Wing and swap passport or credit card for a multimedia guide (there are limited descriptions in the galleries) at the wing entrance.

The Louvre is as much about spectacular architecture as masterful art. To appreciate this, zip up and down Sully's Escalier Henri II to admire **2 Venus de Milo**, then up parallel Escalier Henri IV to the palatial displays in **3 Cour Khorsabad**. Follow signs for the escalator up to the 1st floor and the opulent **4 Napoléon III apartments**. Next traverse 25 consecutive galleries (thank you, floor plan!) to flip conventional contemplation on its head with Cy Twombly's **5 The Ceiling**, and the hypnotic **6 Winged Victory of Samothrace**, which brazenly insists on being admired from all angles. End with the impossibly famous **7 Raft of the Medusa**, **8 Mona Lisa** and **9 Virgin & Child**.

### TOP TIPS

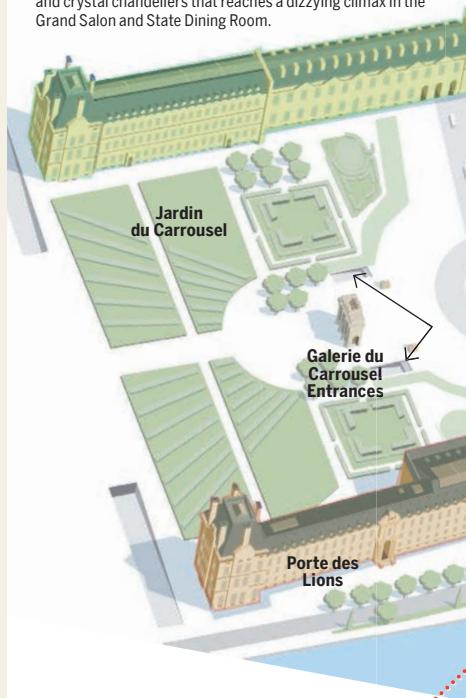
- ➔ Floor plans for navigating the Louvre's maze of galleries are free from the information desks in the Hall Napoléon.
- ➔ The Denon Wing is always packed; visit on late nights (Wednesday or Friday) or trade Denon in for the notably quieter Richelieu Wing.



### Napoléon III Apartments

Rooms 544 & 547, 1st Floor, Richelieu

Napoléon III's gorgeous gilt apartments were built from 1854 to 1861, featuring an over-the-top decor of gold leaf, stucco and crystal chandeliers that reaches a dizzying climax in the Grand Salon and State Dining Room.



### LOUVRE AUDITORIUM

Classical-music concerts are staged several times a week at the Louvre Auditorium (off the main entrance hall). Don't miss the Thursday lunchtime concerts featuring emerging composers and musicians. The season runs from September to April or May, depending on the concert series.

### Mona Lisa

Room 711, 1st Floor, Denon

No smile is as enigmatic or bewitching as hers. Da Vinci's diminutive *La Joconde* hangs opposite the largest painting in the Louvre – sumptuous, fellow Italian Renaissance artwork *The Wedding at Cana*.



## The Raft of the Medusa

**Room 700, 1st Floor, Denon**

Decipher the politics behind French romanticism in Théodore Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*.

## Cour Khorsabad

**Ground Floor, Richelieu**

Time travel with a pair of winged human-headed bulls to view some of the world's oldest Mesopotamian art. **DETOUR»** Night-lit statues in Cour Puget.



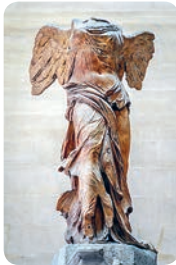
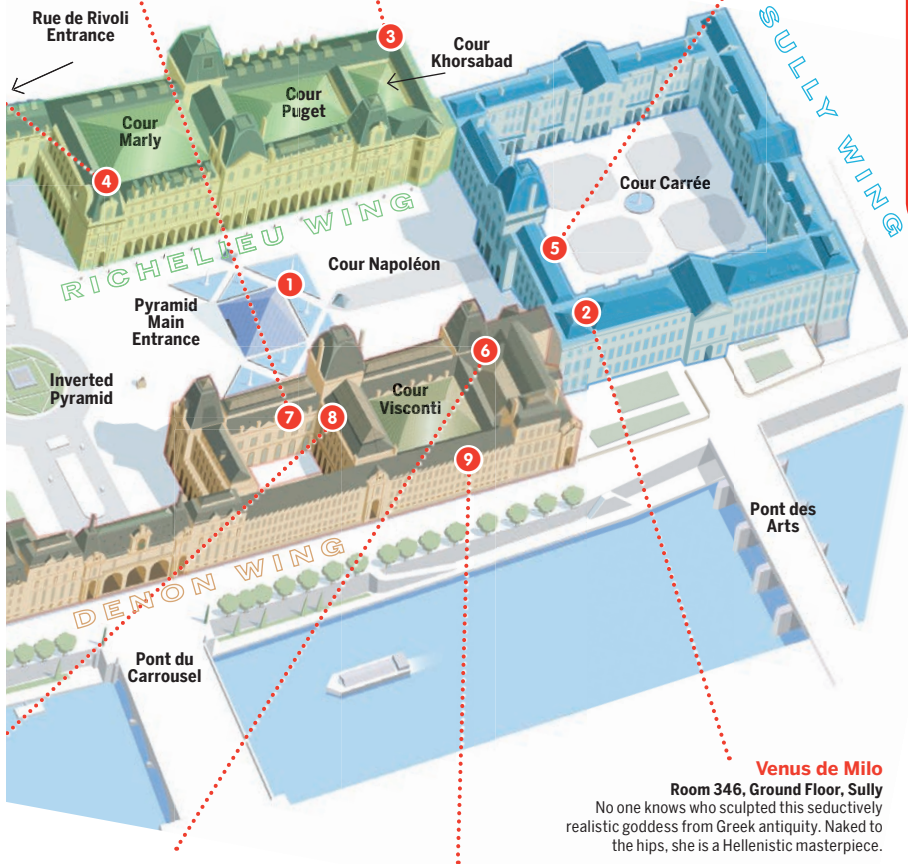
PRZMAT / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## The Ceiling

**Room 663, Sully**

Admire the blue shock of Cy Twombly's 400-sq-metre contemporary ceiling fresco – the Louvre's latest, daring commission.

**DETOUR»** The Braque Ceiling, Room 662.



PRZMAT / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## Winged Victory of Samothrace

**Room 703, 1st Floor, Denon**

Draw breath at the aggressive dynamism of this headless, handless Hellenistic goddess. **DETOUR»** The razzle-dazzle of the Apollo Gallery's crown jewels.

## Virgin & Child Grande Galerie, 1st Floor, Denon

In the spirit of artistic devotion save the Louvre's most famous gallery for last: a feast of Virgin-and-child paintings by Da Vinci, Raphael, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Giovanni Bellini and Francesco Botticini.



TUFTI RUTTI / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## Venus de Milo

**Room 346, Ground Floor, Sully**

No one knows who sculpted this seductively realistic goddess from Greek antiquity. Naked to the hips, she is a Hellenistic masterpiece.

## Louvre &amp; Les Halles

PARIS





## Louvre & Les Halles

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Église St-Eustache .....G4
- 2 Jardin des Tuileries .....A4
- 3 Musée du Louvre .....D5

### 📍 Sights

- 4 Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel .....C5
- 5 Bourse de Commerce Pinault Collection .....F4
- 6 Église St-Germain l'Auxerrois .....E6
- 7 Forum des Halles .....G5
- 8 Grande Pyramide .....D5
- 9 Jardin du Palais Royal .....D3
- 10 Jardin Nelson Mandela .....F4
- 11 L'Oasis d'Aboukir .....G2
- 12 Musée des Arts Décoratifs .....C4
- 13 Musée en Herbe .....F6
- 14 Place Vendôme .....B2

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- Louvre Guided Tours ..... (see 8)

### 📍 Sleeping

- 15 Edgar .....H2
- 16 Hôtel Crayon .....E4
- 17 Hôtel Ritz Paris .....A2
- 18 Hôtel Tiquetonne .....H3

### 📍 Eating

- 19 Au Pied de Cochon .....F4
- 20 Au Rocher de Cancale .....G3
- 21 Balagan .....B3
- 22 Bambou .....G1
- 23 Cédric Grolet Opéra .....C2
- 24 Chez La Vieille .....F5
- 25 Cloud Cakes .....G3
- 26 Daroco .....E2
- 27 Ellsworth .....D3
- 28 Fou de Pâtisserie .....G3

- 29 Frenchie .....H2
- 30 Frenchie Bar à Vins .....H2
- 31 Frenchie to Go .....G2
- 32 Le Grand Véfour .....D3
- 33 L'Escargot .....G4
- 34 Maison Maison .....F6
- 35 Salatim .....G1
- 36 Stohrer .....G3
- 37 Verjus .....D3

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 38 Angelina .....A3
- 39 Baby Doll .....B1
- Bar Hemingway ..... (see 17)
- 40 Chez Bouboule .....F3
- Danico ..... (see 26)
- 41 Experimental Cocktail Club .....H3
- 42 Harry's New York Bar .....B1
- 43 La Champmeslé .....D2
- 44 Le Garde Robe .....F5
- 45 Matamata .....F3
- 46 Nina's .....B2
- 47 Scilicet .....G7
- Verjus Bar à Vins ..... (see 37)

### 📍 Entertainment

- 48 Comédie Française .....D4
- Forum des Images ..... (see 7)
- 49 Sunset & Sunside .....G6
- 50 Théâtre du Châtelet .....G7

### 📍 Shopping

- 51 Bouquinistes .....F6
- 52 Carrousel du Louvre .....C4
- 53 Didier Ludot .....D3
- 54 E Dehillerin .....F4
- 55 La Samaritaine .....F6
- 56 L'Exception .....G5
- 57 Sézane .....G1

ranging from a Louvre masterpieces trail to the art of eating, plus several for kids (hunt lions, galloping horses). Even better are the Louvre's self-paced multimedia guides (€5). More formal, English-language **guided tours** (tour excl museum entry adult/child €12/7; ☀11am & 2pm daily except 1st Tue & Sun of month, plus 7pm Wed) depart from the Hall Napoléon, which has free English-language maps.

For many, the star attraction is Leonardo da Vinci's *La Joconde*, better known as *Mona Lisa* (Room 711, 1st floor, Denon). This entire section of the 1st floor of the Denon Wing, in fact, is hung with masterpieces – Rooms 700 to 702 have enormous French paintings including the *Consecration of the Emperor Napoléon I* (David), *The Raft of the*

*Medusa* (Géricault) and *Grande Odalisque* (Ingres), while Rooms 710, 711, 712 and 716 contain transcendent pieces by Raphael, Titian and Botticini. Room 706 has Botticelli's graceful frescoes. On the ground floor of the Denon Wing, take time for Michelangelo's *The Dying Slave* and Canova's *Psyche and Cupid* (Room 403).

Others, meanwhile, will prefer the treasures from antiquity: the Mesopotamia (ground floor, Richelieu) and Egypt (ground and 1st floors, Sully) collections are both superb. Highlights include the *Code of Hammurabi* (Room 227, ground floor, Richelieu) and *The Seated Scribe* (Room 635, 1st floor, Sully). The mosaics and figurines from the Byzantine Empire (lower ground floor, Denon), which merge into the state-of-the-art

Islamic collection in the Cour Visconti, are also notable. Topping the list of ancient masterpieces are the armless Greek duo, the *Venus de Milo* (Room 346, ground floor, Sully) and the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* (Room 703, 1st floor, Denon).

Also of note are the gilded-to-the-max Napoléon III Apartments (1st floor, Richelieu), Dutch masters Vermeer (Room 837, 2nd floor, Richelieu) and Rembrandt (Room 845, 2nd floor, Richelieu), and the 18th- and 19th-century French painting collection (2nd floor, Sully), which features iconic works like Ingres' *The Turkish Bath* (Room 940).

The main entrance is through the 21m-high **Grande Pyramide** (Map p92; place du Louvre, 1er), a glass pyramid designed by the Chinese-American architect IM Pei (1917–2019). The only way to guarantee entry is by booking online (€2 surcharge) or making a time-slot reservation through the Paris Museum Pass. You can avoid the longest queues (for security) outside the pyramid by entering the Louvre complex via the underground shopping centre **Carrousel du Louvre** ([www.carrouseldulouvre.com](http://www.carrouseldulouvre.com); 99 rue de Rivoli, 1er; ☺ 10am–8pm Wed–Mon, 11am–7pm Tue; ☎), or the Porte des Lions entrance. If you don't have a pre-bought ticket, you'll need to queue up again to buy your ticket once inside (not recommended at peak times, when capacity can mean anyone without a prior reservation won't get in).

Tickets are only valid for the duration of your visit (you can no longer come and go as you please throughout the day).

### Musée des Arts Décoratifs

GALLERY

(MAD; Map p92; ☎ 01 44 55 57 50; [www.mad-paris.fr](http://www.mad-paris.fr); 107 rue de Rivoli, 1er; adult/child €14/free; ☺ 11am–6pm Tue, Wed & Fri–Sun, to 9pm Thu; 🏛 Palais Royal–Musée du Louvre) Privately administered collections of applied arts and design, advertising and graphic design, and fashion and textiles are displayed in the Rohan Wing of the vast Palais du Louvre at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (aka MAD). Art nouveau and art deco pieces are among its highlights.

For an extra €6, you can scoop up a combo ticket that also includes the **Musée Nissim de Camondo** (Map p86; ☎ 01 44 55 57 50; [www.madparis.fr](http://www.madparis.fr); 63 rue de Monceau, 8e; adult/child incl audioguide €12/free; ☺ 10am–5.30pm Wed–Sun; 🏛 Monceau, Villiers) in the 8e.

### Église St-Germain l'Auxerrois

CHURCH

(Map p92; [www.saintgermainauxerrois.cef.fr](http://www.saintgermainauxerrois.cef.fr); 2 place du Louvre, 1er; ☺ 9am–7pm; 🏛 Louvre Rivoli, Pont Neuf) Built between the 13th and 16th centuries in a mixture of Gothic and Renaissance styles and with similar dimensions and ground plans to those of Notre Dame, this once royal parish church stands on a site at the eastern end of the Louvre that has been used for Christian worship since about 500 CE. The church has been hosting Notre Dame's worship services since the cathedral's devastating fire of 2019.

### ★ Jardin des Tuileries

PARK

(Map p92; rue de Rivoli, 1er; ☺ 7am–11pm Jun–Aug, 7am–9pm Apr, May & Sep, 7.30am–7.30pm Oct–Mar; 🏛 Tuileries, Concorde) Filled with fountains, ponds and sculptures, the formal 28-hectare Tuileries Garden, which begins just west of the Jardin du Carrousel, was laid out in its present form in 1664 by André Le Nôtre, architect of the gardens at Versailles. The Tuileries soon became the most fashionable spot in Paris for parading about in one's finery. It now forms part of the Banks of the Seine Unesco World Heritage Site.

### Musée de l'Orangerie

MUSEUM

(Map p86; ☎ 01 44 77 80 07; [www.musee-orange-rie.fr](http://www.musee-orange-rie.fr); place de la Concorde, 1er; adult/child €9/free; ☺ 9am–6pm Wed–Mon; 🏛 Concorde) Monet's extraordinary cycle of eight enormous *Decorations des Nymphéas* (Water Lilies) occupies two huge oval rooms purpose-built in 1927 on the artist's instructions. The lower

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### LIVING WALL

On the corner of rue des Petits Carreaux (the northern extension of foodie street rue Montorgueil), **L'Oasis d'Aboukir** (Map p92; 83 rue d'Aboukir, 2e; 🏛 Sentier) is an extraordinary *mur végétal* ('vertical garden') that was installed on a 25m-high blank building façade by the modern innovator of the genre, French botanist Patrick Blanc, in 2013. It's since flourished to cover a total surface area of 250 sq metres in greenery. Subtitled *Hymne à la Biodiversité* (Ode to Biodiversity), the 'living wall' incorporates some 7600 plants from 237 different species.



## DON'T MISS

## PARISIAN STREET ART

**Street Art Paris** (📍 06 52 69 92 40; [www.streetartparis.fr](http://www.streetartparis.fr); tours €20; 🕒 by reservation)

Learn about the history of graffiti on fascinating tours taking in Paris' vibrant street art. Tours take place in Belleville and Montmartre and on the Left Bank. If you're inspired to try it yourself, book into a 2½-hour mural workshop (€35).

**Art 42** (Map p72; [www.art42.fr](http://www.art42.fr); 96 bd Bessières, 17e; 🕒 tours every 2nd Tue in English 7pm, in French 6-9pm; 🚏 Porte de Clichy) Street art and post-graffiti now have their own dedicated space at this 'anti-museum', with works by Banksy, Bom.K, Miss Van, Swoon and Invader (who's behind the Space Invader motifs on buildings all over Paris), among other boundary-pushing urban artists. Compulsory guided tours, generally lasting 1½ to two hours, lead you through 4000 sq metres of subterranean rooms sheltering some 150 works. Entry's free but you need to reserve tours online (ideally several weeks in advance, although last-minute cancellations can arise).

**Galerie Itinérance** (Map p72; 📍 01 44 06 45 39; [www.itinerance.fr](http://www.itinerance.fr); 24bis bd du Général Jean Simon, 13e; 🕒 noon-7pm Tue-Sat; 🚏 Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand) Testament to the 13e's ongoing creative renaissance, this gallery showcases graffiti and street art, and can advise on self-guided and guided street-art tours of the neighbourhood that take in many landmark works by artists represented by the gallery. Exhibitions and events change regularly.

level houses more of Monet's impressionist works and many by Sisley, Renoir, Cézanne, Gauguin, Picasso, Matisse and Modigliani, as well as Derain's *Arlequin et Pierrot*. The orangery and photography gallery **Jeu de Paume** (Map p86; 📍 01 47 03 12 50; [www.jeudepaume.org](http://www.jeudepaume.org)) are all that remains of the former Palais des Tuileries, which was razed during the Paris Commune in 1871. Audioguides cost €5.

**Place Vendôme** SQUARE  
(Map p92; 1er; 🚏 Tuileries, Opéra) Octagonal place Vendôme and the arcaded and colonnaded buildings around it were constructed between 1687 and 1721. In March 1796 Napoléon married Josephine, Viscountess Beauharnais, in the building at No 3. Today the buildings surrounding the square house the posh Hôtel Ritz Paris and some of the city's most fashionable boutiques.

**Jardin du Palais Royal** GARDENS  
(Map p92; [www.domaine-palais-royal.fr](http://www.domaine-palais-royal.fr); 2 place Collette, 1er; 🕒 8am-10.30pm Apr-Sep, to 8.30pm Oct-Mar; 🚏 Palais Royal-Musée du Louvre) The Jardin du Palais Royal is a perfect spot to sit, contemplate and picnic between boxed hedges, or to shop in the trio of beautiful arcades that frame the garden: the **Galerie de Valois** (east), **Galerie de Montpensier** (west) and **Galerie Beaujolois** (north). However, it's the southern end of the complex, polka-dotted with sculptor Daniel Buren's 260

black-and-white striped columns, that has become the garden's signature feature.

★ **Église St-Eustache** CHURCH  
(Map p92; 📍 01 42 36 31 05; [www.saint-eustache.org](http://www.saint-eustache.org); 146 rue Rambuteau, 1er; 🕒 9.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7.15pm Sat, 9am-7.15pm Sun; 🚏 Les Halles, RER Châtelet-Les Halles) Just north of the gardens adjoining the city's old marketplace, now the Forum des Halles (p99), is one of the most beautiful churches in Paris. Majestic, architecturally magnificent and musically outstanding, St-Eustache was constructed between 1532 and 1632 and is primarily Gothic. Artistic highlights include a work by Rubens, Raymond Mason's colourful bas-relief of market vendors (1969) and Keith Haring's bronze triptych (1990) in the side chapels.

**Bourse de Commerce Pinault Collection** MUSEUM  
(Map p92; [www.boursedecommerce.fr](http://www.boursedecommerce.fr); 2 rue de Viarmes, 1er; 🚏 Les Halles, RER Châtelet-Les Halles) This much-anticipated art museum occupies the Bourse de Commerce, an 18th-century rotunda that once held the city's grain market and stock exchange. Japanese architect Tadao Ando designed the ambitious interior, where three floors of galleries display contemporary works collected by François Pinault, who previously teamed up with Ando to open Venice's Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana. Exhibitions span varying





## Montmartre & Pigalle

### Top Sights

- 1 Basilique du Sacré-Cœur ..... F1  
2 Musée de Montmartre ..... E1

### Sights

- 3 Dalí Paris ..... D2  
4 Église St-Pierre de Montmartre ..... E1

### Sleeping

- 5 Hôtel Joséphine ..... A4  
6 Hôtel Môm'Art ..... E3  
7 Hôtel Particulier Montmartre ..... C1  
8 R Kipling Hotel ..... A4  
9 Terrass' Hôtel ..... B2

### Eating

- 10 Flesh ..... B4  
11 Le Grenier à Pain ..... C2  
12 Pain Pain ..... D3

### Drinking & Nightlife

- La Machine du Moulin Rouge .... (see 15)  
Le Très Particulier ..... (see 7)

### Entertainment

- 13 La Cigale ..... D4  
14 Le Divan du Monde & Madame  
Arthur ..... D4  
15 Moulin Rouge ..... A3

### Shopping

- 16 Spree ..... D3

scales and media, from painting, sculpture, photography and video to installations.

### Forum des Halles

NOTABLE BUILDING

(Map p92; [www.forumdeshalles.com](http://www.forumdeshalles.com); 1 rue Pierre Lescot, 1er; ☺shops 10am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-7pm Sun; 🚆Les Halles, RER Châtelet-Les Halles) Paris' main wholesale food market stood here for nearly 800 years before being replaced by this underground shopping mall in 1971. Long considered an eyesore by many Parisians, the mall's exterior was finally demolished in 2011 to make way for its golden-hued translucent canopy, unveiled in 2016. Below, four floors of stores (125 in total), 23 restaurants, cafes and fast-food outlets, and entertainment venues including cinemas and a swimming pool, extend down to the city's busiest metro/RER hub.

Spilling out from the canopied centre is the **Jardin Nelson Mandela** (☺24hr).

### Centre Pompidou

MUSEUM

See p100.

## Montmartre & Northern Paris

The hilltop neighbourhood of Montmartre safeguards some of Paris' most iconic sights, including the white-domed Sacré-Cœur basilica and a Parisian vineyard. The *quartier's* museums evoke its fabled artistic heritage and it's easy to stroll between them. West, past place de Clichy and beyond to Parc Monceau, there are a couple of excellent lesser-known art museums at home in historic mansions. Canal St-Martin, a sight in itself with its vintage bridges and canal boats, flows to the east.

### Basilique du Sacré-Cœur

BASILICA

See p102.

### Musée de Montmartre

MUSEUM

(Map p98; ☎01 49 25 89 39; [www.musee-demontmartre.fr](http://www.musee-demontmartre.fr); 12 rue Cortot, 18e; adult/child €13/7, garden only €5; ☺11am-6pm Wed-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, to 6pm Wed-Sun Oct-Mar; 🚆Lamarck-Caulaincourt) This delightful 'village' museum showcases paintings, lithographs and documents illustrating Montmartre's bohemian, artistic and hedonistic past – one room is dedicated entirely to the French cancan. It's housed in a 17th-century manor where several artists, including Renoir and Raoul Dufy, had their studios in the 19th century. You can also visit the studio of painter Suzanne Valadon, who lived and worked here with her son Maurice Utrillo and partner André Utter between 1912 and 1926.

### Dalí Paris

GALLERY

(Map p98; ☎01 42 64 40 10; [www.daliparis.com](http://www.daliparis.com); 11 rue Poulbot, 18e; adult/child €13/9; ☺10am-6pm; 🚆Abbesses) More than 300 works by Salvador Dalí (1904–89), the flamboyant Catalan surrealist printmaker, painter, sculptor and self-promoter, are on display at this basement museum located just west of place du Tertre. The private collection includes Dalí's strange sculptures, lithographs, and many of his illustrations and furniture, including the famous *Mae West Lips Sofa*. An audioguide costs €3.

### Musée Jacquemart-André

MUSEUM

(Map p86; ☎01 45 62 11 59; [www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com](http://www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com); 158 bd Haussmann, 8e; adult/child incl audioguide €12/7.50; ☺10am-6pm, to 8.30pm Mon during temporary exhibitions; 🚆Miromesnil) The home of art collectors Nélie Jacquemart

*continued on p104*



TOP EXPERIENCE

## ADMIRE ART AT THE CENTRE POMPIDOU

The Centre Pompidou has amazed and delighted visitors ever since it opened in 1977, not just for its outstanding collection of modern art but also for its radical architectural statement. The dynamic and vibrant arts centre enthral with its irresistible cocktail of galleries and exhibitions, hands-on workshops, dance performances, bookshop, design boutique, cinemas, a research library and other entertainment venues.

### Musée National d'Art Moderne

Europe's largest collection of modern art fills the bright and airy, well-lit galleries of the National Museum of Modern Art, covering two complete floors of the Pompidou. For art lovers, this is one of the jewels of Paris. On a par with the permanent collection are the two temporary exhibition halls (on the ground floor/basement and the top floor), which showcase some memorable blockbuster exhibits. Also of note is the fabulous children's gallery on the 1st floor.

The permanent collection changes every two years, but the basic layout generally stays the same. The 5th floor showcases artists active between 1905 and 1970 (give or take a decade); the 4th floor focuses on more contemporary creations, roughly from the 1990s onward.

The dynamic presentation of the 5th floor mixes up works by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall and Kandinsky with lesser-known contemporaries from as far afield as Argentina and Japan, as well as more famous cross-Atlantic names such as Arbus, Warhol, Pollock and Rothko.

### DON'T MISS

- ➔ The Musée National d'Art Moderne
- ➔ Cutting-edge temporary exhibitions
- ➔ The 6th floor and its sweeping panorama of Paris

### PRACTICALITIES

- ➔ Map p108
- ➔ ☎ 01 44 78 12 33
- ➔ [www.centrepompidou.fr](http://www.centrepompidou.fr)
- ➔ place Georges Pompidou, 4e
- ➔ museum, exhibitions & panorama adult/child €14/free, panorama only €5/free
- ➔ 🕒 11am-9pm Wed-Mon, temporary exhibits to 11pm Thu
- ➔ 🚇 Rambuteau



One floor down on the 4th, you'll find monumental paintings, installation pieces, sculpture and video taking centre stage. The focus here is on contemporary art, architecture and design.

## Architecture & Views

Former French President Georges Pompidou wanted an ultracontemporary artistic hub and he got it: competition-winning architects Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers designed the building inside out, with utilitarian features like plumbing, pipes, air vents and electrical cables forming part of the external façade. The building was renovated in 2020.

Viewed from a distance (such as from Sacré-Cœur), the Centre Pompidou's primary-coloured, box-like form amid a sea of muted grey Parisian rooftops makes it look like a child's Meccano set abandoned on someone's elegant living-room rug. Although the Centre Pompidou is just six storeys high, the city's low-rise cityscape means stupendous views extend from its roof (reached by external escalators enclosed in tubes). Rooftop admission is included in museum and exhibition admission – or buy a panorama ticket (€5) just for the roof.

## Atelier Brancusi

West of the Centre Pompidou main building, this reconstruction of the **studio** (Map p108; 55 rue de Rambuteau, 4e; ☎ 2-6pm Wed-Mon) **FREE** of Romanian-born sculptor Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957) – known for works such as *The Kiss* and *Bird in Space* – contains over 130 sculptures in stone and wood. You'll also find drawings, pedestals and photographic plates from his original Paris studio.

## Tours & Guides

Guided tours in English take place at 2pm on Saturday and sometimes Sunday (€4.50; reserve online). Audioguided tours are downloadable on the website (you'll need your own smartphone and earphones).

## ENTERTAINMENT

A keystone of the Centre Pompidou's popularity within Parisians as well as visitors is its entertainment options. Along with two cinemas screening single films, retrospectives, documentaries and more, it hosts a packed calendar of concerts, theatre and dance.

**The full-monty Pompidou experience is as much about hanging out in the busy streets and squares around it, packed with souvenir shops and people, as absorbing the centre's contents. West of the Centre Pompidou, fun-packed place Georges Pompidou and its nearby pedestrian streets attract bags of buskers, musicians, jugglers and mime artists. Don't miss place Igor Stravinsky with its fanciful mechanical fountains of skeletons, hearts, treble clefs, and a big pair of ruby-red lips by Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle.**

## RENOVATIONS

After closing completely from late 2023 for four years, the Centre Pompidou will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2027 fresh from a full-scale structural makeover.



TOP EXPERIENCE

## DISCOVER THE BASILIQUE DU SACRÉ-CŒUR

More than just a place of worship, the distinctive dove-white domed **Basilique du Sacré-Cœur (Sacred Heart Basilica)** is a veritable experience. Reached by 270 steps, the *parvis* (forecourt) in front of the basilica provides a postcard-perfect city panorama. Buskers and street artists perform on the steps, while picnickers spread out on the hillside park.

### History

It may appear to be a place of peacefulness and quiet contemplation today, but Sacré-Cœur's foundations were laid amid bloodshed and controversy. Its construction began in 1875, in the wake of France's humiliating defeat by Prussia and the subsequent chaos of the Paris Commune. Following Napoléon III's surrender to von Bismarck in September 1870, angry Parisians, with the help of the National Guard, continued to hold out against Prussian forces – a harrowing siege that lasted four long winter months. By the time a ceasefire was negotiated in early 1871, the split between the radical working-class Parisians (supported by the National Guard) and the conservative national government (supported by the French army) had become insurmountable.

Over the next several months, the rebels, known as Communards, managed to overthrow the reactionary government and take over the city. It was a particularly chaotic and bloody moment in Parisian history, with mass executions on both sides and a wave of rampant destruction that spread throughout Paris. Montmartre was a key Communard stronghold. It was on the future site of Sacré-Cœur that the rebels won their first victory and it was consequently the first neighbourhood to be targeted when the French army returned in full force in May 1871. Ultimately, many Communards were buried alive in the gypsum mines beneath the Butte.

### DON'T MISS

- Paris views from the *parvis*
- The apse mosaic *Christ in Majesty*
- The dome

### PRACTICALITIES

- Map p98
- ☎ 01 53 41 89 00
- [www.sacre-coeur-montmartre.com](http://www.sacre-coeur-montmartre.com)
- Parvis du Sacré-Cœur, 18e
- basilica free, dome adult/child €6/4
- 🕒 basilica 6am-10.30pm, dome 10.30am-8.30pm
- 🚶 Anvers, Abbesses

Following the 2019 fire at Notre Dame cathedral, Sacré-Cœur became Paris' most visited building. In 2020, it was announced that the process was underway for the basilica to be protected as a historic monument.

## The Basilica

Within the historical context, the construction of an enormous basilica to expiate the city's sins seemed like a gesture of peace and forgiveness – indeed, the seven million French francs needed to construct the church's foundations came solely from the contributions of local Catholics. However, the Montmartre location was certainly no coincidence: the conservative old guard desperately wanted to assert its power in what was then a hotbed of revolution. The battle between the two camps – Catholic versus secular, royalist versus republican – raged on and in 1882 the construction of the basilica was even voted down by the city council on the grounds that it would continue to fan the flames of civil war. It was overturned in the end by a technicality.

The Romano-Byzantine-style basilica's travertine stone exudes calcite, ensuring it remains white despite weathering and pollution. Six successive architects oversaw construction of the basilica, and it wasn't until 1919 that Sacré-Cœur was finally consecrated, contrasting the surrounding area's bohemian lifestyle.

While criticism of its design and white travertine stone has continued throughout the decades (one poet called it a giant baby's bottle for angels), the interior is enlivened by the glittering apse mosaic *Christ in Majesty*, designed by Luc-Olivier Merson in 1922 and one of the largest in the world.

Above the high altar is displayed the Blessed Sacrament. The prayer 'cycle' that began in 1885 before the basilica's completion still continues around the clock, with perpetual adoration of this sacrament by the faithful – including at night.

On Sundays, you can hear the organ being played during Mass and Vespers.

## The Dome & Crypt

Outside, to the west of the main entrance, 300 spiraling steps climb up to the basilica's dome, which affords one of Paris' most spectacular panoramas; it's said you can see for 30km on a clear day. Weighing in at 19 tonnes, the bell in the tower above, called La Savoyarde, is the largest in France.

To the left of the basilica's main entrance, steps lead down to the huge chapel-lined crypt (typically closed to visitors).

## A PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE

In a sense, atonement here has never stopped: a prayer 'cycle' that began in 1885 before the basilica's completion still continues around the clock, with perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament continually on display above the high altar.

**Try to visit early morning or at sunset when crowds are a little thinner. For the best views, pick a blue-sky day to visit; don't even consider climbing to the top of the dome in bad weather.**

## DIVINE INTERVENTION?

In 1944, 13 Allied bombs were dropped on Montmartre, falling just next to Sacré-Cœur. Although the stained-glass windows all shattered from the force of the explosions, miraculously no one died and the basilica sustained no other damage.

*Continued from p99*

and Édouard André, this opulent late-19th-century residence combines elements from different eras – seen here in the presence of Greek and Roman antiquities, Egyptian artefacts, period furnishings and portraits by Dutch masters. Its 16 rooms offer an absorbing glimpse of the lifestyle of Parisian high society: from the library, hung with canvases by Rembrandt and Van Dyck, to the marvellous Jardin d'Hiver – a glass-paned garden room backed by a magnificent double-helix staircase.

### Parc Monceau

PARK

(Map p86; [www.paris.fr/equipements/parc-monceau](http://www.paris.fr/equipements/parc-monceau) -1804; 35 bd de Courcelles, 8e; ☀ 7am-10pm May-Aug, to 9pm Sep, to 8pm Oct-Apr; 🚶 Monceau) Marked by a neoclassical rotunda at its main bd Courcelles entrance, beautiful Parc Monceau sprawls over 8.2 lush hectares. It was laid out by Louis Carrogis Carmontelle in 1778–79 in English style with winding paths, ponds and flower beds. An Egyptian-style pyramid is the only original folly remaining today, but other distinctive features include a bridge modelled after Venice's Rialto, a Renaissance arch and a Corinthian colonnade. There are play areas, a carousel and scheduled puppet shows for kids.

### Parc de la Villette

PARK

(Map p72; [www.lavillette.com](http://www.lavillette.com); 211 av Jean Jaurès, 19e; ☀ 6am-1am; 🚶 Porte de la Villette, Porte de Pantin) Spanning 55 hectares, this vast city park is a cultural centre, kids playground and landscaped urban space at the intersection of two canals, the Ourcq and the St-Denis. Its futuristic layout includes the colossal mirror-like sphere of the Géode cinema and the bright-red cubical pavilions known as *folies*. Among its themed gardens are the Jardin du Dragon (Dragon Garden), with a giant dragon's tongue slide for kids, Jardin des Dunes (Dunes Garden) and Jardin des Miroirs (Mirror Garden).

### ★ La Recyclerie

CULTURAL CENTRE

(Map p72; ☎ 01 42 57 58 49; [www.larecyclerie.com](http://www.larecyclerie.com); 83 bd Ornano, 18e; ☀ 8am-midnight Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, to 10pm Sun; 🚶 Porte de Clignancourt) 🍃 An abandoned Petite Ceinture train station has been repurposed as an eco-hub with an urban farm along the old railway line, featuring community vegetable and herb gardens and chickens. They provide ingredients for the mostly vegetarian cafe-canteen (tables stretch trackside in summer and the station houses a cavernous

dining space). In turn, food scraps replenish the chickens and gardens. Beehives on the roof produce honey. Look out for regular up-cycling and repair workshops, flea markets, tours and various other events.

## 👁 Le Marais, Ménilmontant & Belleville

The majority of sights in this neighbourhood concentrate in the narrow, medieval streets and sheltered squares of Le Marais, which are easily accessed on foot. Museums here include an increasing number of cutting-edge art galleries. The Cimetière du Père Lachaise sprawls northeast in the 20e.

### ★ Musée National Picasso-Paris

MUSEUM

(Map p108; ☎ 01 85 56 00 36; [www.museepicasso.paris.fr](http://www.museepicasso.paris.fr); 5 rue de Thorigny, 3e; adult/child €14/free; ☀ 10.30am-6pm Tue-Fri, from 9.30am Sat & Sun; 🚶 Chemin Vert, St-Paul) One of Paris' most treasured art collections is showcased inside the mid-17th-century Hôtel Salé, an exquisite private mansion owned by the city since 1964. The Musée National Picasso is a staggering art museum devoted to Spanish artist Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), who spent much of his life living and working in Paris. The collection includes more than 5000 drawings, engravings, paintings, ceramic works and sculptures by the *grand maître* (great master), although they're not all displayed at the same time.

### Hôtel de Ville

ARCHITECTURE

(Map p108; [www.paris.fr](http://www.paris.fr); place de l'Hôtel de Ville, 4e; 🚶 Hôtel de Ville) **FREE** Paris' beautiful town hall was gutted during the Paris Commune of 1871 and rebuilt in luxurious neo-Renaissance style between 1874 and 1882. The ornate façade is decorated with 108 statues of illustrious Parisians, and the outstanding temporary exhibitions (admission free; enter at 29 rue de Rivoli) have a Parisian theme.

### Place des Vosges

SQUARE

(Map p108; 4e; 🚶 Bastille, Chemin Vert) Inaugurated in 1612 as place Royale and thus Paris' oldest square, place des Vosges is a strikingly elegant ensemble of 36 symmetrical houses with ground-floor arcades, steep slate roofs and large dormer windows arranged around a leafy square with four symmetrical fountains and an 1829 copy of a mounted statue of Louis XIII. The square received its present name in 1800 to honour the Vosges

*département* (administrative division) for being the first in France to pay its taxes.

### Maison de Victor Hugo

MUSEUM

(Map p108; ☎01 42 72 10 16; www.maisonsvictorhugo.paris.fr; 6 place des Vosges, 4e; 🚶 Bastille) Between 1832 and 1848, the celebrated novelist and poet Victor Hugo lived in an apartment in Hôtel de Rohan-Guéméné, a town house overlooking one of Paris' most elegant squares. Hugo moved here a year after the publication of *Notre Dame de Paris* (The Hunchback of Notre Dame), completing *Ruy Blas* during his stay. The museum here contains Hugo's personal drawings and portraits, and recently reopened after extensive renovations.

### Musée Carnavalet

MUSEUM

(Map p108; ☎01 44 59 58 58; www.carnavalet.paris.fr; 23 rue de Sévigné, 3e; 🚶 St-Paul, Chérin Vert) **FREE** Paris' history museum, spanning Gallo-Roman times onwards, rambles over a pair of remarkable *hôtels particuliers* (private mansions), the 1560-built **Hôtel Carnavalet** and 1688-built **Hôtel Le Peletier de St-Fargeau**. The museum is expected to reopen after a multi-year renovation in 2021.

### Musée des Arts et Métiers

MUSEUM

(Map p108; ☎01 53 01 82 75; www.arts-et-metiers.net; 60 rue de Réaumur, 3e; adult/child €8/free, 6-9pm Fri & 1st Sun of month free; ☺10am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, to 9pm Fri; 🚶 Arts et Métiers) The Arts and Crafts Museum, dating to 1794 and Europe's oldest science and technology museum, is a must for families – or anyone with an interest in how things tick or work. Housed inside the sublime 18th-century priory of St-Martin des Champs, some 2400 instruments, machines and working models from the 18th to 20th centuries are displayed across three floors. In the priory's attached church is Foucault's original pendulum, introduced to the world at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1855.

### ★ Mémorial de la Shoah

MUSEUM

(Map p108; ☎01 42 77 44 72; www.memorialdelashoah.org; 17 rue Geoffroy l'Asnier, 4e; ☺10am-6.30pm Sun-Wed & Fri, to 10pm Thu; 🚶 Pont Marie, St-Paul) **FREE** Established in 1956, the Memorial to the Unknown Jewish Martyr has metamorphosed into the Memorial of the Shoah – 'Shoah' is a Hebrew word meaning 'catastrophe' and it's synonymous with the Holocaust. Museum exhibitions relate to the Holocaust and German occu-

pation of parts of France and Paris during WWII. The actual memorial to the victims stands at the entrance. The wall is inscribed with the names of 76,000 men, women and children deported from France to Nazi extermination camps.

### ★ Cimetière du Père Lachaise

CEMETERY

(Map p72; ☎01 55 25 82 10; www.pere-lachaise.com; 8 bd de Ménilmontant & 16 rue du Repos, 20e; ☺8am-6pm Mon-Fri, from 8.30am Sat, from 9am Sun mid-Mar–Oct, shorter hours Nov–mid-Mar; 🚶 Père Lachaise, Gambetta) **FREE** Opened in 1804, Père Lachaise is the world's most visited cemetery. Its 70,000 ornate tombs of the rich and famous form a verdant, 44-hectare sculpture garden. Highlights include those of 1960s rock star Jim Morrison (division 6) and Oscar Wilde (division 89). Pick up a cemetery map (or download digitally using a QR code) at the **conservation office** (Bureaux de la Conservation; Map p72; ☺8.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri; 🚶 Philippe Auguste, Père Lachaise) near the bd de Ménilmontant and rue du Repos entrances.

### ★ Atelier des Lumières

MUSEUM

(Map p108; ☎01 80 98 46 00; www.atelier-lumieres.com; 38-40 rue St-Maur, 11e; adult/child €15/10; ☺10am-6pm Mon-Thu, to 10pm Fri & Sat, to 7pm Sun; 🚶 Voltaire) A former foundry dating from 1835 that supplied iron for the French navy and railroads now houses Paris' first digital-art museum. The 1500-sq-metre La Halle mounts dazzling light projections that take over the bare walls. Long programs lasting around 30 minutes are based on historic artists' works; there's also a shorter contemporary program. Screenings are continuous. In the separate Le Studio space, you can discover emerging and established digital artists.

### Lafayette Anticipations

ARTS CENTRE

(Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette; Map p108; ☎01 57 40 64 17; www.lafayetteanticipations.com; 9 rue du Plâtre, 4e; ☺11am-7pm Mon, Wed, Sat & Sun, to 8pm Thu & Fri; 🚶 Rambuteau) **FREE** The corporate foundation of French retailer Galeries Lafayette opened this unique multidisciplinary space for producing, experimenting with and exhibiting new works of contemporary art, design and fashion. Transformed in 2018 by architect Rem Koolhaas, the 1891 building now has 2500 sq metres of exhibition space and a striking 18m-high glass tower. Three to four free



# Cimetière du Père Lachaise

## A HALF-DAY TOUR

There is a certain romance to getting lost in this jungle of graves spun from centuries of tales. But to search for one grave amid the million in this 44-hectare land of the dead requires guidance.

Approaching the main entrance on bd de Ménilmontant, pay your respects at the **1 Monument aux Morts Parisiens de la Première Guerre Mondiale**. Inside the cemetery, head up av Principle and turn right onto av du Puits to grab a map at the **2 Bureaux de la Conservation**.

Backtrack along av du Puits, turn right onto av Latérale du Sud, scale the stairs and bear right along chemin Denon to New Realist artist **3 Arman**, film director **4 Claude Chabrol** and **5 Chopin**.

Follow chemin Méhul downhill, cross av Casimir Périer and bear right onto chemin Serré. Take the second left (chemin Lebrun – unsigned), head uphill and near the top leave the footpath to weave through graves on your right to rock star **6 Jim Morrison**. Back on chemin Lauriston, continue uphill to roundabout **7 Rond-Point Casimir Périer**.

Admire the funerary art of contemporary photographer **8 André Chabot**, av de la Chapelle. Continue uphill for energising city views from the **9 chapel** steps, then zigzag to **10 Molière & La Fontaine**, on chemin Molière.

Cut between graves onto av Transversale No 1 – spot potatoes atop **11 Parmentier's** headstone. Continue straight onto av Greffülhe and left onto av Transversale No 2 to rub **12 Monsieur Noir's** shiny crotch.

Navigation to **13 Édith Piaf** and the **14 Mur des Fédérés** is straightforward. End with angel-topped **14 Oscar Wilde** near the Porte Gambetta entrance.

## TOP TIPS

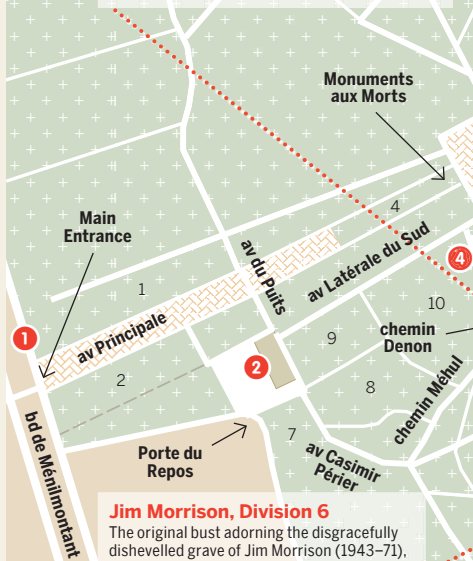
- Père Lachaise is a photographer's paradise any time of the day or year, but best are sunny autumn mornings after the rain.
- Cemetery lovers will appreciate themed guided tours (two hours) led by entertaining cemetery historian Thierry Le Roi ([www.necro-romantiques.com](http://www.necro-romantiques.com)).

BRUNO DE HOOGUES / GETTY IMAGES ©



### Chopin, Division 11

Add a devotional note to the handwritten letters and flowers brightening the marble tomb of Polish composer/pianist Frédéric Chopin (1810–49), who spent his short adult life in Paris. His heart is buried in Warsaw.



### Jim Morrison, Division 6

The original bust adorning the disgracefully dishevelled grave of Jim Morrison (1943–71), lead singer of The Doors, was stolen. Pay your respects to rock's greatest legend – no chewing gum or padlocks please.



HUANG ZHENG / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

**André Chabot, Division 20**

Contemporary photographer André Chabot (b 1941) shoots funerary art, hence the bijou 19th-century chapel he's equipped with monumental granite camera – and a QR code – in preparation for the day he departs.



BRUNO DE HOOGUES / GETTY IMAGES ©

**Molière & La Fontaine, Division 25**

Parisians refused to leave their local *quartier* for Père Lachaise so in 1817 the authorities moved in popular playwright Molière (1622–73) and poet Jean de la Fontaine (1621–95). The marketing strategy worked.



BRUNO DE HOOGUES / GETTY IMAGES ©

**Oscar Wilde, Division 89**

Irish writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) was forever scandalous: check the enormous packet of the sphinx on his tomb, sculpted by British-American sculptor Jacob Epstein 11 years after Wilde died.



ALZADA STUDIOS / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

**Monsieur Noir, Division 92**

Cemetery sex stud Mr Black, alias 21-year-old journalist Victor Noir (1848–70), was shot by Napoléon III's nephew in a botched duel. Urban myth means women rub his crotch to boost fertility.

**Édith Piaf, Division 97**

The archbishop of Paris might have refused Parisian diva Édith Piaf (1915–63) the Catholic rite of burial, but that didn't stop more than 100,000 mourners attending her interment at Père Lachaise.



IRINA KUDACHIROVA / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

**Mur des Fédérés, Division 76**

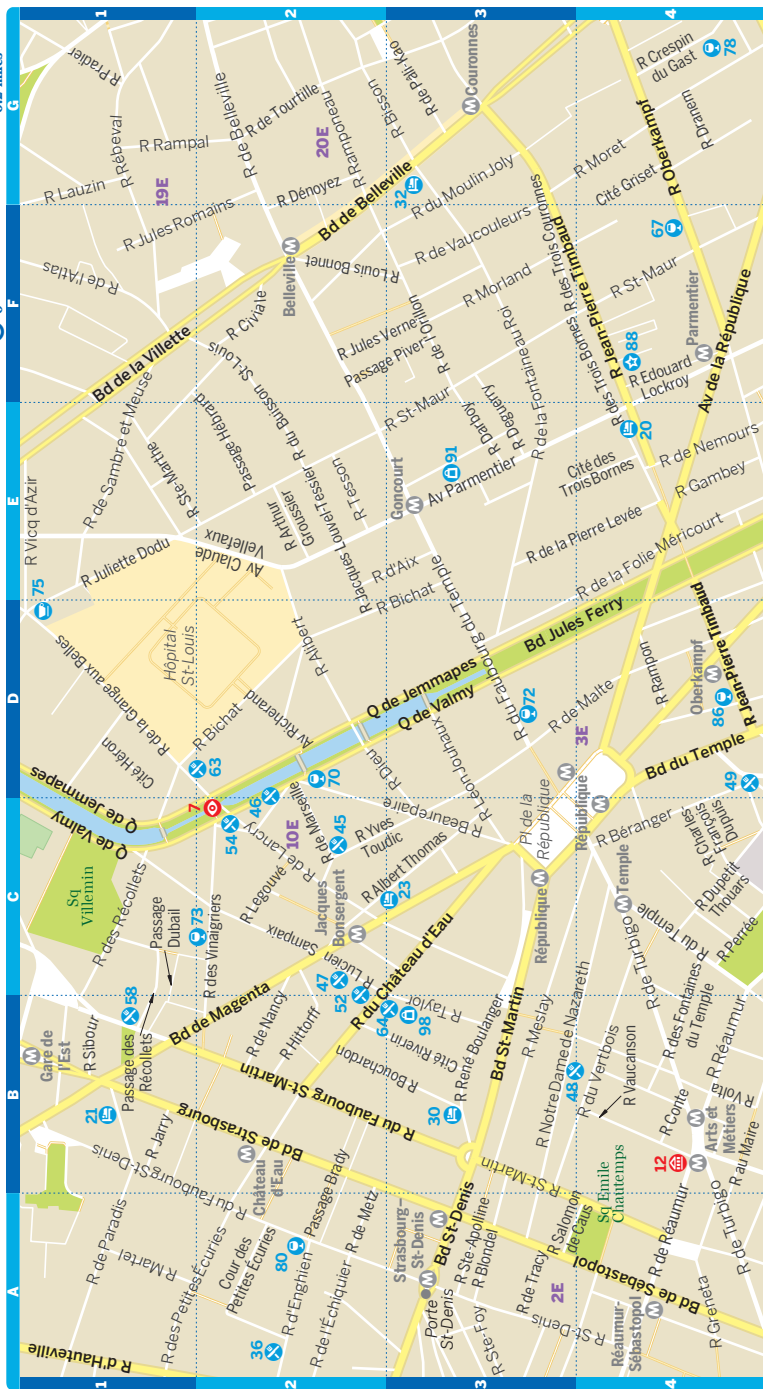
This plain brick wall was where 147 Commune insurgents were lined up and shot in 1871. Equally emotive is the sculpted walkway of commemorative war memorials surrounding the mass grave.

Porte de la Réunion





## Le Marais & Northern Bastille







## Le Marais & Northern Bastille

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Atelier des Lumières.....G5
- 2 Centre Pompidou.....A6
- 3 Mémorial de la Shoah.....B8
- 4 Musée National Picasso-Paris.....C6

### 📍 Sights

- 5 Atelier Brancusi.....A5
- 6 Brasserie BapBap.....G5
- 7 Canal St-Martin.....C2
- 8 Hôtel de Ville.....A7
- 9 Lafayette Anticipations.....A6
- 10 Maison de Victor Hugo.....D8
- 11 Musée Carnavalet.....C7
- 12 Musée des Arts et Métiers.....B4
- 13 Parc Rives de Seine.....B8
- 14 Place de la Bastille.....E8
- 15 Place des Vosges.....D7

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 16 Bike About Tours.....B7
- 17 La Beer Fabrique.....G5
- 18 La Cuisine Paris.....A8
- 19 Nomadshop.....D8
- Rollers & Coquillages.....(see 19)

### 📍 Sleeping

- 20 Cosmos Hôtel.....E4
- 21 Grand Amour Hôtel.....B1

- 22 Hôtel Caron de Beaumarchais.....B7
- 23 Hôtel du Nord – Le Pari Vélo.....C3
- 24 Hôtel du Petit Moulin.....C5
- 25 Hôtel Emile.....C7
- 26 Hôtel Fabric.....E5
- 27 Hôtel Georgette.....A5
- 28 Hôtel Jules & Jim.....B5
- 29 Hôtel l'Antoine.....F8
- 30 Hôtel Providence.....B3
- 31 Les Bains.....A5
- 32 Les Piaules.....G3
- 33 Maison Bréguet.....E7

### 🍴 Eating

- 34 Au Passage.....E5
- 35 Au Top.....C6
- 36 Bonhomie.....A2
- 37 Breizh Café.....C6
- 38 Chambelland.....E5
- 39 CheZaline.....G7
- 40 Clamato.....G8
- 41 Clown Bar.....D5
- 42 Crêperie Bretonne Fleurie de l'Epouse du Marin.....G8
- 43 Derrière.....A5
- 44 Double Dragon.....G5
- 45 Du Pain et des Idées.....C2
- 46 Fric-Frac.....D2
- 47 Holybelly.....C2

exhibitions take place annually, alongside ticketed performances and workshops.

## 📍 Bastille & Eastern Paris

Historic place de la Bastille – at the intersection of the 4e, 11e and 12e *arrondissements* – is the obvious place to start exploring. Take a waterside stroll south along the city's only pleasure port, Port de l'Arsenal. Southeast of here is the busy Gare de Lyon station area, with the unusual Promenade Plantée, which can be followed on foot for 4.5km to Bois de Vincennes on the far eastern fringe of this neighbourhood. Several key sights are clustered in and around the green urban woodland.

### Place de la Bastille

SQUARE

(Map p108; 12e; 🚇 Bastille) A 14th-century fortress built to protect the city gates, the Bastille became a prison under Cardinal Richelieu, which was mobbed on 14 July 1789, igniting the French Revolution. At the centre of the square is the 52m-high **Colonne de Juillet**, a green-bronze column topped by a gilded, winged Liberty. Revolutionaries from the uprising of 1830 are

buried beneath. Major redevelopments now link the square to the Bassin de l'Arsenal.

The location of the old fortress prison of the Bastille is marked on the ground, and the foundations are also marked below ground in the Bastille metro station, on the platform of line 5.

### Promenade Plantée

PARK

(Coulée Verte René-Dumont; Map p112; cnr rue de Lyon & av Daumesnil, 12e; ☀️ 8am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun Mar-Oct, 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun Nov-Feb; 🚇 Bastille, Gare de Lyon, Daumesnil) The disused 19th-century Vincennes railway viaduct was reborn in 1993 as the world's first elevated park, planted with a fragrant profusion of cherry trees, maples, rose trellises, bamboo corridors and lavender. Three storeys above ground, it provides a unique aerial vantage point on the city. Along the first, northwestern section, above av Daumesnil, art-gallery workshops beneath the arches form the **Viaduc des Arts** (Map p112; www.leviaducdesarts.com; 1-129 av Daumesnil, 12e; ☀️ hours vary; 🚇 Bastille, Gare de Lyon).

Staircases provide access (lifts here invariably don't work).



48	Istr.....	B3
49	Jacques Genin.....	D4
	La Cantine de Merci.....	(see 96)
50	La Cave de l'Insolite.....	E5
51	L'As du Fallafel.....	B7
52	Le Petit Château d'Eau.....	C2
53	Le Servan.....	G6
54	Le Verre Volé.....	C2
55	Maison.....	G5
56	Maison Plisson.....	D6
57	Marché des Enfants Rouges.....	C5
58	Marrow.....	B1
59	Mokoloco.....	G8
60	NoGlu.....	G8
61	Robert et Louise.....	B6
62	Septime.....	G8
63	Ten Belles.....	D2
64	Yumi.....	B3

### Drinking & Nightlife

65	Beans on Fire.....	F5
66	Boot Café.....	D6
67	Café Charbon.....	F4
68	Café des Anges.....	F7
69	Candelaria.....	C5
70	Chez Prune.....	D2
71	Cinéma Café Merci.....	D6
72	Gibus Club.....	D3
73	Gravity Bar.....	C2

74	La Caféothèque.....	B8
75	La Fontaine de Belleville.....	D1
76	La Manufacture de Café.....	E7
77	Le Mary Céleste.....	D5
78	Le Perchoir.....	G4
79	Le Perchoir Marais.....	A7
80	Le Syndicat.....	A2
81	L'Ébouillanté.....	B8
82	Les Cuves de Fauve.....	G8
83	Little Red Door.....	C5
84	Open Café.....	A6
85	Septime La Cave.....	G8
86	Wild & The Moon.....	D4

### Entertainment





87	Badaboum.....	F8
88	L'Alimentation Générale.....	F4




### Shopping

89	Candora.....	B8
90	Empreintes.....	C5
91	Fromagerie Goncourt.....	E3
92	Kerzon.....	D6
93	La Manufacture de Chocolat.....	E8
94	Marché Bastille.....	E8
95	Mariage Frères.....	B7
96	Merci.....	D6
97	Moulin Roty.....	D5
98	O/HP/E.....	B3

## Bois de Vincennes

PARK

(Map p72; av Daumesnil, 12e;  Porte de Charenton, Porte Dorée) In the southeastern corner of Paris, Bois de Vincennes encompasses some 995 hectares. Originally royal hunting grounds, the woodland was annexed by the army following the Revolution and then donated to the city in 1860 by Napoléon III. A fabulous place to escape the Parisian concrete, Bois de Vincennes also contains a handful of notable sights, including a bona fide royal château, **Château de Vincennes** ( 01 48 08 31 20; [www.chateau-de-vincennes.fr](http://www.chateau-de-vincennes.fr); 1 av de Paris, Vincennes; adult/child €9.50/free;  10am-6pm mid-May-mid-Sep, to 5pm mid-Sep-mid-May;  Château de Vincennes), with massive fortifications and a moat.

Paris' largest, state-of-the-art zoo, the **Parc Zoologique de Paris** (Zoo de Vincennes; Map p72;  08 11 22 41 22; [www.parc-zoologiqueparis.fr](http://www.parc-zoologiqueparis.fr); cnr av Daumesnil & rte de Ceinture du Lac Daumesnil, 12e; adult/child €20/17;  9.30am-8.30pm May-Aug, shorter hours Sep-Apr;  Porte Dorée), is also here, as is the magnificent **Parc Floral de Paris** ( 01 49 57 25 50; [www.parcfloraldeparis.com](http://www.parcfloraldeparis.com); Esplanade du Château de Vincennes/rte de la Pyramide; adult/child May-Oct €2.50/1.50, Nov-Apr free;  9.30am-8pm Apr-

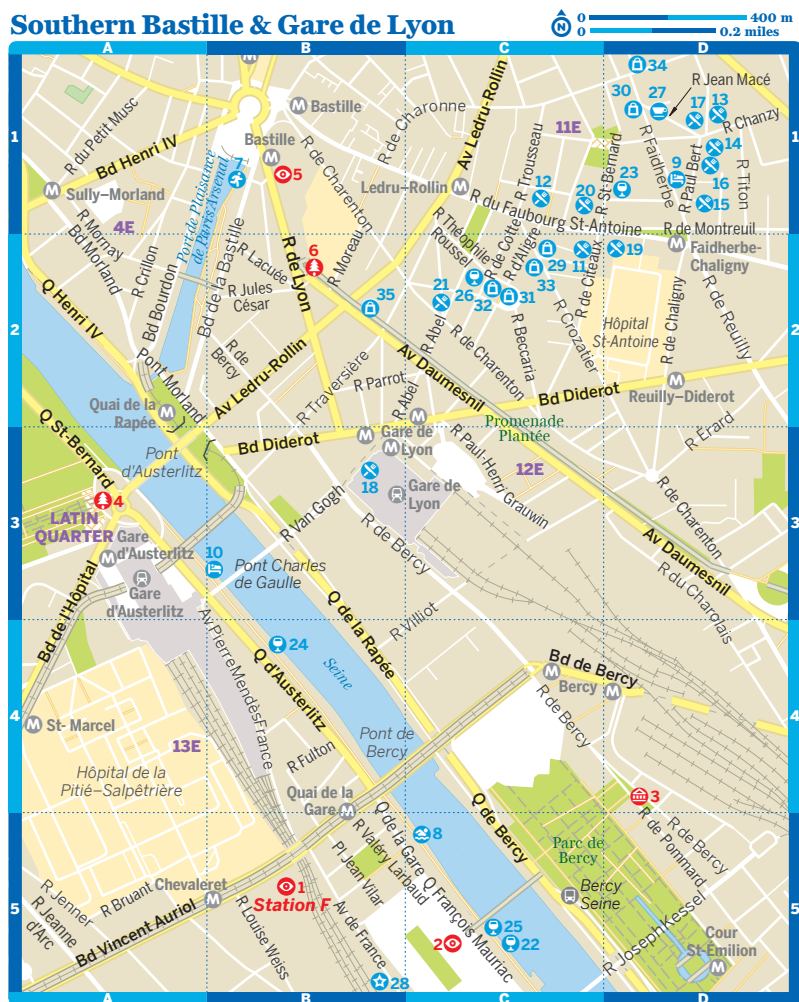
Sep, to 6.30pm Oct, to 5pm Nov-Feb, to 6.30pm Mar;   Château de Vincennes), a botanical park with exciting playgrounds for older children. The wood also has a lovely lake, with boats to rent and ample green lawns to picnic on.

## The Islands

Île de la Cité was the site of the first settlement in Paris (c 3rd century BCE) and later the centre of Roman Lutetia. The island remained the hub of royal and ecclesiastical power, even after the city spread to both banks of the Seine in the Middle Ages. Smaller Île St-Louis was actually two uninhabited islets called Île Notre Dame (Our Lady Isle) and Île aux Vaches (Cows Island) in the early 17th century – until a building contractor and two financiers worked out a deal with Louis XIII to create one island and build two stone bridges to the mainland.

The eventual rebuild of the city's fire-ravaged cathedral is not the only momentous change that the Parisian islands, unchanged for centuries, are experiencing. The recent departure of the law courts and police HQ from Île de la Cité to the suburb of Batignolles, coupled with the agreed future

## Southern Bastille &amp; Gare de Lyon



redevelopment of part of historic hospital Hôtel Dieu into commercial offices, shops and restaurants, heralds a new era for the island.

### ★ Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris

**CATHEDRAL**  
 (Map p116; [www.notredamedeparis.fr](http://www.notredamedeparis.fr); 6 Parvis Notre Dame – place Jean-Paul II, 4e; ☹ closed indefinitely; **M** Cité) Built on a site occupied by earlier churches and, a millennium prior, a Gallo-Roman temple, Notre Dame was begun in 1163 and largely completed by the early 14th century. While its interior is closed following the devastating fire of

April 2019, this French Gothic masterpiece remains the city's geographic and spiritual heart. Its grand exterior, with its two enduring towers and flying buttresses, is a definitive Parisian landmark and symbol of hope during its restoration to its former glory.

Rebuilding works will include the recreation of its 19th-century spire.

### Crypte Archéologique

**MUSEUM**  
 (Archaeological Crypt; Map p116; ☎ 01 55 42 50 10; [www.crypte.paris.fr](http://www.crypte.paris.fr); 7 Parvis Notre Dame – place Jean-Paul II, 4e; adult/child incl exhibition €9/free; ☺ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun; **M** Cité) Beneath the large square in front of Notre Dame

## Southern Bastille & Gare de Lyon

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Station F ..... B5

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Bibliothèque Nationale de France ..... C5  
 3 Cinémaèque Française ..... D4  
 4 Jardin des Plantes ..... A3  
 5 Opéra Bastille ..... B1  
 6 Promenade Plantée ..... B2

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 7 Canauxrama ..... B1  
 8 Piscine Joséphine Baker ..... C5

### 📍 Sleeping

- 9 Hôtel Paris Bastille Boutet ..... D1  
 10 Off Paris Seine ..... B3

### 📍 Eating

- 11 Citeaux Sphere ..... C2  
 12 Farine & O ..... C1  
 13 La Chocolaterie Cyril Lignac ..... D1  
 14 La Pâtisserie ..... D1  
 15 Le 6 Paul Bert ..... D1  
 16 Le Bistrot Paul Bert ..... D1  
 17 Le Chardenoux ..... D1  
 18 Le Train Bleu ..... B3

L'Écailler du Bistrot ..... (see 16)

- 19 Madito ..... D2  
 20 Mokonuts ..... C1  
 21 Table ..... C2

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 22 Bateau El Alamein ..... C5  
 23 Bluebird ..... D1  
 24 Café Oz Rooftop ..... B4  
 La Cave Paul Bert ..... (see 16)  
 25 La Dame de Canton ..... C5  
 26 Le Baron Rouge ..... C2  
 27 Le Pure Café ..... D1

### 📍 Entertainment

- 28 EP7 ..... B5  
 La Cinémaèque Française ..... (see 3)  
 Opéra Bastille ..... (see 5)

### 📍 Shopping

- 29 Hands & Arms ..... C2  
 30 Le Silence de la Rue ..... D1  
 31 Marché aux Puces d'Aligre ..... C2  
 32 Marché Beauvau ..... C2  
 33 Marché d'Aligre ..... C2  
 34 Music Fear Satan ..... D1  
 35 Viaduc des Arts ..... B2

lies an archaeological crypt. The 117m-long and 28m-wide area displays the remains of structures built on this site during the Gallo-Roman period, a 4th-century enclosure wall, the foundations of the medieval foundlings hospice and original sewers sunk by Haussmann. In 2020, the crypt reopened following Notre Dame's catastrophic 2019 fire with an exhibition on the cathedral's 19th-century revival following the publication of Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

### ★ Sainte-Chapelle

CHAPEL

(Map p116; ☎01 53 40 60 80, concerts 01 42 77 65 65; www.sainte-chapelle.fr; 8 bd du Palais, 1er; adult/child €11.50/free, combined ticket with Conciergerie €17/free; ☀11am-7pm; 🚶Cité) Visit Sainte-Chapelle on a sunny day when Paris' oldest, finest stained glass (1242-48) is at its dazzling best. Enshrined within the city's original, 13th-century Palais de Justice (Law Courts), this gem-like Holy Chapel is Paris' most exquisite Gothic monument, completed in 1248. It was conceived by Louis IX to house his personal collection of holy relics, including the famous Holy Crown.

### Conciergerie

MONUMENT

(Map p116; ☎01 53 40 60 80; www.paris-conciergerie.fr; 2 bd du Palais, 1er; adult/child €9.50/

free, combined ticket with Sainte-Chapelle €17/free; ☀10.30am-6.30pm; 🚶Cité) A royal palace in the 14th century, the Conciergerie later became a prison. During the Reign of Terror (1793-94) alleged enemies of the Revolution were incarcerated here before being brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal next door in the 13th-century **Palais de Justice**. Top-billing exhibitions take place in the beautiful, Rayonnant Gothic **Salle des Gens d'Armes**, Europe's largest surviving medieval hall.

### Pont Neuf

BRIDGE

(Map p116; 🚶Pont Neuf) Paris' oldest bridge, misguidingly named 'New Bridge', has linked the western end of Île de la Cité with both riverbanks since 1607, when the king, Henri IV, inaugurated it by crossing the bridge on a white stallion. View the bridge's arches (seven on the northern stretch and five on the southern span), decorated with 381 *mascarons* (grotesque figures) depicting barbers, dentists, pickpockets, loiterers etc, from a spot along the river or afloat.


### Square du Vert-Galant

PARK

(Map p116; place du Pont Neuf, 1er; 🚶Pont Neuf) Chestnut, yew, black walnut and weeping willow trees grace this picturesque park at the westernmost tip of the Île de

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

## CANAL ST-MARTIN

The tranquil, 4.5km-long **Canal St-Martin** (Map p108; 10e;  République, Jaurès, Jacques Bonsergent) was inaugurated in 1825 to provide a shipping link between the Seine and Paris' northeastern suburbs. Emerging from below ground near place de la République, its towpaths take you past locks, bridges and local neighbourhoods. Come for a romantic stroll, cycle, picnic or sundowner. From the iron footbridge by the intersection of rue de la Grange aux Belles and quai de Jemmapes, watch the vintage road bridge swing open to let canal boats pass.

**Canauxrama** (Map p72;  01 42 39 15 00; www.canauxrama.com; 13 quai de la Loire, 19e; adult/child €18/9;  hours vary;  Jaurès) Canal cruises depart from the Bassin de la Villette near Parc de la Villette and from the **Port de l' Arsenal** (Map p112; opposite 50 bd de la Bastille, Port de l' Arsenal, 12e; adult/child €18/9;  hours vary;  Bastille); summertime evening weekend cruises are particularly enchanting.

**Paris Canal Croisières** (Map p72;  01 42 40 29 00; www.pariscanal.com; Parc de la Villette, 19e; adult/child €22/14;  mid-Mar–mid-Dec;  Porte de Pantin) Cruises depart from Parc de la Villette and from **quai Anatole France** (Map p128; quai Anatole France, 7e; adult/child €22/14;  Mar–mid-Dec;  Solférino, RER Musée d'Orsay) near the Musée d'Orsay.




la Cité, along with migratory birds including mute swans, pochard and tufted ducks, black-headed gulls and wagtails. Sitting at the islands' original level, 7m below their current height, the waterside park is reached by stairs leading down from the Pont Neuf. It's romantic at any time of day, but especially so in the evening as the sun sets over the river.

## Latin Quarter

The Latin Quarter's Roman and medieval roots can be seen throughout the neighbourhood. Natural history buffs won't want to miss the museums making up the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in the beautifully green Jardin des Plantes. Watch for the 2022 reopening after extensive renovation of the neighbourhood's premier museum and France's finest medieval-history museum, the Musée National du Moyen Âge.

## Panthéon

MAUSOLEUM




(Map p118;  01 44 32 18 00; www.paris-pantheon.fr; place du Panthéon, 5e; adult/child €11.50/free;  10am–6.30pm Apr–Sep, to 6pm Oct–Mar;  Maubert-Mutualité or RER Luxembourg) The Panthéon's stately neoclassical dome is an icon of the Parisian skyline. Its vast interior is an architectural masterpiece: originally an abbey church dedicated to Ste Geneviève and now a mausoleum, it has served since 1791 as the resting place of some of France's greatest thinkers, including Voltaire, Rous-

seau, Braille and Hugo. A copy of Foucault's pendulum, first hung from the dome in 1851 to demonstrate the rotation of the earth, takes pride of place.

The first woman to be interred in the Panthéon based on achievement was two-time Nobel Prize-winner Marie Curie (1867–1934), reburied here, along with her husband, Pierre, in 1995. Also interred here are Resistance fighters Pierre Brossolette and Jean Zay, as well as the symbolic interments of Resistance fighters Germaine Tillion and Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz, with soil from their graves. In July 2018, Auschwitz survivor, feminist icon and human rights activist Simone Veil became the fifth woman to be interred in the Panthéon.

## Église St-Étienne du Mont

CHURCH

(Map p118;  01 43 54 11 79; www.saintetienne.dumont.fr; 1 place Ste-Geneviève, 5e;  2.30–7.30pm Mon, 8.30am–7.30pm Tue–Fri, 8.30am–1pm & 2–8pm Sat & Sun;  Cardinal Lemoine) **FREE** The Church of Mount St Stephen, built between 1492 and 1655, contains Paris' only surviving roof screen (1521–45), separating the chancel from the nave; the others were removed during the late Renaissance because they prevented the faithful in the nave from seeing the priest celebrate Mass.

In the nave's southeastern corner, the tomb of Ste Geneviève lies in a chapel.

The patron saint of Paris, Ste Geneviève was born at Nanterre in 422 CE and turned away Attila the Hun from Paris in 451 CE.

A highly decorated reliquary near her tomb contains all that is left of her earthly remains – a finger bone.

Fans of the Woody Allen film *Midnight in Paris* will recognise the stone steps on the northwestern corner as the place where Owen Wilson's character is collected by vintage car and transported back to the 1920s.

### Jardin des Plantes

PARK

(Map p112; ☎ 01 40 79 56 01; www.jardindesplantes.paris.fr; place Valhubert & 36 rue Geoffroy-St-Hilaire, 5e; ☀ 8am-7.30pm Apr-Sep, shorter hours winter; 🚶 Gare d'Austerlitz, Censier Daubenton, Jussieu) Founded in 1626 as a medicinal herb garden for Louis XIII, Paris' 24-hectare botanic gardens – visually defined by the double alley of plane trees that runs the length of the park – are an idyllic spot to stroll around, break for a picnic (watch out for the automatic sprinklers!) and escape the city concrete for a spell. Three museums from the **Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle** (Map p118; www.mnhn.fr) and a small zoo, **La Ménagerie** (Le Zoo du Jardin des Plantes; Map p118; 57 rue Cuvier, 5e; adult/child €13/10; ☀ 9am-

6pm Mon-Sat, to 6.30pm Sun Mar-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Feb), add to its appeal.

### Mosquée de Paris

MOSQUE

(Map p118; ☎ 01 45 35 78 17; www.mosqueede.paris.net; 2bis place du Puits de l'Ermite, 5e; adult/child €3/2; ☀ 9am-6pm Sat-Thur; 🚶 Place Monge) Paris' central mosque, with a striking 33m-high minaret, was completed in 1926 in an ornate art deco Moorish style. You can visit the interior to admire the intricate tile work and calligraphy. A separate entrance leads to the wonderful North African-style hammam (Turkish steambath), restaurant and tearoom, and a small souk (actually more of a gift shop). Visitors must be modestly dressed.

### ★ Institut du Monde Arabe

MUSEUM

(Arab World Institute; Map p118; ☎ 01 40 51 38 52; www.imarabe.org; 1 place Mohammed V, 5e; adult/child €8/free; ☀ 1-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Jussieu) The Arab World Institute was jointly founded by France and 18 Middle Eastern and North African nations in 1980, with the aim of promoting cross-cultural dialogue. It hosts temporary exhibitions and

## MUSEUMS FOR CHILDREN

Children's science museum **Palais de la Découverte** (www.palais-decouverte.fr) will take up temporary residence in the Parc André Citroën until after the Paris Olympics in 2024.

**Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie** (Map p72; ☎ 01 85 53 99 74; www.cite-sciences.fr; 30 av Corentin Cariou, 19e, Parc de la Villette; per attraction adult/child €12/9; ☀ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, to 7pm Sun, La Géode 10.30am-8.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚶; 🚶 Porte de la Villette) Paris' top museum for kids has a host of hands-on exhibits for children aged two and up, the special-effects cinema La Géode, a planetarium and a retired submarine. Various combination tickets can be booked online. Advance reservations are essential for weekend and school-holiday visits, and for the fabulous year-round Cité des Enfants educative play sessions (1½ hours, ages two to seven years or five to 12 years). Packing a picnic is also a good idea.

**Musée en Herbe** (Map p92; ☎ 01 40 67 97 66; www.museeenherbe.com; 23 rue de l'Arbre Sec, 1er; €7; ☀ 10am-7pm; 🚶; 🚶 Louvre Rivoli, Pont Neuf) One of the city's great backstreet secrets, this children's museum is a surprise gem for art lovers of every age. Its permanent exhibition changes throughout the year and focuses on the work of one artist or theme through a series of interactive displays.

**Galerie des Enfants** (Map p118; ☎ 01 40 79 56 01; www.mnhn.fr; 36 rue Geoffroy-St-Hilaire, 5e; adult/child €12/9, combination ticket with Grande Galerie de l'Évolution €12/9; ☀ 10am-6pm Wed, Sat & Sun, plus school holidays; 🚶 Censier Daubenton) This hands-on science museum tailored to children from ages six to 12 is located in the **Grande Galerie de l'Évolution** (Map p118; ☎ 01 40 79 54 79; www.grandegaleriedelevolution.fr; adult/child €10/7, incl Galeries des Enfants €12/9; ☀ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 🚶), part of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, within the Jardin des Plantes. All exhibitions are in French and English.





## The Islands

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris ..... D3  
2 Sainte-Chapelle ..... C2

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Conciergerie ..... C1  
4 Crypte Archéologique ..... C3  
5 Pont Neuf ..... A1  
6 Square du Vert-Galant ..... A1

### 🚣 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 7 Vedettes du Pont Neuf ..... A1

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 8 Hôtel de Lutèce ..... E3  
9 Hôtel des 2 Îles ..... F3  
10 Hôtel du Jeu de Paume ..... F3

### 🍴 Eating

- 11 Berthillon ..... F4  
12 Café Saint Régis ..... E3  
13 Le Caveau du Palais ..... B1

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 14 Le Bar du Caveau ..... B1

### 🛍 Shopping

- 15 Marché aux Fleurs Reine  
Elizabeth II ..... C2

a fascinating museum of Arabic culture and history (4th to 7th floors). The stunning building, designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, was inspired by latticed-wood windows (*mashrabiya*) traditional to Arabic architecture: thousands of modern-day photoelectrically sensitive apertures cover its sparkling glass façade.

## 📍 St-Germain & Les Invalides

Chart-topping sights in this stately neighbourhood include the impressionist-art-filled Musée d'Orsay, massive military complex Hôtel des Invalides (home to Napoléon's tomb) and romantic, sculpture-strewn Musée Rodin. Look out for smaller, lesser-known gems too, such as the Musée National Eugène Delacroix, and some exquisite churches. Allow ample time for ambling in the city's most beautiful park, timeless Jardin du Luxembourg.

### Musée d'Orsay

MUSEUM

See p122.

### Jardin du Luxembourg

PARK

See p124.

## ★ Église St-Germain des Prés

CHURCH

(Map p128; ☎01 55 42 81 18; www.eglise-saint-germaindespres.fr; 3 place St-Germain des Prés, 6e; ☀9am-8pm; 🕒St-Germain des Prés) Paris' oldest standing church, the Romanesque St Germanus of the Fields, was built in the 11th century on the site of a 6th-century abbey and was the main place of worship in Paris until the arrival of Notre Dame. It's since been altered many times. The oldest part, **Chapelle de St-Symphorien**, is to the right as you enter; St Germanus (496–576), the first bishop of Paris, is believed to be buried there.

## ★ Musée Rodin

MUSEUM

(Map p128; ☎01 44 18 61 10; www.musee-rodin.fr; 79 rue de Varenne, 7e; adult/child €13/free, garden only €5/free; ☀10am-6.30pm Tue-Sun; 🕒Varenne, Invalides) Sculptor, painter, sketcher, engraver and collector Auguste Rodin donated his entire collection to the French state in 1908 on the proviso that it dedicate his former workshop and showroom, the beautiful 1730 Hôtel Biron, to displaying his works. They're now installed not only in the mansion itself, but also in its rose-filled garden – one of the most peaceful places in central Paris and a wonderful spot to contemplate his famous work *The Thinker*.

Prepurchase tickets online to avoid queuing.

## ★ Hôtel des Invalides

MONUMENT, MUSEUM

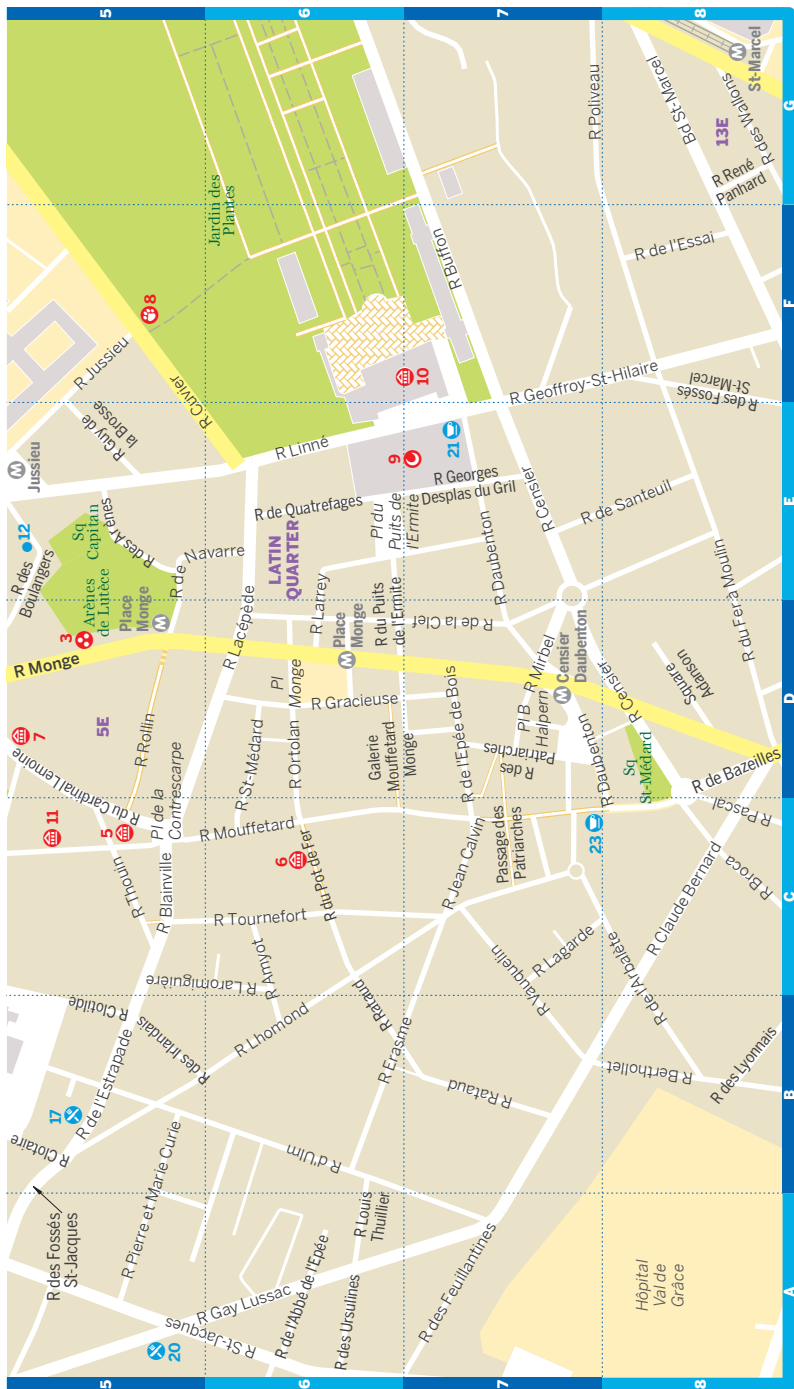
(Map p78; ☎01 44 42 38 77; www.musee-armee.fr; 129 rue de Grenelle, 7e; adult/child €14/free; ☀10am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar; 🕒Varenne,

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

## ÎLE AUX CYGNES

Paris' little-known third island, the artificially created **Île aux Cygnes** (Isle of Swans; Map p78; btwn Pont de Grenelle & Pont de Bir Hakeim, 15e; 🕒Javel-André Citroën, Bir Hakeim), was formed in 1827 to protect the river port and measures just 850 by 11 metres. On the western side of the Pont de Grenelle is a soaring one-quarter scale **Statue of Liberty replica** (Map p72), inaugurated in 1889. Walk east along the Allée des Cygnes – the tree-lined walkway that runs the length of the island – for knockout Eiffel Tower views.





## Latin Quarter

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Institut du Monde Arabe ..... F3  
2 Panthéon ..... B4

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Arènes de Lutèce ..... D5  
4 Église St-Étienne du Mont ..... C4  
5 Ernest Hemingway's Apartment ..... C5  
Galerie des Enfants ..... (see 10)  
6 George Orwell's Boarding House ..... C6  
Grande Galerie de  
l'Évolution ..... (see 10)  
7 James Joyce's Flat ..... D5  
8 La Ménagerie ..... F5  
9 Mosquée de Paris ..... E7  
10 Muséum National d'Histoire  
Naturelle ..... F7  
11 Paul Verlaine's Garret ..... C5

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 12 Wine Tasting in Paris ..... E5

### 📍 Sleeping

- 13 Familia Hôtel ..... D4  
14 Hôtel Atmosphères ..... C3

- 15 Hôtel Diana ..... B2  
16 Hôtel La Lanterne ..... C3

### 📍 Eating

- 17 Café de la Nouvelle Mairie ..... B5  
18 Croq' Fac ..... A4  
19 Le Coupe-Chou ..... B3  
20 Les Papilles ..... A5

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 21 La Mosquée ..... E7  
22 Le Piano Vache ..... C4  
23 Le Verre à Pied ..... C7  
24 Pub St-Hilaire ..... B3  
Shakespeare & Company  
Cafe ..... (see 28)

### 📍 Entertainment

- 25 Caveau de la Huchette ..... B1

### 📍 Shopping

- 26 Le Bonbon au Palais ..... D4  
27 Mayette la Boutique de la  
Magie ..... C3  
28 Shakespeare & Company ..... C1

La Tour Maubourg) Flanked by the 500m-long Esplanade des Invalides lawns, Hôtel des Invalides was built in the 1670s by Louis XIV to house 4000 *invalides* (disabled war veterans). On 14 July 1789, a mob broke into the building and seized 32,000 rifles before heading on to the prison at Bastille and the start of the French Revolution.

Admission includes entry to all Hôtel des Invalides sights (temporary exhibitions cost extra). Hours for individual sites can vary – check the website for updates.

In the **Cour d'Honneur**, the nation's largest collection on the history of the French military is displayed at the **Musée de l'Armée** (Army Museum; [www.musee-armee.fr](http://www.musee-armee.fr); incl in Hôtel des Invalides entry; ☉ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar). South is **Église St-Louis des Invalides**, once used by soldiers, and **Église du Dôme** (incl in Hôtel des Invalides entry; ☉ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon, to 9pm Tue Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar), with a dazzling golden dome (1677-1735). Scale models of towns and châteaux across France fill the **Musée des Plans-Reliefs**.

Atmospheric classical concerts (ranging from €10 to €35; <http://saisonmusicale.musee-armee.fr>) take place regularly here year-round.

## Monnaie de Paris

MUSEUM

(Map p128; ☎ 01 40 46 56 66; [www.monnaie-de-paris.fr](http://www.monnaie-de-paris.fr); 11 quai de Conti, 6e; adult/child €12/free; ☉ 11am-7pm Tue & Thu-Sun, to 9pm Wed; 🚇 Pont Neuf) The 18th-century royal mint, Monnaie de Paris, houses the **Musée du 11 Conti**, an interactive museum exploring the history of French coinage from antiquity onwards, plus edgy contemporary-art exhibitions. The impeccably restored, neoclassical building, with one of the longest façades on the Seine, stretching 116m, squirrels away five sumptuous courtyards, the Hôtel de Conti designed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart in 1690, engraving workshops, the original foundry (now the museum boutique), Guy Savoy's flagship restaurant (p154) and fashionable cafe **Frappe par Bloom** (☎ 07 89 83 79 58; <http://frappe.bloom-restaurant.fr>; 2 rue Guénégaud, 6e; ☉ 11am-7pm Tue-Sun; 🚇 Pont Neuf).

## Église St-Sulpice

CHURCH

(Map p128; ☎ 01 42 34 59 98; [www.pss75.fr/saint-sulpice-paris](http://www.pss75.fr/saint-sulpice-paris); place St-Sulpice, 6e; ☉ 7am-7.30pm; 🚇 St-Sulpice) **FREE** In 1646 work started on the twin-towered Church of St Sulpicius, lined inside with 21 side chapels, and it took six architects 150 years to finish. It's famed for its striking Italianate façade with two rows of superimposed columns, its Counter



Reformation-influenced neoclassical decor, its frescoes by Eugène Delacroix – and its setting for a murderous scene in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. You can hear the monumental, 1781-built organ during 10.30am Mass on Sunday or the occasional Sunday-afternoon concert.

**Musée National Eugène Delacroix** MUSEUM  
(Map p128; ☎01 44 41 86 50; www.musee-delacroix.fr; 6 rue de Furstenberg, 6e; adult/child €7/free; ☀9.30am-5.30pm Wed-Mon; 🚶Mabillon) In a courtyard off a tree-shaded square, this museum is housed in the romantic artist's home and studio at the time of his death in 1863. It contains a collection of his oil paintings, watercolours, pastels and drawings, including *L'Education de la Vierge* (1842) and his paintings of Morocco.

## 📍 Montparnasse & Southern Paris

This vast swath of southern Paris is a perfect place to explore if you're looking for a local experience away from the tourist crowds. There are some big-hitting sights here, too, from the creepy skull-and-bone-packed underground tunnels of Les Catacombes to France's national library, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the world's largest campus for start-ups, Station F.

★ **Les Catacombes** CEMETERY  
(Map p72; ☎01 43 22 47 63; www.catacombes.paris.fr; 1 av du Colonel Henri Rol-Tanguy, 14e; adult/child €14/free, online booking incl audioguide from €24/5; ☀9.45am-8.30pm Tue-Sun, last admission 7.30pm; 🚶Denfert-Rochereau) Paris' most macabre sight are these skull- and bone-lined underground tunnels. In 1785 it was decided to rectify the hygiene problems of Paris' overflowing cemeteries by exhuming the bones and storing them in disused quarry tunnels, and the Catacombes were created in 1810. After descending 20m (via 131 narrow, dizzying spiral steps), you follow dark, subterranean passages to the ossuary (about 1.5km in all). Exit up 112 steps via a 'transition space' with gift shop onto 21bis av René Coty, 14e.

**Musée de la Libération de Paris – Musée du Général Leclerc – Musée Jean Moulin** MUSEUM  
(Map p72; ☎01 40 64 39 44; www.museeliberation-leclerc-moulin.paris.fr; 4 av du Colonel Henri Rol-Tanguy, 14e; ☀10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶Denfert-

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### RUE CLER

For a picnic in the vicinity of the Eiffel Tower or one of the 7e's picturesque parks, pick up fresh bread, sandwich fillings, pastries and wine along the typically Parisian commercial street rue Cler, 7e, which buzzes with local shoppers, especially on weekends.

Interspersed between the *boulangeries* (bakeries), *fromageries* (cheese shops), grocers, butchers, delis and other food shops (many with pavement stalls), lively cafe terraces overflow with locals.

Rochereau) **FREE** This history museum is devoted to the WWII German occupation of Paris, with its focus on the Resistance and its leader, Jean Moulin (1899–1943), Free French general Philippe François Marie Leclerc de Hauteclocque, and the Liberation of Paris in August 1944. Chronologically arranged displays include clothing, equipment, personal items and photographs. Opened on 25 August 2019 – the 75th anniversary of the city's liberation – it's housed in the Ledoux pavilions, built in 1787 by architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, opposite Les Catacombes.

★ **Cimetière du Montparnasse** CEMETERY  
(Map p128; www.paris.fr; 3 bd Edgar Quinet, 14e; ☀8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5.30pm Sat, 9am-5.30pm Sun; 🚶Edgar Quinet) **FREE** This 19-hectare cemetery opened in 1824 and is Paris' second largest after Père Lachaise (p105). Famous residents include writer Guy de Maupassant, playwright Samuel Beckett, sculptor Constantin Brancusi, photographer Man Ray, industrialist André Citroën, Captain Alfred Dreyfus of the infamous Dreyfus Affair, legendary singer Serge Gainsbourg and philosopher-writers Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.

★ **Station F** RESEARCH CENTRE  
(Map p112; www.stationf.co; 5 Parvis Alan Turing, 13e; ☀English-language tours by reservation 11.30am Tue & Thu; 🚶Chevaleret, Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand) **FREE** The world's largest start-up campus was unveiled by French President Emmanuel Macron in mid-2017. At any one time, some 3000 resident entrepreneurs from all over the world beaver away on groundbreaking new ideas and *continued on p126*



TOP EXPERIENCE

## VIEW MASTERPIECES AT MUSÉE D'ORSAY

Resplendently set in a former railway station overlooking the Seine, the Musée d'Orsay is a one-stop shop for some of the world's most celebrated paintings by impressionist, postimpressionist and art nouveau artists. The museum's cavernous interiors, vintage monumental clocks and contemporary styled galleries are as dazzling as the art itself.

### Paintings

Most visitors make a beeline for the world's largest collection of impressionist and postimpressionist art, the highlights of which include Manet's *On the Beach* and *Woman with Fans*; Monet's gardens at Giverny and *Rue Montorgueil, Paris, Celebration of June 30, 1878*; Cézanne's card players, *Apples and Oranges* and *Blue Vase*; Renoir's *Ball at the Moulin de la Galette* and *Young Girls at the Piano*; Degas' ballerinas; Toulouse-Lautrec's cabaret dancers; Pissarro's *The Seine and the Louvre*; Sisley's *View of the Canal St-Martin*; and Van Gogh's self-portraits, *Bedroom in Arles* and *Starry Night over the Rhône*.

### Decorative & Graphic Arts

Household items such as hat and coat stands, candlesticks, desks, chairs, bookcases, vases, pot-plant holders, free-standing screens, wall mirrors, water pitchers, plates, goblets and bowls became works of art in the hands of their creators, who incorporated exquisite design elements from the era.

### DON'T MISS

- The building
- Painting collections
- Decorative-arts collections
- Sculptures
- Graphic-arts collections

### PRACTICALITIES

- Map p128
- ☎ 01 40 49 48 14
- [www.musee-orsay.fr](http://www.musee-orsay.fr)
- 1 rue de la Légion d'Honneur, 7e
- adult/child €16/free
- 🕒 9.30am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, to 9.45pm Thu
- 🚉 Assemblée Nationale or RER Musée d'Orsay

Drawings, pastels and sketches from major artists are another of the d'Orsay's lesser-known highlights. Look for Georges Seurat's *The Black Bow* (c 1882), which uses crayon on paper to define forms by contrasting between black and white, and Paul Gauguin's poignant self-portrait (c 1902–03), drawn near the end of his life.

## Sculptures

The cavernous former station is a magnificent setting for sculptures, including works by Degas, Gauguin, Camille Claudel, Renoir and Rodin.

## History

The Gare d'Orsay railway station was designed by competition-winning architect Victor Laloux. Even on its completion, just in time for the 1900 Exposition Universelle, painter Edouard Detaille declared that the new station looked like a Palais des Beaux Arts. But although it had its own hotel and all the mod cons of the day – including luggage lifts and passenger elevators – by 1939 the increasing electrification of the rail network meant the platforms were too short for mainline trains, and within a few years all rail services ceased.

The station was used as a mailing centre during WWII, and in 1962 Orson Welles filmed Franz Kafka's *The Trial* in the then-abandoned building. Fortunately, it was saved from demolition and replaced with a hotel complex by a Historical Monument listing in 1973, before the government set about establishing the palatial museum.

Transforming the languishing building into the country's premier showcase for art from 1848 to 1914 was the grand project of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who signed off on it in 1977. The museum opened its doors in 1986.

Far from resting on its laurels, major renovations at the Musée d'Orsay between 2008 and 2011 incorporated a re-energised layout and increased exhibition space. Nine rooms on the 5th floor were completely renovated in 2019. World-renowned paintings now gleam from richly coloured walls that create an intimate, stately home-like atmosphere, with high-tech illumination literally casting the masterpieces in a new light.

## GUIDED TOURS

For a thorough introduction to the museum, 90-minute 'Masterpieces of the Musée d'Orsay' guided tours (€6) in English run at 11.30am and 2.30pm on Tuesday. Kids under 13 years aren't permitted on adult tours; look out for family tours (six to 12 years; €4.50) and themed children's workshops (six to eight years; €7) instead. An audioguide costs €5.

**The museum is busiest on Tuesday and Sunday, followed by Thursday and Saturday. Save time by buying tickets online and head directly to entrance C.**

## TIME-HONOURED VIEWS

Look down on Paris (spot Montmartre's Sacré-Cœur) through the former railway station's two giant glass clock faces – one in the museum cafe and another immediately after the impressionist galleries.



TOP EXPERIENCE

## EXPLORE THE JARDIN DU LUXEMBOURG

This inner-city oasis of formal terraces, chestnut groves and lush lawns has a special place in Parisians' hearts. Napoléon dedicated the 23 gracefully laid-out hectares of the Luxembourg Gardens to the children of Paris, and many residents spent their childhood enjoying activities such as prodding 1920s wooden sailboats on the octagonal pond.

### History

The gardens are a backdrop to the Palais du Luxembourg, built in the 1620s for Marie de Médicis, Henri IV's consort, to assuage her longing for the Pitti Palace in Florence. The Palais is now home to the French Senate.

Numerous overhauls over the centuries have given the Jardin du Luxembourg a blend of traditional French- and English-style gardens that is unique in Paris.

### Grand Bassin

Children adore chasing **toy sailboats** ([www.lesvoiliersduluxembourg.fr](http://www.lesvoiliersduluxembourg.fr); sailboat rental per 30min €4; ☀ 11am-6pm Apr-Oct) on the octagonal Grand Bassin, a serene ornamental pond.

Nearby, littlies can take **pony rides** (☎ 06 07 32 53 95; [www.animaponey.com](http://www.animaponey.com); 600m/900m pony ride €6/8.50; ☀ 3-6pm Wed, Sat, Sun & school holidays) or romp around the **playgrounds** (adult/child €1.50/2.50; ☀ hours vary) – the green half is for kids aged seven to 12 years, the blue half for under-sevens.

### Puppet Shows

Puppetry is an ancient tradition in France and shows at the Jardin du Luxembourg's bijou **Théâtre du Luxembourg** (☎ 01 43 29 50 97; [www.marionnettesdu](http://www.marionnettesdu)

### DON'T MISS

- ➔ Grand Bassin
- ➔ Puppet shows
- ➔ Orchards
- ➔ Palais du Luxembourg
- ➔ Musée du Luxembourg

### PRACTICALITIES

- ➔ Map p128
- ➔ [www.senat.fr/visite/jardin](http://www.senat.fr/visite/jardin)
- ➔ 6e
- ➔ ☀ hours vary
- ➔ 🚶 Mabillon, St-Sulpice, Rennes, Notre Dame des Champs, RER Luxembourg

luxembourg.fr; tickets €6.80; ☺ Wed, Sat & Sun, daily during school holidays) are entertaining regardless of whether you speak French or are a child. Check the program online.

## Orchards

Dozens of apple varieties grow in the orchards in the gardens' south. Bees have produced honey in the nearby apiary, **Rucher du Luxembourg**, since the 19th century. The annual Fête du Miel (Honey Festival) offers two days of tasting and buying its sweet harvest around late September in the ornate **Pavillon Davioud** (55bis rue d'Assas, 6e).

## Palais du Luxembourg

The **Palais du Luxembourg** (www.senat.fr; rue de Vaugirard, 6e) was built in the 1620s and has been home to the Sénat (French Senate) since 1958. It's occasionally visitable by guided tour.

East of the palace is the ornate, Italianate **Fontaine des Médicis**, built in 1630. During Baron Haussmann's 19th-century reshaping of the roads, the fountain was moved 30m and the pond and dramatic statues of the giant bronze Polyphemus discovering the white-marble lovers Acis and Galatea were added.

## Musée du Luxembourg

Top-billing temporary art exhibitions, such as 'Cézanne et Paris,' are held in the beautiful **Musée du Luxembourg** (☎ 01 40 13 62 00; www.museeduluxembourg.fr; 19 rue de Vaugirard, 6e; most exhibitions adult/child €13/free; ☺ 10.30am-7pm Tue-Sun, to 10pm Mon).

Around the back of the museum, lemon and orange trees, palms, grenadiers and oleanders shelter from the cold in the palace's **orangery**. Nearby, the heavily guarded **Hôtel du Petit Luxembourg** was where Marie de Médicis lived while the Palais du Luxembourg was being built. The president of the Senate has called it home since 1825.

## PICNICS IN THE PARK

If you're planning on having a picnic, forget bringing a blanket – the elegantly manicured lawns are off limits apart from a small wedge on the southern boundary. Instead, do as Parisians do, and corral one of the iconic 1923-designed green metal chairs and find your own favourite part of the park.

**The Jardin du Luxembourg plays a pivotal role in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*: the novel's lovers Marius and Cosette meet here for the first time.**

## SCULPTURES

The gardens are studied with over 100 sculptures. Look out for statues of Stendhal, Chopin, Baudelaire and Delacroix.



*continued from p121*

businesses, supported by 30 high-tech incubators and accelerators in this unique start-up ecosystem. Guided tours take visitors on a 45-minute waltz through the gargantuan steel, glass and concrete hangar – a railway depot constructed in 1927–29 to house new trains servicing nearby Gare d'Austerlitz.

**Bibliothèque Nationale de France** LIBRARY  
(Map p112; ☎ 01 53 79 59 59; www.bnf.fr; 11 quai François Mauriac, 13e; temporary exhibitions €9–11, reference library €3.90; ☺ 2–8pm Mon, 9am–8pm Tue–Sat, 1–7pm Sun; 🚶 Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand) With four glass towers shaped like half-open books, the National Library of France, opened in 1995, was one of President Mitterrand's most ambitious and costliest projects. Some 12 million tomes are stored on 420km of shelves and the library can accommodate 2000 readers and 2000 researchers. It also hosts excellent temporary exhibitions (entrance Est), mostly visual arts.

No expense was spared to carry out the library's grand design, which many claimed defied logic. Books and historical documents are shelved in the sunny, 23-storey, 79m-high towers, while patrons sit in artificially lit basement halls built around a 'forest courtyard' of 140 50-year-old pines, trucked in from the countryside.

**La Fab** GALLERY  
(Map p72; ☎ 01 87 44 35 73; www.la-fab.com; place Jean-Michel Basquiat, 13e; adult/child €4/free;

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### RUE DAGUERRE

Paris' traditional village atmosphere thrives along rue Daguerre, 14e.

Tucked just southwest of the Denfert-Rochereau metro and RER stations, this narrow street – pedestrianised between av du Général-Leclerc and rue Boulard – is lined with florists, *fromageries* (cheese shops), *boulangeries* (bakeries), patisseries, greengrocers, delis (including Greek, Asian and Italian) and classic cafes where you can watch the local goings on.

Shops set up market stalls on the pavement; Sunday mornings are especially lively. It's a great option for lunch before or after visiting Les Catacombes, or packing a picnic to take to one of the area's parks or squares.

🕒 11am–7pm Tue–Sat; 🚶 Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand) French fashion designer and art collector agnès b opened this gallery in a striking new building by SOA Architects in 2020. Her 5000-plus strong collection of contemporary works is presented in themed exhibitions on the ground floor that change every three to four months. On the 1st floor, the 'galerie du jour' is styled like a home where everything, from the art to the furniture, is for sale.

**Ballon de Paris** VIEWPOINT  
(Map p72; ☎ 01 44 26 20 00; www.ballondeparis.com; 2 rue de la Montagne de la Fage, 15e, Parc André Citroën; adult/child €15/8; ☺ 9am–9pm May–Aug, shorter hours Sep–Apr; 🚶 Balard, Lourmel) 🌀 Drift up and up but not away – this helium-filled balloon in Parc André Citroën remains tethered to the ground as it lifts you 150m into the air for spectacular panoramas over Paris. The balloon plays an active environmental role, changing colour depending on the air quality and pollution levels. From September to April, the last 'flight' is 30 minutes before the park closes. Confirm ahead any time of year as the balloon doesn't ascend in windy conditions.

## Activities

In the run-up to Paris' 2024 Summer Olympics and Summer Paralympics, you'll find ample opportunities to watch spectator sports or take part yourself. To unwind with the Parisians, check out the city's green spaces, where you can thwack a tennis ball, stroll in style, admire art, or break out some wine and cheese.

A favourite area is the **Parc Rives de Seine** along the city's **right** (Map p108; btwn Port de l'Arsenal, 4e & quai des Tuileries, 1er; 🚶 Quai de la Rapée, Pont Marie, Pont Neuf) and left (p164) riverbanks.

### Cycling

Everyone knows that the Tour de France races up the Champs-Élysées at the end of July every year, but you don't need Chris Froome's leg muscles to enjoy Paris on two wheels. Between the Paris bike-share scheme **Vélib'** (p179), and the hundreds of kilometres of urban bike paths, cycling around the city has never been easier. Sign up for one of the great city **bike tours** (Map p108; ☎ 06 18 80 84 92; www.bikeabouttours.com; Le Peloton Café, 17 rue du Pont Louis-Philippe, 4e; 🚶 Hôtel de Ville) or hire a bike yourself (p179). Some streets are closed to vehicle traffic on

Sundays – see [www.paris.fr/pages/paris-respire-2122](http://www.paris.fr/pages/paris-respire-2122) – great news for cyclists! Bring your own helmet.

## Skating

The next-most popular activity after cycling has to be skating, whether on the street or on ice. Rent a pair of in-line skates at **Nomadeshop** (Map p108; ☎01 44 54 07 44; [www.nomadeshop.com](http://www.nomadeshop.com); 37 bd Bourdon, 4e; half-/full-day skate hire from €8/15; ☀11am-1.30pm & 2.30-7.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat; 📍 Bastille) and join the Friday-evening skate, **Pari Roller** (Map p128; [www.pari-roller.com](http://www.pari-roller.com); place Raoul Dautry, 14e; ☀9.30pm-midnight Fri; 📍 Montparnasse Bienvenue) **FREE**, that zooms through the Paris streets, or join the more laid-back Sunday-afternoon skate, **Rollers & Coquillages** (Map p108; [www.rollers-coquillages.org](http://www.rollers-coquillages.org); place de la Bastille; ☀2.30-5.30pm Sun; 📍 Bastille).

During the winter holidays several temporary outdoor rinks are installed around Paris. Venues change from year to year; check [www.paris.fr](http://www.paris.fr) for locations.

## Swimming

If you plan to go swimming at either your hotel or in a public pool, you'll need to don a *bonnet de bain* (bathing cap) – even if you don't have any hair. You shouldn't need to buy one ahead of time as they are generally sold at most pools. Men are required to wear skin-tight trunks (Speedos); loose-fitting Bermuda shorts are not allowed.

★ **Piscine de la Butte aux Cailles** SWIMMING  
(Map p72; ☎01 45 89 60 05; [www.paris.fr/equipements/piscine-de-la-butte-aux-cailles-2927](http://www.paris.fr/equipements/piscine-de-la-butte-aux-cailles-2927); 5 place Paul Verlaine, 13e; adult/child €3.50/2; ☀hours vary; 📍 Place d'Italie) Built in 1924, this art deco swimming complex – a historical monument – takes advantage of the lovely warm artesian well water nearby. It has a spectacular vaulted indoor pool and, since 2017, Paris' only Nordic pool. In the depths of winter, Parisians head here to swim 25m laps in a five-lane outdoor pool, heated to a toasty 27°C. Check schedules online.

**Piscine Joséphine Baker** SWIMMING  
(Map p112; ☎01 56 61 96 50; [www.piscine-baker.fr](http://www.piscine-baker.fr); quai François Mauriac, 13e; adult/child from €4/2.20; ☀hours vary; 📍 Quai de la Gare) Floating on the Seine, this striking swimming pool is named after the 1920s American singer. The 25m-by-10m, four-lane pool and large sun deck are especially popular in summer when the roof slides back. Also here is a children's paddling pool. In July and August,

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### NATURAL PARISIAN SPRING WATER

You'll often see locals filling containers with the natural 28°C spring water that has bubbled up from **Puits Artésien de la Butte aux Cailles** (Map p72; place Paul Verlaine, 13e; ☀24hr; 📍 Corvisart) from 600m below ground since 1893. It's free, safe to drink, and is said to have health-giving properties thanks to its rich iron fluoride content and low calcium levels (BYO bottle). The four-tap stainless-steel fountain was inaugurated in the year 2000; striking opaque panels describe the history of the *source* (spring).

plus weekends from late May to September, admission is limited to two hours.

## Boules

You'll often see groups of earnest Parisians playing *boules* (aka *pétanque*, France's most popular traditional game, similar to lawn bowls) in the Jardin du Luxembourg and other parks and squares with suitably flat, shady patches of gravel. The **Arènes de Lutèce** (Map p118; 49 rue Monge, 5e; ☀8am-8.30pm May-Aug, shorter hours rest of the year; 📍 Place Monge) **FREE** *boulodrome* in a 2nd-century Roman amphitheatre in the Latin Quarter is a fabulous spot to absorb the scene. There are usually places to play at Paris Plages (p132).

If you want to try out the sport indoors, head to **Chez Bouboule** (Map p92; [www.chez-bouboule.fr](http://www.chez-bouboule.fr); 46 rue d'Argout, 2e; ☀noon-2am Mon, 5.30pm-2am Tue-Sat; 📍 Sentier), which has a packed-sand *boulodrome* and a bar.

## Courses

**La Cuisine Paris** COOKING  
(Map p108; ☎01 40 51 78 18; [www.lacuisineparis.com](http://www.lacuisineparis.com); 80 quai de l'Hôtel de Ville, 4e; 2hr cooking class/walking tour from €99; 📍 Pont Marie, Hôtel de Ville) Classes in English range from how to make bread and croissants to macarons as well as market classes and gourmet 'foodie walks'.

**Le Cordon Bleu** COOKING  
(Map p72; ☎01 85 65 15 00; [www.cordonbleu.edu/paris](http://www.cordonbleu.edu/paris); 13-15 quai André Citroën, 15e; 3hr classes from €55, 2-day courses from €470; 📍 Javel-André Citroën, RER Javel) One of the world's





## St-Germain & Montparnasse

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cimetière du Montparnasse ..... D8
- 2 Église St-Germain des Prés ..... F3
- 3 Jardin du Luxembourg ..... F6
- 4 Musée d'Orsay ..... C1
- 5 Musée Rodin ..... A3

### 📍 Sights

- 6 Église St-Sulpice ..... E4
- 7 Fontaine des Médicis ..... F5
- 8 Grand Bassin ..... F6
- 9 Monnaie de Paris ..... G2
- 10 Musée du Luxembourg ..... E5
- 11 Musée National Eugène Delacroix ..... F3
- 12 Orangery ..... E5
- 13 Orchards ..... F6
- 14 Palais du Luxembourg ..... F5
- 15 Parc Rives de Seine ..... C1
- 16 Pavillon Davioud ..... E6
- 17 Rucher du Luxembourg ..... E6

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 18 Alliance Française ..... D6
- 19 Children's Playgrounds ..... E6
- 20 Grand Bassin Toy Sailboats ..... F6
- 21 Pari Roller ..... B7
- 22 Paris Canal Croisières ..... D1
- 23 Pony Rides ..... F6

### 🏠 Sleeping

- 24 Hôtel du Dragon ..... D4
- 25 Hôtel Le Clément ..... F4
- 26 Le Bellechasse ..... C1
- 27 L'Hôtel ..... F2

### 🍴 Eating

- 28 À la Petite Chaise ..... D3
- 29 Anicia ..... B6
- 30 Beaupassage ..... C3
- 31 Bouillon Racine ..... G5
- 32 Così ..... F3

- 33 Crêperie de Josselin ..... C7
- 34 Cuppa ..... C1
- 35 Freddy's ..... F3
- 36 Hûitrierie Regis ..... F4
- 37 La Bête Noire ..... F8
- 38 L'Avant Comptoir de la Mer ..... F4
- 39 L'Avant Comptoir de la Terre ..... F4
- 40 L'Avant Comptoir du Marché ..... F4  
Le Comptoir ..... (see 39)
- 41 Le Dôme ..... D7
- 42 Le Procope ..... F3
- 43 Little Breizh ..... F4
- 44 Poilâne ..... D4
- 45 Restaurant Cinq-Mars ..... D2
- 46 Restaurant Guy Savoy ..... G2  
Semilla ..... (see 35)

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 47 Au Sauvignon ..... D4
- 48 Café de Flore ..... E3
- 49 Coutume Café ..... B4
- 50 Frappé par Bloom ..... G2
- 51 Frog & Princess ..... F4
- 52 Le Select ..... D7
- 53 Les Deux Magots ..... E3
- 54 Prescription Cocktail Club ..... F3
- 55 Tiger ..... F4

### 🎭 Entertainment

- 56 Café Universel ..... G7
- 57 Théâtre du Luxembourg ..... E6

### 🛍 Shopping

- 58 Cire Trudon ..... F4
- 59 Deyrolle ..... D2
- 60 Hermès Paris Sèvres ..... D4
- 61 La Dernière Goutte ..... F3
- 62 La Grande Épicerie de Paris ..... C5
- 63 Le Bon Marché ..... C4
- 64 Le Petit Prince ..... F3
- 65 Magasin Sennelier ..... E2
- 66 Marché Raspail ..... D5

foremost culinary arts schools, founded in 1895, the Le Cordon Bleu campus overlooks the Seine and Statue of Liberty, with views of the nearby Eiffel Tower from its terrace. Themed three-hour classes span food and wine pairing, vegetarian cuisine, eclairs, choux pastry and more.

### Wine Tasting in Paris

(Map p118; ☎ 06 76 93 32 88; www.wine-tasting-in-paris.com; 14 rue des Boulangers, 5e; tastings from €47; ☺ hours vary; 📍 Jussieu) Find this wine-tasting school on a winding cobblestone backstreet. With the knowledgeable Thierry from wine-rich Burgundy at the helm, themed tastings and tours do not dis-

appoint. The comprehensive French Wine Tour (€62, 2½ hours, six wines, 5pm) covers tasting methodology, wine vocabulary and French winegrowing regions. Foodies will adore the tasty, lunchtime cheese-wine pairing (€47, 1½ hours, four wines, noon).

### La Beer Fabrique

BREWING

(Map p108; ☎ 01 71 27 71 02; www.labeerfabrique.com; 6 rue Guillaume Bertrand, 11e; 2hr/4hr brewing course €60/160; ☺ by reservation; 📍 Rue St-Maur) During a two-hour course at this brewing school, you'll brew your own beer (and take it away with you, along with three of La Beer Fabrique's own beers), and enjoy six tastings accompanied by charcuterie. Four-hour



courses will see you brew 15L of beer that you also get to take with you. Instruction is in English and French.

## Tours

### ★ Parisien d'un

#### Jour – Paris Greeters

WALKING

(www.greeters.paris; by donation) See Paris through local eyes with these two- to three-hour city tours. Volunteers – mainly knowledgeable Parisians passionate about their city – lead groups (maximum six people) to their favourite spots. Minimum two weeks' notice is needed.

#### Meeting the French

TOURS

(☎01 42 51 19 80; www.meetingthefrench.com; tours & courses from €30) Cosmetics workshops, backstage cabaret tours, fashion-designer showroom visits, market tours, baking with a Parisian baker, dinner with a Parisian family – the repertoire of cultural and gourmet tours and behind-the-scenes experiences offered by Meeting the French is truly outstanding. All courses and tours are in English.

#### THATMUSE

TOURS

(www.thatmuse.com; per person excl museum admission Louvre/Musée d'Orsay €29/35) Organises treasure hunts in English and French in the Louvre and Musée d'Orsay. Participants (up to five people, playing alone or against another team) have to photograph themselves in front of 20 to 30 works of art ('treasure'). Hunts typically last 1½ to two hours.

#### Bateaux-Mouches

CRUISE

(Map p86; ☎01 42 25 96 10; www.bateaux-mouches.fr; Port de la Conférence, 8e; adult/child €14/6; ☀every 30min 10am-10.30pm Apr-Sep, every 40min 11am-9.20pm Oct-Mar; 🚶Alma Marceau) Bateaux-Mouches, the largest river-cruise company in Paris, is a favourite with tour groups. Departing just east of the Pont de l'Alma on the Right Bank, its 70-minute cruises have commentary in French and English.

#### Vedettes du Pont Neuf

CRUISE

(Map p116; ☎01 46 33 98 38; www.vedettesdu-pontneuf.com; square du Vert Galant, 1er; adult/child €14/7; ☀10.30am-10.30pm; 🚶Pont Neuf) One-hour cruises depart year-round from Vedettes' centrally located dock at the western tip of Île de la Cité; commentary is in

French and English. Tickets are cheaper if you buy in advance online (adult/child €12/5). Check the website for details of its 90-minute lunch cruises (€49/30) and evening Champagne cruises (€24.50), and two-hour dinner cruises (€75/35).

#### Fat Tire Bike Tours

CYCLING

(☎01 82 88 80 96; www.fattiretours.com; tours adult/child from €34/32) Offers day and night bicycle tours of the city, both in central Paris and further afield to Versailles and Monet's garden, the Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet, in Giverny.

#### Left Bank Scooters

TOURS

(☎06 78 12 04 24; www.leftbankscooters.com; 3hr tours per 1st/2nd passenger from €200/50) Runs a variety of motor-scooter tours around Paris, both day and evening, as well as trips out to Versailles and sidecar tours. Car or motorcycle licence required. Also rents scooters (50/125cc scooters per 24 hours €70/80).



## Festivals & Events

### January

#### Paris Cocktail Week

FOOD &amp; DRINK

(www.pariscocktailweek.fr; ☀Jan) Participating cocktail bars all over the city create signature cocktails for late January's Paris Cocktail Week. There are also workshops, guest bartenders, masterclasses and food pairings.

### May

#### French Open

SPORTS

(www.rolandgarros.com; ☀late May-early Jun; 🚶Porte d'Auteuil) The glitzy Grand Slam tournament Les Internationaux de France de Tennis hits up from late May to early June at Stade Roland Garros.

### June

#### Fête de la Musique

MUSIC

(www.fetedelamusique.culturecommunication.gouv.fr; ☀21 Jun) This national music festival welcomes in summer on the solstice with fabulous staged and impromptu live performances of jazz, reggae, classical and more. Held at venues all over the city.

#### Paris Jazz Festival

MUSIC

(www.parisjazzfestival.fr; ☀late Jun–mid-Jul; 🚶Château de Vincennes) Jazz concerts swing every Saturday and Sunday afternoon in the Parc Floral de Paris (p111) during the Paris Jazz Festival.

## July & August

### Paris Plages

BEACH

(www.parisinfo.com; ☺ mid-Jul–early Sep) ‘Paris Beaches’ set up along Paris’ riverbanks in two main zones, the Parc Rives de Seine and the Bassin de la Villette (with swimming pools in the canal).

### Bastille Day

CULTURAL

(☺ 14 Jul) The capital celebrates France’s national day with a morning military parade along av des Champs-Élysées, accompanied by a fly-past of fighter aircraft and helicopters. *Feux d’artifice* (fireworks) light up the sky above the Champ de Mars by night.

### Tour de France

SPORTS

(www.letour.com; ☺ late Jul) The last of 21 stages of this prestigious, 3500km-long cycling event finishes with a race up the av des Champs-Élysées on the third or fourth Sunday of July.

### Rock en Seine

MUSIC

(www.rockenseine.com; ☺ late Aug; 🚗 Pont de St-Cloud, 🚶 Parc de St-Cloud) Headlining acts rock the Domaine National de St-Cloud, on the city’s southwestern edge, at this popular three-day music festival.

## October

### Nuit Blanche

CULTURAL

(☺ early Oct) From sundown until sunrise on the first Saturday and Sunday of October, museums stay open, along with bars and clubs, for one ‘White Night’ (ie ‘All Nighter’).

### Paris Beer Festival

BEER

(www.parisbeerfestival.fr; ☺ Oct) Craft beer’s popularity in Paris peaks during the Paris Beer Festival, held over 10 days. Events take place across the city’s bars, pubs, breweries, specialist beer shops and other venues.

### Fête des Vendanges de Montmartre

WINE

(www.fetedesvendangesdemontmartre.com; ☺ Oct) This five-day festival taking in the second weekend in October celebrates Montmartre’s grape harvest with costumes, concerts, food events and a parade.

## December

### Le Festival du Merveilleux

CULTURAL

(www.arts-forains.com; ☺ Dec-Jan; 🚗 Cour St-Émilien) The magical private museum Musée des Arts Forains, filled with fairground attractions of yesteryear, opens from late December to early January, with enchanting rides, attractions and festive shows.

## Sleeping

Paris’ wealth of accommodation spans all budgets, but it’s often *complet* (full) well in advance. Reservations are recommended year-round and essential during the warmer months (April to October) and all public and school holidays.

Although marginally cheaper, accommodation outside central Paris is invariably a false economy given travel time and costs. Choose somewhere within Paris’ 20 *arrondissements* to experience Parisian life the moment you step out the door.

## Eiffel Tower & Western Paris

### Camping de Paris

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 01 45 24 30 00; www.campingparis.fr; 2 allée du Bord de l’Eau, 16e; camping/cabin from €28/95; 🚗 Pont de Neuilly, 🚶 T2 Suresnes Longchamp) On the Bois de Boulogne’s western edge by the banks of the Seine, this year-round campground has 410 sites for tents and campervans, along with kitchen-equipped cabins and static caravans sleeping up to six. Facilities include a cafe, shop, playgrounds and summer bike hire. Some areas have wi-fi.

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

#### WHOLESALE-MARKET TOURS

Covering an area bigger than Monaco (234 hectares), Paris’ wholesale markets, **Marché International de Rungis** (☎ 08 25 05 44 05; www.visiterungis.com; av des Maraîchers, Rungis; tour €85; ☺ by reservation), are sectioned into vast halls for meat, cheese, fish, fruit and vegetables, organic fruit and vegetables, plants and cut flowers. Fascinating behind-the-scenes tours of its operations are in English and French. Prices include a three-hour market tour, a 45-minute breakfast and bus transport to and from central Paris. Pick-up is at 4am from place Denfert-Rochereau, 14e, returning around 10am. Wear warm clothes (and comfortable shoes!). No children under 13.

The markets are otherwise off limits to the public.

A shuttle bus (return €4) runs to/from the Porte Maillot metro/RER station.

**Hôtel Molitor** HISTORIC HOTEL €€€  
(☎01 56 07 08 50; www.mltr.fr; 13 rue Nungesser et Coli, 16e; d/ste from €256/581; 📞@📺📺; 🚇 Michel Ange Molitor) Famed as Paris' swishest swimming pool in the 1930s (where the bikini made its first appearance, no less) and a hotspot for graffiti art in the 1990s, the art deco Molitor, built in 1929 and abandoned from 1989, has been restored to stunning effect. All 124 hotel rooms are arranged gallery-style in a U shape overlooking the outdoor pool (heated year-round).

**Hôtel Félicien** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€  
(Map p72; ☎01 55 74 00 00; www.hotelfelicien.paris.com; 21 rue Félicien David, 16e; d/ste from €250/420; 📞@📺; 🚇 Mirabeau) The price-quality ratio at this chic boutique hotel, squirreled away in a 1930s building, is excellent. Exquisitely designed rooms feel more five star than four, with 'White' and 'Silver' suites on the hotel's top 'Sky floor' (rooftop Jacuzzi included) more than satisfying their promise of indulgent cocooning.

## 🚇 Champs-Élysées & Grands Boulevards

**BVJ Opéra** HOSTEL €  
(Map p80; ☎01 42 36 88 18; www.bvjhostelparis.com; 1 rue de la Tour des Dames, 9e; dm/d from €19/48; 📞; 🚇 Trinité) Clean rooms at this Bureau des Voyages de la Jeunesse (BVJ) hostel might be monastic, but that's negated by its decent location near the Palais Garnier and Grands Boulevards department stores, and its 19th-century building opening to a cobble courtyard. Lockers and wi-fi both cost extra (per day from €2). There's no sign.

**Hôtel Chopin** HISTORIC HOTEL €  
(Map p80; ☎01 47 70 58 10; www.hotelchopin-paris-opera.com; 46 passage Jouffroy, 9e; s/d from €82/103; 📞@📺; 🚇 Grands Boulevards) Dating from 1846, the 36-room Chopin is inside one of Paris' most delightful 19th-century *passages couverts* (covered shopping arcades). Cheaper rooms are small and dark, but the belle époque location is beautiful. Baby cots are available.

**Hôtel du Temps** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€  
(Map p80; ☎01 47 70 37 16; http://hotel-du-temps.fr; 11 rue de Monthonlon, 9e; s/d/ste from €154/174/334; 📞@📺; 🚇 Poissonnière) This artsy boutique hotel is loaded with person-

ality, from the flea-market furniture and white-parquet flooring to the patterned green tiling in the lobby. Check out the secret basement bar where guests can play the piano over cocktails. It's a 10-minute walk from the Gare du Nord.

**Hôtel Joyce** DESIGN HOTEL €€  
(Map p80; ☎01 55 07 00 01; www.astotel.com; 29 rue la Bruyère, 9e; s/d from €91/131; 📞@📺; 🚇 St-Georges) 🌿 Located in a lovely residential area between Montmartre and Opéra, this 44-room hotel has all the modern design touches (individually styled rooms, a skylit breakfast room fitted out with old Range Rover seats) and has an ecofriendly policy, including the use of organic products. There are in-room tea and coffee facilities, and free snacks and soft drinks every afternoon.

There are interconnecting rooms for families.

**Hôtel Ekta** DESIGN HOTEL €€€  
(Map p86; ☎01 53 76 09 05; www.hotelekt.com; 52 rue Galilée, 8e; d/ste from €290/495; 📞@📺; 🚇 George V) Psychedelic zebra stripes give this 1970s-style fashionista an unusually playful personality, especially in a neighbourhood where sleeping choices tend more towards the classical. Rooms are smallish but modern – smart TVs, Nespresso coffee makers and universal phone chargers are some of the amenities available. Rooms on the top floor have small, private terraces.

**Hôtel de Crillon** HISTORIC HOTEL €€€  
(Map p86; ☎01 44 71 15 00; www.rosewoodhotels.com; 10 place de la Concorde, 8e; d/ste from €970/1750; 📞@📺📺; 🚇 Concorde) Built in 1758 by Louis XV-commissioned architect Jacques-Ange Gabriel and transformed into a hotel in 1909, this palatial address at the foot of the Champs-Élysées opposite the Jardin des Tuileries retains its original splendour in its sumptuous rooms and suites, three restaurants and opulent bar.

## 🚇 Louvre & Les Halles

**Hôtel Tiquetonne** HOTEL €  
(Map p92; ☎01 42 36 94 58; www.hoteltiquetonne.fr; 6 rue Tiquetonne, 2e; d from €76, without bathroom from €66; 📞@📺; 🚇 Étienne Marcel) Heart-warmingly good value, this 45-room well-tended address has been in the hotel biz since the 1900s and is much loved by a loyal clientele of all ages. Ranging across seven floors (there's a small lift), rooms are spick and span, and sport an inoffensive mix of

vintage decor – roughly 1930s to 1980s, with bathrooms and parquet flooring in some rooms.

### Hôtel Vivienne

HOTEL €€

(Map p80; ☑01 42 33 13 26; www.hotel-vivienne.com; 40 rue Vivienne, 2e; d/f from €130/190; @☎; 🚶 Grands Boulevards) This refurbished two-star hotel is amazingly good value for Paris. While the 45 rooms are not huge, they have all the mod cons; some even boast little balconies. Family rooms accommodate up to two children on a sofa bed. Not all rooms have air-con.

### ★ Edgar

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(Map p92; ☑01 40 41 05 19; www.edgarparis.com; 31 rue d'Alexandrie, 2e; d from €180; ☎☎; 🚶 Strasbourg St-Denis) Thirteen playful rooms, each decorated by a different team of artists or designers, await the lucky few who secure a reservation at this former convent/seamstress workshop. 'La La Salama' conjures up all the magic of wild Africa, while 'Dream' echoes the rich imagination of childhood with surrealist installations. Breakfast is served in the popular downstairs restaurant, and the hidden tree-shaded square is a fabulous location.

### ★ Hôtel Crayon

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(Map p92; ☑01 42 36 54 19; www.hotelcrayon.com; 25 rue du Bouloi, 1er; s/d/ste €140/169/269; ☎☎; 🚶 Les Halles, Louvre-Rivoli) Line drawings by French artist Julie Gauthron bedeck walls and doors at this creative hotel. *Le crayon* (the pencil) is the theme, with 26 rooms sporting a different shade of each floor's chosen colour, including coloured-glass shower doors. Guests can swap the books on the bedside table to take home. There's an honesty bar and a lift.

### Hôtel des Grands Boulevards

DESIGN HOTEL €€€

(Map p80; ☑01 85 73 33 33; www.grandsboulevardshotel.com; 17 bd Poissonnière, 2e; d from €209; ☎☎; 🚶 Grands Boulevards) The 50 rooms at this contemporary hotel play with the building's Revolution-era roots, with rustic curtained headboards and vintage wooden stools. Bathrooms come stocked with natural organic soaps. Nonguests should drop by Giovanni Passerini's inner courtyard restaurant, or, even better, for cocktails at the rooftop bar, the Shed.

### Hoxton

DESIGN HOTEL €€€

(Map p80; ☑01 85 65 75 00; www.thehoxton.com; 30-32 rue du Sentier, 2e; d from €299; ☎☎; 🚶 Bonne Nouvelle) The Parisian outpost of

designer hotel the Hoxton occupies a grand 18th-century former residence. Its 172 striking rooms come in four sizes: Shoebox (from 13 sq metres), Cosy (from 17 sq metres), Roomy (from 21 sq metres) and Biggy (from 32 sq metres). All have intricate corning and reclaimed oak floors; some have balconies.

### Hôtel Ritz Paris

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(Map p92; ☑01 43 16 30 30; www.ritzparis.com; 15 place Vendôme, 1er; d/ste from €1100/1900; 🚶☎☎☎☎; 🚶 Opéra) Paris' most rarefied address, the incomparable Ritz retains its original features while incorporating 21st-century technology. Highlights include a manicured French formal garden, a world-first Chanel spa (Coco Chanel lived here), prestigious Ritz Escoffier cookery school and legendary Bar Hemingway (p157).

## 🚶 Montmartre & Northern Paris

### ★ Generator Hostel

HOSTEL €

(Map p72; ☑01 70 98 84 00; www.staygenerator.com; 9-11 place du Colonel Fabien, 10e; dm/d from €22/77; ☎☎☎; 🚶 Colonel Fabien) From the 9th-floor rooftop bar overlooking Sacré-Cœur and the stylish ground-floor cafe-restaurant to the vaulted basement bar-club styled like a Paris metro station, and super-cool bathrooms with 'I love you' tiling, this ultra-contemporary hostel near Canal St-Martin is sharp. Dorms have USB sockets and free lockers, and the best doubles have fabulous terraces with views. Women-only dorms are available.

### St Christopher's Canal

HOSTEL €

(Map p72; ☑01 40 34 34 40; www.st-christophers.co.uk/paris; 159 rue de Crimée, 19e; dm from €18, d with/without shared bathroom from €84/62; @☎; 🚶 Riquet, Laumière) This is one of Paris' most up-to-date hostels, with modern design and four- to 12-bed dorms, including female-only dorms. Doubles come with or without en-suite bathroom. Other perks include a canalside cafe, a bar, bike rental and organised day trips, though note there's no kitchen. Daily prices vary wildly; reserve in advance to secure reasonable prices.

### St Christopher's Gare du Nord

HOSTEL €

(Map p72; ☑01 70 08 52 22; www.st-christophers.co.uk/paris; 5 rue de Dunkerque, 10e; dm/s/d from €10/42/96; @☎; 🚶 Gare du Nord) Steps from Gare du Nord, St Christopher's is a modern backpacker hostel with six light-

filled floors and 580 beds. Dorms (including women-only dorms) sleep four to 10, but beds are pricey unless you reserve months in advance. Facilities include a laundry and Belushi's bar and restaurant with live music. No kitchen.

**Hôtel du Nord – Le Pari Vélo** HOTEL €  
(Map p108; ☎01 42 01 66 00; www.hotel.dunord-leparivelo.com; 47 rue Albert Thomas, 10e; s/d/q €73/86/125; 📞; 🚗 Jacques Bonsergent) Offering fantastic value given its prized location near place de la République, this perennial favourite has 23 rooms decorated with flea-market antiques and free bikes for guests to borrow to ride around town. Served in a vaulted stone cellar, breakfast includes locally baked bread and pastries along with homemade jams.

★ **Hôtel Providence** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€  
(Map p108; ☎01 46 34 34 04; www.hotelprovidenceparis.com; 90 rue René Boulanger, 10e; d from €232; 📞@📞; 🚗 Strasbourg–St-Denis) This luxurious hideaway in a 19th-century town house in the trendy 10e is exquisite. Its 18 bohemian-chic rooms have rich House of Hackney velvet wallpaper and vintage flea-market finds and some have balconies; the smallest aren't nearly as 'Mini' (by Paris standards) as the name implies. Bespoke cocktail bars in each room come complete with suggested recipes and ingredients.

**Terrass' Hôtel** HOTEL €€  
(Map p98; ☎01 46 06 72 85; www.terrass-hotel.com; 12-14 rue Joseph de Maistre, 18e; d/s from €153/203; 📞@📞; 🚗 Blanche) Enjoy one of the finest bird's-eye views of Paris from the rooftop bar of this historic 1911 hotel, which received a stunning designer makeover just over a century later. Darkened corridors lead to 92 rooms with striking black-and-red decor; the vast open-plan lobby has a library-lounge and photo booth, and there's a luxurious Nuxe spa, plus running and cycling cabins.

**Le Pigalle** DESIGN HOTEL €€  
(Map p80; ☎01 48 78 37 14; www.lepigalle.paris; 9 rue Frochot, 9e; d from €175; 📞@📞; 🚗 Pigalle) This offbeat lifestyle hotel's edgy design reflects the neighbourhood's legendary nightlife, while carefully thought-out details, like a postcard taped on the bathroom wall and a key ring jangling with Paris souvenirs, add personalised touches to the 40 stylish rooms. Each has an iPad loaded with music,

## BOOKING SERVICES

**Lonely Planet** (lonelyplanet.com/france/paris/hotels) Reviews of Lonely Planet's top choices.

**Paris Attitude** (www.parisattitude.com) Thousands of apartment rentals, professional service, reasonable fees.

**Haven In** (www.havenin.com) Charming Parisian apartments for rent.

and larger rooms have vintage turntables with an eclectic vinyl collection.

**Hôtel Amour** DESIGN HOTEL €€  
(Map p80; ☎01 48 78 31 80; www.hotelamour.paris.fr; 8 rue de Navarin, 9e; d from €165; 📞; 🚗 St-Georges, Pigalle) The inimitable black-clad Amour ('Love') in south Pigalle plays on its long-ago incarnation as a brothel, featuring a soft pink façade and nude artwork (some more explicit than others) in each of its 24 rooms. (No TVs, but that's not the point here.) The beloved ground-floor bistro-bar – open until 2am – has a leafy summer patio garden.

**Grand Amour Hôtel** DESIGN HOTEL €€  
(Map p108; ☎01 44 16 03 30; www.hotelamour.paris.fr; 18 rue de la Fidélité, 10e; d from €165; 📞; 🚗 Gare de l'Est) Younger sister to Pigalle's Hôtel Amour, this lifestyle hotel mixes vintage furniture from the flea market with phallic-symbol carpets and the striking B&W nude photography of graffiti artist André Saraiva. The result is an edgy hideaway for lovers in one of Paris' most up-and-coming neighbourhoods. Its bistro is a trendy spot in itself.

**Hôtel Môm'Art** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€  
(Map p98; ☎01 82 52 26 26; www.hotelmomart.com; 42 rue d'Orsel, 18e; d €185-360; 📞@📞; 🚗 Anvers) Owned by the Sellam family since 1971, this up-to-the-minute Montmartre hotel has just 25 generously sized rooms in four different styles – bohemian 'Artistes' rooms sport modern-art motifs while 'Collection Hermès' rooms, clad in beautiful fabrics, scream traditional luxury. There's an interior courtyard, fitness area, spa, fine-dining restaurant and cocktail bar with a tasty tapas menu.

**R Kipling Hotel** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€  
(Map p98; ☎01 55 31 91 99; www.kipling-hotel.com; 65 rue Blanche, 9e; d from €148; 📞@📞;



(M Blanche) Part of France's Happy Culture boutique hotel collection, this spellbinding hotel evokes famous works of Nobel Prize-winning writer Rudyard Kipling, such as *The Jungle Book*. Forty rooms, some with balconies and rooftop views, come in soothing pastel blues and greens. Both the lounge and library are beautifully wallpapered.

### Hôtel Joséphine

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(Map p98; ☎01 55 31 90 75; www.hotel-josephine.com; 67 rue Blanche, 9e; s/d €200/220; 📶📶; M Blanche) Life's a cabaret at this novel, four-star boutique address in Pigalle. Named after 1920s cabaret star Josephine Baker, the hotel has 41 rooms with richly patterned wallpapers broken up by solid colours and 1930s period furniture and light fittings. Black-and-white cabaret photos decorate walls, and downstairs in the sociable library-lounge there's an honesty bar, free coffee and board games.

### Grand Hôtel Pigalle

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(Map p80; ☎01 85 73 12 00; www.grandpigalle.com; 29 rue Victor Massé, 9e; d/ste from €209/289; 📶@📶; M Pigalle) Created by the cocktail-loving Experimental group, this is a sophisticated lifestyle hotel in south Pigalle (aka 'SoPi') with cocktail 'minibars' in its 37 beautifully crafted rooms and a fabulous no-reservations restaurant, **Frenchie Pigalle** (small plates €7-19, mains €21-27; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 6-9pm; 📶), the northern Paris outpost of Frenchie by Michelin-starred chef Gregory Marchand.

### ★ Hôtel Particulier Montmartre

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(Map p98; ☎01 53 41 81 40; www.hotelparticulier.com; 23 av Junot, 18e; ste from €390; 📶📶; M Lamarck-Caulaincourt) Hidden down a stone-paved alley, this mansion is a magical address. Its five sweeping designer suites are decorated with retro flea-market finds, but it's the garden designed by landscape architect Louis Benech, and fashionable restaurant and cocktail bar (p159), that really stun. Ring the buzzer outside the unmarked black-gated entrance at No 23.

## Le Marais, Ménilmontant & Belleville

### ★ Les Piaules

HOSTEL €

(Map p108; ☎01 43 55 09 97; www.lespiaules.com; 59 bd de Belleville, 11e; dm/d from €20/72; @📶; M Couronnes, Belleville) Run by hip, witty staff,

this brilliant hostel is the Belleville hotspot to mingle with locals over Parisian craft beer at the stunning ground-floor bar, cosy up in front of the wood-burner, or soak up the sun and panoramic views from the roof terrace. Dorms come with custom bunks and ample bedside plugs; rooftop doubles have sleek all-white decor.

### Cosmos Hôtel

HOSTEL €

(Map p108; ☎01 43 57 25 88; www.cosmos-hotel-paris.com; 35 rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud, 11e; s/d/tr from €75/92/108; 📶; M Parmentier, Goncourt) Cheap, brilliant value and just footsteps from the nightlife of rue JPT, Cosmos is a shining star with retro style on the budget-hotel scene that, unlike most other hotels in the same price bracket, has been treated to a thoroughly modern makeover this century.

### ★ Hôtel Georgette

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(Map p108; ☎01 44 61 10 10; www.hotelgeorgette.com; 36 rue du Grenier St-Lazare, 3e; d from €175; 📶📶; M Rambuteau) Taking inspiration from the Centre Pompidou around the corner, this vivacious hotel's 19 rooms reflect major 20th-century artistic movements, including pop art, op art, Dada, new realism and street art, with lots of bold colours and funky touches like Andy Warhol-inspired Campbell's-soup-can lampshades. Art exhibitions regularly take place in the bright lobby. It's gay-friendly and all-welcoming.

### Hôtel Emile

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(Map p108; ☎01 42 72 76 17; www.hotelemile.com; 2 rue Malher, 4e; d/ste from €119/191; 📶📶; M St-Paul) Prepare to be dazzled – literally. Retro B&W, geometrically patterned carpets, curtains, wallpapers and drapes dress this chic hotel, wedged between boutiques and restaurants in Le Marais. Pricier 'top floor' doubles look out over Parisian roofs and chimney pots. Breakfast is on bar stools in the lobby; open the cupboard to find the 'kitchen'.

### Hôtel Fabric

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(Map p108; ☎01 43 57 27 00; www.hotelfabric.com; 31 rue de la Folie Méricourt, 11e; d/tr from €190/255; 📶@📶; M St-Ambroise) Honouring its industrial heritage as a 19th-century textile factory, four-star Hôtel Fabric has steely pillars propping up the red-brick lounge area with dining tables where breakfast is served, and vintage touches include a Singer sewing machine. Darkly carpeted corridors



put together playlists (performances also often take place here). Some of its 53 art deco-influenced rooms and suites have terraces.

## The Islands

### Hôtel des 2 Îles

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(Map p116; ☎01 43 26 13 35; www.deuxiles-paris-hotel.com; 59 rue St-Louis en l'Île, 4e; s/d from €179/199; 🏠🚿; 🏠 Pont Marie) A venerable 17th-century building shelters this intimate three-star hotel, where 17 classical rooms sport ancient wooden beams and a punchy new decor that evokes the history of the island on which it languishes enchantingly. Top-floor rooms peep out over Parisian rooftops and chimney pots. Breakfast is served in a vaulted stone cellar.

### Hôtel de Lutèce

HOTEL €€

(Map p116; ☎01 43 26 23 52; www.paris-hotel-lutece.com; 65 rue St-Louis en l'Île, 4e; s/d/tr from €139/169/209; 🏠🚿; 🏠 Pont Marie) An elegant lobby-salon, with ancient fireplace, wood panelling, antique furnishings and traditional board games to borrow, welcomes guests at the lovely Lutèce, a country-style three-star hotel with 23 tastefully decorated rooms across six floors. Those overlooking the village-like street – with *fromagerie* (cheese shop), greengrocer's and chocolate shop – are more atmospheric than those facing the interior courtyard.

### ★ Hôtel du Jeu de Paume

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(Map p116; ☎01 43 26 14 18; www.jeudepaume-hotel.com; 54 rue St-Louis en l'Île, 4e; s/d from €199/268; 🏠🚿; 🏠 Pont Marie) Romantically set in a courtyard off Île St-Louis' main street, this contemporary four-star hotel occupies a 17th-century royal tennis court. Its 30 rooms are each inspired by a different modern artist. Pantone chairs add a design edge to the historic beamed and exposed-stone-walled house, and its leafy patio garden is divine. Facilities include a wellness centre.

## Latin Quarter

### ★ Hôtel Diana

HOTEL €€

(Map p118; ☎01 43 54 92 55; www.hotel-diana-paris.com; 73 rue St-Jacques, 5e; s/d/tr from €86/116/165; 🏠; 🏠 Maubert-Mutualité) Footsteps from the Sorbonne, two-star Diana is budget-traveller gold. Owner extraordinaire Thérèse Cheval has been at the helm here

since the 1970s and the pride and joy she invests in the hotel is boundless. Spacious rooms sport a stylish contemporary decor with geometric-patterned fabrics, the odd retro furniture piece, and courtesy tray with kettle and white-mug twinset.

### ★ Familia Hôtel

HOTEL €€

(Map p118; ☎01 43 54 55 27; www.familiahotel.com; 11 rue des Écoles, 5e; s €110, d €134-152, tr €175; 🏠🚿; 🏠 Cardinal Lemoine) Staff at this friendly, third-generation family-run hotel proudly tell you that nothing ever changes at the Familia. Indeed, the sepia murals of Parisian landmarks, flower-bedecked windows, and exposed rafters and stone walls are clearly from a past era. Some of the 32 rooms have weeny balconies; those on the 6th floor peep at Notre Dame.

### Hôtel Atmosphères

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(Map p118; ☎01 43 26 56 02; www.hotelatmospheres.com; 31 rue des Écoles, 5e; s/d/tr/ste from €150/160/240/280; 🏠🚿🚿; 🏠 Maubert-Mutualité) Striking images by award-winning French photographer Thierry des Ouches are permanently exhibited at this design hotel where 56 glam rooms evoke different Parisian 'atmospheres' – nature, monuments, Paris by night, the metro-inspired 'urban' and colourful *salon de thé* (tearoom)-style 'macaron'. A small gym, sauna and water massage bed are tucked away in the basement.

### Hôtel La Lanterne

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(Map p118; ☎01 53 19 88 39; www.hotel-la-lanterne.com; 12 rue de la Montagne Ste-Geneviève, 5e; d/ste from €210/380; 🏠🚿🚿; 🏠 Maubert-Mutualité) A stunning swimming pool and *hammam* in a vaulted stone cellar, a topiary-filled courtyard garden, contemporary guest rooms (some with small balconies) with black-and-white photos of Parisian architecture, amenities including Nespresso machines, and an honesty bar make this a jewel of a boutique hotel.

## St-Germain & Les Invalides

### ★ Hôtel du Dragon

HOTEL €

(Map p128; ☎01 45 48 51 05; www.hoteludragon.com; 36 rue du Dragon, 6e; d from €105; 🏠; 🏠 St-Sulpice) It's hard to believe that such a gem of a budget hotel still exists in this ultrachic part of St-Germain. A family affair for the last five generations, today

the ever-charming Roy runs the 28-room Dragon with his children, Sébastien and Marie-Hélène. Spotlessly clean rooms are decidedly large by Paris standards, often with exposed wooden beams and lovely vintage furnishings.

**Hôtel Le Clément** HOTEL €€  
(Map p128; ☎01 43 26 53 60; www.hotelclementparis.com; 6 rue Clément, 6e; s/d/ste from €85/110/160; 📶📶; 🚗St-Germain des Prés) Excellent value for the style and tranquillity it offers, the Clément has 28 stylish rooms (with beautiful printed wallpapers and fabrics), some overlooking the Marché St-Germain. Rooms on the top floor have sloping ceilings. The proprietors know what they're doing – this place has been in the same family for over a century.

★ **Hôtel Le Comtesse** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€  
(Map p78; ☎01 45 51 29 29; www.comtesse-hotel.com; 29 av de Tourville, 7e; d from €173; 📶📶; 🚗École Militaire) A five-star view of Mademoiselle Eiffel seduces guests in every single room at the Countess, an utterly charming boutique hotel at home in a 19th-century building with alluring wrought-iron balconies. Colour palettes are playful, and the feathered quill pen adorning the desk in each room is one of many cute touches. The glamorous, boudoir-styled cafe has a pavement terrace.

**Le Bellechasse** DESIGN HOTEL €€  
(Map p128; ☎01 45 50 22 31; www.lebellechasse.com; 8 rue de Bellechasse, 7e; s/d from €179/189; 📶📶; 🚗Solférino) Handily placed near the Seine and Musée d'Orsay, 33-room Le Bellechasse is an enticing, sensorial feast. Enticing room themes by fashion designer Christian Lacroix – including St-Germain, with brocades, zebra striping and faux-gold leafing; Tuileries, with trompe l'œil and palms; and Jeu de Paume, with giant playing-card motifs – create the impression you've stepped into a larger-than-life oil painting.

★ **L'Hôtel** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€  
(Map p128; ☎01 44 41 99 00; www.l-hotel.com; 13 rue des Beaux Arts, 6e; d/ste from €332/739; 📶📶📶; 🚗St-Germain des Prés) In a quiet quayside street, this 20-room establishment is the stuff of romance, Parisian myths and urban legends. Rock- and film-star patrons fight to sleep in the Oscar Wilde Suite, decorated with a peacock motif, where the Irish playwright died in 1900. A stunning, mod-

ern swimming pool occupies the ancient cellar.

## 🚗 Montparnasse & Southern Paris

**Arty Paris** HOSTEL €  
(Map p72; ☎01 40 34 40 34; www.arty-paris.fr; 62 rue des Morillons, 15e; dm/s/d/q from €25.50/76.50/92/115; 📶📶; 🚗Porte de Vanves) Flags add a dashing splash of colour to the delicious, caramel-brick façade of this design hostel-hotel, tucked away in the staunchly local 15e but moments from the T3 tram, and zippy buses to St-Germain, the Louvre and Montmartre. Inside, it is all geometric wallpapers, parquet flooring and funky colour schemes. Guests have use of a superb kitchen, making it a family favourite too.

**Hôtel Carladéz Cambronne** HOTEL €  
(Map p72; ☎01 47 34 07 12; www.hotelcarladéz.com; 3 place du Général Beuret, 15e; d from €129; 📶; 🚗Vaugirard) On a quintessentially Parisian cafe-clad square, this very good-value hotel has 27 comfortable rooms with attractive wallpapers and fabrics. Higher-priced superior rooms come with bathtubs, more space and tend to be quieter. Communal coffee- and tea-making facilities let you make yourself at home. Check its website for last-minute deals.

★ **Hôtel Henriette** DESIGN HOTEL €€  
(Map p72; ☎01 47 07 26 90; www.hotelhenriette.com; 9 rue des Gobelins, 13e; s/d/tr from €109/119/189; 📶📶; 🚗Les Gobelins) Interior designer Vanessa Scoffier scoured Paris' flea markets to source Platner chairs, 1950s lighting and other unique vintage pieces for the 32 rooms at bohemian Henriette – one of the Left Bank's most stunning boutique addresses. Guests can mingle in the light-flooded glass atrium and adjoining plant-filled patio with wrought-iron furniture. Prices vary a lot depending on demand and season – check the website.

Afternoon tea and cake and an early-evening aperitif with savoury tasting board are an intrinsic part of any stay.

**Off Paris Seine** HOTEL €€  
(Map p112; ☎01 44 06 62 66; www.offparisseine.com; 86 quai d'Austerlitz, 13e; d/ste from €139/259; 📶📶; 🚗Gare d'Austerlitz) Should the idea of being gently rocked to sleep take your fancy, check into Paris' first floating hotel. The sleek, 80m-long catamaran-design structure moored by Pont Charles de Gaulle sports

sun terraces overlooking the Seine, a chic bar by a 15m-long dipping pool, a lounge and 58 stunning rooms and suites, some of which have Seine views.

There's live music on weekends.

## Eating

The inhabitants of some cities rally around local sports teams, but in Paris they rally around *la table* – and everything on it. Pistachio macarons, shots of tomato consommé, decadent bœuf bourguignon, a gooey wedge of Camembert running onto the cheese plate...food isn't fuel here; it's the reason you get up in the morning.

## Eiffel Tower & Western Paris

In addition to the pickings of the 16e *arrondissement*, the many restaurants of Les Invalides and the buzzing market street of rue Cler (7e) are a short walk from the Eiffel Tower. For a truly memorable experience, dine in the icon itself.

### Les Deux Abeilles

CAFE ☹

(Map p78; ☎01 45 55 64 04; 189 rue de l'Université, 7e; 3-course lunch menu €24, dishes €16-21; ☀9am-7pm Mon-Sat; 🚶Alma Marceau, RER Pont d'Alma) A refuge from the Eiffel Tower crowds, delightfully old-fashioned tearoom the Two Bees has floral-patterned wallpaper, terracotta-tiled floors and white-clothed tables. It serves a variety of soups, salads, quiches, omelettes and gratins, along with homemade cakes and *citronnade* (ginger lemonade) throughout the day. In warm weather, take a seat on the pavement terrace, shaded by a dark-green awning.

### Brasserie Cézanne

BRASSERIE ☹☹

(Map p72; ☎01 43 59 58 43; www.brasseriecezanne.fr; 45 av Kléber, 16e; mains €18-27; ☀noon-midnight; 🚶Boissière) Pastel shutters, ochre walls, olive-green velvet seating and terracotta pots of lavender recreate a little slice of sun-baked southern France – as do the Provençal dishes (simply grilled sardines with bread and butter, tender pink lamb with rosemary, entrecôte with roast tomato and artichoke salad), and delightful reds, whites and rosés from Provence, Languedoc-Roussillon and the Rhône Valley.

### ★ Substance

FRENCH ☹☹☹

(Map p86; ☎01 47 20 08 90; www.substance.paris; 18 rue de Chaillot, 16e; mains €24-40, 5-/7-course

menu €79/95, with paired wines €124/150; ☀noon-2pm & 7.30-10.30pm Mon-Fri; 🚶Iéna, Alma-Marceau) A striking contemporary dining room in shades of muted blue is the backdrop for truly original cooking by young-gun chef Matthias Marc: Normandy scallop carpaccio with smoked sea urchin roe and hay vinaigrette; foie gras and Ardennes pheasant pie with purple cauliflower, kale and quince relish; and hazelnut-crème-stuffed cabbage, with Corsican clementine and citrus calamansi sorbet. Book ahead.

## Champs-Élysées & Grands Boulevards

The Champs-Élysées area is known for its big-name chefs and culinary icons, but there are a few under-the-radar restaurants too, where Parisians who live and work in the area dine on a regular basis. Rue de Ponthieu, running parallel to the Champs-Élysées, is a good spot to hunt for casual eateries, bakeries and cafes.

Head to the Grands Boulevards for a more diverse dining selection – everything from hole-in-the-wall wine bars to organic cafes.

### ★ Ladurée

PASTRIES ☹

(Map p86; ☎01 40 75 08 75; www.laduree.fr; 75 av des Champs-Élysées, 8e; pastries €7-10.50, mains €19-33; ☀tearoom noon-9pm, shop 8am-7.30pm; 📞; 🚶George V) One of Paris' oldest patisseries, Ladurée has been around since 1862 and first created the lighter-than-air, ganache-filled macaron in the 1930s. Its tearoom is the classiest spot to indulge on the Champs in pastries or more formal meals. Alternatively, pick up some pastries to go – its trademark macarons (€2.60), in particular, are heavenly.

### Chéri Charlot

SANDWICHES ☹

(Map p80; ☎09 80 41 78 27; www.facebook.com/chericharlot; 33 rue Richer, 9e; dishes €6-11; ☀10am-4pm Mon & Tue, to 9pm Wed-Fri; 🚶Cadet) If every French cheese had a charcuterie soulmate, who would be paired up with whom? This tiny deli seeks to answer this question with its excellent choice of sandwiches: Le Serra (St-Nectaire, Serrano ham), Le Rami (Comté, pastrami) and Le Chon (Reblochon, smoked bacon) are just some of its winning combinations. A sandwich (or quiche) with a drink costs €9.



★ **Richer**

BISTRO €€

(Map p80; www.lericher.com; 2 rue Richer, 9e; mains €17-25; ☉ noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm; 🍷 Poissonnière, Bonne Nouvelle) Richer's pared-back, exposed-brick decor is a smart setting for genius creations including wild plaise ceviche with fennel puree and confit tomato jelly or lacquered pork with chorizo curry. It doesn't take reservations, but it serves snacks and Chinese tea, and has a full bar (open until midnight). It's run by the same team as across-the-street neighbour **L'Office** (Map p80; ☎ 01 47 70 67 31; www.office-resto.com; 3 rue Richer, 9e; mains €19-29.50; ☉ noon-2.30pm & 6.30-10.30pm Mon-Fri).

★ **Mamou**

BISTRO €€

(Map p80; ☎ 01 44 63 09 25; www.mamou-restaurant.com; 42 rue Taitbout, 9e; 2-/3-course lunch menu €21/23, mains €23-28; ☉ noon-2.30pm Mon & Tue, noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Wed-Fri; 🍷 Chaussée d'Antin) Fans of *haute cuisine* sans *haute* attitude should seek out this casual bistro by the Palais Garnier. Accomplished chef Romain Lalu runs the kitchen, and diners can expect well-executed flavour combinations such as trout with white asparagus and radishes or veal terrine with wild mushroom sauce. There's an excellent natural wine selection. Reserve ahead.

★ **Le Hide**

FRENCH €€

(Map p86; ☎ 01 45 74 15 81; www.lehide.fr; 10 rue du Général Lanrezac, 17e; 2-/3-course menu €34/38, mains €26; ☉ 6.30-11pm Mon, Tue & Sat, noon-2pm & 6.30-11pm Wed-Fri; 🍷 Charles de Gaulle-Étoile) A perpetual favourite, Le Hide is a tiny neighbourhood bistro serving scrumptious traditional French fare: lobster bisque with

shaved black truffles, veal kidneys sautéed in mustard and baked shoulder of lamb. Unsurprisingly, this place fills up faster than you can scamper down the steps of the nearby Arc de Triomphe – reserve well in advance.

★ **Lasserre**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(Map p86; ☎ 01 43 59 53 43; www.restaurant-lasserre.com; 17 av Franklin D Roosevelt, 8e; mains €78-112, 4-/6-course menu €145/195, with paired wines €260/350; ☉ 7-10pm Tue-Sat; 🍷 Franklin D Roosevelt) Since 1942, this exceedingly elegant Triangle d'Or restaurant has hosted style icons (including Audrey Hepburn) and is still a superlative choice for a Michelin-starred meal to remember. A bellhop-attended lift, white-and-gold chandeliered decor, extraordinary retractable roof and flawless service set the stage for creations such as braised sea bass with caviar or crêpes Suzette flambéed tableside. Observe the dress code.

✂ **Louvre & Les Halles**

The dining scene in central Paris is excellent, and there is no shortage of choices, from eat-on-the-go bakeries to casual foodie favourites to Michelin-starred cuisine. By all means reserve a table at a big-name restaurant, but also try wandering along food streets like rue Montorgueil or rue Ste-Anne, aka 'Little Tokyo'.

★ **Cédric Grolet Opéra**

PASTRIES €

(Map p92; www.cedric-grolet.com; 35 av de l'Opéra, 2e; pastries €4-17; ☉ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat; 🍷 Opéra, Pyramides) Palace hotel Le Meurice's executive

## DON'T MISS

## MOVEABLE FEASTS

**Bustronome** (Map p86; ☎ 09 54 44 45 55; www.bustronome.com; 2 av Kléber, 16e; 4-course lunch menu €65, 6-course dinner menu €100; ☉ by reservation 3hr tour 12.15pm, 12.45pm, 7.45pm & 8.45pm daily; 🍷 📱 Kléber, Charles de Gaulle-Étoile) A true moveable feast, Bustronome is a voyage into French gastronomy aboard a glass-roofed bus, with Paris' famous monuments – the Arc de Triomphe, Palais Garnier and Eiffel Tower among them – gliding by as you dine on seasonal creations prepared in the purpose-built vehicle's lower-deck galley. Children's menus for lunch/dinner cost €40/50; vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free menus are available.

**Ducasse sur Seine** (Map p78; ☎ 01 58 00 22 08; www.ducasse-seine.com; Port Debilly, 16e; 3-course lunch menu €100, with paired wines €150, 5-course dinner menu €190, with paired wines €290; ☉ 12.45-2.30pm & 8.30-10.30pm; 🍷 Trocadéro) Launched by multi-Michelin-starred chef Alain Ducasse, 'floating restaurant' Ducasse sur Seine sails through the city past icons such as the Louvre at lunch and dinner, served at white-clothed tables.

pastry chef, wunderkind Cédric Grolet, opened his own *boulangerie-pâtisserie* in 2019, showcasing his *viennoiseries* including *pains au chocolat*, magnificent filled still-warm baguettes, and signature pastries, such as caramel-and-Tahitian-vanilla St-Honoré. Upstairs is a herringbone-floored tearoom.

### Salatim

ISRAELI €

(Map p92; ☎01 42 36 30 03; www.facebook.com/SalatimParis; 15 rue des Jeûneurs, 2e; mains €9-16; ☎11am-3.30pm Mon-Fri; 🍷Sentier) Chipped plates and organised chaos reign at Yariv Berreby's overflowing sardine-tin-sized eatery. It takes its name from the Hebrew word for salad, and you'd be remiss not to try the eponymous mixed plate (eggplant caviar, pickled red cabbage, hummus etc), or its chocolate babka (braided Jewish bread). If you can't get a seat, the takeaway window beckons.

### ★ Maison Maison

MEDITERRANEAN €€

(Map p92; ☎09 67 82 07 32; www.maisonmaison.fr; 63 Parc Rives de Seine, 1er; small plates €9-19; ☎kitchen noon-11.30pm Tue-Sat, to 6pm Sun, bar to 2am; 🍷Pont Neuf) Halfway down the stairs by Pont Neuf is this wonderfully secret space beneath the *bouquinistes* (used-book sellers), where you can watch the *bateaux-mouches* (river-cruise boats) float by as you dine on creations such as butter-nut squash and blue cheese *millefeuille* or

smoked black mullet with radish dressing. In nice weather, don't miss a cocktail on the glorious riverside terrace.

### ★ Balagan

ISRAELI €€

(Map p92; ☎01 40 20 72 14; www.balagan-paris.com; 9 rue d'Alger, 1er; mains €24-33; ☎noon-2pm & 7-10pm; 🍷Tuileries) Navy blues and creamy diamond tiling characterise this Israeli hotspot. Delectable starters – deconstructed kebabs, crispy halloumi cheese with dates, onion confit Ashkenazi chicken liver, spicy tuna tartare with pistachios – are followed by mains such as lamb with smoked-almond yoghurt or octopus with bone-marrow crumble. Pair them with knock-out cocktails like a Bloody Balagan (mezcal, sherry vinegar, beetroot syrup and lime).

### Au Pied de Cochon

BRASSERIE €€

(Map p92; ☎01 40 13 77 00; www.pieddecochon.com; 6 rue Coquillière, 1er; mains €19-36.50, seafood platters per person €30-80; ☎24hr; 🍷; 🍷Les Halles, RER Châtelet-Les Halles) Enduring brasserie Au Pied de Cochon, with huge mirrors, crimson banquettes and frosted-glass lamps, opens around the clock, just as it did when workers at the former Les Halles wholesale markets started and ended their day here. Specialities include sensational croton-filled onion soup topped with melted Emmental cheese, pigs' trotters, tails, ears and snouts, and spectacular shellfish platters.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### BEST BOULANGERIES

**Poilâne** (Map p128; ☎01 45 48 42 59; www.poilane.com; 8 rue du Cherche Midi, 6e; breads €3.80-12; ☎7.15am-8pm Mon-Sat; 🍷Sèvres-Babylone) Turning out distinctive wood-fired, rounded sourdough loaves since 1932.

**Du Pain et des Idées** (Map p108; ☎01 42 40 44 52; www.dupainetdesidees.com; 34 rue Yves Toudic, 10e; breads €1.20-7, pastries €2.50-6.50; ☎6.45am-8pm Mon-Fri, closed Aug; 🍷Jacques Bongerger) Traditional bakery near Canal St-Martin with an exquisite 19th-century interior.

**Le Grenier à Pain** (Map p98; 38 rue des Abbesses, 18e; breads & pastries €1.10-6; ☎7am-8pm Thu-Mon; 🍷Abbesses) Perfect Montmartre picnic stop.

**Pain Pain** (Map p98; ☎01 42 23 62 81; www.pain-pain.fr; 88 rue des Martyrs, 18e; breads & pastries €1.20-8; ☎7am-8pm Tue-Sat, 7.30am-7.30pm Sun; 🍷Abbesses) Famed for its baguettes, corn bread, rye and seasonal chestnut loaves and other varieties of *pain*.

**Farine & O** (Map p112; www.facebook.com/FarineetO; 153 rue du Faubourg St-Antoine, 11e; pastries €2-5.50, sandwiches & salads €5.50-7.50; ☎7.30am-8.30pm Wed-Mon; 🍷Ledru-Rollin) Superb breads and pastries by a winner of the prestigious Meilleur Ouvrier de France master craftsman competition.

## **i** FOOD WEBSITES

**David Lebovitz** ([www.davidlebovitz.com](http://www.davidlebovitz.com)) Expat US pastry chef and cookbook author. Good insights and recommendations.

**Le Fooding** ([www.lefooding.com](http://www.lefooding.com)) The French movement that's giving Michelin a run for its money. Le Fooding's mission is to shake up the ossified establishment, so expect a good balance of quirky, under-the-radar reviews and truly fine dining.

**La Fourchette** ([www.thefork.com](http://www.thefork.com)) Website offering user reviews and great deals of up to 50% off in Paris restaurants.

**Paris by Mouth** ([www.parisbymouth.com](http://www.parisbymouth.com)) Capital dining and drinking with articles and recommendations searchable by *arrondissement*.

### Chez La Vieille

FRENCH €€

(Map p92; ☎ 01 42 60 15 78; [www.chezlavielle.fr](http://www.chezlavielle.fr); 1 rue Bailleul, 1er; mains €26-39; ☺ noon-2pm & 6-10.30pm Tue-Sat, closed Aug; 📍 Louvre Rivoli) In salvaging this history-steeped spot within a 16th-century building, star chef Daniel Rose pays homage to the former wholesale markets, erstwhile legendary owner Adrienne Biasin (many of her timeless dishes have been updated, from terrines and rillettes to veal blanquette), and the soul of Parisian bistro cooking itself. Dine at the street-level bar or upstairs in the peacock-blue dining room.

### Bambou

SOUTHEAST ASIAN €€€

(Map p92; ☎ 01 40 28 98 30; [www.bambouparis.fr](http://www.bambouparis.fr); 23 rue des Jeûneurs, 2e; mains €12-24; ☺ kitchen noon-2.30pm & 7-11.30pm Mon-Sat, bar to 2am Mon-Sat; 📍 Sentier) This spectacular restaurant occupies a 500-sq-metre former fabric warehouse, with vintage birdcages and a giant metal dragon adorning the main dining room, a downstairs billiards room-bar, a vast terrace and a Zen-like garden. Specialities include squid with black pepper and basil, and aromatic pad thai, along with cocktails like Chang Mai Mule (lemongrass-infused vodka, ginger beer and lime leaves).

### ★ Frenchie

BISTRO €€€

(Map p92; ☎ 01 40 39 96 19; [www.frenchie-rue-dunil.com](http://www.frenchie-rue-dunil.com); 5 rue du Nil, 2e; 3-/5-course menu €57/95; ☺ 6-10pm Mon-Wed, noon-2pm & 6-10pm Thu & Fri; 📍 Sentier) Tucked down an inconspicuous alley, this tiny bistro with wooden tables and old stone walls is always packed and for good reason: Gregory Marchand's modern, market-driven, unpretentious dishes, which have earned him a Michelin star. Only five-course menus are available at dinner. Reserve well in advance. Alternatively, head to neighbouring **Frenchie Bar à Vins**

(Map p92; [www.frenchie-bav.com](http://www.frenchie-bav.com); 6 rue du Nil, 2e; small plates €11-34; ☺ 6.30-11pm).

There are no reservations at Frenchie Bar à Vins – for the best chance of nabbing a seat, arrive by 6pm, when a queue starts forming, or after 10pm.

During the day, swing by its adjacent deli-style takeaway outlet **Frenchie to Go** (Map p92; ☎ 01 42 21 96 92; [www.frenchie-ftg.com](http://www.frenchie-ftg.com); 9 rue du Nil, 2e; dishes €8.50-22; ☺ 10am-6pm; 📍 Sentier).

Its northern Paris outpost Frenchie Pigalle (p136), in the Grand Hôtel Pigalle, also takes walk-in diners only.

### ★ Verjus

INTERNATIONAL €€€

(Map p92; ☎ 01 42 97 54 40; [www.verjusparis.com](http://www.verjusparis.com); 52 rue de Richelieu, 1er; menu €78, with wine €133; ☺ 7-11pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Bourse, Pyramides) Opened by American duo Braden Perkins and Laura Adrian, Verjus was born out of their former clandestine supper club, the Hidden Kitchen. The restaurant builds on that tradition, offering a chance to sample some excellent, creative cuisine in a casual space. The tasting menu is a series of small plates, using ingredients sourced straight from producers. Reserve well in advance.

If you're just after an aperitif or a prelude to dinner, the downstairs **Verjus Bar à Vins** (Map p92; 47 rue de Montpensier, 1er; ☺ 6-11pm Mon-Fri) serves a handful of charcuterie and cheese plates. For lunch or a more casual dinner, don't miss nearby **Ellsworth** (Map p92; ☎ 01 42 60 59 66; [www.ellsworthparis.com](http://www.ellsworthparis.com); 34 rue de Richelieu, 1er; 2-/3-course lunch menu €24/30, mains €24-28; ☺ 12.15-2.15pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sat, 11.30am-3pm Sun; 📍 Pyramides), Verjus' sister restaurant.

### Le Grand Véfour

GASTRONOMY €€€

(Map p92; ☎ 01 42 96 56 27; [www.grand-vefour.com](http://www.grand-vefour.com); 17 rue de Beaujolais, 1er; lunch/dinner menu

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

## RUE MONTORQUEUIL

A splinter of the historic Les Halles, rue Montorgueil was once the oyster market and the final stop for seafood merchants hailing from the coast. Immortalised by Balzac in *La Comédie humaine*, this vibrant strip still draws Parisians to eat and shop – it's lined with *fromageries* and other shops with stalls on the street, cafes, and some revered patisseries and restaurants.

**Au Rocher de Cancale** (Map p92; ☎ 01 42 33 50 29; 78 rue Montorgueil, 2e; dozen oysters €18-40, seafood platter €32-80; ☀ 8am-2am; 🚶 Sentier, Les Halles, RER Châtelet–Les Halles) This 19th-century timber-lined restaurant (first opened in 1804 at No 59) is the last remaining legacy of the old oyster market. You can feast on oysters and seafood from Cancale (in Brittany) as well as other *plats du jour*.

**L'Escargot** (Map p92; ☎ 01 42 36 83 51; www.escargotmontorgueil.com; 38 rue Montorgueil, 1er; snails per half-dozen €12-18, mains €23-37; ☀ noon-11pm; 🚶 Étienne Marcel) A rue Montorgueil landmark, the giant golden snail atop this restaurant's jet-black façade leaves you in no doubt of its signature cuisine. Dating from 1832, it replenished market workers at the former *halles*, and keeps the tradition alive with snails prepared in a variety of ways, from classic garlic and parsley butter to truffles, foie gras or pungent blue cheese.

**Stohrer** (Map p92; www.stohrer.fr; 51 rue Montorgueil, 2e; pastries €2.50-6; ☀ 7.30am-8.30pm; 🚶 Étienne Marcel, Sentier) Opened in 1730 by Nicolas Stohrer, the Polish pastry chef of queen consort Marie Leszczyńska (wife of Louis XV), this place offers house-made specialities, including its own inventions *baba au rhum* (rum-soaked sponge cake) and *puits d'amour* (caramel-topped, vanilla-cream-filled puff pastry). The beautiful pastel murals were added in 1864 by Paul-Jacques-Aimé Baudry, who also decorated the Palais Garnier's Grand Foyer.

**Fou de Pâtisserie** (Map p92; www.foudepatisserieboutique.fr; 45 rue Montorgueil, 2e; pastries €4.50-11.50; ☀ 10am-8pm; 🚶 Les Halles, Sentier, RER Châtelet–Les Halles) Single-name patisseries scatter across the city, but for a greatest-hits range from its finest pastry chefs – Cyril Lignac, Christophe Adam (L'Éclair de Génie), Jacques Genin, Pierre Hermé and Philippe Conticini included – head to this one-stop concept shop.

€115/315, mains €102-126; ☀ noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Mon-Fri; 🚶 Pyramides) Holding two Michelin stars, this 18th-century jewel on the northern edge of the Jardin du Palais Royal has been a dining favourite since 1784; the names ascribed to each table span Napoléon and Victor Hugo to Colette (who lived next door). Expect a voyage of discovery from chef Guy Martin in one of the most beautiful restaurants in the world.

## 🔪 Montmartre & Northern Paris

Western Paris' culinary scene evolves slowly, but once you cross over that invisible border somewhere in the middle of the 9th *arrondissement*, it's a different world, with a constant flurry of new openings in south Pigalle, along Canal St-Martin and in the cosmopolitan 10e west of place de la République: young chefs here head up some of the most exciting dining venues in Paris today. *Rues commerçantes* (shopping streets), where food stalls set up on the pavement

outside shops, include rue des Martyrs and, in the 17e, rue Poncelet.

### ★ Holybelly

INTERNATIONAL €

(Map p108; www.holybellycafe.com; 5 & 19 rue Lucien Sampaix, 10e; dishes €6-16.50; ☀ 9am-5pm; ☎ ☎; 🚶 Jacques Bonsergent) Friendly vibes, sassy breakfast 'n' lunch dishes and specialist coffee define this duo. Holybelly at No 5 cooks all-day pancakes and eggs, while the Holybelly original at No 19 serves more creative, seasonal dishes to share. Last orders 4pm. No reservations.

### ★ Le Verre Volé

BISTRO €

(Map p108; ☎ 01 48 03 17 34; www.leverrevole.fr; 67 rue de Lancry, 10e; mains €14-21, sandwiches €6-12; ☀ kitchen 12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-11.30pm, bar 9.30am-2am; ☎; 🚶 Jacques Bonsergent) The tiny 'Stolen Glass' – a wine shop with a few tables – is one of Paris' most popular wine bar/restaurants, with outstanding natural and unfiltered wines and expert advice. Unpretentious *plats du jour* are excellent

and seasonal specials include house-smoked salmon gravlax with lime-pickled red cabbage and cauliflower.

### Fric-Frac

SANDWICHES €

(Map p108; ☎ 01 42 85 87 34; www.fricfrac.fr; 79 quai de Valmy, 10e; sandwiches €9-14; ☺ noon-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm Mon-Thu, noon-10.30pm Fri-Sun; 🍷 Jacques Bonsergent) French snack *croque monsieur* (toasted cheese-and-ham sandwich) gets a contemporary makeover at this canalside space. Gourmet Winnie (Crottin de Chavignol cheese, dried fruit, chestnut honey, chives and rosemary) and exotic Shaolin (king prawns, lemongrass paste, shi-take mushrooms and Thai basil) are among the creative combos served with salad and fries. Eat in or head to the canal.

### Ten Belles

CAFE €

(Map p108; ☎ 09 83 08 86 69; www.tenbelles.com; 10 rue de la Grange aux Belles, 10e; dishes €3-7; ☺ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun; 🍷; 🍷 Jacques Bonsergent) A stone's skim from the canal, this lively cafe with mezzanine seating and pavement tables overflows with regulars drinking Parisian-roasted Belleville Brûlerie coffee and dining on homemade soups, salads, filled focaccia, toasted sandwiches and tartines (open-faced sandwiches) as well as house-baked scones, cookies and cakes.

### Le Petit Château d'Eau

FRENCH €

(Map p108; ☎ 01 42 08 72 81; 34 rue du Château d'Eau, 10e; mains €13-16; ☺ kitchen noon-3pm Mon, noon-3pm & 7-11.30pm Tue-Sat, bar 8am-3.30pm Mon, to 2am Tue-Fri, 9am-2am Sat;

🍷 Jacques Bonsergent) Scarcely changed in a century, with lemon- and lime-tiled walls, horseshoe-shaped zinc bar and burgundy banquettes, this neighbourhood treasure endures in defiance of the post-industrial co-working cafes that have sprung up around it. Classical cooking ranges from duck with honey sauce to beef entrecôte with roast garlic potatoes; you can just stop by for a morning coffee or afternoon kir.

### Le Bel Ordinaire

MEDITERRANEAN €

(Map p80; ☎ 01 46 27 46 67; www.lebelordinaire.com; 54 rue de Paradis, 10e; 2-/3-course mid-week lunch menu €21/26, dishes €8-17; ☺ kitchen noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat, bar 11am-11pm; 🍷; 🍷 Poissonnière) Floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall open shelves lined with bottles and gourmet products (hams, cheeses, shellfish, preserves, straw baskets of farm eggs and fresh fruit and vegetables) fire up your appetite for tapas-style small plates, such as pistachio, pea and duck terrine or scallops with basil oil, at this contemporary wine bar. Some 150 winemakers are represented.

### ★ Django

FRENCH €€

(Map p80; ☎ 01 74 64 64 84; www.django-pigalle.fr; 24 rue Victor Massé, 9e; shared plates €9-16; ☺ kitchen 6-11pm, bar to 2am daily; 🍷 Pigalle) A former Pigalle guitar shop has morphed into a stylish *bar à manger* (dining bar) where fashionistas hobnob until the wee hours over craft cocktails, natural wines and inventive shared plates by chef Khélil Morin. Offerings might include leeks in fig vinaigrette with

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### BEST VEGETARIAN & VEGAN

**Abattoir Végétal** (Map p72; www.abattoirvegetal.com; 61 rue Ramey, 18e; mains €15-17; ☺ noon-4pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3.30pm Sun; 🍷; 🍷 Jules Joffrin) Plant-filled vegan cafe in Montmartre.

**Le Potager de Charlotte** (Map p80; ☎ 01 44 65 09 63; www.lepotagerdecharlotte.fr; 12 rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, 9e; mains €18-21, Sun brunch €30; ☺ 7-10pm Tue-Thu, noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Fri & Sat, 11am-3pm Sun; 🍷; 🍷 Cadet) Gourmet vegan restaurant.

**Sweet Rawmance** (Map p72; ☎ 09 86 12 73 48; 83 rue Daguerre, 14e; pastries & cakes €3-6.50, mains €11-16, Sun brunch €25; ☺ 11am-10pm Mon-Thu, 11am-4pm Fri, noon-7pm Sun; 🍷; 🍷 Gaîté) Be seduced by raw cakes, pizzas, burgers and more.

**Yumi** (Map p108; ☎ 01 86 76 72 29; www.yumi.fr; 27 rue du Château d'Eau, 10e; sandwiches, soups & bowls €3.50-11; ☺ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; 🍷; 🍷 Jacques Bonsergent, Château d'Eau) New-generation coffee shop and veg canteen.

**Cloud Cakes** (Map p92; www.cloudcakes.fr; 8 rue Mandar, 2e; dishes €5.50-13, Sun brunch €26; ☺ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat; 🍷; 🍷 Sentier) Plant-based cuisine just off foodie strip rue Montorgueil.



tangy 12-month-aged Comté, shrimp ravioli or roast cauliflower with piquillo pepper and caraway 'ketchup'.

### Marrow

BISTRO €€

(Map p108; ☎09 81 34 57 00; 128 rue du Faubourg St-Martin, 10e; mains €15-19; ☺kitchen 6-10pm Tue-Sat, bar to 2am, closed Aug; 🚶Gare de l'Est) Hay-smoked quail with peat vinaigrette, grilled octopus with fennel confit, and roast bone marrow are among the adventurous flavour combinations from Hugo Blanchet, who partnered with mixologist Arthur Combe to open this gourmet neobistro. Cheese aficionados won't be able to resist the caramelised *chèvre frais* (fresh goat's cheese) as *fromage* course.

### Abri

BISTRO €€

(Map p80; ☎01 83 97 00 00; www.abrirestaurant.fr; 92 rue du Faubourg Poissonnière, 9e; tasting menu lunch/dinner €55/65, dinner mains €17-22; ☺12.15-2pm & 7.15-10pm Tue-Sat; 🚶Poissonnière) It's no bigger than a shoebox and the decor is borderline nonexistent, but that's all part of the charm. Katsuaki Okiyama is a seriously talented chef with an artistic flair, and his surprise tasting menus are exceptional. On Saturdays, a giant gourmet sandwich (€14) is all that's served for lunch.

### Bonhomie

BISTRO €€

(Map p108; ☎09 83 88 82 51; www.bonhomie.paris; 22 rue d'Enghien, 10e; 2-/3-course lunch menu €18/22, mains €12-21; ☺kitchen 12.30-2.30pm & 6-10pm Mon-Fri, 6-10pm Sat, 11am-3pm Sun, bar to 1am Mon-Sat; 🚶Bonne Nouvelle) Good-time Bonhomie serves home-brewed beer and creative cocktails (Pina Sage, with sage-infused mezcal, almond liqueur and sherry; Bon Americano, with dry vermouth, bitters and rhubarb soda), but the biggest draw is the food. Dishes whipped up in its open kitchen might include oysters with champagne foam, and black garlic-crusting lamb with beetroot mousse.

### Flesh

BARBECUE €€

(Map p98; ☎01 42 81 21 93; www.facebook.com/fleshrestaurant; 25 rue de Douai, 9e; mains €12-38; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm; 🚶Blanche) Meats and seafood, charcoal-barbecued to smoky perfection, are the specialties of this spartan spot in hip Pigalle. Angus beef, free-range chicken, suckling lamb and other quality meats and cuts come in two sizes – big or XL – in the company of garlic-spiked fries and some fantastic veggie dishes.

### La Bulle

FRENCH €€

(Map p72; ☎01 85 15 21 58; www.restolabulle.fr; 48 rue Louis Blanc, 10e; 2-/3-course lunch menu €18.50/24, 3-/6-course dinner menu €36/55; ☺noon-3pm & 7.30-11.30pm Mon-Thu, noon-3.30pm & 7.30-11.45pm Fri & Sat; 🚶Louis Blanc) It's worth detouring a couple of blocks west of Canal St-Martin to this contemporary corner bistro with avocado-green seating on a sunny pavement terrace. Creative *fait maison* (homemade) cuisine includes razor clams with white and green asparagus salsa, coffee-marinated quail, and poached pear with duck-fat caramel, accompanied by outstanding all-natural French wines.

### Aspic

BISTRO €€€

(Map p80; ☎09 82 49 30 98; www.aspic-restaurant.fr; 24 rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, 9e; 7-course tasting menu €75, with wine €118; ☺7.30-10pm Tue-Sat; 🚶Anvers) Chef Quentin Giroud ditched the high-flying world of finance for the stoves, and this small, vintage-style space with semi-open kitchen is testament to his conviction – as is his Michelin star. No-choice, weekly changing tasting menus feature inspired creations like salt-roasted beetroot with lobster bisque mousse, skin-on plaice with popcorn capers, and celeriac with mustard shoots and grated raw cauliflower.

## ✂ Le Marais, Ménilmontant & Belleville

Packed with eateries of every imaginable type, Le Marais is one of Paris' premier dining neighbourhoods, with many restaurants and bistros requiring a reservation. Despite the huge concentration of eating addresses, it's one of the premier places for new openings. Multi-ethnic Belleville is tops for Asian fare. Some of the Bastille and Eastern Paris neighbourhood's best neobistros are within easy walking distance of Cimetière du Père Lachaise.

### ★ Jacques Genin

PASTRIES €

(Map p108; ☎01 45 77 29 01; www.jacquesgenin.fr; 133 rue de Turenne, 3e; pastries €9; ☺11am-7pm Tue-Fri & Sun, to 7.30pm Sat; 🚶Oberkampf, Filles du Calvaire) Wildly creative *chocolatier* Jacques Genin is famed for his flavoured caramels, *pâtes de fruits* (fruit jellies) and exquisitely embossed *bonbons de chocolat* (chocolate sweets). But what completely steals the show at his elegant chocolate showroom is the *salon de dégustation* (aka tearoom),

where you can order a pot of outrageously thick hot chocolate and legendary Genin *millefeuille*, assembled to order.

### Maison Plisson

CAFE €

(Map p108; ☎01 71 18 19 09; [www.facebook.com/LaMaisonPlisson](http://www.facebook.com/LaMaisonPlisson); 93 bd Beaumarchais, 3e; mains €7-15, weekend brunch €29; ☎9.30am-9pm Mon, 8.30am-9pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-8pm Sun; 🗺 St-Sébastien-Froissart) Framed by glass-canopied wrought-iron girders, this gourmet emporium incorporates a covered-market-style, terrazzo-floored food hall filled with exquisite, mostly French produce: meat, vegetables, cheese, wine, chocolate, jams, freshly baked breads and much more. If your appetite's whetted, its cafe, opening to twin terraces, serves charcuterie, foie gras and cheese platters, bountiful salads and delicacies such as Noilly Prat-flambéed sardines.

### L'As du Fallafel

FALAFEL €

(Map p108; ☎08 99 34 43 64; [www.l-as-du-fallafel.zenchef.com](http://www.l-as-du-fallafel.zenchef.com); 34 rue des Rosiers, 4e; takeaway €5.50-8.50, mains €12-18; ☎noon-midnight Sun-Thu, to 4pm Fri; 🗺 St-Paul) The lunchtime queue stretching halfway down the street from this place says it all. This Parisian favourite, 100% worth the inevitable wait, is

the address for kosher, perfectly deep-fried falafel (chickpea balls) and chicken or lamb shawarma sandwiches. Do as every Parisian does and get them to take away.

### ★ Au Passage

BISTRO €€

(Map p108; ☎01 43 55 07 52; [www.restaurant-aupassage.fr](http://www.restaurant-aupassage.fr); 1bis passage St-Sébastien, 11e; small plates €8-24, meats to share €25-70; ☎12.30-2pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sat; 🗺 St-Sébastien-Froissart) Rising-star chefs continue to make their name at this *petit bar de quartier* (little neighbourhood bar). Choose from a good-value, uncomplicated selection of *petites assiettes* (small tapas-style plates) of cold meats, raw or cooked fish, vegetables and more, and larger meat dishes such as slow-roasted lamb shoulder or *côte de bœuf* (rib-eye steak) to share. Reservations are essential.

### Double Dragon

ASIAN €€

(Map p108; [www.doubledragonparis.com](http://www.doubledragonparis.com); 52 rue St-Maur, 11e; 3-course lunch menu €18, mains €15.50-28; ☎noon-2.30pm Wed, noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Thu-Sun; 🗺 Rue St-Maur) Sisters Tatiana and Katia Levha, who run nearby bistro Le Servan (p150), fire up the spice on organic produce at this on-trend place. Barbecued duck hearts, pan-fried mussels,

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### GLUTEN-FREE ESSENTIALS

Gluten-free dining options are steadily becoming more prevalent in the city. Addresses are mapped at [www.glutenfreeinparis.com](http://www.glutenfreeinparis.com).

Top choices include:

**Helmut Newcake** (Map p80; ☎09 81 31 28 31; [www.helmutnewcake.com](http://www.helmutnewcake.com); 28 rue Vignon, 9e; pastries €3.50-6, plats du jour €7-12; ☎9am-7pm Tue-Sat; 🗺 Madeleine) Combining the French genius for pastries with a 100% gluten-free kitchen, Helmut Newcake is one of those Parisian addresses that some will simply have to hang on to. Éclairs, fondants and tarts are some of the dessert options, while you can count on lunch (salads, quiches, soups, pizzas) to be delicious and market-driven. Takeaway only.

**Chambelland** (Map p108; ☎01 43 55 07 30; [www.chambelland.com](http://www.chambelland.com); 14 rue Ternaux, 11e; lunch menu €10-12, pastries €2.50-9; ☎8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun; 🗺 Parmentier) Using rice and buckwheat flour from its own mill in southern France, this pioneering 100% gluten-free bakery creates exquisite cakes and pastries as well as sourdough loaves and brioches peppered with nuts, seeds, chocolate and fruit. Stop for lunch at one of the handful of plastic tables in this relaxed space, strewn with sacks of flour and books.

**NoGlu** (Map p108; ☎01 42 36 52 50; [www.noglu.fr](http://www.noglu.fr); 15 rue Basfroi, 11e; pastries €2.50-8, dishes €8.50-17, weekend brunch €28; ☎9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat; 🗺 Charonne) The clue is in the name: everything NoGlu serves for breakfast (granola, porridge, tartines), lunch (Buddha bowls, soups, quiches, burgers and pastas) and weekend brunch is gluten-free, with dairy-free and vegan options. The rose-pink dining room is styled like a Parisian living room.

crispy pig's-ear dumplings or simple veggie red curries are typical dishes on the frequently changing menu. No reservations (expect to wait).

**Bôti**

BISTRO €€

(Map p72; ☎ 06 65 49 12 29; www.facebook.com/BOTI.paris; 74 bd de Ménilmontant, 20e; 2-/3-course menu lunch €12/16, dinner €23/27; ☀ noon-3pm & 8pm-midnight Wed-Sat; 🍷 Père Lachaise) There's always at least one vegetarian option (such as black sesame polenta) on the small but superb weekly menu at this welcoming little stone-walled bistro footsteps from Père Lachaise, alongside meat and poultry dishes like confit spiced lamb shoulder or duck terrine with pickled lotus root. Wines are excellent; artisanal beers include a quinoa-based gluten-free brew. Cash only.

**La Cave de l'Insolite**

BISTRO €€

(Map p108; ☎ 01 53 36 08 33; www.facebook.com/lacaveinsolite; 30 rue de la Folie Méricourt, 11e; 2-/3-course midweek lunch menu €18/20, mains €18-26; ☀ 12.15-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat, 12.15-2.30pm & 7.30-10pm Sun; 🍷; 🍷 St-Ambroise, Parmentier) Brothers Axel and Arnaud, who have worked at some of Paris' top addresses, run this rustic-chic wine bar with barrels, timber tables and a wood-burning stove. Duck pâté with cider jelly, haddock rillettes with lime and endive confit, and beef with mushroom and sweetbread sauce are among the seasonal dishes; its 100-plus hand-harvested wines come from small-scale French vineyards.

**Robert et Louise**

FRENCH €€

(Map p108; ☎ 01 42 78 55 89; www.robertetlouise.com; 64 rue Vieille du Temple, 3e; mains €18-26; ☀ 7.30-10pm Tue-Fri, 12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Sat & Sun; 🍷 Rambuteau) Going strong since 1958, this wonderfully convivial 'country inn' with red gingham curtains and rustic timber beams offers simple and inexpensive French food, including *côte de bœuf* (side of beef for two or three people) cooked on an open fire. Arrive early to snag the farmhouse table next to the fireplace – the makings of a real jolly Rabelaisian evening.

**Clown Bar**

FRENCH €€

(Map p108; ☎ 01 43 55 87 35; www.clown-bar-paris.com; 114 rue Amelot, 11e; mains €28-36; ☀ kitchen noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Wed-Sun, bar 8am-2am; 🍷 Filles du Calvaire) The former staff dining room of the city's winter circus, the 1852-built Cirque d'Hiver, is a historic monument with colourful clown-themed ceram-

ics and mosaics, painted glass ceilings and its original zinc bar. Modern French cuisine spans scallops with finger lime and watercress dressing to Mesquer pigeon stuffed with figs. The pavement terrace gets packed out on sunny days.

**Derrière**

FRENCH €€

(Map p108; ☎ 01 44 61 91 95; www.derriere-resto.com; 69 rue des Gravilliers, 3e; mains €18-36, weekend brunch €34; ☀ 7.30-11.30pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm & 7.30-11.30pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun; 🍷 Arts et Métiers) Play table football, sit on the side of the bed, glass of Champers in hand, or lounge between bookcases at this apartment-style restaurant in a beautiful courtyard. Chilled vibe aside, Derrière ('behind') is deadly serious in the kitchen. Classic French bistro dishes and more inventive creations are excellent, as is weekend brunch.

**Istr**

SEAFOOD €€

(Map p108; ☎ 01 43 56 81 25; www.istr.paris; 41 rue Notre Dame de Nazareth, 3e; half-dozen oysters €12-44, mains €19-35, 2-/3-course lunch menus €19/24; ☀ kitchen noon-2.30pm & 6-10pm Mon-Fri, 6-11pm Sat & Sun, bar to 2am daily; 🍷 Temple) Fabulously patterned wallpaper and a gleaming zinc bar set the stage for innovative Breton-inspired cuisine. The region's famed *istr* ('oyster' in Breton) is the star of the show here, served natural, as a Bloody Mary-style shot, or with sauces such as soy and ginger. Other creations include buckwheat chips with smoked haddock fishcakes. It doubles as a rocking bar.

**★ Maison**

FUSION €€€

(Map p108; ☎ 01 43 38 61 95; www.maison-sota.com; 3 rue St-Hubert, 11e; lunch/dinner menu €55/125; ☀ 12.30-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Wed-Sun; 🍷 Rue St-Maur) Ring to enter this epicurean loft (as one would any '*maison*' or 'home'), take the monumental staircase to a mezzanine crowned with a glass skylight, and savour the open-kitchen show of Japanese chef Sota Atsumi. The *tomettes* (terracotta tiles) covering floor and walls are as sensational as the kaleidoscope of exquisitely presented, fusion small plates. Final fixed menus change daily.

**✂ Bastille & Eastern Paris**

Bastille dining tends to swing between a highly lauded group of up-and-coming chefs, who run the hip neobistros that have re-inspired Parisian cooking, and the die-hard

traditionalists, who rarely venture beyond the much-loved standards of French cuisine. The neighbourhood caters to all budgets, tastes and time constraints – along with the area's sensational markets, speciality food shops and *boulangeries*, you'll find gourmet burger, sandwich and pizza addresses in the mix too.

### ★ Madito

LEBANESE €

(Map p112; ☎01 45 35 89 72; www.madito.fr; 38 rue de Citeaux, 12e; mains €11-15, tasting menu €28; ☺noon-3pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat; 📄; 🚗) Faidherbe-Chaligny) Teensy Madito prepares startlingly good Lebanese cuisine daily from scratch (there's no microwave or freezer on the premises). With just 20 seats, you'll need to book ahead to feast on starters such as *makdous* (aubergine stuffed with red peppers and walnuts) or *warak enab* (vine-leaf-wrapped rice and spiced beef), followed by mains like *tawouk* (lemon- and yoghurt-marinated chicken).

Vegetarian choices are plentiful. Finish with desserts like *aish as-saraya* (rosewater-syrup-soaked bread pudding) or *sfouf* (almond semolina cake).

### Café Mirabelle

CAFE €

(Map p72; www.cafemirabelleparis.wixsite.com; 16 rue la Vacquerie, 11e; pastries €2.50-7.50, 2-course lunch menu €15.80, weekend brunch €29; ☺8am-6pm Wed-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun; 📄; 🚗) Philippe Auguste, Voltaire) A black-and-white stencilled outline of Paris' skyline stretches across one wall of this charming cafe, whose home-baked treats include custard- and banana-filled croissants, Grand Marnier gâteau and yuzu meringue pie. Its *gianduja* (choc-hazelnut) hot chocolate is a winter warmer; in summer, cool down with a freshly squeezed juice.

### CheZaline

SANDWICHES €

(Map p108; 85 rue de la Roquette, 11e; sandwiches €5.50-9; ☺11am-5.30pm Mon-Fri; 🚗) Voltaire) A former horse-meat butcher's shop (*chevaline*, hence the spin on the name; look for

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### FAVOURITE FOOD MARKETS

Check locations and hours of all of Paris' food markets at [www.paris.fr/equipements/marches-alimentaires/tous-les-horaires](http://www.paris.fr/equipements/marches-alimentaires/tous-les-horaires).

**Marché d'Aligre** (Map p112; rue d'Aligre, 12e; ☺7.30am-1.30pm Tue-Fri, to 2.30pm Sat & Sun; 🚗) Ledru-Rollin) A favourite with chefs and locals, this chaotic street market's stalls are piled with fruit, vegetables and seasonal delicacies such as truffles. Behind them, specialist shops stock cheeses, coffee, chocolates, meat, seafood and wine. More are located in the adjoining covered market hall, **Marché Beauvau** (place d'Aligre, 12e; ☺9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun). The small but bargain-filled flea market **Marché aux Puces d'Aligre** (☺7.30am-1.30pm Tue-Fri, to 2.30pm Sat & Sun) takes place on the square.

**Marché Bastille** (Map p108; bd Richard Lenoir, 11e; ☺7am-2.30pm Thu, to 3pm Sun; 🚗) Bastille, Bréguet-Sabin) If you only get to one open-air street market in Paris, this one – stretching between the Bastille and Richard Lenoir metro stations – is among the very best. Its 150-plus stalls are piled high with fruit and vegetables, meats, fish, shellfish, cheeses and seasonal specialities such as truffles. You'll also find clothing, leather handbags and wallets, and a smattering of antiques.

**Marché Raspail** (Map p128; bd Raspail, btwn rue de Rennes & rue du Cherche Midi, 6e; ☺7am-2.30pm Tue & Fri, organic market 9am-1.30pm Sun; 🚗) Rennes) A traditional open-air market on Tuesday and Friday, Marché Raspail is especially popular on Sunday, when it's filled with *biologique* (organic) produce.

**Marché des Enfants Rouges** (Map p108; 39 rue de Bretagne & 33bis rue Charlot, 3e; ☺8.30am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 8.30am-2pm Sun, individual stall hours vary; 🚗) Filles du Calvaire) Built in 1615, Paris' oldest covered market is secreted behind an inconspicuous green metal gate. A glorious maze of 20-odd food stalls selling ready-to-eat dishes from around the globe (Moroccan couscous, Japanese bento boxes and more), as well as produce, cheese and flower stalls, it's a great place to meander and to dine with locals at communal tables.

the gold horse head above the door) is now a fabulous deli for baguettes filled with ingredients such as Prince de Paris ham and housemade garlic pesto, salads and home-made terrines. There's a handful of seats (and plenty of parks nearby). Prepare to queue at lunchtime.

### ★ Mokonuts

CAFE €€

(Map p112; ☎09 80 81 82 85; www.mokonuts.com; 5 rue St-Bernard, 11e; pastries €2.50-7, mains €20-25; ☀9am-4pm Mon-Fri, closed Aug; ☎; 📍Faidherbe-Chaligny) Much-loved hole-in-the-wall Mokonuts, with a beautiful mosaic-tiled floor, makes a cosy refuge for snacks like flourless chocolate layer cake, clementine almond cake and white-chocolate and roasted-almond cookies. Sea bream with chickpeas and capers, and lamb shoulder with hummus are among the all-organic lunchtime mains (book well ahead). Natural wines and craft beers feature on the drinks list. Bookings are recommended.

Alternatively, head around the corner to its offspring **Mokoloco** (Map p108; 74 rue de Charonne, 11e; sandwiches €7.50-10.50; ☀11.30am-5pm Tue-Sat; 📍Charonne) for gourmet sandwiches, salads and famous cookies – look for the same mint-green façade.

### ★ Le Servan

BISTRO €€

(Map p108; ☎01 55 28 51 82; www.leservan.fr; 32 rue St-Maur, 11e; 3-course lunch menu €29, mains €24-35; ☀noon-10.30pm; 📍Voltaire, Rue St-Maur, Père Lachaise) Ornate cream-coloured ceilings with moulded cornices and pastel murals, huge windows and wooden floors

give this neighbourhood neobistro near Père Lachaise a light, airy feel on even the greyest Parisian day. Seared mackerel with yuzu and miso dressing, and duck and coriander dumplings are among the inventive creations on the daily changing menu. Reserve to avoid missing out.

### Le Bistrot Paul Bert

BISTRO €€

(Map p112; ☎01 43 72 24 01; 18 rue Paul Bert, 11e; 2-/3-course menu €19/42; ☀noon-2pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Thu, 7.30-11pm Fri, noon-2.30pm Sat, closed Aug; 📍Faidherbe-Chaligny) When food writers list Paris' best bistros, Paul Bert's name consistently pops up. The timeless decor and classic dishes, such as *steak-frites* (steak and chips) and hazelnut-cream Paris-Brest pastry, reward booking ahead. Siblings in the same street: **L'Écailler du Bistrot** (Map p112; ☎01 43 72 76 77; 22 rue Paul Bert, 11e; oysters per half-dozen €9-22, mains €28-41, seafood platters per person from €42; ☀noon-2.30pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Sat) for seafood; **La Cave Paul Bert** (Map p112; ☎01 58 53 50 92; 16 rue Paul Bert, 11e; ☀noon-midnight, kitchen noon-2pm & 7.30-11.30pm), a wine bar with small plates; and **Le 6 Paul Bert** (Map p112; ☎01 43 79 14 32; www.le6paulbert.com; 6 rue Paul Bert, 11e; 3-course weekday lunch menu €22, small plates €8-28; ☀noon-2pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-11pm Sat) for modern cuisine.

### Le Chardenoux

BISTRO €€

(Map p112; ☎01 43 71 49 52; www.restaurantlechardenoux.com; 1 rue Jules Vallès, 11e; mains €20-28; ☀noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm; 📍Charonne) Dating from 1908, this picture-perfect Pa-

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### BEST CRÊPES

**Breizh Café** (Map p108; ☎01 42 72 13 77; www.breizhcafe.com; 109 rue Vieille du Temple, 3e; crêpes & galettes €6.80-19; ☀11.30am-11pm Mon-Sat, to 10pm Sun; 📍St-Sébastien-Froissart) Authentic Breton crêpes, with several branches around town.

**Crêperie Pen-Ty** (Map p80; ☎01 48 74 18 49; www.creperiepen-ty.com; 65 rue de Douai, 9e; crêpes €5-9, galettes €4-13; ☀noon-2.30pm & 7-11.15pm Mon-Fri, 12.30-4pm & 6.30-11.30pm Sat, to 10.30pm Sun; 📍Place de Clichy) Northern Paris' best crêperie.

**Little Breizh** (Map p128; ☎01 43 54 60 74; www.facebook.com/littlebreizhcreperie; 11 rue Grégoire de Tours, 6e; crêpes & galettes €6-17; ☀noon-2.15pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sat, closed Aug; ☎; 📍Odéon) Innovative twists such as Breton sardines.

**Crêperie Bretonne Fleurie de l'Épouse du Marin** (Map p108; ☎01 43 55 62 29; 67 rue de Charonne, 11e; crêpes €4.50-13.50; ☀noon-2pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-2pm & 7-10pm Sun; 📍Charonne) Delightful 11e crêperie.

**Crêperie Josselin** (Map p128; ☎01 43 20 93 50; 67 rue du Montparnasse, 14e; crêpes & galettes €5-14; ☀noon-11pm Tue-Sun; 📍Edgar Quinet) In the 'Little Brittany' neighbourhood near Gare Montparnasse.



risian bistro with a polished-timber façade, patterned tiled floors, ceiling frescoes, mirrored walls, bevelled frosted-glass screens and a centrepiece zinc bar is a listed historic monument. Star chef Cyril Lignac creates inventive surf (mussels au gratin, Guérande salt-crusted sea bass) and some turf (seared rib-eye with kombu seaweed, fresh wasabi and green-apple relish).

It's across the road from Lignac's combined chocolate boutique and tearoom **La Chocolaterie Cyril Lignac** (Map p112; www.lachocolateriecyrillignac.com; 25 rue Chanzy, 11e; pastries €3-5.50; ☺ 8am-6pm Tue-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun; ☑ Charonne), to the east, and from his bakery-pastry shop **La Pâtisserie** (Map p112; www.cyrillignac.com; 24 rue Paul Bert, 11e; pastries €3-6.50; ☺ 7am-8pm Tue-Sun; ☑ Charonne, Faidherbe-Chaligny), to the south.

### ★ Septime

GASTRONOMY €€€

(Map p108; ☎ 01 43 67 38 29; www.septime-charonne.fr; 80 rue de Charonne, 11e; mains €24-28, 5-course lunch menu with/without wine €105/60, 7-course dinner menu €155/95; ☺ 7.30-10pm Mon, 12.15-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Fri; ☑ Charonne) The alchemists in Bertrand Grébaut's Michelin-starred kitchen produce truly beautiful creations, served by blue-aproned waitstaff. The menu reads like an obscure shopping list: each dish is a mere listing of three ingredients, while the mystery *carte blanche* dinner menu puts you in the hands of the innovative chef. Reservations require planning and perseverance – book at least three weeks in advance.

Its nearby wine bar **Septime La Cave** (Map p108; ☎ 01 43 67 14 87; www.septime-lacave.fr; 3 rue Basfroi, 11e; ☺ 4-11pm; ☑ Charonne) is ideal for a pre- or post-meal drink. For stunning small seafood plates, its walk-in sister restaurant **Clamato** (Map p108; www.clamato-charonne.fr; 80 rue de Charonne, 11e; small plates €14-23, dozen oysters €24-58; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat & Sun; ☑ Charonne) is right next door.

### Table

FRENCH €€€

(Map p112; ☎ 01 43 43 12 26; www.table.paris; 3 rue de Prague, 12e; mains €79-89; ☺ noon-3pm & 7.45-10.30pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-10pm Sat; ☑ Ledru-Rollin) Unusual and rare artisan products sourced from all over France decide the day's menu at Michelin-starred Table, styled like a contemporary *table d'hôte*, with diners seated at the curvaceous zinc bar while talented food writer and chef Bruno Verjus performs in his open kitchen. Verjus grows herbs and

flowers in his own garden, and delights in talking food with diners.

### Le Train Bleu

FRENCH €€€

(Map p112; ☎ 01 43 43 09 06; www.le-train-bleu.com; 1st fl, Gare de Lyon, 26 place Louis Armand, 12e; 2-/3-/6-course menu €49/65/110, mains €29-46; ☺ restaurant 11.30am-2.45pm & 7-10.45pm, bar 7.30am-10pm; ☑ ☑; ☑ Gare de Lyon) This spectacular belle époque train-station restaurant has been an elegant port of call since 1901. Cuisine is traditional French – Salers beef tartare is prepared at your table – and even if you can't dine here, indulging in a silver pot of tea or a cocktail in its comfortable lounge-bar is well worth the top-end prices.

A two-course children's menu costs €25.

### ✂ The Islands

Île St-Louis is a pleasant, if pricey and unexceptional, and often touristy place to dine. Otherwise lacking in decent eating places, Île de la Cité has a handful of lovely addresses on its western tip.

Self-caterers will find a couple of *fromageries*, chocolate shops and a small grocery store on rue St-Louis en l'Île, 4e.

### ★ Berthillon

ICE CREAM €

(Map p116; ☎ 01 43 54 31 61; www.berthillon.fr; 29-31 rue St-Louis en l'Île, 4e; 1/2/3/4 scoops takeaway €3/4.50/6/7.50; ☺ 10am-8pm Wed-Sun, closed mid-Feb-early Mar & Aug; ☑ Pont Marie) Founded here in 1954, this esteemed *glacier* (ice-cream maker) is still run by the same family today. Its 70-plus all-natural, chemical-free flavours include fruit sorbets (pink grapefruit, raspberry and rose) and richer ice creams made from fresh milk and eggs (salted caramel, candied Ardèche chestnuts, Armagnac and prunes, gingerbread, liquorice, praline and pine kernels). Watch for tempting new seasonal flavours.

### ★ Café Saint Régis

CAFE €

(Map p116; ☎ 01 43 54 59 41; www.lesaintregis-paris.com; 6 rue Jean du Bellay, 4e; dishes €10-15, mains €19-29; ☺ kitchen 7am-midnight, bar to 2am; ☑ ☑; ☑ Pont Marie) Waiters in long white aprons, a ceramic-tiled interior and retro vintage decor make hip Le Saint Regis a deliciously Parisian hang-out any time of the day, from breakfast pastries, organic omelettes and mid-morning *croques monsieurs* to Parisian classics – garlicky snails, onion soup, fried-egg-topped *steak à cheval* – and late-night cocktails.

## PARIS' OLDEST RESTAURANT & CAFE

**À la Petite Chaise** (Map p128; ☎01 42 22 13 35; www.alapetitechaise.fr; 36 rue de Grenelle, 7e; 2-/3-course lunch menu €25.50/33.50, 3-course dinner menu €36.50, mains €21-28;

☺ noon-2pm & 7-11pm; 🚶 Sèvres-Babylone) Paris' oldest restaurant hides behind an iron gate that's been here since it opened in 1680. Classical decor and cuisine (onion soup, duck, lamb and unexpected delights such as venison terrine with hazelnuts) make it worth a visit above and beyond its history.

**Le Procope** (Map p128; ☎01 40 46 79 00; www.procope.com; 13 rue de l'Ancienne Comédie, 6e; 2-/3-course menu lunch €22/29, dinner €31.50/38.50; ☺ noon-11pm; 🚶 Odéon) The city's oldest cafe welcomed its first patrons in 1686, and was frequented by Voltaire, Molière and Balzac et al. Its chandeliered interior also has an entrance onto the 1735-built glass-roofed passageway Cour du Commerce St-André. House specialities include coq au vin, veal *blanquette* and homemade ice cream.

### Le Caveau du Palais

FRENCH €€

(Map p116; ☎01 43 26 04 28; www.caveaudu.palais.fr; 19 place Dauphine, 1er; mains €21-27; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm; 🚶 Pont Neuf) Le Caveau's half-timbered dining areas and (weather permitting) alfresco terrace are invariably packed with diners tucking into bountiful fresh fare: pan-seared scallops with artichokes, mushroom ravioli in creamy chestnut sauce, or duck with roast figs. The divinely flaky *millefeuille maison* or crème brûlée are typically sweet Parisian ways to end any meal here.

More informal dishes are served at its adjacent wine bar, **Le Bar du Caveau** (17 place Dauphine, 1er; ☺ bar 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, kitchen noon-4pm Mon-Fri).

## Latin Quarter

From chandelier-lit palaces loaded with history to cheap-eat student haunts, the 5e *arrondissement* caters to every budget and culinary taste. Rue Mouffetard is famed for its food market and food shops, though you'll have to trek down side streets for the neighbourhood's best meals.

### ★ Café de la Nouvelle Mairie

CAFE €

(Map p118; ☎01 44 07 04 41; 19 rue des Fossés St-Jacques, 5e; small plates €8-11, mains €14-22; ☺ kitchen noon-3pm & 8-10.30pm Mon-Fri, bar 8am-midnight Mon-Fri; 🚶 Cardinal Lemoine) Shhhh...just around the corner from the Panthéon but hidden away on a small, fountained square, this hybrid cafe-restaurant and wine bar is a tip-top neighbourhood secret, serving natural wines and delicious seasonal bistro fare, from oysters and ribs (*à la française*) to grilled lamb sausage over lentils. It takes reservations for dinner but not lunch – arrive early.

### La Bête Noire

MEDITERRANEAN €

(Map p128; ☎06 15 22 73 61; www.facebook.com/labetenoireparis; 58 rue Henri Barbusse, 5e; lunch mains €12-15, dinner menu €25-45, brunch €25; ☺ 8am-5pm Tue, 8am-11pm Wed-Fri, 9.30am-5.30pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 RER Port Royal) A small, fashionably minimalist interior with open kitchen and funky music ensure bags of soul at this off-the-radar *cantine gastronomique*, a showcase for the sensational home cooking of passionate chef-owner Maria. Inspired by her Russian-Maltese heritage, she cooks just one meat and one vegetarian dish daily using seasonal ingredients from local farmers and small producers, washed down with Italian wines.

### Croq' Fac

SANDWICHES €

(Map p118; 160 rue St-Jacques, 5e; sandwich menu €5.50; ☺ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat; 🚶 Cardinal Lemoine) Latin Quarter students pack out this *sandwicherie* (sandwich bar) at lunchtime and for good reason. Delicious, made-to-measure sandwiches embrace dozens of bread types (wraps, ciabatta, panini, bagels, *pan bagnat* etc) and fillings (the world's your oyster). Arrive before noon to ensure a table – inside or on the people-watching pavement terrace – otherwise you can take away.

### Les Papilles

BISTRO €€

(Map p118; ☎01 43 25 20 79; www.lespapilles.paris.fr; 30 rue Gay Lussac, 5e; 2-/4-course menu €28/35; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sat; 🚶 Raspail or RER Luxembourg) This hybrid bistro, wine cellar and *épicerie* (specialist grocer) with a sunflower-yellow façade is one of those fabulous Parisian dining experiences. Meals are served at simply dressed tables wedged beneath bottle-lined walls, and fare is market driven: each weekday sees a different *retour du marché* (back-from-the-

market menu). But what really sets it apart is its exceptional, mostly natural wine list.

### Le Coupe-Chou

FRENCH €€

(Map p118; ☎01 46 33 68 69; www.lecoupechou.com; 9 & 11 rue de Lanneau, 5e; mains €22-36.50; ☎7-10.30pm; 🍷Maubert-Mutualité) This maze of candlelit rooms inside a vine-clad 17th-century town house is overwhelmingly romantic. Ceilings are beamed, furnishings are antique, open fireplaces crackle and background classical music mingles with the intimate chatter of diners. As in the days when Marlene Dietrich dined here, reservations are essential. Timeless French dishes include Burgundy snails, steak tartare and bœuf bourguignon.

### 🔪 St-Germain & Les Invalides

This neighbourhood's streets are lined with everything from quintessential Parisian bistros to chic designer restaurants and flagship establishments with Michelin-starred chefs. Some charming places hide inside Cour du Commerce St-André, a glass-covered passageway built in 1735 to link two *jeu de paume* (old-style tennis) courts.

### Cuppa

CAFE €

(Map p128; 86 rue de l'Université, 7e; dishes €5-12.50; ☎9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat; ☎☎; 🍷Solférino) 🍷 Footsteps from the Musée d'Orsay, behind a dark-green façade framing original glass window panes, teensy Cuppa is a fabulous find for all-organic breakfasts (eg caramelised grapefruit or granola with cardamom, pistachios and yuzu zest), lunches (like avocado and house-made hummus tartines), homemade cakes, and expertly brewed coffee using ethically sourced beans. Everything is vegetarian; many dishes are vegan and/or gluten-free.

### Cosi

SANDWICHES €

(Map p128; ☎01 46 33 35 36; www.cosiparis.com; 54 rue de Seine, 6e; sandwiches €6-11; ☎noon-11pm; ☎☎; 🍷Mabillon) Cosi is the local institution for a sandwich with attention-grabbing names like Stonker, Naked Willi or Rocket Scientist and equally creative fillings (tandoori turkey with cheddar and oven-roast tomatoes, curried turkey and apple, roast veggies). Eat upstairs with classical music and a glass of well-chosen wine from La Dernière Goutte (p176), or take away. Homemade foccacia comes warm from the oven.

### L'Avant Comptoir du Marché

TAPAS €

(Map p128; www.camdeborde.com; 15 rue Lobineau, 6e; tapas €5-15; ☎noon-11pm; 🍷Mabillon) Top chef Yves Camdeborde's porcine-specialist tapas bar is wedged in one corner of the Marché St-Germain covered market. A flying, fire-engine-red pig is the ceiling's centrepiece, surrounded by suspended menus listing dishes such as Bayonne ham croquettes, Bigorre pâté and shots of Béarnaise pig's blood; wines are chalked on the blackboard. No reservations.

Camdeborde's neighbouring addresses include bistro **Le Comptoir** (Map p128; ☎01 44 27 07 97; 5 Carrefour de l'Odéon, 6e; mains €20-36; ☎noon-11pm; 🍷Odéon), tapas bar **L'Avant Comptoir de la Terre** (Map p128; 3 Carrefour de l'Odéon, 6e; tapas €5-15; ☎noon-11pm; 🍷Odéon) and seafood tapas bar **L'Avant Comptoir de la Mer** (Map p128; 3 Carrefour de l'Odéon, 6e; tapas €5-15, oysters per half-dozen €18-26; ☎noon-11pm; 🍷Odéon).

### Freddy's

FRENCH €

(Map p128; www.semillaparis.com; 54 rue de Seine, 6e; small plates €8-15; ☎kitchen 12.30-3pm & 6-11pm, bar noon-midnight; 🍷Mabillon) This buzzing no-reservation wine bar serves creative small plates (smoked artichoke with hazelnut butter, fire-roasted duck hearts, mushroom cappuccino, chicken teriyaki, grilled sardines) that pair with some fantastic small-scale producer-sourced wines. Herringbone timber floors, exposed stone walls and bar-stool seating give it a warm, welcoming vibe.

It's run by the same team as neighbouring neobistro **Semilla** (Map p128; ☎01 43 54 34 50; 54 rue de Seine, 6e; mains €23-39; ☎12.30-2pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Sat, to 10pm Sun; 🍷Mabillon).

### ★ Bouillon Racine

BRASSERIE €€

(Map p128; ☎01 44 32 15 60; www.bouillonracine.fr; 3 rue Racine, 6e; 3-course menu €35, mains €17-33; ☎noon-11pm; 🍷; 🍷Clury-La Sorbonne) Inconspicuously situated in a quiet street, this heritage-listed art nouveau 'soup kitchen', with mirrored walls, floral motifs and ceramic tiling, was built in 1906 to feed market workers. Despite the magnificent interior, the food – inspired by age-old recipes – is no afterthought and is superbly executed (stuffed, spit-roasted suckling pig, pork shank in Rodenbach red beer, scallops and shrimps with lobster coulis).

★ **Beaupassage**

FOOD HALL €€

(Map p128; [www.beaupassage.fr](http://www.beaupassage.fr); 53-57 rue de Grenelle, 7e; ☺ passage 7am-11pm, individual hours vary; 🚻 Sèvres-Babylone) Some of France's finest chefs, artisans and purveyors occupy this open-air 'mini district'. Look out for Yannick Alléno (with a restaurant, wine cellar and art gallery), Anne-Sophie Pic (gastronomy), Olivier Bellin (seafood), Thierry Marx (bakery-pâtisserie), Pierre Hermé (pastries, including his signature macarons, with a sit-down café), Nicole Barthélémy (cheeses) and renowned butcher Alexandre Polmard (with an attached restaurant).

Also accessible via Beaupassage is Coya, a Peruvian bar-restaurant in a former church.

**Tomy & Co**

GASTRONOMY €€

(Map p78; ☎ 01 45 51 46 93; [www.tomygoussset.com](http://www.tomygoussset.com); 22 rue Surcouf, 7e; 3-course/tasting menu €58/60, mains €33; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.45pm Mon-Fri; 🚻 Invalides) Tomy Goussset's restaurant near the Eiffel Tower has been a sensation since day one. The French-Cambodian chef works his magic on inspired seasonal dishes using produce from his organic garden. The spectacular desserts are equally seasonal. Reservations essential.

**Huîtrerie Regis**

SEAFOOD €€

(Map p128; ☎ 01 44 41 10 07; [www.huîtrerie-regis.com](http://www.huîtrerie-regis.com); 3 rue de Montfaucon, 6e; dozen oysters €19.49; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 6.30-10.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-10.15pm Sat, noon-10pm Sun; 🚻 Mabillon) Hip, trendy, tiny and white, this is the spot for slurping oysters on crisp winter days – inside or on the tiny pavement terrace sporting sage-green Fermob chairs. Oysters arrive live from the Bassin de Marennes-Oléron and come only by the dozen. Wash them

down with a glass of chilled Muscadet. No reservations, so arrive early.

**Anicia**

FRENCH €€

(Map p128; ☎ 01 43 35 41 50; [www.anicia-bistrot.com](http://www.anicia-bistrot.com); 97 rue du Cherche Midi, 6e; 2-/3-course weekday lunch menu €28/37, 4-/6-course dinner menu €58/74, mains €23-34; ☺ noon-10.30pm Tue-Sat; 🚻 Duroc, Vaneau) An advance online booking is essential at this glorious 'bistro nature', showcase for the earthy but refined cuisine of chef François Gagnaire, who ran a Michelin-starred restaurant in the Auvergne before uprooting to the French capital. He still sources dozens of regional products – Puy lentils, meat from Haute-Loire, St-Nectaire cheese – from small-time producers in central France, to stunning effect.

**Restaurant Cinq-Mars**

BISTRO €€

(Map p128; ☎ 01 45 44 69 13; [www.cinq-mars-restaurant.com](http://www.cinq-mars-restaurant.com); 51 rue de Verneuil, 7e; mains €19-29; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 12.30-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm Sat & Sun; 🚻 Solférino, RER Musée d'Orsay) A huge dining room partition with blackboard paint chalks up Cinq-Mars' vast array of wines, while the seasonal menu is scrawled on one side. Traditional bistro dishes are given a contemporary spin (seared fennel with lemon-marinated squid, or veal liver with homemade puree). Desserts include deliciously rich chocolate mousse.

★ **Restaurant Guy Savoy**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(Map p128; ☎ 01 43 80 40 61; [www.guysavoy.com](http://www.guysavoy.com); 11 quai de Conti, 6e, Monnaie de Paris; lunch menu via online booking €250, 13-course tasting menu €490; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Fri, 7-10.30pm Sat; 🚻 Pont Neuf) If you're considering visiting a three-Michelin-star temple to gastronomy,

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

**BEST PAVEMENT TERRACES**

**Scilicet** (Map p92; [www.scilicet.fr](http://www.scilicet.fr); 134 voie Georges Pompidou, 1er; ☺ noon-2am daily Jun-Aug, 6pm-2am Wed-Fri, 4pm-2am Sat Sep-May; 📍; 🚻 Châtelet, RER Châtelet-Les Halles) Right on the Seine with a spectacular Parisian panorama.

**Chez Prune** (Map p108; 36 rue Beurepaire, 10e; ☺ 8am-2am Mon-Sat, 10am-2am Sun; 🚻 Jacques Bersenger, République) The boho café that put Canal St-Martin on the map.

**L'Ébouillanté** (Map p108; [www.facebook.com/Ebouillante](http://www.facebook.com/Ebouillante); 6 rue des Barres, 4e; ☺ noon-10pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug, to 7pm Tue-Sun Sep-May; 📍; 🚻 Pont Marie, Hôtel de Ville) Among Paris' prettiest café terraces, with homemade ginger lemonade.

**Café des Anges** (Map p108; [www.cafedesangesparis.com](http://www.cafedesangesparis.com); 66 rue de la Roquette, 11e; ☺ 7.30am-2am; 📍; 🚻 Bastille) The terrace of this Bastille café buzzes night and day.

**Shakespeare & Company Cafe** (p163) Live the Parisian Left Bank literary dream.

this should certainly be on your list. The world-famous chef needs no introduction (he trained Gordon Ramsay, among others); his flagship, entered via a red-carpeted staircase, is ensconced in the neoclassical *Monnaie de Paris*. Monumental cuisine to match includes Savoy icons such as artichoke and black-truffle soup with layered brioche.

## **Montparnasse & Southern Paris**

Since the 1920s *bd du Montparnasse* has been one of the city's premier avenues for enjoying Parisian pavement life, with legendary brasseries and cafes.

The down-to-earth 15e has some fabulous bistro fare.

In the 13e, head to Chinatown, and try *av de Choisy*, *av d'Ivry* and *rue Baudricourt*. *Village Butte aux Cailles*, 13e, is chock-a-block with interesting addresses, particularly on and around *rue de la Butte aux Cailles*. The up-and-coming area around *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, 13e, also has great eating options for all budgets.

### **L'Atelier B**

BURGERS €  
(Map p72; ☎09 82 41 11 27; www.latelierb.fr; 129 rue du Château, 14e; burgers €12-16; ☺noon-2pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍷Pernety) A brilliant spot for pairing a glass of wine or cocktail with a burger and side of sweet-potato fries, regular fries with melted cheese or homemade coleslaw. Superb burger choices include black Angus with confit onion, rocket and mozzarella cheese, and chunky chicken with aubergine, red onion, *comté* cheese and homemade sauce. Seating is inside or out.

### **Le Cassenois**

MODERN FRENCH €€  
(Map p78; ☎01 45 66 09 01; www.le-cassenois.fr; 56 rue de la Fédération, 15e; 3-course menu €35; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Fri; 🍷Bir Hakeim) The Nutcracker is everything a self-respecting neighbourhood bistro should be. *'Tradition et terroir'* ('tradition and provenance') dictate the menu that inspires owner-chef Pierre Olivier Lenormand to deliver dishes incorporating top-quality ingredients (eg John Dory with potato gratin or beef ribs with fig jus). Vintage ceiling fans add to the wonderful retro vibe. Book ahead.

### **Le Beurre Noisette**

BISTRO €€  
(Map p72; ☎01 48 56 82 49; www.restaurantbeurrenoisette.com; 68 rue Vasco de Gama, 15e; 2-/3-course lunch menu €25/34, 3-/5-/7-course

dinner menu €42/50/60, mains €19; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍷Lourmel) *Beurre noisette* (brown butter sauce, named for its hazelnut colour) features in dishes such as beef cheeks braised in red wine and caramelised pork-belly tender with braised radishes, at pedigreed chef Thierry Blanqui's neighbourhood neobistro. Filled with locals, the chocolate-toned dining room is wonderfully convivial – be sure to book. Fantastic value.

### **La Butte aux Piafs**

BISTRO €€  
(Map p72; ☎09 83 51 07 50; www.labutteauxpiafs-paris.fr; 31 bd Auguste Blanqui, 13e; mains €18-24; ☺noon-3.30pm & 5-10pm Tue-Sat, bar to midnight; 🍷Place d'Italie) A cluster of cherry-red chairs flag the pavement terrace of this neighbourhood bistro on the edge of *La Butte aux Cailles*. Large windows giving plenty of natural light and an eclectic jumble of vintage (but slightly uncomfortable) seating create an inviting setting to dine on appetising dishes such as grilled cod with carrot mousseline and charred pink grapefruit.

### **Le Petit Pan**

FRENCH €  
(Map p72; ☎01 42 50 04 04; www.lepetitpan.fr; 18 rue Rosenwald, 15e; 2-/3-course lunch menu €16.50/20.50, small plates €3-18; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat; 🍷Porte de Vanves) Parisians working in the 'hood fill this casual bistro to bursting at lunchtime thanks to a fantastic-value lunch menu, but it's after dusk that the gourmet action kicks in with small plates of *tapas à la française* designed for sharing: cured ham, mayonnaise eggs or beef tartare, accompanied by superb wines by the glass.

The lunch menu includes gourmet sandwiches, quiches and salads. For a meat-oriented feast, nip across the street to big sister restaurant **Le Grand Pan** (Map p72; ☎01 42 50 02 50; www.legrandpan.fr; 20 rue Rosenwald, 15e; mains €14-30; ☺noon-2pm & 7.30-11pm Mon-Fri).

### **L'Accolade**

BISTRO €€  
(Map p72; ☎01 45 57 73 20; www.lacoladeparis.fr; 208 rue de la Croix Nivert, 15e; 2-/3-course lunch menu €19.50/24.50, 3-/6-course dinner menu €35/60; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Fri; 🍷Convention) Seasonal market products reign supreme at this neighbourhood bistro where rising star Nicolas Tardivel woos a local crowd with his creative, modern French 'bistronomie' – bistro-style gastronomy. The lunch-time *plat du jour* (dish of the day), at €16 including coffee, is an excellent deal. Should you be open to temptation, the *compotée de mangue* (mango compote) is sublime.



**Simone Le Resto**

(Map p72; ☎01 43 37 82 70; www.simoneparis.com; 33 bd Arago, 13e; 2-/4-course lunch menu €22/32, 5-course tasting menu €55, mains €28-32; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-10pm Sat; 🍷 Les Gobelins) A generous smattering of pavement-terrace tables flags this vibrant neobistro where inventive *menus* are created in the open kitchen from high-quality products. An exceptional selection of all-natural and biodynamic wines that pair perfectly with each course are also available at Simone's nearby wine shop and bar, **Simone La Cave** (Map p72; ☺ 5pm-midnight Tue-Sat).

**Le Dôme**

(Map p128; ☎01 43 35 25 81; www.restaurant-ledome.com; 108 bd du Montparnasse, 14e; 2-/3-course menu €39/45, mains €28-69, seafood platters €85-159; ☺ noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-3pm Sun; 🍷 Vavin) A 1930s art deco extravaganza of the formal white-tablecloth and bow-tied waiter variety, monumental Le Dôme is one of the swishest places around for shellfish platters laden with fresh oysters, king prawns, crab claws and much more, followed by homemade *millefeuille* flavoured with rum and vanilla for dessert.

**Drinking & Nightlife**

For the French, drinking and eating go together like wine and cheese, and the line between a cafe, *salon de thé*, bistro, brasserie, bar and even a wine bar is blurred. The line between drinking and clubbing is often non-existent – a cafe that's quiet mid-afternoon

BISTRO **cc**

might have DJ sets in the evening and dancing later on.

**Eiffel Tower & Western Paris**

Gazing at the illuminated Eiffel Tower aside, the wealthy, predominantly residential 16e doesn't have much going on after dark. The pace picks up around the Palais de Tokyo, and the lively bars and cafes of St-Germain are a short metro ride away.

**★ St James Paris**

(Map p72; www.saint-james-paris.com; 43 av Bugeaud, 16e; ☺ 7pm-1am; 🍷; 🍷 Porte Dauphine) Hidden behind a stone wall, this historic mansion-turned-hotel opens its bar nightly to nonguests – and the setting redefines extraordinary. Winter drinks are in the wood-paneled library; summer drinks are on the impossibly romantic 300-sq-metre garden terrace with giant balloon-shaped gazebos (the first publicly displayed hot-air balloons took flight here). It has 35 house cocktails and a premium wine list.

**Yoyo**

(Map p86; www.facebook.com/yoyoconcertparis; 13 av du Président Wilson, 16e; ☺ hours vary; 🍷 léna) Deep in the basement of the Palais de Tokyo, Yoyo has an edgy, raw-concrete Berlin-style vibe and a capacity of 800. Techno and house dominate, with diversions into hip-hop, electro, funk, disco, R&B and soul. Check the Facebook page to see what's happening when.

CLUB

**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE****BEST SPECIALIST COFFEE**

**Belleville Brûlerie** (Le Quartier Général; Map p72; ☎01 42 85 79 37; www.cafesbelleville.com; 14 rue Lally Tollendal, 19e; ☺ 10.30am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Wed-Sun; 🍷 Jaurès) Ground-breaking roastery with Saturday-morning tastings and cuppings.

**Beans on Fire** (Map p108; www.thebeansonfire.com; 7 rue du Général Blaise, 11e; ☺ 9am-3pm Tue-Sat; 🍷; 🍷 St-Ambroise) Collaborative roastery and cafe.

**La Caféthèque** (p161) Coffee house and roastery with an in-house coffee school.

**Coutume Café** (p164) Artisan roastery with a flagship Left Bank cafe.

**Honor** (Map p86; www.honor-cafe.com; 54 rue du Faubourg St-Honoré, 8e; ☺ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 9am-3pm Fri; 🍷 Madeleine) Outdoor coffee bar in an elegant rue du Faubourg St-Honoré courtyard.

**Café Lomi** (Map p72; ☎09 51 27 46 31; www.lomi.coffee; 3ter rue Marcadet, 18e; ☺ 8am-6pm Tue-Sat; 🍷; 🍷 Marcadet-Poissonnière) Coffee roastery and cafe in the multi-ethnic La Goutte d'Or neighbourhood.

## Champs-Élysées & Grands Boulevards

The Champs-Élysées is home to a mix of exclusive nightspots, tourist haunts and a handful of large dance clubs. As a rule, you'll want to look as chic as possible to get in the door. Bars in the Grands Boulevards area tend to be more relaxed.

### Bridge

CLUB

(Map p86; ☎06 40 46 44 62; www.facebook.com/pg/bridgeparisclub; Pont Alexandre III, 8e; ☀11pm-6am Fri & Sat; 🚏 Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau, Invalides) Buried beneath Paris' most elaborate bridge, Pont Alexandre III, this cavernous 1500-sq-metre space, with a capacity of 2000 clubbers, is one of the city's top nightlife destinations. Check its agenda online for DJs, video installations, parties and other events. It also opens on Sunday nights before public-holiday Mondays.

### Le Rouge à Lèvres

WINE BAR

(Map p80; www.lerougealevres.com; 6 rue Rougemont, 9e; ☀6pm-1am Tue-Sat; 🚏; 🚏 Grands Boulevards) Stylised wine bar Le Rouge à Lèvres has an eye-popping decor of foliage-print wallpaper, bamboo-and-straw light fittings and a fairy-lit indoor tree. Pair 60-plus natural wines by the glass or bottle with small sharing plates like stuffed peppers or swordfish tataki.

## Louvre & Les Halles

The area north of Les Halles is a prime destination for night owls. Cocktails predominate, but you'll also find wine and Champagne bars, studenty hang-outs, open-till-dawn local dives and a smattering of nightclubs. Rue St-Sauveur, rue Tiquetonne and rue Montmartre make good starting points.

### ★ Bar Hemingway

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p92; www.ritzparis.com; Hôtel Ritz Paris, 15 place Vendôme, 1er; ☀6pm-2am; 🚏; 🚏 Opéra) Black-and-white photos and memorabilia (hunting trophies, old typewriters and framed handwritten letters by the great writer) fill this snug bar inside the Ritz. Head bartender Colin Peter Field mixes monumental cocktails, including three different Bloody Marys made with juice from freshly squeezed seasonal tomatoes. Legend has it that Hemingway himself, wielding a machine gun, helped liberate the bar during WWII.

### ★ Baby Doll

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p92; www.babydollparis.com; 16 rue de Daunou, 2e; ☀6pm-2am Tue-Thu & Sun, to 5am Fri & Sat; 🚏; 🚏 Opéra) Paying homage to immortal Parisian musician Serge Gainsbourg (1928-91), this seductive bar has foliage-print carpets replicated from his 7e mansion, ruby and emerald velvet banquettes, pleated leather armchairs and a smooth soundtrack. Gainsbourg-inspired cocktails include Couleur Café (chocolate-infused tequila, mezcal and coriander) and Bloody & G (a reinvented Bloody Mary with caper- and horseradish-infused gin).

### Experimental Cocktail Club

COCKTAIL BAR

(ECC; Map p92; www.experimentalgroup.com; 37 rue St-Sauveur, 2e; ☀7pm-2am Mon-Thu, 7pm-4am Fri & Sat, 8pm-2am Sun; 🚏 Réaumur Sébastopol) Behind black curtains, this retro-chic speakeasy is a sophisticated flashback to those *années folles* (crazy years) of Prohibition New York. Cocktails are individual and fabulous, and DJs keep the party going until dawn at weekends. It's not a large space, however, and fills to capacity quickly.

### Danico

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p92; www.daroco.fr; 6 rue Vivienne, 2e; ☀6pm-2am; 🚏 Bourse) While not exactly a secret, Danico still feels like one – first you'll need to find the hidden, candlelit backroom in **Daroco** (☎01 42 21 93 71; pizzas €12-19, mains €18-38; ☀noon-midnight; 🚏) before you get to treat yourself to one of its extravagant cocktails. Chia seeds, kombucha tea, ghost peppers and pomegranate Champagne are some of the more unusual ingredients you'll find on the drinks list.

### Le Garde Robe

WINE BAR

(Map p92; ☎01 49 26 90 60; www.legarderobe.fr; 41 rue de l'Arbre Sec, 1er; ☀noon-3pm & 5pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 4pm-midnight Sat; 🚏 Louvre Rivoli) At Le Garde Robe you can expect excellent, affordable natural wines, a casual atmosphere and a good selection of food, ranging from cheese and charcuterie plates to adventurous options (Chinese five spice and soy-marinated cocksles).

### Angelina

TEAHOUSE

(Map p92; ☎01 42 60 82 00; www.angelina-paris.fr; 226 rue de Rivoli, 1er; ☀10.30am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, to 7.30pm Sat & Sun; 🚏 Tuileries) Clink china with lurching ladies, their posturing poodles and half the students from Tokyo University at Angelina, a grande-dame tearoom with bevelled mirrors and beautiful frescoes

## LGBTIQ PARIS

The city known as 'gay Páree' lives up to its name. Paris is so open that there's less of a defined 'scene' here than in other cities where it's more underground. Beyond the hot-spots, you'll find LGBT+ venues throughout the city attracting a mixed crowd.

Le Marais, especially the areas around the intersection of rue Ste-Croix de la Bretonnerie and rue des Archives, and eastwards to rue Vieille du Temple, has long been Paris' main centre of LGBT+ nightlife and is still its epicentre. There's also a handful of bars and clubs close by to its west, particularly around Châtelet. The lesbian scene is less prominent than its gay counterpart, and centres on a few cafes and bars; rue des Écouffes is a good starting point. Bars and clubs are generally all gay- and lesbian-friendly.

### Best Drinking & Nightlife

**Open Café** (Map p108; www.opencafe.fr; 17 rue des Archives, 4e; ☺ 11am-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; 🚻 Hôtel de Ville) The wide terrace is prime for talent-watching.

**Gibus Club** (Map p108; ☎ 01 77 15 73 09; www.gibusclub.fr; 18 rue du Faubourg du Temple, 11e; ☺ 11pm-7am Thu-Sat; 🚻 République) One of Paris' biggest gay parties.

**La Champmeslé** (Map p92; ☎ 01 42 96 85 20; www.lachampmesle.fr; 4 rue Chabanaise, 2e; ☺ 4pm-4am Mon-Sat; 🚻 Pyramides) Cabaret nights, fortune-telling and art exhibitions attract an older lesbian crowd.

### Guided Tours

For an insider's perspective on gay life in Paris, and recommendations on where to eat, drink, sightsee and party, take a tour with the **Gay Locals** (www.thegaylocals.com; 2/3hr tour €240/300). English-speaking residents lead two tours of 'the Gaybourhood' Le Marais or Montmartre, as well as longer tours, and itinerary planning (from €40 per day) based on your interests. Its website is a good source of nightlife info.

### Events

By far the biggest event on the gay and lesbian calendar is Gay Pride Day, in late June, when the annual **Marche des Fiertés** (Gay Pride March; www.inter-lgbt.org; ☺ Jun/Jul) through Paris via Le Marais provides a colourful spectacle, and plenty of parties take place.

Year-round, check LGBT+ websites or ask at gay and lesbian bars and other venues for upcoming events.

### Information

**Centre LGBT Paris-Île de France** (Map p108; ☎ 01 43 57 21 47; www.centrelgbtparis.org; 63 rue Beaubourg, 3e; ☺ centre & bar 3.30-8pm Mon-Fri, 1-7pm Sat, library 6-8pm Mon-Wed, 5-7pm Fri & Sat; 🚻 Rambuteau) is the single best source of information for gay and lesbian travellers in Paris, with a large library of books and periodicals and a sociable bar. It also has details of hotlines, helplines, gay and gay-friendly medical services and politically oriented activist associations.

dating from 1903. Decadent pastries are available, but it's the super-thick 'African' hot chocolate, served with a pot of whipped cream and a carafe of water, that prompts the constant queue for a table.

### Matamata

COFFEE

(Map p92; ☎ 01 71 39 44 58; www.matamatacofee.com; 58 rue d'Argout, 2e; ☺ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun; ☺; 🚻 Sentier) Beans from France's best micro-roasteries are expertly brewed at this small, two-level space with tables and light fittings made from recycled timber and repurposed metal, and subtrop-

ical fern wallpaper. In summer, cool down with a cold-drip coffee over ice.

### Harry's New York Bar

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p92; ☎ 01 42 61 71 14; www.facebook.com/HarrysNewYorkBarParis; 5 rue Daunou, 2e; ☺ noon-2am Mon-Sat, 4pm-1am Sun; 🚻 Opéra) One of the most popular American-style bars in the prewar years, Harry's once welcomed writers including F Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, who no doubt sampled the bar's unique cocktail and creation: the Bloody Mary. The Cuban mahogany interi-

or dates from the mid-19th century and was brought over from a Manhattan bar in 1911.

There's a basement piano bar called Ivories where George Gershwin supposedly composed *An American in Paris* and, for the peckish, old-school hot dogs to snack on.

### Le Rex Club

CLUB

(Map p80; ☎01 42 36 10 96; www.rexclub.com; 5 bd Poissonnière, 2e; ☺midnight-7am Thu-Sat; 📍Bonne Nouvelle) Attached to the art deco Grand Rex cinema, with a capacity of 850 clubbers, this is Paris' premier house and techno venue where some of the world's hottest DJs strut their stuff on a 70-speaker, multidiffusion sound system.

## Montmartre & Northern Paris

Crowded around place Pigalle at the foot of Montmartre you'll find an eclectic selection of nightlife options, from local cafes and hipster dives to dance clubs and hostess bars. In contrast, the trend around the Canal St-Martin is more barista-run cafes, though wonderful summer nights (and days) see everyone decamp to the canalside quays with blankets, baguettes and bottles of wine. In the 10e, parallel rue du Faubourg St-Martin and rue du Faubourg St-Denis and surrounding streets are speckled with cocktail bars, hybrid bistro-bars and hip cafes.

### ★ Le Pavillon Puebla

BEER GARDEN

(Map p72; ☎01 42 39 34 20; www.leperchoir.fr; 39 av Simon Bolivar, 19e, Parc des Buttes Chaumont; ☺6pm-midnight Tue-Sat, 1-9pm Sun; 📍; 📍Buttes Chaumont, Pyrénées) The folks running the hugely successful rooftop bar **Le Perchoir** (Map p108; ☎01 48 06 18 48; www.leperchoir.fr; 14 rue Crespin du Gast, 11e; ☺6pm-2am Mon-Thu, 4pm-2am Fri & Sat, 4pm-midnight Sun; 📍; 📍Ménilmontant) are also behind this enchanting, self-proclaimed *'temple du bonheur'* (temple of happiness), evocative of an old-fashioned *guinguette* (outdoor tavern/dance venue) in Parc des Buttes Chaumont. Fairy lights illuminate, while Moroccan decor with contemporary furniture gives the interior of the 19th-century pavilion a cool 21st-century edge. DJs play Fridays and Saturdays.

### ★ Le Syndicat

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p108; www.syndicatcocktailclub.com; 51 rue du Faubourg St-Denis, 10e; ☺6pm-2am; 📍Château d'Eau) Plastered top to bottom in peel-

ing posters, an otherwise unmarked façade conceals one of Paris' hottest cocktail bars, but it's no fly-by-night. Le Syndicat's subtle, Organisation de Défense des Spiritueux Français, reflects its impassioned commitment to French spirits. Ingeniously crafted (and named) cocktails include Saix en Provence (Armagnac, chilli-spiced watermelon syrup, lemon and lavender). Table reservations highly recommended.

### ★ Le Très Particulier

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p98; ☎01 53 41 81 40; www.hotelparticulier.com; 23 av Junot, 18e; ☺6pm-2am Tue-Sat; 📍Lamarck-Caulaincourt) The clandestine cocktail bar of boutique Hôtel Particulier Montmartre is an entrancing spot for a summertime alfresco cocktail. Each cocktail is inspired by a film and comes with tasting notes. Ring the buzzer at the unmarked black gated entrance and make a beeline for the 1871 mansion's flowery walled garden (or, if it's raining, the lavish conservatory-style interior).

### Gravity Bar

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p108; ☎06 98 54 92 49; www.facebook.com/gravitybar; 44 rue des Vinaigriers, 10e; ☺6pm-2am Wed-Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun & Mon; 📍Jacques Bonsergent) Gravity's wave-like interior, crafted from slats of plywood descending to the curved concrete bar, threatens to distract from the business at hand – serious cocktails, such as Back to My Roots (Provence herb-infused vodka, vermouth, raspberry puree and lemon juice), best partaken in the company of excellent and inventive tapas-style small plates such as octopus croquettes.

## i CLUBBING WEBSITES

Track tomorrow's hot 'n' happening soirée with these finger-on-the-pulse Parisian-nightlife links:

**Paris DJs** (www.parisdjs.com) Free downloads to get you in the groove.

**Paris Bouge** (www.parisbouge.com) Comprehensive listings site.

**Sortir à Paris** (www.sortiraparis.com) Click on 'Soirées & Bars', then 'Nuits Parisiennes'.

**Tribu de Nuit** (www.tribudenuit.com) Parties, club events and concerts galore.

**La Fontaine de Belleville**

COFFEE  
(Map p108; ☎ 09 81 75 54 54; www.cafesbelleville.com; 31-33 rue Juliette Dodu, 10e; ☀ 8am-10pm Wed-Sun; ☕; 🚻 Colonel Fabien) This seemingly traditional neighbourhood cafe with gold lettering, woven sky-blue-and-cream bistro chairs and vintage fittings is so much more than that. Showcasing expertly roasted beans by Parisian coffee roastery Belleville Brûlerie, it's a hotspot for excellent coffee, all-day food and fantastic live jazz every Saturday from 4.30pm to 7.30pm.

**Lipstick**

COCKTAIL BAR  
(Map p80; www.facebook.com/Lipstickbar; 5 rue Frochot, 9e; ☀ 6pm-5am Tue-Sat; 🚻 Pigalle) If the name isn't a clue, the decor certainly is: its bordello-like leopard-print lounges, red-velour drapes and a pole in the centre of the bar reflect its former incarnation as a brothel in this gentrifying red-light district. Stupendous cocktails (€8 to €10) include Lip Smash (rum, Angostura bitters, ginger, lime and red-fruit coulis).

**La Machine du Moulin Rouge**

CLUB  
(Map p98; ☎ 01 53 41 88 89; www.lamachinedumoulinrouge.com; 90 bd de Clichy, 18e; 🍷 club

midnight-6am Fri & Sat, bar 6pm-midnight Wed & Thu, 6pm-2am Fri, noon-2am Sat, noon-4pm Sun; 🚻 Blanche) Part of the original Moulin Rouge (well, the boiler room, anyway), this club packs 'em in on weekends with a dance floor, concert hall, the Bar à Bulles (aka Champagne bar), an outdoor terrace and a rooftop. Live sounds include rock, metal, hip-hop and jazz. Check the club agenda and buy tickets online.

**Le Marais, Ménilmontant & Belleville**

Le Marais is a spot *par excellence* when it comes to a good night out – the lively scene embraces everything from gay-friendly and gay-only venues to arty cafes, eclectic bars and raucous pubs. Rue Oberkampf and parallel rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud are hubs of the Ménilmontant bar crawl, a scene that is edging out steadily through cosmopolitan Belleville.

**★ Le Mary Céleste**

COCKTAIL BAR  
(Map p108; www.quixotic-projects.com/venue/le-mary-celeste; 1 rue Commines, 3e; ☀ bar 6pm-2am Mon-Fri, noon-2am Sat & Sun, kitchen 7-11.30pm

**OFF THE BEATEN TRACK****PARIS' ROOFTOPS**

Innovative drinking and dining spaces are carving out their place on the city's rooftops, with panoramic views over the skyline strung with Parisian landmarks.

One of the best rooftop bars is Le Perchoir (p159), atop a former industrial building in Ménilmontant. The same team also runs the rooftop bar **Le Perchoir Marais** (Map p108; ☎ 01 48 06 18 48; www.leperchoir.fr; 37 rue de la Verrerie, 4e, BHV; ☀ 8.15pm-1.30am Mon-Sat, 7.15pm-1.30am Sun; 🚻 Hôtel de Ville) at department store BHV, and the 2020-opened bar and restaurant **Le Perchoir Porte de Versailles** (Map p72; ☎ 01 83 62 64 21; www.leperchoir.fr; 2 av de la Porte de la Plaine, 15e, Pavilion 6, Paris Expo Porte de Versailles; mains €22-27, 3-course dinner menu €41; ☀ kitchen 7.30-11pm Wed-Fri, noon-3pm & 7.30-11pm Sat & Sun, bar 6pm-2am Mon-Fri, noon-2am Sat & Sun; ☕ 🍷; 🚻 Porte de Versailles) at the trade-fair and exhibition centre Paris Expo Porte de Versailles, 15e, utilising produce grown on-site at the 14,000-sq-metre biodiverse urban rooftop farm (the world's largest) in both its Mediterranean dishes and cocktail infusions.

For inventive Mediterranean cuisine, drinks and 360-degree skyline views, search out clandestine **Au Top** (Map p108; ☎ 01 43 56 50 50; www.au-top.paris; 93 rue Vieille du Temple, 3e; small plates €9-18, mains €22-31; ☀ kitchen 6-11pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11pm Sat & Sun, bar to 2am daily; ☕; 🚻 Rambuteau). To find it, step through the red door at No 93, search out the lift at the far right back of the courtyard and ride it to the 5th floor.


Seasonal rooftop bar-restaurants set up at department stores Galeries Lafayette (p169) and Le Printemps (p169). Other warm-weather hotspots are the rooftop terrace of cultural centre **Point Éphémère** (Map p72; ☎ 01 40 34 02 48; www.pointephemere.org; 200 quai de Valmy, 10e; ☀ noon-2am Mon-Sat, to 11pm Sun; ☕; 🚻 Jaurès, Louis Blanc) on the banks of Canal St-Martin, and Perchoir de l'Est, above railway station Gare de l'Est.


An increasing number of Paris' hotels also have spectacular rooftop bars, such as Hôtel des Grands Boulevards (p134), Mama Shelter (p137) and Terrass' Hôtel (p135), among others.




## LATIN QUARTER LITERARY ADDRESSES


Like its Left Bank neighbours, the Latin Quarter is steeped in literary history.

**James Joyce's flat** (Map p118; 71 rue du Cardinal Lemoine, 5e;  Cardinal Lemoine) Somewhat fittingly, squint through the wrought-iron gates of 71 rue du Cardinal Lemoine to see the courtyard flat where a near-blind James Joyce finished editing *Ulysses*. The Irish writer and his wife, Nora, were put up rent-free by French novelist Valéry Larbaud, who owned the apartment marked with an 'E'. It's not open to the public, but Joyce is said to have scribbled away at the manuscript with his head laid almost sideways as it was the only way he was able to see what he had written.

**Ernest Hemingway's apartment** (Map p118; 74 rue du Cardinal Lemoine, 5e;  Cardinal Lemoine) A few doors down from chez Joyce, at 74 rue du Cardinal Lemoine, is the town house where Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) and his first wife, Hadley, lived it up between January 1922 and August 1923. Conveniently for the party-loving novelist, his 3rd-floor apartment was right above one of the hottest dance halls in town, the Bal au Printemps: Hemingway was one of the most loyal regulars at the parties and literary soirées thrown many Friday nights here by English writer and editor Ford Madox.

**Paul Verlaine's garret** (Map p118; 39 rue Descartes, 5e;  Cardinal Lemoine) Hemingway might have lived on rue du Cardinal Lemoine in the 1920s but his writing desk was around the corner, in a top-floor garret of a hotel at 39 rue Descartes – today a traditional French restaurant with vintage decor and plenty of time-faded old photographs on the wall. A popular stopover for impoverished writers, French poet Paul Verlaine (1844–96) lived for a while – and then died – in the same hotel.


**Place de la Contrescarpe** Rue Descartes runs south into place de la Contrescarpe (place Monge), now a well-scrubbed square with four Judas trees and a fountain, but once a 'cesspool' (said Hemingway), especially Café des Amateurs at 2–4 place de la Contrescarpe.

**George Orwell's boarding house** (Map p118; 6 rue du Pot de Fer, 5e;  Place Monge) George Orwell (1903–50) arrived in Paris in spring 1928 and checked into a cheap boarding house above 6 rue du Pot de Fer, where he stayed until he moved to London in December 1929. Despite its slumminess, the boarding house – or 'Hotel X' as he called it in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) – seemed 'like a holiday' after a day slaving away washing dishes at a restaurant on nearby rue du Commerce.

Mon-Fri, noon-11.30pm Sat & Sun;  Filles du Calvaire) Snag a stool at the central circular bar at this eternally fashionable, brick-and-timber-floored cocktail bar or reserve one of a handful of tables online. Innovative cocktails mix weird and wonderful ingredients (curry leaves, green cardamom, dried Iranian lemon, turmeric syrup), often seasonal, and there are lovely natural wines too – all perfect partners to tapas-style dishes (grilled duck hearts, devilled eggs).

**★ Candelaria** COCKTAIL BAR  
(Map p108; [www.quixotic-projects.com/candelaria](http://www.quixotic-projects.com/candelaria); 52 rue de Saintonge, 3e; ☺ bar 6pm-2am, taqueria noon-10.30pm Sun-Wed, to 11.30pm Thu-Sat;  Filles du Calvaire) A lime-green taqueria serving homemade tacos, quesadillas and tostadas conceals one of Paris' coolest cocktail bars through an unmarked internal door. Phenomenal cocktails made from aga-

ve spirits, including mezcal, are inspired by Central and South America, such as a Guatemalan El Sombbrero (tequila, vermouth, bitters, hibiscus syrup, pink-pepper-infused tonic and lime). Weekend evenings kick off with DJ sets.

**La Caféoθήque** COFFEE  
(Map p108; ☎ 01 53 01 83 84; [www.lacafeotheque.com](http://www.lacafeotheque.com); 52 rue de l'Hôtel de Ville, 4e; ☺ 9am-6pm; ☎;  Pont Marie, St-Paul) From the industrial grinder to elaborate tasting notes, this coffee house and roastery is serious. Grab a seat, and pick your bean, filtration method (Aeropress, V60 filter, piston or drip) and preparation style. The in-house coffee school has tastings and various courses, including two-hour weekend tasting initiations (five *terroirs*, five extraction methods), for €60 (English available).

**Boot Café**

(Map p108; [www.facebook.com/bootcafe](http://www.facebook.com/bootcafe); 19 rue du Pont aux Choux, 3e; ☎ 10am-6pm; ☎; ☑) St-Sébastien-Froissart) Born in a former cobblers' shop, bijou Boot is a fashionable spot to grab a quality coffee and an accompanying sweet morsel. Colombian beans are roasted by the Fuglen Roastery in Oslo and monster cookies – the salted caramel is sinful – are by Paris' imitable Emperor Norton. Just two tables and a handful of plastic stools squeeze into the box interior.

**Little Red Door**

(Map p108; ☎ 01 42 71 19 32; [www.lrdparis.com](http://www.lrdparis.com); 60 rue Charlot, 3e; ☎ 6pm-1am Thu-Sun; ☑) Filles du Calvaire) Behind an inconspicuous timber façade, a tiny crimson doorway is the illusionary portal to this low-lit, bare-brick drinking den filled with flickering candles. Ranked among the World's 50 Best Bars, it's a must for serious mixology fans. Its annual collection of 11 cocktails, in themes from 'art' to 'architecture', are intricately crafted from ingredients such as glacier ice and paper syrup.

**Café Charbon**

(Map p108; ☎ 01 43 57 55 13; [www.lecafecharbon.fr](http://www.lecafecharbon.fr); 109 rue Oberkampf, 11e; ☎ 8am-2am Mon-Wed, to 5am Thu, to 6am Fri & Sat; ☎; ☑) Parmentier) Night owls, this is *your* address. Canopied by a gold-stencilled navy-blue awning, veteran Charbon remains one of the best bars in Ménilmontant and is always crowded thanks to a fantastical belle époque decor (high ceilings, chandeliers and leather booths) and buzzing ambience. Happy 'hour' is 5pm to 8pm; DJs and musicians play Friday and Saturday.

**Wild & The Moon**

(Map p108; ☎ 01 43 20 50 01; [www.wildandthemoon.fr](http://www.wildandthemoon.fr); 138 rue Amelot, 11e; ☎ 9am-8.30pm; ☎; ☑) Filles du Calvaire) Wild & The Moon's largest space yet occupies a former wine bar, complete with original vintage signage and a generously sized pavement terrace. Nut

COFFEE

milks, 'superhero' vitality shots, fruit and vegetal smoothies and cold-pressed juices are the specialities, and raw food – power bowls, granola, gluten-free avocado toast etc – are served all day.

**Bastille & Eastern Paris**

Bastille invariably draws a crowd, particularly along rue de Lappe, 11e, which is awash with raucous bars. Continue further east and the options become much more stylish and appealing, with wine bars, intimate clubs and backstreet cocktail dens.

**★ Le Baron Rouge**

(Map p112; [www.lebaronrouge.net](http://www.lebaronrouge.net); 1 rue Théophile Roussel, 12e; ☎ 5-10pm Mon, 10am-2pm & 5-10pm Tue-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun; ☑) Ledru-Rollin) Just about the ultimate Parisian wine-bar experience, this wonderfully unpretentious local meeting place, where everyone is welcome, has barrels stacked against the bottle-lined walls and serves cheese, charcuterie, and oysters on weekends in season. It's especially busy on Sunday after the Marché d'Aligre wraps up. For a small deposit, you can fill up 1L bottles straight from the barrel.

WINE BAR

**Bluebird**

(Map p112; 12 rue St-Bernard, 11e; ☎ 6pm-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; ☑) Faidherbe-Chaligny) The ultimate neighbourhood hang-out, Bluebird is styled like a 1950s apartment with retro decor, a fish tank along one wall, and a soundtrack of smooth lounge music. Cocktail recipes date from the 1800s and early 1900s and change seasonally. Guest bartenders often drop by for a stint; ask about cocktail masterclasses.

COCKTAIL BAR

**La Manufacture de Café**

(Map p108; [www.lecafe-alainducasse.com](http://www.lecafe-alainducasse.com); 12 rue St-Sabin, 11e; ☎ 10.15am-6.45pm Tue-Sun; ☑) Bréguet-Sabin) Legendary French chef Alain Ducasse's ongoing expansion of his

COFFEE

**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE****TEATIME IN PARIS**

**Mariage Frères** (Map p108; [www.mariagefreres.com](http://www.mariagefreres.com); 30, 32 & 35 rue du Bourg Tibourg, 4e; ☎ 10.30am-7.30pm; ☑) Hôtel de Ville) Paris' oldest and finest tearoom, founded in 1854.

**Nina's** (Map p92; ☎ 01 55 04 80 55; [www.ninasparis.com](http://www.ninasparis.com); 29 rue Danielle Casanova, 1er; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri; ☑) Opéra) Utilises produce from the Château de Versailles' gardens.

**La Mosquée** (Map p118; 39 rue Geoffroy-St-Hilaire, 5e; ☎ noon-midnight; ☑) Censier Daubenton) Sip sweet mint tea and nibble delicious pastries at Paris' mosque.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

## ARTISAN BEER

Paris' growing *bière artisanale* (craft beer) scene is going from strength to strength, with an increasing number of city breweries, such as **Brasserie BapBap** (Map p108; ☎ 01 77 17 52 97; www.bapbap.paris; 79 rue St-Maur, 11e; guided tours €15; ☎ 90min guided tours in English 4.30pm Sat, shop & tasting room 6-10pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Rue St-Maur) and **Brasserie la Goutte d'Or** (Map p72; ☎ 09 80 64 23 51; www.brasserielaouttedor.com; 28 rue de la Goutte d'Or, 18e; ☎ 4-7pm Tue-Sat; 📍 Château Rouge, Barbès-Rochechouart) **FREE**, microbreweries and cafes offering limited-production brews on tap and by the bottle.

The city's artisan-beer fest, the Paris Beer Festival (p132), takes place in brasseries, bars and specialist beer shops throughout the city. An excellent resource for hopheads is www.hoppyparis.com.

Favourite addresses for a Parisian brew:

**Paname Brewing Company** (Map p72; ☎ 01 40 36 43 55; www.panamebrewingcompany.com; 41bis quai de la Loire, 19e; ☎ 11am-2am; 📍; 📍 Crimée, Laumière) Craft-brewery taproom in a 19th-century waterside granary with a floating pontoon.

**Micro Brasserie Balthazar** (Map p72; ☎ 01 71 24 90 82; www.facebook.com/MBBalthazar; 90 bd Ménilmontant, 20e; ☎ 5pm-1am Mon-Sat; 📍 Père Lachaise) Crowdfunded microbrewery with guest Parisian beers.

**Les Cuves de Fauve** (Map p108; www.fauvebiere.com; 64 rue de Charonne, 11e; ☎ 5.30pm-2am Mon-Fri, 11.30am-2am Sat & Sun; 📍) Watch the brewing in action while you try Fauve's award-winning brews.

**Frog & Princess** (Map p128; ☎ 01 40 51 77 38; www.frogpubs.com; 9 rue Princesse, 6e; ☎ 6-11pm Tue & Wed, 6pm-midnight Thu, 6pm-2am Fri, 5pm-2am Sat; 📍; 📍 Mabillon) Long-established microbrewery on a hopping nightlife street.

empire includes this 2019-launched coffee roastery, using beans sourced from his travels to sustainable small-scale plantations. Glass windows at the back of the cafe let you see the roasting in action, while expert staff guide you through the menu of coffees, accompanied by chocolates made at Ducasse's nearby La Manufacture de Chocolat (p175).

**Le Pure Café** CAFE  
(Map p112; www.lepurecafe.fr; 14 rue Jean Macé, 11e; ☎ 7am-2am; 📍 Charonne) A classic Parisian corner cafe, Le Pure is a charming spot to drop into for a morning coffee, aperitif, contemporary bistro meal or weekend brunch. Its selection of wines by the glass (including natural and organic varieties) is particularly good. Film buffs might recognise its cherry-red façade and vintage-wood and zinc bar from the Richard Linklater film *Before Sunset*.



## Latin Quarter

Rive Gauche romantics, well-heeled cafe-society types and students by the gallon drink in the 5e arrondissement, where nostalgic haunts, swish bars and new-generation coffee

shops ensure a deluge of early-evening happy hours and a quintessential Parisian soirée.

★ **Shakespeare & Company Cafe** CAFE  
(Map p118; www.shakespeareandcompany.com; 37 rue de la Bucherie, 5e; ☎ 10am-7pm; 📍; 📍 St-Michel) ☕ Instant history was made when this literary-inspired cafe opened in 2015 adjacent to magical bookshop Shakespeare & Company (p175), designed from long-lost sketches to fulfil late bookshop founder George Whitman's 1960s dream. Organic chai tea, turbo-power juices and specialist coffee by Parisian roaster Café Lomi marry with soups, salads, bagels and pastries by Bob's Bake Shop.

**Le Verre à Pied** CAFE  
(Map p118; ☎ 01 43 31 15 72; www.facebook.com/leverreapied.fr; 118bis rue Mouffetard, 5e; ☎ 10am-10pm Tue, 10am-10.30pm Wed, 9.30am-10.30pm Thu-Sat, 9.30am-4pm Sun; 📍 Censier Daubenton) This *café-tabac* (cafe and tobacconist) is a pearl of a place where little has changed since 1870. Its nicotine-hued mirrored wall, moulded cornices and original bar make it part of a dying breed, but it epitomises the charm, glamour and romance of an old Paris everyone loves,

including stallholders from the rue Mouffetard market who yo-yo in and out.

### Pub St-Hilaire

PUB

(Map p118; ☎01 46 33 52 42; www.facebook.com/pubstilaire; 2 rue Valette, 5e; ☎3pm-2am Mon-Thu, 4pm-4am Fri & Sat; 📍Maubert-Mutualité) 'Buzzing' fails to do justice to the pulsating vibe inside this student-loved pub. Generous happy hours last from 5pm to 9pm and the place is kept packed with a trio of pool tables, board games, music on two floors, hearty bar food and various gimmicks to rev up the party crowd (a metre of cocktails, 'be your own barman' etc).

### Le Piano Vache

BAR

(Map p118; ☎01 46 33 75 03; www.facebook.com/pianovacheparis5; 8 rue Laplace, 5e; ☎5pm-2am Mon-Sat; 📍Maubert-Mutualité) Down the hill from the Panthéon, this shabby backstreet bar is covered in old posters and drenched in 1970s and '80s rock ambience. A real student fave, it has bands and DJs playing mainly rock, plus some goth, reggae and pop. Happy hour runs from 5pm to 9pm.

## 🍷 St-Germain & Les Invalides

St-Germain's Carrefour de l'Odéon has a cluster of lively bars and cafes. Rues de Buci, St-André des Arts and de l'Odéon enjoy a fair slice of night action with arty cafes and busy pubs, while place St-Germain des Prés buzzes with the pavement terraces of fabled literary cafes. Rue Princesse and rue Guisarde attract a student crowd with their bevy of pubs, microbreweries and cocktail bars.

Les Invalides is a daytime rather than night-time venue, with government ministries and embassies outweighing drinking venues. Particularly in summer, however, look out for bars along the Seine's river banks in the **Parc Rives de Seine** (Map p128; btwn Musée d'Orsay & Pont de l'Alma, 7e; ☎information point noon-7pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, shorter hours Oct-Apr; 📍Solférino, Assemblée Nationale, Invalides).

### ★ Les Deux Magots

CAFE

(Map p128; ☎01 45 48 55 25; www.lesdeuxmagots.cafe; 6 place St-Germain des Prés, 6e; ☎7.30am-1am; 📍St-Germain des Prés) If ever there was a cafe that summed up St-Germain des Prés' early-20th-century literary scene, it's this former hang-out of anyone who was anyone. You'll spend substantially more here to sip *un café* (€4.80) in a wicker chair on the pavement terrace shaded by dark-

green awnings, but it's an undeniable piece of Parisian history.

### ★ Au Sauvignon

WINE BAR

(Map p128; ☎01 45 48 49 02; www.ausauvignon.com; 80 rue des Sts-Pères, 7e; ☎8am-11pm Mon-Sat, 9am-10pm Sun; 📍Sèvres-Babylone) Grab a table in the evening light at this wonderfully authentic wine bar or head to the quintessential bistro interior, with original zinc bar, tightly packed tables and hand-painted ceiling celebrating French viticultural tradition. A *casse-croustes au pain Poilâne* (gourmet sandwich) is the perfect accompaniment.

### ★ Coutume Café

COFFEE

(Map p128; ☎09 88 40 47 99; www.coutumecafe.com; 47 rue de Babylone, 7e; ☎8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun; 📍St-François Xavier) ☕ The Parisian coffee revolution is thanks in no small part to Coutume, artisanal roaster of premium beans for scores of establishments around town. Its flagship cafe – a light-filled, post-industrial space – is ground zero for innovative preparation methods, including cold extraction and siphon brews.

### Café de Flore

CAFE

(Map p128; ☎01 45 48 55 26; www.cafedeflore.fr; 172 bd St-Germain, 6e; ☎7.30am-1.30am; 📍St-Germain des Prés) The red upholstered benches, mirrors and marble walls at this art deco landmark haven't changed much since the days when Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir essentially set up office here, writing in its warmth during the Nazi occupation.

### Tiger

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p128; www.tiger-paris.com; 13 rue Princesse, 6e; ☎6.30pm-2am; 📍Mabillon) Suspended bare-bulb lights and fretted timber make this split-level space a stylish spot for specialist gins (100 varieties), including a devilish Opposite Attraction (gin, chocolate, almonds and orange). Dedicated G&T aficionados can work their way through a staggering 1040 combinations. Gin aside, Tiger serves Japanese sake, wine and craft beer. DJs play some evenings.

### Prescription Cocktail Club

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p128; ☎09 50 35 72 87; www.experimentalgroup.com; 23 rue Mazarine, 6e; ☎7pm-2am Mon-Thu, 7pm-4am Fri & Sat, 8pm-2am Sun; 📍Odéon) With bowler and flat-top hats as lampshades and a 1930s speakeasy New York air to the place, this cocktail club – run by the same

mega-successful team as Experimental Cocktail Club (p157) – is very Parisian-cool.

## Montparnasse & Southern Paris

The comings and goings of the Gare Montparnasse and its historic brasseries keep things lively. Southwest of place d'Italie, rue de la Butte aux Cailles and the surrounding Butte aux Cailles molehill have a plethora of fabulous options popular with students and locals; places here have a loyal clientele and lack the pretension of more trendsetting neighbourhoods. You can also head to rue du Chevaleret and av de France, a burgeoning area with great options. Especially in summer, you can't beat the floating bars and clubs on the Seine.

### ★ Poinçon

BAR

(Map p72; ☎ 01 56 08 16 69; www.poinconparis.com; 124 av du Général Leclerc, 14e; ☎ 8.30am–11.45pm Wed & Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, 11.30am–5pm Sun; 🚏 Porte d'Orléans) Bars in the 14e don't come much more atmospheric than this one. Poinçon occupies a delightfully restored 1867-built railway station that was part of the Petite Ceinture. Half trendy bar and half slick bistro bathing in a warm atmosphere, it's much loved by Parisians living in the *arrondissement*, not least for its cocktails, wines, fantastic-value food and Sunday jazz brunches.

### Le Select

CAFE

(Map p128; www.leselectmontparnasse.fr; 99 bd du Montparnasse, 6e; ☎ 7am–2am Sun–Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; 🚏 Vavin) Dating from 1923, this Montparnasse brasserie, restaurant and *bar américain* was the first of the area's grand cafes to stay open late into the night, and it still draws everyone from beer-swilling students to whisky-swilling politicians and smartly dressed Parisians who've been coming here for years. Traditional French fare is served throughout the day.

### La Dame de Canton

CLUB

(Map p112; www.damedecanton.com; opposite 11 quai François Mauriac, 13e; ☎ noon–midnight Tue–Sat; 🚏 Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand) This floating *boîte* (club), aboard a three-masted Chinese junk with a couple of world voyages under its belt, bobs beneath the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Concerts cover pop and indie to electro, hip-hop, reggae and rock; afterwards, DJs keep the crowd hyped. From May to September, its popular

bar and restaurant serves wood-fired pizzas on the terrace.

### Café Oz Rooftop

BAR

(Map p112; ☎ 01 73 71 29 09; www.cafe-oz.com; 34 quai d'Austerlitz, 13e, Les Docks; ☎ 5pm–2am Wed–Fri, from 4pm Sat; 🚏 Gare d'Austerlitz) Chill with a cocktail or beer between potted palms at this alfresco rooftop bar. The river views are glorious, multicoloured surfboards inject a touch of Australian beach culture, and the dance floor throbs after dark. Pizzas, burgers, cheese and charcuterie platters are available at all times. Happy hour runs until 8pm.

### Bateau El Alamein

CLUB

(Map p112; www.bateuelalamein.com; opposite 11 quai François Mauriac, 13e; ☎ 5.30pm–2am mid-May–mid-Oct, 7pm–2am mid-Oct–mid-May; 🚏 Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand) Strung with terracotta pots of flowers, this deep-purple boat has a Seine-side terrace for sitting amid tulips and enjoying live bands (flyers are stuck on the lamppost at the front). Concerts starting at 9pm (no reservations) span jazz, world and Piaf-style *chansons*. Hours can vary.

## ★ Entertainment

Catching a performance in Paris is a treat. French and international opera, ballet and theatre companies and cabaret dancers take to the stage in fabled venues, while elsewhere a flurry of young, passionate, highly creative musicians, thespians and other artists make the city's fascinating fringe art scene what it is.

### Cabarets

Whirling lines of feather-boa-clad, high-kicking dancers at grand-scale cabarets like cancan creator Moulin Rouge are a quintessential fixture on Paris' entertainment scene – for everyone but Parisians. Still, the dazzling sets, costumes and dancing guarantee an entertaining evening (or matinee). Tickets to these spectacles start at around €90 (from around €165/190 with lunch/dinner), with the option of Champagne. Reserve ahead.

### Moulin Rouge

CABARET

(Map p98; ☎ 01 53 09 82 82; www.moulinrouge.fr; 82 bd de Clichy, 18e; show only from €88, dinner & show from €190; ☎ show only 9pm & 11pm, dinner & show 7pm; 🚏 Blanche) Immortalised in Toulouse-Lautrec's posters and later in Baz Luhrmann's film, Paris' legendary cabaret twinkles beneath a 1925 replica of its original red windmill. Yes, it's packed with



bus-tour crowds, but from the opening bars of music to the last high cancan kick, it's a whirl of fantastical costumes, sets, choreography and Champagne. Book in advance and dress smartly (no trainers/sneakers).

No entry for children under six years.

## Live Music

Festivals for just about every musical genre ensure that everyone gets to listen in. Street music is a constant in this busker-filled city, with summer adding stirring open-air concerts along the Seine and in city parks to the year-round serenade of accordions.

★ **Philharmonie de Paris** CONCERT VENUE  
(Map p72; ☎01 44 84 44 84; www.philharmoniedeparis.fr; 221 av Jean Jaurès, 19e; ☺box of-fice noon-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun, plus concerts; 🚶Porte de Pantin) Major complex the Cité de la Musique - Philharmonie de Paris hosts an eclectic range of concerts, from classical to North African and Japanese, in the Philharmonie building's Grande Salle Pierre Boulez, with an audience capacity of 2400 to 3600. The adjacent Cité de la Musique's Salle des Concerts has a capacity of 900 to 1600.

★ **EP7** ARTS CENTRE  
(Map p112; ☎01 43 45 68 07; www.ep7.paris; 133 av de France, 13e; ☺9.30am-midnight Mon-Wed, 9.30am-2am Thu-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun; 📶; 🚶Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand) Paris' first piece of 'interactive architecture', this cultural cafe and concert venue was unveiled in 2018. Contemporary works of pixel art prance across 12 giant screens covering the façade, creating a dazzling digital gallery. Inside the complex, named after the vintage vinyl format 'extended play', you'll find art exhibitions and happenings, DJ sets (Fridays and Saturdays), a bistro and bar.

★ **La Seine Musicale** CONCERT VENUE  
(☎01 74 34 54 00; www.laseinemusicale.com; Île Seguin, Boulogne-Billancourt; 🚶Pont de Sèvres) A landmark addition to Paris' cultural offerings, La Seine Musicale opened on the Seine island of Île Seguin in 2017. Constructed of steel and glass, the egg-shaped auditorium has a capacity of 1150, while the larger, modular concrete hall accommodates 6000. Ballets, musicals and concerts from classical to rock are all staged here, alongside exhibitions.

★ **Café Universel** JAZZ  
(Map p128; ☎01 71 32 64 38; www.cafeuniversel.org; 267 rue St-Jacques, 5e; ☺7pm-midnight Tue-

Sat, to 2pm Sun; 📶; 🚶Censier Daubenton, RER Port Royal) Café Universel hosts a brilliant array of live concerts with everything from bebop and Latin sounds to vocal jazz sessions (check the schedule online). Plenty of freedom is given to young producers and artists, and its convivial, relaxed atmosphere attracts a mix of students and jazz lovers. Concerts are free, but you should tip the artists when they pass the hat around.

**Caveau de la Huchette** JAZZ  
(Map p118; ☎01 43 26 65 05; www.caveaudela-huchette.fr; 5 rue de la Huchette, 5e; admission €13-15; ☺9pm-2am Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat; 🚶St-Michel) Housed in a medieval *caveau* (cellar) used as a courtroom and torture chamber during the Revolution, this club is where many of the jazz greats (Count Basie, Art Blakey) have played since the end of WWII. It attracts its fair share of tourists, but the atmosphere can be more electric than at the more serious jazz clubs. Sessions start at around 9.30pm.

**Sunset & Sunside** LIVE MUSIC  
(Map p92; ☎01 40 26 46 60; www.sunset-sunside.com; 60 rue des Lombards, 1er; concerts €7-25; ☺hours vary; 🚶Châtelet, RER Châtelet-Les Halles) There are two venues in one at this well-respected club, which hosts electric jazz, fusion and occasional salsa at Sunset, in the vaulted cellar, and acoustics and concerts on the ground floor at Sunside.

**Le Divan du Monde & Madame Arthur** LIVE MUSIC  
(Map p98; ☎01 40 05 08 10; www.madame-arthur.fr; 75 rue des Martyrs, 18e; cabaret before 10pm €20, club from midnight Fri & Sat/Wed & Thu €15/free; ☺8pm-6am Wed-Sat; 🚶Pigalle) Very much an iconic, cross-cultural address at the foot of Montmartre, this hybrid cabaret-club has played host to cabaret troupe Madame Arthur since 1946. The first show is at 8pm, and the dance floor thrives with clubbers from midnight. Soirées are themed around a music genre, band or artist: 100% *musique française*, Britney Spears, 1980s French pop group Les Rita Mitsouko, Françoise Hardy etc. Dress code: no shorts, flip-flops or sports trainers/sneakers.

**La Cigale** LIVE MUSIC  
(Map p98; ☎01 49 25 89 99; www.lacigale.fr; 120 bd de Rochechouart, 18e; 🚶Pigalle) Now classed as a historical monument, this music hall dates from 1887 but was redecorated a century later by Philippe Starck. Artists who

## **i** WHAT'S ON & TICKETS

Paris' top listings guide, *L'Officiel des Spectacles* ([www.offi.fr](http://www.offi.fr); €1), is published in French but is easy to navigate. It's available from news stands on Wednesday, and is crammed with everything that's on in the capital, including concert, theatre and cinema listings.

The most convenient place to purchase concert, theatre and other cultural and sporting-event tickets is from electronics and entertainment megashop **Fnac** ([www.fnactickets.com](http://www.fnactickets.com)), whether in person at the *billetteries* (ticket offices) or online. There are branches throughout Paris, including in the Forum des Halles. Tickets generally can't be refunded.

On the day of performance, theatre, opera and ballet tickets are sold for half price (plus €3.50 commission) at the **Kiosque Théâtre Madeleine** (Map p86; [www.kiosqueculture.com](http://www.kiosqueculture.com); opposite 15 place de la Madeleine, 8e; ☎12.30-2.30pm & 3-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 12.30-3.45pm Sun; 🚏 Madeleine); there are branches at the main tourist office (p177) and at Montparnasse.

have performed here include Ryan Adams, Ibrahim Maalouf and the Dandy Warhols.

### **Badaboum**

LIVE MUSIC

(Map p108; ☎01 48 06 50 70; [www.badaboum.paris](http://www.badaboum.paris); 2bis rue des Taillandiers, 11e; 🕒 club 11pm-6am Thu-Sun, concerts vary; 🚏 Ledru-Rollin) The onomatopoeically named Badaboum hosts a mixed bag of concerts on its up-close-and-personal stage, but focuses on electro, funk and hip-hop. Great atmosphere, super cocktails and a super-chic white-tiled restaurant, too.

### **L'Alimentation Générale**

LIVE MUSIC

(Map p108; ☎09 81 86 42 50; [www.alimentation-generale.net](http://www.alimentation-generale.net); 64 rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud, 11e; admission Wed, Thu & Sun free, Fri & Sat €10; 🕒 7pm-2am Wed, Thu & Sun, to 5am Fri & Sat; 🚏 Parmentier) This true hybrid, known as the Grocery Store to Anglophones, is a massive space, fronted at street level by its in-house Italianate canteen-bar with big glass windows and retro 1960s Belgian furniture. But music is the big deal here, with an impressive line-up of live gigs and DJs spinning pop, rock, electro, soul and funk to a packed dance floor.

### **Cinema**

The film lover's ultimate city, Paris has some wonderful movie houses to catch new flicks, avant-garde cinema and priceless classics.

First-run cinema tickets cost around €11.50 for adults (€13.50 for 3D). Students and over 60s get discounted tickets (usually around €8.50) from 7pm Sunday to 7pm Friday. Discounted tickets for children and teens have no restrictions. Most cinemas have across-the-board discounts before noon.

Foreign films (including English-language films) screened in their original language

with French subtitles are labelled 'VO' (*version originale*). Films labelled 'VF' (*version française*) are dubbed in French.

**Lost in Frenchlation** ([www.lostin-frenchlation.com](http://www.lostin-frenchlation.com)) regularly hosts English-subtitled screenings of French films accompanied by drinks – check upcoming events online.

### **La Cinémathèque Française**

CINEMA

(Map p112; ☎01 71 19 33 33; [www.cinematheque.fr](http://www.cinematheque.fr); 51 rue de Bercy, 12e; tickets adult/child €7/4; 🕒 noon-10pm; 🚏 Bercy) This national institution is a temple to the 'seventh art' and always screens its foreign offerings in their original versions. Up to 10 films a day are shown, usually retrospectives (eg Spielberg, Altman, Eastwood) mixed in with related but more obscure films.

### **Le Grand Rex**

CINEMA

(Map p80; ☎01 45 08 93 58; [www.legrandrex.com](http://www.legrandrex.com); 1 bd Poissonnière, 2e; adult/child tours €11/9, cinema tickets €15/12; 🕒 tours 10am-6pm Wed, Sat & Sun, extended hours during school holidays; 🚏 Bonne Nouvelle) Blockbuster screenings and concerts aside, this 1932 art deco cinematic icon runs 50-minute behind-the-scenes tours (English soundtracks available) during which visitors – tracked by a sensor slung around their neck – are whisked up (via a lift) behind the giant screen, tour a soundstage and experiment in a recording studio. Whiz-bang special effects along the way will stun adults and kids alike.

### **Forum des Images**

CINEMA

(Map p92; ☎01 44 76 63 00; [www.forumdesimages.fr](http://www.forumdesimages.fr); Forum des Halles, 2 rue du Cinéma, Porte St-Eustache, 1er; cinema tickets adult/child €6.50/4.50; 🕒 5-9pm Tue & Thu, from 1pm Wed, from 4pm Fri, from 10.30am Sat & Sun; 🚏 Les

## DON'T MISS

## BUSKERS IN PARIS

Paris' gaggle of clowns, mime artists, living statues, acrobats, in-line skaters, buskers and other street entertainers can be loads of fun and cost substantially less than a theatre ticket (a few coins in the hat is appreciated). Some excellent musicians perform in the long, echo-filled corridors of the metro (artists audition for the privilege). Outside, you can be sure of a good show at the following:

**Place Georges Pompidou, 4e** The huge square in front of the Centre Pompidou.

**Pont St-Louis, 4e** The bridge linking Paris' two islands.

**Place Joachim du Bellay, 1er** Musicians and fire-eaters near the Fontaine des Innocents.

**Parc de la Villette, 19e** African drummers at the weekend.

**Place du Tertre, 18e** Montmartre's original main square is Paris' busiest busker stage.

Halles, RER Châtelet-Les Halles) A five-screen cinema showing films set in Paris is the centrepiece of the city's film archive. Created in 1988 to establish an audiovisual archive of the city, the complex has a library and research centre with newsreels, documentaries and advertising. Its online program lists thematic series, festivals and events.

### Le Louxor

CINEMA

(Map p80; ☎01 44 63 96 98; www.cinematoux.or.fr; 170 bd de Magenta, 10e; tickets adult/child €9.90/5; 🚏Barbès-Rochechouart) Built in neo-Egyptian art deco style in 1921 and saved from demolition by a neighbourhood association seven decades later, this historical monument is a palatial place to catch new releases, classics, piano-accompanied 'ciné-concerts', short-film festivals, special workshops (such as singalongs) or live-music performances. Don't miss a drink at its bar, which opens onto an elevated terrace overlooking Sacré-Cœur.

### Opera & Ballet

France's Opéra National de Paris and Ballet de l'Opéra National de Paris perform at Paris' two opera houses, the Palais Garnier and Opéra Bastille. The season runs between September and July.

### Palais Garnier

OPERA, BALLET

(Map p80; www.operadeparis.fr; place de l'Opéra, 9e; 🚏Opéra) The city's original opera house (p88) is smaller than its Bastille counterpart, but has perfect acoustics. Due to its odd shape, some seats have limited or no visibility – book carefully. Ticket prices and conditions (including last-minute discounts) are available from the **box office** (Map p80;

☎international calls 01 71 25 24 23, within France 08 92 89 90 90; www.operadeparis.fr; cnr rues Scribe & Auber; ☎10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; 🚏Opéra). Online flash sales (*les rendez-vous du mercredi*) are held from noon on Wednesdays.

### Opéra Bastille

OPERA

(Map p112; ☎01 71 25 24 23; www.operadeparis.fr; 2-6 place de la Bastille, 12e; ☎box office noon-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 1hr prior to performances Sun; 🚏Bastille) Paris' premier opera hall, Opéra Bastille's 2745-seat main auditorium also stages ballet and classical concerts. Online tickets go on sale up to three weeks before telephone or box-office sales (from noon on Wednesdays; online flash sales offer significant discounts). Limited standing-only tickets (*places débouts*; €5) are available 90 minutes before performances. French-language 90-minute **guided tours** (tours adult/child €17/12; ☎Sep-mid-Jul) take you backstage.

Significant discounts are available for those aged under 28 and over 65.

### Theatre

Theatre productions, including those originally written in other languages, are invariably performed in French. Only occasionally do English-speaking troupes play at smaller venues in and around town.

Non-French speakers should check out **Theatre in Paris** (TIP; ☎01 85 08 66 89; www.theatreinparis.com; tickets €20-100; ☎phone enquiries 10am-7pm Mon-Fri), whose bilingual hosts provide an English-language program and direct you to your seats. Typically there are upwards of 10 shows on offer, from French classics to contemporary comedies and Broadway-style productions with Eng-

lish subtitles. Book via its English online ticketing platform.

### Comédie Française

THEATRE

(Map p92; [www.comedie-francaise.fr](http://www.comedie-francaise.fr); 1 place Colette, 1er; Palais Royal–Musée du Louvre) Founded in 1680 under Louis XIV, this state-run theatre bases its repertoire on the works of classic French playwrights. The theatre has its roots in an earlier company directed by Molière at the Palais Royal.

### Théâtre du Châtelet

PERFORMING ARTS

(Map p92; 01 40 28 28 28; [www.chatelet.com](http://www.chatelet.com); 2 rue Edouard Colonne, 1er; Châtelet, RER Châtelet–Les Halles) Stunningly renovated, this 2046-capacity venue stages concerts, operas, musicals, theatre and dance.



## Shopping

Paris remains at the forefront of international trends, and browsing emerging and established designer boutiques and flagship *haute couture* houses is a quintessential part of visiting. This stylish city also has a trove of hip concept and homewares shops, and resplendent art nouveau department stores, along with vintage shops and flea markets, atmospheric bookshops, adorable children's wear and toy shops, art and antique dealers, venerable establishments selling professional cookware, and, of course, gourmet-food and wine shops galore.

## Champs-Élysées & Grands Boulevards

Global chains line the Champs-Élysées, but it's the luxury fashion houses in the Triangle d'Or and on rue du Faubourg St-Honoré that have made Paris famous. The area around Opéra and the Grands Boulevards is where you'll find flagship *grands magasins*.

### ★Galeries Lafayette

DEPARTMENT STORE

(Map p80; 01 42 82 34 56; <http://haussmann.galerieslafayette.com>; 40 bd Haussmann, 9e; 9.30am–8.30pm Mon–Sat, 11am–8pm Sun; Chaussée d'Antin, RER Auber) Grand-dame department store Galeries Lafayette is spread across the main store (its magnificent neo-byzantine stained-glass dome dates from 1912), its **men's store** (48 bd Haussmann, 9e), and **homewares store** (35 bd Haussmann, 9e) with **gourmet emporium** (35 bd Haussmann, 9e).

Catch modern art in the 1st-floor **gallery** (Map p80; 01 42 82 87 98; [\[galeries.com\]\(http://galeries.com\); 1st fl, Galeries Lafayette, 40 bd Haussmann, 9e; 11am–7pm Wed–Mon; Chaussée d'Antin, RER Auber\) \*\*FREE\*\*, take in a \*\*fashion show\*\* \(adult/child €14/9; 3pm Fri mid-Feb–mid-Dec by online reservation\), ascend to a free, windswept rooftop panorama or take a break at one of its many restaurants and cafes.](http://www.galeriesdes-</a></p>
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For the best views of the dome, walk along the free, 9m-long glass walkway extending below it on the 3rd floor.

Check online for details of 70-minute behind-the-scenes store tours (adult/child €13.50/9), available in English.

A branch of Galeries Lafayette is located on the **avenue des Champs-Élysées** (Map p86; 01 83 65 61 00; [www.galerieslafayette.com](http://www.galerieslafayette.com); 60 av Champs-Élysées, 8e; 10.30am–11pm Tue–Sat, to 10pm Sun & Mon; Franklin D Roosevelt).

### Le Printemps

DEPARTMENT STORE

(Map p80; 01 42 82 50 00; [www.printemps.france.com](http://www.printemps.france.com); 64 bd Haussmann, 9e; 9.35am–8pm Mon–Wed, Fri & Sat, 9.35am–8.45pm Thu, 11am–8pm Sun; Havre Caumartin) Famous department store Le Printemps encompasses Le Printemps de la Mode, for women's fashion; Le Printemps de la Beauté et Maison, for beauty and homewares, with a staggering display of perfume, cosmetics and accessories; Le Printemps de l'Homme, for men's fashion; and the gourmet emporium Le Printemps du Goût, with two floors dedicated to artisan French produce.

Guided 90-minute tours (adult/child €13.50/9) of the historic building, getting you up-close to highlights like its glass dome, are available in English.

There's a free panoramic rooftop terrace and numerous luxury eateries.

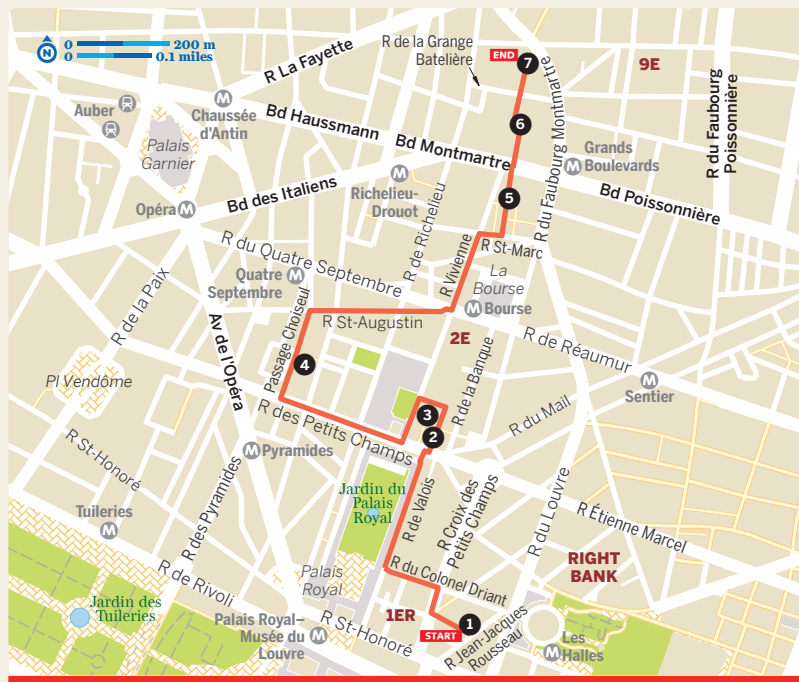
### Guerlain

PERFUME

(Map p86; spa 01 45 62 52 57; [www.guerlain.com](http://www.guerlain.com); 68 av des Champs-Élysées, 8e; 10am–8pm Mon–Sat; Franklin D Roosevelt) Guerlain

## LES SOLDES

Paris' twice-yearly *soldes* (sales), which last for four weeks, start in mid-January (the second Wednesday, or first Wednesday if the second occurs after 12 January) and again in late June (the last Wednesday, or second-last if the last occurs after 28 June).



## City Walk Right Bank Covered Passages

**START GALERIE VÉRO DODAT**  
**END PASSAGE VERDEAU**  
**LENGTH 2.2KM; TWO HOURS**

The Right Bank's sumptuously decorated *passages couverts* (covered arcades) offer a stroll through early-19th-century Paris. Avoid Sundays, when some arcades are shut.

At 19 rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the 1826-built **1 Galerie Véro Dodat** retains its 19th-century skylights, ceiling murals, Corinthian columns, tiled floor, gas globe fittings (now electric) and bijou shopfronts. Continue to the Jardin du Palais Royal, and follow the arcades to Passage des Deux Pavillons and up the stairs to rue des Petits Champs. Turn right and duck into **2 Galerie Vivienne** (1826), decorated with floor mosaics and bas-reliefs on the walls. Don't miss wine shop Legrand Filles & Fils, Wolff et Descourts, selling silk scarves, and florist Emilio Robba.

Exit on rue Vivienne and peek in at **3 Galerie Colbert** (1823), featuring a huge glass dome and rotunda. West along rue

des Petits Champs is **4 Passage Choiseul** (1824), a 45m-long covered arcade, now filled with cheap eateries. Paul Verlaine (1844–96) drank absinthe here and Céline (1894–1961) grew up in his mother's lace shop at No 62.

Continue to **5 Passage des Panoramas**, Paris' oldest covered arcade (1800) and the first to be lit by gas (1817). It was expanded in 1834 with four interconnecting passages – Feydeau, Montmartre, St-Marc and Variétés – and is full of excellent restaurants and unusual shops.

Enter at 10-12 bd Montmartre into **6 Passage Joffroy**, Paris' last major passage (1847). There's a wax museum, the Musée Grévin, and wonderful boutiques, including bookshops, silversmiths and MG Segas, where Toulouse-Lautrec bought his walking sticks.

Cross the road to the 1847-opened **7 Passage Verdeau**. There's lots to explore: vintage comic books, antiques, old postcards and more. The northern exit is at 31bis rue du Faubourg Montmartre.



## DON'T MISS

## PARIS' RIVERSIDE BOOKSELLERS

With some 3km of forest-green boxes lining the Seine – containing over 300,000 secondhand (and often out-of-print) books, rare magazines, postcards and old advertising posters – Paris' **Bouquinistes** (Map p92; quai Voltaire, 7e, to quai de la Tournelle, 5e, & Pont Marie, 4e, to quai du Louvre, 1er; ☎ 11.30am-dusk) – used-book sellers – are as integral to the cityscape as the Panthéon. Many open only from spring to autumn (and many shut in August), but year-round you'll still find some to browse.

The *bouquinistes* have been in business since the 16th century, when they were itinerant peddlers selling their wares on Parisian bridges; back then their sometimes subversive (eg Protestant) materials could get them into trouble with the authorities. By 1859 the city had finally wised up: official licences were issued, space (10m of railing) was rented and eventually the permanent green boxes were installed.

Today, *bouquinistes* (the official count ranges from 200 to 240) are allowed to have four boxes, only one of which can be used to sell souvenirs. Look hard enough and you just might find some real treasures: old comic books, forgotten first editions, maps, stamps, erotica and prewar newspapers – as in centuries past, it's all there, waiting to be rediscovered.

is Paris' most famous parfumerie, and its shop (dating from 1912) is one of the most beautiful in the city. With its shimmering mirror-and-marble art deco interior, it's a reminder of the former glory of the Champs-Élysées. For total indulgence, make an appointment at its sublime spa.

### À la Mère de Famille

FOOD &amp; DRINKS

(Map p80; ☎ 01 47 70 83 69; www.lamerede-famille.com; 35 rue du Faubourg Montmartre, 9e; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7.30pm Sun; ☒ Le Peletier) Founded in 1761, this is the original location of Paris' oldest chocolatier. Its beautiful belle époque shop (a listed historic monument) is as enchanting as the rainbow of sweets, caramels and chocolates inside.

### Place de la Madeleine

FOOD &amp; DRINKS

(Map p86; place de la Madeleine, 8e; ☒ Madeleine) Ultragourmet food shops garland place de la Madeleine; many have in-house dining options. Notable names include truffle dealers **La Maison de la Truffe** (☎ 01 42 65 53 22; www.maison-de-la-truffe.com; 19 place de la Madeleine, 8e; ☎ 10am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, closed mid-late Aug); mustard specialist **Boutique Maille** (www.maille.com; 6 place de la Madeleine, 8e; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun); and extravagant chocolate sculptures at **Patrick Roger** (☎ 09 67 08 24 47; www.patrickroger.com; 3 place de la Madeleine, 8e; ☎ 11am-7pm). Famous caterer Fauchon has a **grand cafe** (☎ 01 87 86 28 23; www.grandcafe-fauchon.fr; 11 place de la Madeleine, 8e; 2-/3-course lunch menu €45/55, 4-/5-course dinner menu €48/78; ☎ 7am-midnight; ☎ ☎ here).

Nearby is **La Maison du Miel** (Map p80; www.maisondumiel.fr; 24 rue Vignon, 9e; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat; ☒ Madeleine), in the honey business since 1898.

### Hôtel Drouot

ANTIQUES

(Map p80; ☎ 01 48 00 20 20; www.drouot.com; 7-9 rue Drouot, 9e; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, to 8pm Thu; ☒ Richelieu Drouot) Selling everything from antiques and jewellery to rare books and art, Paris' most established auction house has been in business for more than a century. Viewings are from 11am to 6pm the day before and from 11am to noon the morning of the auction. Pick up the catalogue in-house or online.

### Laulhère

HATS

(Map p86; www.laulhere-france.com; 14-16 rue du Faubourg St-Honoré, 8e; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Sat; ☒ Madeleine) Founded in 1840, beret maker Laulhère still supplies the French army with the iconic headwear. Handcrafted from soft, durable and water-resistant merino wool, varieties range from plain to jewel-encrusted versions. The boutique is hidden within a courtyard off rue du Faubourg St-Honoré.

### 🛍 Louvre & Les Halles

The 1er and 2e arrondissements are mostly about fashion. Indeed Sentier is the city's traditional garment-making district. Rue Étienne Marcel, place des Victoires and rue du Jour flaunt prominent labels and shoe shops. Nearby rue Montmartre and rue Tiquette have streetwear and avant-garde designs; the easternmost part of the 1er

## **i** PARISIAN SOUVENIRS

For authentic distinctive and/or nostalgic souvenirs, visit the City of Paris' Paris Rendez-Vous ([www.rendesvous.paris.fr](http://www.rendesvous.paris.fr)) boutique at the Hôtel de Ville (p104). Its online boutique ships worldwide.

At major museums, the Boutiques de Musées ([www.boutiquesdemusees.fr](http://www.boutiquesdemusees.fr)) have high-quality replicas and a digital painting-and-frame service: browse masterpieces, choose a frame style and have it mailed to your home.

around Palais Royal, luxury vintage and conservative label fashion.

### La Samaritaine

DEPARTMENT STORE

(Map p92; [www.lasamaritaine.com](http://www.lasamaritaine.com); 19 rue de la Monnaie, 1er;  Pont Neuf) One of Paris' four big department stores, the 10-storey La Samaritaine is finally emerging from its much-contested and drawn-out multimillion euro overhaul. Pritzker Prize-winning Japanese firm Sanaa has preserved much of the building's gorgeous art nouveau and art deco features, including the glass ceiling topping the central Hall Jourdain. It was slated to open in 2021.

Luxury hotel Cheval Blanc was also set to open its doors here in 2021.

### Didier Ludot

VINTAGE

(Map p92;  01 42 96 06 56; [www.didierludot.fr](http://www.didierludot.fr); 20 & 24 Galerie de Montpensier, 1er;  10.30am-7pm Mon-Sat;  Palais Royal-Musée du Louvre) In the rag trade since 1975, collector Didier Ludot sells the city's finest couture creations of yesteryear, hosts exhibitions and has published a book portraying the evolution of the little black dress.

### L'Exception

DESIGN

(Map p92;  01 40 39 92 34; [www.lexception.com](http://www.lexception.com); 24 rue Berger, 1er;  11am-7pm Mon-Sat, 1-7pm Sun;  Les Halles, RER Châtelet-Les Halles) Over 400 different French designers come together under one roof at this light-filled concept store, which showcases rotating collections of men's and women's fashion along with accessories including lingerie and swimwear, shoes, eyewear, gloves, hats, scarves, belts, bags, watches and jewellery. It also sells design books, cosmetics, candles, vases and other gorgeous homewares, and has a small in-house coffee bar.

### E Dehillerin

HOMEWARES

(Map p92;  01 42 36 53 13; [www.edehillerin.fr](http://www.edehillerin.fr); 18-20 rue Coquillière, 1er;  9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat;  Les Halles, RER Châtelet-Les Halles) Founded in 1820, this extraordinary two-level store – more like an old-fashioned warehouse than a shiny, chic boutique – carries an incredible selection of professional-quality *matériel de cuisine* (kitchenware). Poultry scissors, turbot poacher, professional copper cookware or an Eiffel Tower-shaped cake tin – it's all here.

### Sézane

FASHION & ACCESSORIES



(Map p92; [www.sezane.com](http://www.sezane.com); 1 rue St-Fiacre, 2e;  8am-8.30pm Tue-Sat;  Grands Boulevards)  Affordable French fashion label Sézane, founded by Parisian entrepreneur-designer Morgane Sézalory, has cult status in Paris. Its chic women's tops, trousers, skirts, dresses, knitwear, outerwear, handbags, shoes and homewares, such as bed linen, are all sustainably sourced, with many proceeds donated to Demain, its own children's charity (there's also an adjoining charity shop selling past collections).

## Montmartre & Northern Paris

Montmartre screams crass keyring-filled souvenir shops, but there are quality specialist boutiques selling everything from handcrafted jewellery to antique perfume bottles, plus classic vinyl and vintage fashion to be found. Gourmets will enjoy the food shops on rue des Martyrs in Pigalle, while rue Beaurepaire and rue de Marseille by Canal St-Martin are for discerning fashion lovers. For alternative and/or sustainable fashion, design and pop-up concept stores, the edgiest strips to watch are rue du Château d'Eau, 10e, and rue des Dames in upcoming Batignolles. North of all this sprawls Paris' gargantuan Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen flea market.

### ★ Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen

MARKET

(Map p72; [www.pucesdeparissaintouen.com](http://www.pucesdeparissaintouen.com); rue des Rosiers, St-Ouen;  Sat-Mon;  Porte de Clignancourt) Spanning nine hectares, this vast flea market was founded in 1870 and is said to be Europe's largest. Over 2000 stalls are grouped into 15 *marchés* (markets) selling everything from 17th-century furniture to 21st-century clothing. Each market has different opening hours – check the website for details. There are kilometres of 'freelance' stalls; come prepared to spend some time. Dining options here include the legendary 1930s **Chez Lou-**

**isette** (Map p72; ☎01 40 10 12 14; Marché Vernaison, allée 10, 136 av Michelet, St-Ouen, Marché aux Pucés de St-Ouen; mains €14.50-20; ☀11am-7pm Sat-Mon; 🚶 Porte de Clignancourt), where singers perform rousing *chansons*.

★ **Les Récupérables** FASHION & ACCESSORIES (Map p72; www.lesrecuperables.com; 11 rue des Gardes, 18e; ☀10am-6pm Mon-Wed, to 7.30pm Thu & Fri, noon-7.30pm Sat; 🚶 Château Rouge, Barbès-Rochechouart) Eco-conscious Parisian designer Anaïs Dautais Warmel takes unwanted fabric scraps from upholstery workshops and haute couture fashion houses in Paris and transforms them into wildly trendy, petrol-blue bomber jackets, cute Dior-inspired dresses, tartan-print trench coats and the like.

★ **Fromagerie Alléosse** CHEESE (Map p86; www.fromage-alloesse.com; 13 rue Poncelet, 17e; ☀9am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-12.45pm Sun; 🚶 Ternes) On stall-filled foodie street rue Poncelet, heady *fromagerie* Alléosse has its own cheese-ripening *caves* (cellars) spanning 300 sq metres with four separate environments. Its 250-plus cheeses are grouped into five main categories: *fromage de chèvre* (goat's milk), *fromage à pâte persillée* (veined or blue), *fromage à pâte molle* (soft), *fromage à pâte demi-dure* (semihard) and *fromage à pâte dure* (hard).

★ **Thanks** CONCEPT STORE (Map p80; www.thanks.paris; 42 rue Condorcet, 9e; ☀10.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sat; 🚶 Pigalle, Anvers) Former financial-trader-turned-jeweller Arnaud Soullignac is the creative mastermind behind this tiny boutique specialising in stylish and unique homewares, gifts and

jewellery – all made in France. The origami-inspired unicorn, swan and triceratops pendants are by the owner himself, and the choice of handmade greeting cards and inspirational posters is particularly tempting.

**Balades Sonores** MUSIC (Map p80; ☎01 83 87 94 87; www.baladessonores.com; 1-3 av Trudaine, 9e; ☀noon-8pm Mon-Sat, plus 2-7pm 1st Sun of month; 🚶 Anvers) One of Paris' best vinyl shops, Balades Sonores sprawls over two adjacent buildings. The ground floor of 1 av Trudaine stocks contemporary pop, rock, metal, garage and French music (all genres). Its basement holds secondhand blues, country, new wave and punk from the '60s to '90s. Next door, No 3 has soul, jazz, funk, hip-hop, electronica and world music.

**O/HP/E** CONCEPT STORE (Map p108; www.facebook.com/ohpeparis10; 27 rue du Château d'Eau, 10e; ☀2-7pm Tue, 8.30am-7pm Wed-Fri, 9.30am-7.30pm Sat, 9.30am-6.30pm Sun; 🚶 Jacques Bonsergent) White-on-white concept store O/HP/E ('Objets Homemade Pâtisserie Épicerie') stocks chic homewares – ceramics, textiles, light fittings, candles and kitchenware – alongside beautiful cosmetics, stationery, gifts and gourmet delicacies (preserves, nougats, sugar-coated olives and chocolates). Ponder your purchases over coffee and a hazelnut praline tart or other tempting cake in its stylish cafe.

**Spree** FASHION & ACCESSORIES (Map p98; www.spree.fr; 16 rue de la Vieuville, 18e; ☀11am-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 3-7pm Sun; 🚶 Abesses) Allow plenty of time to browse this boutique-gallery, with a carefully selected collection of designer fashion put together by stylist Roberta Oprandi and artist Bruni

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### RECORD COLLECTIONS

Bastille has a great collection of vinyl shops. **Souffle Continu** (Map p72; www.souffle.continu.com; 20-22 rue Gerbier, 11e; ☀noon-8pm Mon-Sat; 🚶 Philippe Auguste, Voltaire) owners Bernard Ducayron and Théo Jarrier have their own record label, and stock genres as diverse as avant-garde garage, industrial poetry and medieval metal. Unearth jazz, blues, soul, funk, indie rock and garage at **Le Silence de la Rue** (Map p112; 39 rue Faidherbe, 11e; ☀11am-7.30pm Mon-Sat; 🚶 Faidherbe-Chaligny). **Music Fear Satan** (Map p112; www.musicfearsatan.com; 4bis rue Richard Lenoir, 11e; ☀11.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat; 🚶 Charonne) specialises in metal (all genres), indie rock and hardcore punk. New releases, rereleases and secondhand '60s, '70s and '80s vinyl are stocked at haphazardly catalogued **Hands & Arms** (Map p112; www.handsandarms.com; 72 rue Crozatier, 12e; ☀11am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 2pm Sun; 🚶 Faidherbe-Chaligny). **Citeaux Sphere** (Map p112; ☎06 11 76 65 89; 45 rue de Citeaux, 12e; mains €12-18; ☀11am-5pm Mon & Sun, to 11pm Tue-Sat; 🚶 Faidherbe-Chaligny) combines a vinyl shop with a wine bar and laid-back cafe.

## **i** MUSEUM DISCOUNTS & PASSES

Almost all museums and monuments in Paris have discounted tickets (*tarif réduit*) for students and seniors (generally over 60 years), provided they have valid ID. Children often get in for free; the cut-off age for 'child' is anywhere between six and 18 years. EU citizens under 26 years get in for free at national monuments and museums.

**Paris Museum Pass** ([www.parismuseumpass.fr](http://www.parismuseumpass.fr); two/four/six days €52/66/78) Gets you into 50-plus venues in and around Paris; a huge advantage is that pass holders usually enter larger sights at a different entrance, meaning you bypass (or substantially reduce) ridiculously long ticket queues.

**Paris Passlib'** ([www.parisinfo.com](http://www.parisinfo.com); two/three/five days €119/139/165) Sold at the Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau (p177) and on its website, this handy city pass covers unlimited public transport in zones 1 to 3, admission to some 50 museums in the Paris region (aka a Paris Museum Pass), temporary exhibitions at most municipal museums, a one-hour boat cruise along the Seine, and a two-hour bus sightseeing tour around central Paris' key sights. There's an optional €20 supplement for a skip-the-line ticket to levels one and two of the Eiffel Tower.

Hadjadj. What makes shopping here fun is that all the furniture – vintage 1950s to 1980s pieces by Eames and other midcentury designers – is also for sale, as is the contemporary artwork on the walls.

### **🛍️ Le Marais, Ménilmontant & Belleville**

Le Marais has an ever-expanding fashion presence, with tiny *ateliers* (workshops) and boutiques with rising and just-established designers at work. In the Haut Marais, young designers have colonised the upper reaches of the 3e on and around rue Charlot and rue de Turenne. To the south, in the 4e, rue des Francs Bourgeois and rue François Miron have well-established boutique shopping for clothing, hats, home furnishings and stationery. Place des Vosges is lined with very high-end art and antique galleries. Both areas form one of Paris' ZITs (international tourist zones) with late-night and Sunday trading.

#### **★Merci**

CONCEPT STORE

(Map p108; ☎01 42 77 00 33; [www.merci-merc.com](http://www.merci-merc.com); 111 bd Beaumarchais, 3e; ☺10am-7:30pm Mon-Sat; 🚇St-Sébastien-Froissart) 🍃 A Fiat Cinquecento marks the entrance to this unique concept store, which donates all its profits to a children's charity in Madagascar. Shop for fashion, accessories, linens, lamps and nifty designs for the home. Complete the experience with a coffee in its hybrid used-bookshop-cafe, a juice at its **Cinéma Café** (☺10am-7pm Mon-Sat) or lunch in its stylish **La Cantine de Merci** (mains €14-20; ☺10am-6pm Mon-Sat).

#### **★Empreintes**

DESIGN

(Map p108; [www.empreintes-paris.com](http://www.empreintes-paris.com); 5 rue de Picardie, 3e; ☺11am-1pm & 2-7pm Tue-Sat; 🚇Temple) Spanning four floors, this design emporium is a concept store for unique, handcrafted pieces by emerging and established French artists and designers. Exquisite jewellery, fashion and art are displayed alongside striking homewares (ceramics, cushions, furniture, lighting, books and more).

#### **★Kerzon**

HOMEWARES

(Map p108; [www.kerzon.paris](http://www.kerzon.paris); 68 rue de Turenne, 3e; ☺11.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sat; 🚇St-Sébastien-Froissart) Candles made from natural, biodegradable wax in Parisian scents such as Jardin du Luxembourg (with lilac and honey), Place des Vosges (rose and jasmine) and Parc des Buttes-Chaumont (cedar and sandalwood) make aromatic souvenirs of the city. The pretty white and sage-green boutique also stocks room fragrances, scented laundry liquids, and perfumes, soaps, bath oils and other toiletries.

#### **★Fromagerie Goncourt**

CHEESE

(Map p108; ☎01 43 57 91 28; [www.facebook.com/lafromageriegoncourt](http://www.facebook.com/lafromageriegoncourt); 1 rue Abel Rabaud, 11e; ☺9am-1.30pm & 3.30-8pm Tue-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat; 🚇Goncourt) Styled like a boutique, this contemporary *fromagerie* is a must-discover. Clément Brossault ditched a career in banking to become a *fromager* and his seasonal cheese selection – 70-plus types – is superb. Cheeses flagged with a bicycle symbol are varieties he discovered in situ during a two-month French cheese tour he embarked on as part of his training.

## Moulin Roty

TOYS

(Map p108; [www.moulinrotty.com](http://www.moulinrotty.com); 22 bd des Filles du Calvaire, 11e; ☺11am-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Sat; 📍Filles du Calvaire) Beloved French children's brand Moulin Roty is stocked in department stores and boutiques, but this is the company's only premises of its own in Paris. Alongside shelves of soft toys (mice, ducks, cats etc, in beautifully stitched outfits) are animal-adorned backpacks, adorable booties and old-fashioned toys such as rocking horses, tea sets, kaleidoscopes, shadow puppets and cinema projector sets.

## Candora

PERFUME

(Map p108; ☎01 43 48 76 05; [www.candora-fragrance.com](http://www.candora-fragrance.com); 1 rue du Pont Louis-Philippe, 4e; ☺2-7pm Mon-Sat; 📍Pont Marie) This brother-and-sister-run parfumerie near the Seine makes up bespoke scents in just 10 minutes and offers 90-minute perfume-making workshops in English (adult/child €79/49).

## 📍 Bastille & Eastern Paris

Superb markets aside, Bastille and eastern Paris are not really known for shopping, but there's a select choice of unique boutiques and specialist shops. Key fashion brands have stores on the western end of trendy rue de Charonne, between av Ledru-Rollin and rue du Faubourg St-Antoine, and arts and crafts studio-showrooms are tucked under the viaduct arches beneath the Promenade Plantée.

## La Manufacture de Chocolat

CHOCOLATE

(Map p108; [www.lechocolat-alainducasse.com](http://www.lechocolat-alainducasse.com); 40 rue de la Roquette, 11e; ☺10.30am-7pm Mon-Sat; 📍Bastille) If you dine at superstar chef Alain Ducasse's restaurants, the chocolate will have been made here at Ducasse's own chocolate factory (the first in Paris to produce 'bean-to-bar' chocolate), which he set up with his former executive pastry chef, Nicolas Berger. Deliberate over ganaches, pralines and truffles and no fewer than 47 flavours of chocolate bar.

## 📍 The Islands

### ★ Marché aux Fleurs Reine Elizabeth II

MARKET

(Map p116; [www.facebook.com/Marche.Aux.Fleurs.Reine.Elizabeth.2](http://www.facebook.com/Marche.Aux.Fleurs.Reine.Elizabeth.2); place Louis Lépine et quai de la Corse, 4e; ☺9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-7pm Sun; 📍Cité) Blooms have been sold at this quaint flower market since 1808, making it the oldest market of any kind in Paris.

## 📍 Latin Quarter

Bookworms will love this part of the Left Bank, home to some wonderful bookshops. Other student-frequented shops include camping stores, comic shops, old-school vinyl shops, where collectors browse for hours, and cheap, colourful homewares stores, interspersed with the occasional *droguerie-quincaillerie* (hardware store) – easily spotted by the jumble of laundry baskets, buckets etc piled on the pavement out the front.

## ★ Shakespeare & Company

BOOKS

(Map p118; ☎01 43 25 40 93; [www.shakespeareandcompany.com](http://www.shakespeareandcompany.com); 37 rue de la Bûcherie, 5e; ☺10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-8pm Sun; 📍St-Michel) Enchanting nooks and crannies overflow with new and secondhand English-language books. The original shop (12 rue l'Odéon, 6e; closed by the Nazis in 1941) was run by Sylvia Beach and became the meeting point for Hemingway's 'Lost Generation'. Readings by emerging and illustrious authors regularly take place, and there's a wonderful cafe (p163) next door.

## ★ Le Bonbon au Palais

FOOD

(Map p118; ☎01 78 56 15 72; [www.lebonbonaupalais.com](http://www.lebonbonaupalais.com); 19 rue Monge, 5e; ☺10.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sat; 📍Cardinal Lemoine) Kids and kids-at-heart will adore this sugar-fuelled *tour de France*. The school-geography-themed boutique stocks rainbows of artisanal sweets from around the country. Old-fashioned glass jars brim with treats like *calissons* (diamond-shaped, icing-sugar-topped ground fruit and almonds from Aix-en-Provence), *rigolettes* (fruit-filled pillows from Nantes), *berlingots* (striped, triangular boiled sweets from Carpentras and elsewhere) and *papalines* (herbal liqueur-filled pink-chocolate balls from Avignon).

## Mayette la Boutique de la Magie

GAMES

(Map p118; ☎01 43 54 13 63; [www.mayette.com](http://www.mayette.com); 8 rue des Carmes, 5e; ☺2-7.30pm Tue-Sat; 📍Maubert-Mutualité) One of a kind, this 1808-established magic shop is said to be the world's oldest. Since 1991 it's been in the hands of world-famous magic pro Dominique Duvivier. Professional and hobbyist magicians flock here to discuss king sandwiches, reverse assemblies, false cuts and other card tricks with Duvivier and his daughter, Alexandra.



## 🛍️ St-Germain & Les Invalides

The northern wedge of the 6e between Église St-Germain des Prés and the Seine is a dream to mooch around with its bijou art galleries, antique shops, stylish vintage clothes shops and designer boutiques (Vanessa Bruno, Isabel Marant et al). St-Germain's style continues along the western half of bd St-Germain and rue du Bac with a striking collection of contemporary furniture, kitchen and design shops. Gourmet food and wine shops galore make it a foodie's paradise.

### ★ Le Bon Marché

DEPARTMENT STORE

(Map p128; ☎01 44 39 81 81; [www.24s.com](http://www.24s.com); 24 rue de Sèvres, 7e; ☀10am-7.45pm Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun; 🚇Sèvres-Babylone) Built by Gustave Eiffel as Paris' first department store in 1852, this is the epitome of style, with a superb concentration of men's and women's fashions, homewares, stationery, books and toys. Break for a coffee, afternoon tea or a light lunch at the Rose Bakery tearoom on the 2nd floor. The icing on the cake is the glorious food hall.

### ★ La Grande Épicerie de Paris

FOOD &amp; DRINKS

(Map p128; ☎01 44 39 81 00; [www.lagrandeepicerie.com](http://www.lagrandeepicerie.com); 38 rue de Sèvres, 7e; ☀8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-8pm Sun; 🚇Sèvres-Babylone) The magnificent food hall of department store Le Bon Marché sells 30,000 rare and/or luxury gourmet products, including 60 different types of bread baked on-site. Its fantastical displays of chocolates, pastries, biscuits, cheeses, fresh fruit and vegetables and deli goods are a sight in themselves.

### Magasin Sennelier

ARTS &amp; CRAFTS

(Map p128; ☎01 42 60 72 15; [www.magasin-sennelier.art](http://www.magasin-sennelier.art); 3 quai Voltaire, 7e; ☀2-6.30pm Mon, 10am-12.45pm & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sat; 🚇St-Germain des Prés) Cézanne and Picasso were among the artists who helped develop products for this venerable 1887-founded art supplier on the banks of the Seine, and it remains an exceptional place to pick up canvases, brushes, watercolours, oils, pastels, charcoals and more. The shop's forest-green façade with gold lettering, exquisite original timber cabinetry and glass display cases also fuel artistic inspiration.

### Cantin

CHEESE

(Map p78; ☎01 45 50 43 94; [www.cantin.fr](http://www.cantin.fr); 12 rue du Champs de Mars, 7e; ☀8.30am-5pm Tue-Sat; 🚇École Militaire) 🍷 Opened in 1950 and still

run by the same family today, this exceptional art shop stocks cheeses only made in limited quantities on small rural farms. They're then painstakingly ripened in Cantin's own cellars (from two weeks up to two years) before being displayed for sale.

### Le Petit Prince

CONCEPT STORE

(Map p128; <https://le-petit-prince-store-paris.business.site>; 8 rue Grégoire Tours, 6e; ☀11am-7pm Mon-Sat, 1-7pm Sun; 🚇Odéon) Fronted by a midnight-blue façade, this magical boutique is solely devoted to the world of Le Petit Prince (the Little Prince), the golden-haired protagonist from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's poignant 1943 novella. Its shelves are filled with adorable cuddly toys, figurines, magnets, key rings, T-shirts (for adults and kids), puzzles, crockery, placemats, stationery, posters and various imprints of the classic book.

### Deyrolle

ANTIQUES

(Map p128; ☎01 42 22 30 07; [www.deyrolle.com](http://www.deyrolle.com); 46 rue du Bac, 7e; ☀1.30-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 10.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Sat; 🚇Rue du Bac) Overrun with creatures such as lions, tigers, zebras and storks, taxidermist Deyrolle opened in 1831. In addition to stuffed animals (for rent and sale), it stocks minerals, shells, corals and crustaceans, stand-mounted ostrich eggs and pedagogical storyboards. There are also rare and unusual seeds (including many old types of tomato), gardening tools and accessories.

### Hermès Paris Sèvres

FASHION &amp; ACCESSORIES

(Map p128; ☎01 42 22 80 83; [www.hermes.com](http://www.hermes.com); 17 rue de Sèvres, 6e; ☀10.30am-7pm Mon-Sat; 🚇Sèvres-Babylone) A stunning art deco swimming pool (originally belonging to neighbouring Hôtel Lutetia) now houses luxury label Hermès' inaugural concept store. Retaining its mosaic tiles and iron balustrades, the vast, tiered space showcases new directions in home furnishings, including fabrics and wallpaper, along with classic lines such as its signature scarves. Its cafe, Le Plongeur (the Diving Board), is equally chic.

### La Dernière Goutte

WINE

(Map p128; ☎01 43 29 11 62; [www.ldgparis.com](http://www.ldgparis.com); 6 rue du Bourbon le Château, 6e; ☀3.30-8pm Mon, 10.30am-1.30pm & 3-8pm Tue-Fri, 10.30am-8pm Sat, 11am-7pm Sun; 🚇Mabillon) 'The Last Drop' is the brainchild of Cuban-American sommelier Juan Sánchez, whose tiny wine shop is packed with exciting, mostly organic French *vins de propriétaires* (estate-bottled wines) made by small independent producers. Wine classes lasting two hours (two

white tastings, five red) regularly take place in English (per person €55); it also hosts free tastings with winemakers most Saturdays.

### Cire Trudon

GIFTS & SOUVENIRS

(Map p128; ☎ 01 43 26 46 50; www.trudon.com; 78 rue de Seine, 6e; ☀ 11am-7pm Mon, 10.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sat; 🏠 Odéon) Claude Trudon began selling candles here in 1643, and the company – which officially supplied Versailles and Napoléon with light – is now the world's oldest candle-maker (look for the plaque to the left of the shop's royal-blue awning). A rainbow of candles and candlesticks fill the shelves inside.

## i Information

### MEDICAL SERVICES

Paris has some 50 hospitals, including the following with 24-hour emergency rooms:

**Hôpital Hôtel Dieu** (☎ 01 42 34 82 34; www.aphp.fr; 7 rue de la Cité, 4e; 🏠 Cité) One of the city's main government-run public hospitals; after 8pm use the emergency entrance on rue de la Cité.

**L'Institut Hospitalier Franco-Britannique** (IHFB; ☎ 01 46 39 22 08; www.hopitalfranco-britannique.org; 4 rue Kléber, Levallois-Perret; 🏠 Anatole France) Private, English-speaking option.

*Pharmacies* (chemists) are marked by a large illuminated green cross outside. At least one in each neighbourhood is open for extended hours; find a complete night-owl listing on the Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau website (www.parisinfo.com).

**Pharmacie Bader** (☎ 01 43 26 92 66; www.pharmaciebader.com; 10-12 bd St-Michel, 6e; ☀ 8.30am-9pm Sep-Jul, from 10am Aug; 🏠 St-Michel)

**Pharmacie de la Mairie** (☎ 01 42 78 53 58; www.pharmacie-mairie-paris.com; 9 rue des Archives, 4e; ☀ 9am-8pm; 🏠 Hôtel de Ville)

**Pharmacie Les Champs** (☎ 01 45 62 02 41; www.boticalin-pharmacie.com; Galerie des Champs-Élysées, 84 av des Champs-Élysées, 8e; ☀ 8.30am-9pm; 🏠 George V)

### SAFE TRAVEL

Overall, Paris is well lit and safe. Random street assaults are rare.

➤ Stay alert for pickpockets and take precautions: don't carry more cash than you need, and keep credit cards and passports concealed.

➤ Beware scams such as fake petitions.

➤ Metro stations best avoided late at night including Châtelet-Les Halles, Château Rouge, Gare du Nord, Strasbourg St-Denis, Réaumur Sébastopol, Stalingrad and Montparnasse

Bienvenüe. Marx Dormoy, Porte de la Chapelle and Marcadet-Poissonniers can be sketchy day and night.

➤ *Bornes d'alarme* (alarm boxes) are located in the centre of metro/RER platforms and some station corridors.

➤ Avoid street protests, which can turn violent.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau** (Paris Office de Tourisme; Map p108; ☎ 01 49 52 42 63; www.parisinfo.com; 29 rue de Rivoli, 4e; ☀ 10am-6pm; 🏠; 🏠 Hôtel de Ville) Paris' main tourist office is at the Hôtel de Ville. It sells tickets for tours and several attractions, plus museum and transport passes.

## i Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Aéroport de Charles de Gaulle** (☎ 01 70 36 39 50; www.parisaeroport.fr; Roissy) Most international airlines fly to Aéroport de Charles de Gaulle, 28km northeast of central Paris. (The airport is commonly called 'Roissy' after the suburb in which it's located.)

**Aéroport d'Orly** (☎ 01 70 36 39 50; www.parisaeroport.fr; Orly) Aéroport d'Orly is located 19km south of central Paris, but despite being closer to the centre than Aéroport de Charles de Gaulle, it's not as frequently used by international airlines and public-transport options aren't quite as straightforward. If you're travelling with heavy luggage or young kids, consider a taxi.

**Aéroport de Beauvais** (☎ 08 92 68 20 66; www.aeroportparisbeauvais.com; Beauvais) Aéroport de Beauvais is 75km north of Paris and is served by a few low-cost airlines – but before you snap up that bargain, consider whether the post-arrival journey is worth it.

### BUS

In France, bus operators consolidated after major European bus company FlixBus (www.flixbus.com) bought Eurolines in 2019.


FlixBus connects all major European capitals to Paris. Its main terminal is at **Bercy Seine** (Map p112; 210 quai de Bercy, 12e; 🏠 Bercy, Cour St-Émilien). Some services use other bus stops located in and around Paris.

### TRAIN

Paris is the central point in the French rail network, Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français (SNCF), with six train stations that handle passenger traffic to different parts of France and Europe. Each is well connected to the Paris public-transport system, the Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens (RATP).


To buy onward tickets from Paris, visit a station or go to Oui.SNCF (www.oui.sncf). Most trains – and all high-speed Trains à Grande Vitesse


(TGV) – require advance reservations. The earlier you book, the better your chances of securing a discounted fare. Mainline stations in Paris have left-luggage offices and/or *consignes* (lockers) for a maximum of 72 hours.


**Gare du Nord** (rue de Dunkerque, 10e;  Gare du Nord) The terminus for northbound domestic trains as well as several international services. Located in northern Paris.

**Eurostar** ([www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)) The London–Paris line runs from St Pancras International to Gare du Nord. Voyages take 2¼ hours.


**Thalys** ([www.thalys.com](http://www.thalys.com)) Trains pull into Paris' Gare du Nord from Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne.

**Gare de Lyon** (bd Diderot, 12e;  Gare de Lyon) The terminus for trains from Lyon, Provence, the Côte d'Azur, the French Alps, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. Located in eastern Paris.

**Gare de l'Est** (place du 11 Novembre 1918, 10e;  Gare de l'Est) The terminus for trains from Luxembourg, southern Germany (Frankfurt, Munich, Stuttgart) and points further east (including a weekly Moscow service); there are regular and TGV Est trains to areas of France east of Paris (Champagne, Alsace and Lorraine). Located in northern Paris.

**Gare d'Austerlitz** (bd de l'Hôpital, 13e;  Gare d'Austerlitz) The terminus for a handful of trains from the south, including services from Orléans, Limoges and Toulouse. Current renovations are due to continue until 2025. Located in southeast-ern Paris.

**Gare Montparnasse** (av du Maine & bd de Vaugirard, 15e;  Montparnasse Bienvenue) The terminus for trains from the southwest and west, including services from Brittany, the Loire Valley, Bordeaux, Toulouse and Spain. Located in southern Paris.


**Gare St-Lazare** (rue Intérieure, 8e;  St-Lazare) The terminus for trains from Normandy. Located in Clichy, northwestern Paris.


## Getting Around

### TO/FROM AÉROPORT CHARLES DE GAULLE


#### Bus


**Noctilien buses 140 and 143** (€8 or four metro tickets) Part of the RATP night service, Noctilien has two hourly services that link the airport with


**Gare de l'Est** (Map p72; rue du 8 Mai 1945, 10e;  Gare de l'Est) in northern Paris via nearby

**Gare du Nord** (Map p72; 170 rue La Fayette, 10e;  Gare du Nord): bus 140 (1am to 4am; from Gare de l'Est 1am to 3.40am) takes 80 minutes, and bus 143 (12.32am to 4.32am; from Gare de l'Est 12.55am to 5.08am) takes 55 minutes.

**RATP bus 350** (€6 or three metro tickets, 80 minutes, every 15 to 30 minutes from 5.30am to 9.30pm) Links the airport with **Gare de l'Est**

(Map p72; [www.ratp.fr](http://www.ratp.fr); rue du 8 Mai 1945, 10e;  Gare de l'Est).

**RATP bus 351** (€6 or three metro tickets, 90 minutes, every 15 to 30 minutes from 5.35am to 9.37pm) Links the airport with **place de la Nation** (Map p72; 2 av du Trône, 12e;  Nation) in eastern Paris.

**Roissybus** (€13.70, 75 minutes, from the airport every 15 to 20 minutes from 6am to 12.30am, from Paris every 15 to 20 minutes from 5.15am to 12.30am) Links the airport with **Opéra** (Map p80; 13-15 rue Scribe, 9e;  Opéra).

#### Taxi

A taxi to the city centre takes 40 to 80 minutes. Fares are standardised to a flat rate: €53 to the Right Bank and €58 to the Left Bank. The fare increases by 15% between 7pm and 7am and on Sundays.


Only take taxis at a clearly marked rank. Never follow anyone who approaches you at the airport and claims to be a driver.

#### Train

Charles de Gaulle Airport is served by the RER B line (€11.40, children aged four to nine €7.90, approximately 50 minutes, every 10 to 15 minutes), which connects with central Paris stations including Gare du Nord, Châtelet–Les Halles and St-Michel–Notre Dame. Trains run from 4.50am to 11.50pm (from Gare du Nord 4.53am to 12.15am).

### TO/FROM AÉROPORT D'ORLY

#### Bus

**OrlyBus** (€9.50, 30 minutes, every eight to 15 minutes from 6am to 12.30am from Orly, 5.35am to midnight from Paris) Runs to/from **place Denfert-Rochereau** (Map p72; [www.ratp.fr](http://www.ratp.fr); 3 place Denfert-Rochereau, 14e;  Denfert-Rochereau) in southern Paris.

#### Taxi

A taxi to the city centre takes roughly 30 minutes. Standardised flat-rate fares mean a taxi costs €32 to the Left Bank and €37 to the Right Bank. The fare increases by 15% between 7pm and 7am and on Sundays.

#### Train

There is currently no direct train to/from Orly; you'll need to change halfway. Note that while it is possible to take a shuttle to the RER C line, this service is quite long and not recommended.

**RER B** (€12.10, children aged four to nine €6.05, 35 minutes, every four to 12 minutes) This line connects Orly with the St-Michel–Notre Dame, Châtelet–Les Halles and Gare du Nord stations in the city centre. In order to get from Orly to the RER station (Antony), you must first take the Orlyval automatic train. The service runs every five to seven minutes from 6am to 11.35pm and


takes six minutes. You only need one ticket to take the two trains.

## Tram

**Tramway T7** (€1.90, 30 minutes, every eight to 15 minutes from 6am to 11.45pm) This tramway links Orly with Villejuif–Louis Aragon metro station in southern Paris; buy tickets from the machine at the tram stop as no tickets are sold on board.

## Aéroport Paris-Beauvais

### Shuttle

The Beauvais *navette* (shuttle bus; €17, 1¼ hours) links the airport with **Parking Pershing** (Gare Routière Pershing; Map p72; 22-24 bd Pershing, 17e;  Porte Maillot) on central Paris' western edge; services are coordinated with flight times. See the airport website for details and tickets.

### Taxi

A taxi to central Paris (around 1¾ hours) during the day/night costs around €170/210 (probably more than the cost of your flight!).

## BICYCLE

The **Vélib'** ( 01 76 49 12 34; www.velib-metro.pole.fr; day/week subscription €5/15, standard bike hire up to 30/60min free/€1, electric bike €1/2) bike-share scheme puts tens of thousands of bikes (30% of which are electric) at the disposal of Parisians and visitors at some 1400 stations throughout Paris, accessible around the clock.

♦ To get a bike, you first need to purchase a one- or seven-day subscription either online (generally EU credit cards only) or at the docking stations.

♦ After you authorise a deposit (€300) to pay for the bike should it go missing, you'll receive an ID number and PIN code and you're ready to go.

♦ Bikes are rented in 30-minute intervals. If you return a bike before a half-hour is up and then take a new one, you will not be charged for a standard bicycle (electric bikes incur charges).

♦ Standard bikes are suitable for cyclists aged 14 and over, and are fitted with gears, an antitheft lock with cable, reflective strips and front/rear lights. Bring your own helmet (they are not required by law).

♦ Electric bikes are also for those aged over 14. They have a top speed of 25km/h and a range of 50km.

## Rentals

Most rental places will require a deposit (usually €150 for a standard bike, €300 for electric bikes). Take ID and your bank or credit card.


**Freescoot** ( 01 44 07 06 72; www.freescoot.fr; 63 quai de la Tournele, 5e; 50/125cc scooters per 24hr from €65/75, bicycle/tandem/electric-bike hire per 24hr from €20/40/40; ☀ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, closed late Jul-late Aug & late Dec-early Jan;

## TROTTINETTES

Electric *trottinettes* (kick-scooters) have taken off in popularity, with an estimated 20,000 inside central Paris.

These *trottinettes* are hired via an app. There are numerous operators; Lime (www.li.me) is the most common. Rates per 15/30 minutes are typically €3.25/5.50, with every additional minute costing €0.15.

To increase safety, the city of Paris has introduced laws including a 20km/h speed limit, fines for riding on the pavement and for illegal parking, and a limit of one rider per *trottinette*. Riders must be aged 12 and above.

 Maubert-Mutualité) Rents bicycles (including tandems) and electric bikes.

**Gepetto et Vélos** ( 01 43 54 19 95; www.gepetto-velos.com; 28 rue des Fossées St-Bernard, 5e; bike rental per hr/day/weekend from €4/16/27; ☀ 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, closed Aug;  Cardinal Lemoine) Rents city and mountain bikes; you'll need to leave your passport or a deposit (€350 to €500).

**Paris à Vélo, C'est Sympa** ( 01 48 87 60 01; www.parisavelo.fr; 22 rue Alphonse Baudin, 11e; half-/full day/24hr bike from €13/16/22, electric bike €33/40/50; ☀ 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Mar;  Richard Lenoir) One-stop shop for bicycle hire.

## BOAT

**Batobus** (www.batobus.com; adult/child 1-day pass €17/8, 2-day pass €21/11; ☀ 10am-9.30pm late Apr-Aug, shorter hours Sep-late Apr) Runs glassed-in trimarans that dock every 20 to 25 minutes at nine small piers along the Seine: Eiffel Tower, Invalides, Musée d'Orsay, St-Germain des Prés, Notre Dame/Latin Quarter, Jardin des Plantes, Hôtel de Ville, Musée du Louvre and place de la Concorde. Buy tickets online, at ferry stops or at tourist offices. Two-day passes must be used on consecutive days. You can also buy a Pass+ that includes **L'Open Tour** ( 01 42 66 56 56; www.opentourparis.com; adult/child 1-day pass €35/18, night tour €27/17) buses, to be used on consecutive days. A two-day pass per adult/child costs €47/21; a three-day pass is €51/21.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving in Paris is defined by the triple hassle of navigation, heavy traffic and limited parking. Petrol stations are also difficult to locate and access. A car is unnecessary to get around, but if you're heading out of the city on an excursion,

then one can certainly be useful. A Crit'Air Vignette (compulsory anti-pollution sticker) is also required in most instances. If you plan on hiring a car, it's best to do so online and in advance.

### Motor Scooters

**Cityscoot** ([www.cityscoot.eu](http://www.cityscoot.eu); per 1/100min €0.34/29) Electric mopeds with a top speed of 45km/h are available to rent as part of Paris' scooter-sharing scheme, with all bookings via smartphones. No subscriptions are necessary. Any driver's licence (including a foreign-issued licence) is valid for those born before 1 January 1988; anyone born after that date requires a current EU driver's licence.

**Freescoot** (p179) Rents 50/125cc scooters in various intervals. Prices include third-party insurance as well as helmets, locks, rain gear and gloves. A motorcycle licence is required for 125cc scooters but not for 50cc scooters, though you must be at least 23 years old and leave a credit-card deposit of €1000.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

#### Bus

Buses can be a scenic way to get around – and there are no stairs to climb, meaning they are more widely accessible – but they're slower and less intuitive to figure out than the metro.

Paris' bus system, operated by the RATP, runs from approximately 5am to 1am Monday to Saturday; services are drastically reduced on Sunday and public holidays. Hours vary substantially depending on the line.

► As with metro tickets, paper tickets will be phased out by 2022 and replaced by contactless cards.

► Normal bus rides embracing one or two bus zones cost one metro ticket; longer rides require two or even three tickets.

► Transfers to other buses – but not the metro – are allowed on the same ticket as long as the change takes place 1½ hours between the first and last validation. This does not apply to Noctilien services.

► Whatever kind of single-journey ticket you have, you must validate it in the ticket machine near the driver. If you don't have a ticket, the driver can sell you one for €2 (correct change required).

### Metro & RER

Paris' underground network is run by RATP ([www.ratp.fr](http://www.ratp.fr)) and consists of two separate but linked systems: the metro and the Réseau Express Régional (RER) suburban train line. The metro has 14 numbered lines; the RER has five main lines (but you'll probably only need to use A, B and C). When buying tickets consider how many zones your journey will cover; there are five concentric transport zones rippling out from Paris (zone 5 being the furthest); if you travel from Charles de Gaulle Airport to Paris, for instance, you will have to buy a ticket for zones 1 to 5.

Metro maps of various sizes and degrees of detail are available for free at metro ticket win-

### ARRONDISSEMENTS

#### Paris' Arrondissements



Within the bd Périphérique ring road, Paris is divided into 20 *arrondissements* (city districts), which spiral clockwise like a snail shell from the centre. *Arrondissement* numbers (1er, 2e etc) form an integral part of all Parisian addresses. Each *arrondissement* has its own personality, but it's the *quartiers* (quarters, ie neighbourhoods), which often overlap *arrondissement* boundaries, that give Paris its village atmosphere.



## **i** TOURIST PASSES

The Mobilis and Paris Visite passes are valid on the metro, the RER, SNCF's suburban lines, buses, night buses, trams and the Montmartre funicular railway.

As Paris is phasing out paper tickets, they will be available in contactless card form. Passes operate by date (rather than 24-hour periods), so activate them early in the day for the best value.

**Mobilis** Allows unlimited travel for one day and costs €7.50 (for two zones) to €17.80 (five zones).

**Paris Visite** Allows unlimited travel as well as discounted entry to certain museums and other discounts and bonuses. The 'Paris+ Suburbs+ Airports' pass includes transport to/from the airports and costs €25.25/38.35/53.75/65.80 for one/two/three/five days. The cheaper 'Paris Centre' pass, valid for zones 1 to 3, costs €12/19.50/26.65/38.35 for one/two/three/five days. Children aged four to 11 years pay half price.

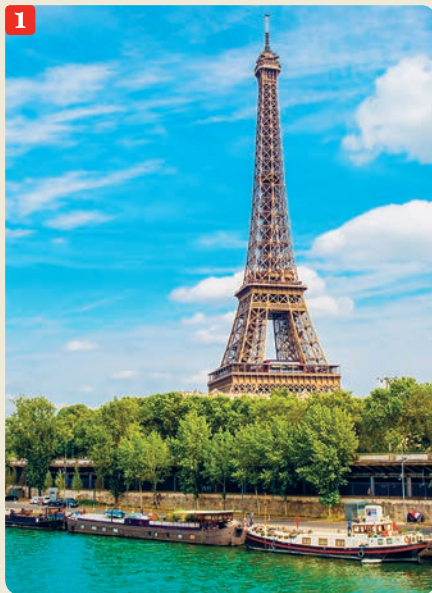
dows; several can also be downloaded for free from the RATP website.

- ♦ Paris is phasing out paper tickets by 2022.
- ♦ A Navigo Easy contactless card (€2) allows infrequent transport users, including visitors, to prepay for journeys (single + tickets or banks of 10) by topping the card up; there is no expiry date, and cards can be shared between passengers.
- ♦ The same RATP 'tickets' (loaded onto contactless cards) are valid on the metro, the RER (for travel within the city limits), buses, trams and the Montmartre funicular.
- ♦ Individual + tickets cost €1.90 (half price for children aged four to nine years) if bought individually; a *carnet* (book, ie a bank) of 10 costs €14.90 for adults.
- ♦ Navigo cards and top-ups are sold at all metro stations. Ticket windows accept most credit cards; however, machines do not accept credit cards without embedded chips (and even then, not all foreign chip-embedded cards are accepted).
- ♦ One ticket lets you travel between any two metro stations (no return journeys) for a period of 1½ hours, no matter how many transfers are required. You can also use it on the RER for travel within zone 1, which encompasses all of central Paris.
- ♦ Transfers from the metro to buses (or trams) or vice versa are not possible.
- ♦ You will have to pay a fine if you don't have a valid ticket.
- ♦ Mobilis day tickets and Paris Visite tourist passes cover transport.

## TAXI

- ♦ The *prise en charge* (flagfall) is €4 (€7 for advance bookings). Within the city limits, it costs €1.12 per kilometre for travel between 10am and 5pm Monday to Saturday (*Tarif A*; white light on taxi roof and meter).
- ♦ At night (5pm to 10am), on Sunday from 7am to midnight and during peak travel times (7am to 10am and 5pm to 7pm Monday to Saturday) in the central 20 arrondissements, the rate is €1.38 per kilometre (*Tarif B*; orange light).
- ♦ Travel in inner Paris on Sunday night (midnight to 7am Monday) and in the outer suburbs is at *Tarif C*, €1.61 per kilometre (blue light).
- ♦ The minimum taxi fare for a short trip is €7.30.
- ♦ There are flat-fee fares to/from the major airports (Charles de Gaulle from €53, Orly from €32).
- ♦ A fifth passenger incurs a €4 surcharge.
- ♦ There's no additional charge for standard-size luggage; larger pieces have a €2 surcharge.
- ♦ Flagging down a taxi in Paris can be difficult; it's best to find an official taxi stand.
- ♦ To order a taxi, call or reserve online with **Taxis G7** (☎ from a French phone 3607, from an international phone 01 41 27 66 99; [www.g7.fr](http://www.g7.fr)) or **Alpha Taxis** (☎ 01 45 85 85 85; [www.alpha taxis.fr](http://www.alpha taxis.fr)).
- ♦ An alternative is Uber ([www.uber.com/fr/cities/paris](http://www.uber.com/fr/cities/paris)).

1



AEMIX/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



1. Eiffel Tower (p76) 2. Pont Neuf (p113)  
3. Musée d'Orsay (p122) 4. Paris Plages (p132)

3



GWIENGOAT/GETTY IMAGES ©

2

## The Seine



ROMAIN VILLA PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES ©

The lifeline of Paris, the Seine sluices through the city, spanned by 37 bridges. Its Unesco World Heritage-listed riverbanks offer picturesque promenades, parks, activities and events, including summertime beaches. After dark, watch the river dance with the watery reflections of city lights and tourist-boat flood lamps.

Long harbouring busy traffic-choked freeways, the Seine's *berges* (banks) were reborn with the 2013 creation of the completely car-free 2.5km stretch of the Left Bank from the Pont de l'Alma to the Musée d'Orsay (linked to the water's edge by a grand staircase that doubles as amphitheatre seating). This innovative promenade is dotted with restaurants and bars (some aboard boats), and there are ball-game courts, a skate ramp, a kids' climbing wall, a 100m running track and floating gardens on 1800 sq metres of artificial islands. Temporary events as diverse as film screenings and knitting workshops take place throughout the year.

4



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The city of Paris followed up this success in 2017 by banishing cars on the Right Bank, now with a car-free total of 4.5km between the quai des Tuileries and Port de l'Arsenal (from where cruises depart to the Bassin de la Villette via Canal St-Martin). There are cycle and walking paths, *pétanque* and other sporting facilities, along with kids' play areas, restaurants and bars, and some nifty audio-visual 'timescope' binoculars covering the city's history.

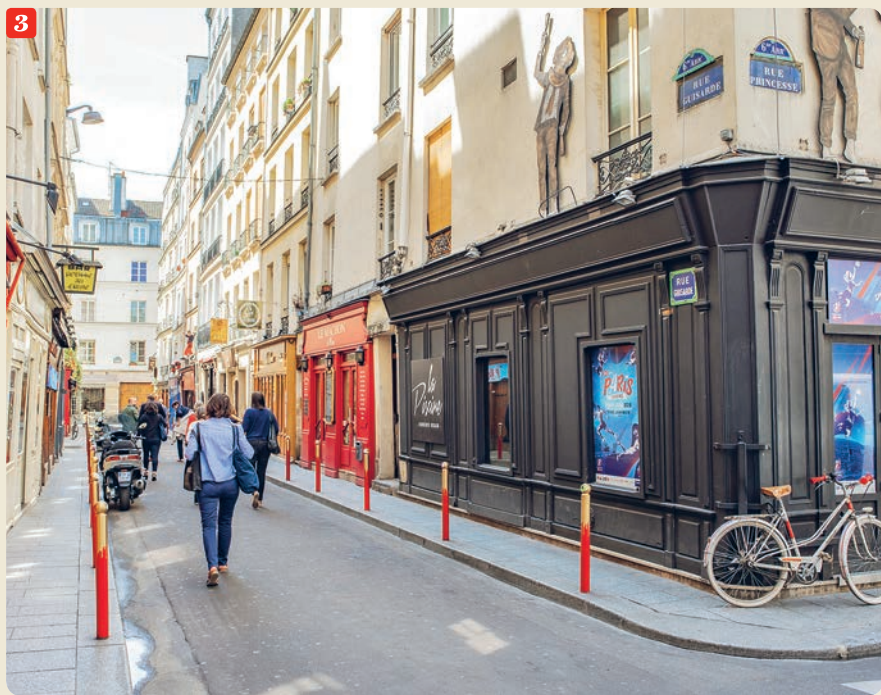




JEROME LABOURE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



1. Passage Jouffroy (p170) 2. Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen (p172)  
3. St-Germain area (p176) 4. Marché Bastille (p149)



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## Paris Shopping

Paris has it all: broad boulevards lined with flagship fashion houses and international labels, famous *grands magasins* (department stores) and fabulous markets. But the real charm of Parisian shopping lies in strolling the backstreets, where tiny speciality shops and quirky boutiques sell everything from strawberry-scented wellington boots to heavenly fragranced candles.

Fashion is Paris' forte. Browse *haute couture* creations in the Étoile and Champs-Élysées neighbourhood, particularly within the Triangle d'Or (Golden Triangle). For original streetwear and vintage gear, head for Le Marais, particularly the Haut Marais. Small boutiques fill St-Germain's chic streets. You'll also find adorable children's wear and accessories. Parisian fashion doesn't have to break the bank: there are fantastic bargains at secondhand and vintage boutiques, along with outlet shops selling previous seasons' collections, surpluses and seconds by top-line designers.

But fashion is just the beginning. Paris is an exquisite treasure chest of gourmet food (including cheeses, macarons and foie gras), wine, tea, books, beautiful stationery, art, art supplies, antiques and collectables. Ask for *un paquet cadeau* – free (and very beautiful) gift wrapping, offered by most shops.

### UNIQUE SHOPPING EXPERIENCES

**Passages couverts** Paris' 19th-century glass-roofed covered passages were the precursors to shopping malls.

**Flea markets** Lose yourself in the maze of *marchés* (markets) at the enormous Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen (p172).

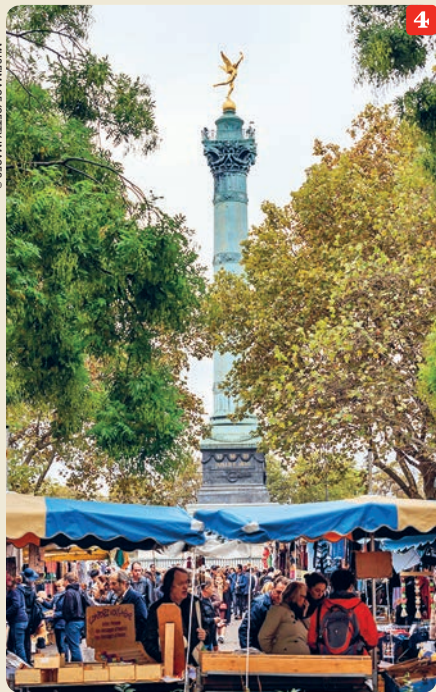
**Street markets** Scores of colourful street markets (p149) take place every week.

**Grands magasins** One-stop department-store shopping (p169) in resplendent art nouveau surrounds.



2

IRINA IRIS SZEWICZYK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



4

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## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

Biggest city:  
Boulogne-Billancourt  
(121,350)

### ÎLE-DE-FRANCE TOTAL AREA

12,012 sq km

### BEST MAJESTIC STROLL

Château de Versailles  
Gardens & Park  
(p190)

### BEST GOURMET GETAWAY

Le Jardin des Plumes  
(p195)

### BEST FOR KID JOY

Disneyland Resort  
Paris (p189)



### WHEN TO GO

**Mid-Apr–mid-Oct**  
Chartres' landmarks  
light up during Chartres  
en Lumières.

**Mid-May–early Oct**

Candlelight visits  
are magical at the  
Château de Vaux-le-  
Vicomte.

**Mid-Jun–mid-Sep**

Fountains dance to  
classical music in  
Versailles' gardens  
some summer  
evenings.



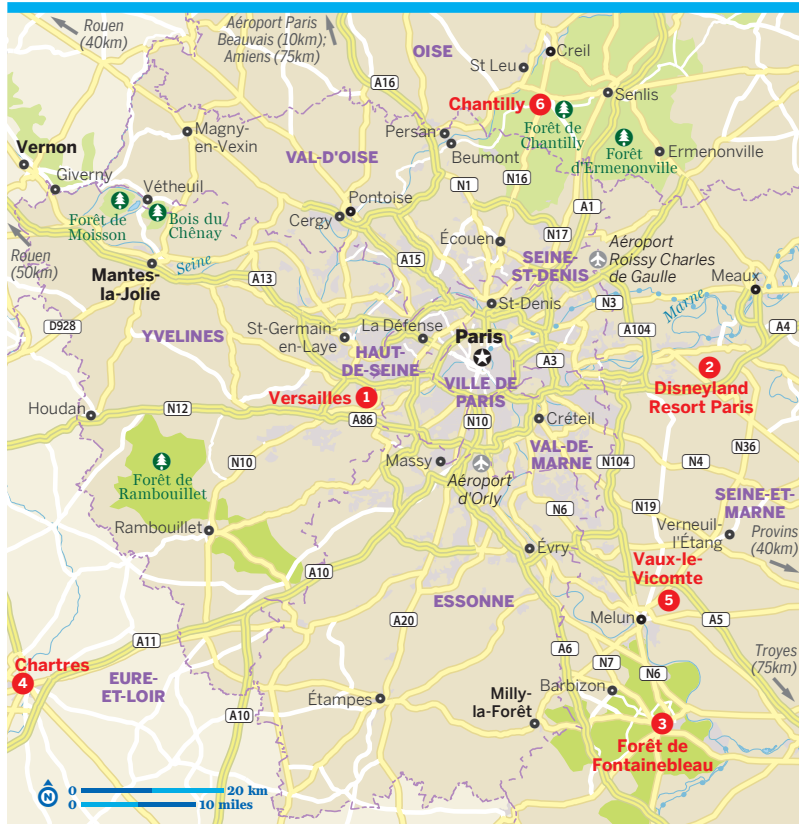


## Around Paris

**W**hether you're taking day trips from Paris or continuing further afield, a trove of treasures awaits around the French capital. The Île-de-France *région* – the 12,000-sq-km 'Island of France' shaped by five rivers – and surrounding areas contain some of the most extravagant châteaux in the land. At the top of everyone's list is the palace at Versailles, whose opulence partly spurred the French Revolution, but the châteaux in Fontainebleau and Chantilly are also breathtaking. Many ambitious cathedrals are also here, including the glorious cathedral crowning the medieval city of Chartres. In Giverny, Monet's home and gardens provide a picturesque insight into the inspiration for his seminal paintings.

### INCLUDES

Disneyland	Fontainebleau . . . . .	196
Resort Paris . . . . .	Vaux-le-Vicomte . . . . .	198
Versailles . . . . .	Chantilly . . . . .	199
Giverny . . . . .	Chartres . . . . .	201



## Around Paris Highlights

**1 Château de Versailles** (p190) Reliving the glory of the 17th- and 18th-century kingdom of France at the opulent-and-then-some palace.

**2 Disneyland Resort Paris** (p189) Following an adorable aspiring chef, rat Rémy, in his quest to prepare a Parisian meal aboard Walt

Disney Studios Park's larger-than-life *Ratatouille* ride.

**3 Forêt de Fontainebleau** (p197) Hiking, cycling, horse riding or rock climbing in one of France's loveliest forests.

**4 Cathédrale Notre Dame** (p203) Gazing at the hypnotic blue stained-glass windows at the awe-inspiring cathedral in Chartres.

**5 Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte** (p198) Visiting the interior of this 17th-century château and its collection of carriages.

**6 Château de Chantilly** (p199) Viewing the extraordinary artworks inside the lake-set château where the namesake whipped cream was created.



## Disneyland Resort Paris

It took almost €4.6 billion to turn the beet fields 32km east of Paris into Europe's first Disney theme park. What started out as Euro-Disney in 1992 today comprises the traditional Disneyland Park theme park, the

film-oriented Walt Disney Studios Park, and the hotel-, shop- and restaurant-filled Disney Village. Kids – and kids-at-heart – can't seem to get enough.




## Sights

Basic one-day admission fees at **Disneyland Resort Paris** ( 08 25 30 05 00, booking 01 60 30 60 53, restaurant reservations 01 60 30 40 50; [www.disneylandparis.com](http://www.disneylandparis.com); adult/child 1 day single park €89/82, 1 day both parks €109/102, 2 days both parks €179/165;  hours vary) include unlimited access to attractions in either Disneyland Park or Walt Disney Studios Park. A multitude of multiday passes, special offers and packages are always available.


### Disneyland Park

AMUSEMENT PARK

(Disneyland Resort Paris;  check website for current opening hours) Disneyland Park has five themed *pays* (lands): the 1900s-styled **Main Street USA**; **Frontierland**, home of the legendary Big Thunder Mountain ride; **Adventureland**, which evokes exotic lands in rides including the Pirates of the Caribbean and Indiana Jones and the Temple of Peril; **Fantasyland**, crowned by Sleeping Beauty's castle; and the high-tech **Discoveryland**, with massive-queue rides such as Star Wars Hyperspace Mountain and Buzz Lightyear Laser Blast.

### Walt Disney Studios Park

AMUSEMENT PARK

(Disneyland Resort Paris;  check website for current opening hours) Disneyland Resort Paris' sound stage, production backlot and animation studios provide an up-close insight into the production of films, TV programs and cartoons. There are behind-the-scenes tours, larger-than-life characters and spine-tingling rides like the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror, as well as the outsized *Ratatouille* ride, based on the winsome 2007 film about a rat who dreams of becoming a top Paris-

ian chef, which offers a multisensory rat's perspective of Paris' rooftops and restaurant kitchens aboard a trackless 'ratmobile'.

Three new themed areas – Star Wars, Marvel and Frozen – are in development and are expected to start rolling out features from 2022.



## Sleeping

The resort's seven American-styled hotels are linked by free shuttle bus to the parks. Rates vary hugely, according to the season, packages and promotional deals. Plenty of chain-style hotels are also in the vicinity of the resort.

## Eating

No picnic hampers or coolers are allowed but you can bring snacks, sandwiches, water bottles (refillable at water fountains) and the like. The resort also has 36 themed restaurants and cafes of varying quality and value; reservations are recommended and can be made online up to two months in advance.

## Information

**Tourist Office** ( 01 60 43 33 33; [www.visitparisregion.com](http://www.visitparisregion.com); place François Truffaut;  9am-8.45pm) Near the RER and TGV train stations.

## Getting There & Away

Disneyland is easily reached by RER A (€7.60, 40 minutes to one hour, frequent), which runs from central Paris to Marne-la-Vallée/Chessy, Disneyland's RER station.

TGV trains run directly from Charles de Gaulle airport terminal 2 (from €24, nine minutes, up to

## TOP DISNEY TIPS

- Crowds peak during European school holidays; visit [www.schoolholidaysseurope.eu](http://www.schoolholidaysseurope.eu) and avoid them if possible.
- Pre-plan your day on Disney's website or the excellent [www.dlpguide.com](http://www.dlpguide.com), working out which rides and shows you really want to see.
- Buy tickets in advance to avoid the ticket queue.
- The free Disneyland Paris app provides real-time waiting times for attractions, but note that free wi-fi is only available in limited areas within the park.
- Once in, sometimes it is possible to reserve your time slot on the busiest rides using FastPass (€45 to €150), the park's ride reservation system. Check online in advance.
- Disney hotel guests are entitled to 'Magic Hours' in Disneyland Park (usually from 8am, May to October) before it opens to the public, although not all rides run during these hours.
- Visitors with disabilities should check the website for details on accommodation.

two per hour) to Disneyland's Marne-la-Vallée/Chessey TGV station, or you can catch one in central Paris (from €35) requiring at least one change.

Shuttle buses link Charles de Gaulle and Orly airports (adult/child €23/10, 45 minutes to one hour, six daily) with the resort. From central Paris (Gare du Nord, Opéra and Châtelet-Les Halles), one shuttle a day runs from Gare du Nord at 8.20am and one from the Eiffel Tower departing at 8.10am. Both return from Disneyland Park at 9pm (or 8pm in winter).

By car, follow route A4 from Porte de Bercy (direction Metz-Nancy) and take exit 14.

## Versailles

POP 87,900

Louis XIV transformed his father's hunting lodge into the monumental Château de Versailles in the mid-17th century, and it remains France's most famous and grand palace. Situated in the leafy, bourgeois suburb of Versailles, 22km southwest of central Paris, the baroque château was the kingdom's political capital and the seat of the royal court from 1682 up until the fateful events of 1789, when revolutionaries massacred the palace guard. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were ultimately dragged back to Paris, where they were ingloriously guillotined.

### Sights

#### ★ Château de Versailles

PALACE

(📍 01 30 83 78 00; [www.chateauversailles.fr](http://www.chateauversailles.fr); place d'Armes; adult/child passport ticket incl estate-wide access €20/free, with musical events €27/free, palace €18/free except during musical events; 🕒 9am-6.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar; 🚆 RER Versailles-Château-Rive Gauche) Amid magnificently landscaped formal gardens, this splendid and enormous palace was built in the mid-17th century during the reign of Louis XIV – the Roi Soleil (Sun King) – to project the absolute power of the French monarchy, which was then at the height of its glory. The château has undergone relatively few alterations since its construction, though almost all the interior furnishings disappeared during the Revolution and many of the rooms were rebuilt by Louis-Philippe (r 1830–48).

Some 30,000 workers and soldiers toiled on the structure, the bills for which all but emptied the kingdom's coffers.

Work began in 1661 under the guidance of architect Louis Le Vau (Jules Hardouin-Mansart took over from Le Vau in

the mid-1670s); painter and interior designer Charles Le Brun; and landscape artist André Le Nôtre, whose workers flattened hills, drained marshes and relocated forests as they laid out the seemingly endless gardens, ponds and fountains.

Le Brun and his hundreds of artisans decorated every moulding, cornice, ceiling and door of the interior with the most luxurious and ostentatious of appointments: frescoes, marble, gilt and woodcarvings, many with themes and symbols drawn from Greek and Roman mythology. The King's Suite of the Grands Appartements du Roi et de la Reine (King's and Queen's State Apartments), for example, includes rooms dedicated to Hercules, Venus, Diana, Mars and Mercury. The opulence reaches its peak in the Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors), a 75m-long ballroom with 17 huge mirrors on one side and, on the other, an equal number of windows looking out over the gardens and the setting sun.

In the early 2000s, the château underwent a thorough €400-million restoration.

#### ★ Château de Versailles Gardens & Park

GARDENS

([www.chateauversailles.fr](http://www.chateauversailles.fr); place d'Armes; free except during musical events; 🕒 gardens 8am-8.30pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar, park 7am-8.30pm Apr-Oct, 8am-6pm Nov-Mar) The section of the vast gardens nearest the palace, laid out between 1661 and 1700 in the formal French style, is famed for its geometrically aligned terraces, flower beds, tree-lined paths, ponds and fountains. The 400-odd statues of marble, bronze and lead were made by the most talented sculptors of the era. The English-style Jardins du Petit Trianon are more pastoral and have meandering, sheltered paths.

Oriented to reflect the sunset, the **Grand Canal**, 1.6km long and 62m wide, is traversed by the 1km-long Petit Canal, creating a cross-shaped body of water with a perimeter of more than 5.5km.

On the southwestern side of the palace, the **Orangerie**, built under the Parterre du Midi (Southern Flowerbed), shelters tropical plants in winter.

The gardens' largest fountains include the 17th-century **Bassin de Neptune**, a dazzling mirage of 99 spouting gushers 300m north of the palace, whose straight side abuts a small pond graced by a winged dragon (Grille du Dragon). On the same days as the



## **i** TOP VERSAILLES TIPS

Versailles is one of the country's most popular destinations, with over 10 million visitors annually; advance planning will make visiting more enjoyable.

- ➔ By noon, queues for tickets or for entering the château spiral out of control: arrive early and avoid Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday, its busiest days. It's closed Mondays.
- ➔ Prepurchase tickets on the château's website or at Fnac ([www.fnactickets.com](http://www.fnactickets.com)) branches and head straight to **Entrance A**.
- ➔ Versailles is free on the first Sunday of every month from November to March.
- ➔ Audioguides are included in admission.
- ➔ Prams/buggies, metal-frame baby carriers and luggage, plus food, drink, tripods and selfie-sticks aren't allowed inside the palace.
- ➔ Prebook a guided tour (p194) to access areas that are otherwise off limits as well as the most famous parts of the palace.
- ➔ The estate is so vast that the only way to see it all is to hire a four-person **electric car** (☎ 01 39 66 97 66; [www.astel-versailles.com](http://www.astel-versailles.com); car hire per hr €34; ☀ 10am-6.45pm Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Feb & Mar, to 5pm Nov & Dec) or hop aboard the **shuttle train** (☎ 01 39 54 22 00; [www.train-versailles.com](http://www.train-versailles.com); adult/child €8/6.10; ☀ every 20min 10.10am-6.50pm Apr-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Mar); you can also rent a **bike** (☎ 01 39 66 97 66; [www.astel-versailles.com](http://www.astel-versailles.com); bike hire per hr/day €8.50/20; ☀ 10am-6.45pm Apr-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Mar) or a **rowboat** (☎ 01 39 66 97 66; boat hire per 30min/hr €14/18; ☀ 10am-6.45pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Mar-Jun & Sep-mid-Nov).
- ➔ Try to time your visit for the **Grandes Eaux Musicales'** ([www.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr](http://www.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr); adult/child €11/9.50; ☀ 9am-7pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, also 9am-7pm Tue mid-May-mid-Jun) truly magical 'dancing water' displays – set to music composed by Baroque- and classical-era composers – throughout the grounds in summer.
- ➔ Check the website for organ concerts in the palace chapel and other events and performances.
- ➔ Download the free Versailles app from the website.

Grandes Eaux Musicales fountain displays, the Bassin de Neptune flows for 10 minutes.

At the eastern end of the Grand Canal, the **Bassin d'Apollon** was built in 1688. Emerging from the water in the centre is Apollo's chariot, pulled by rearing horses.

### **Domaine de Trianon**

PALACE

(Trianon Estate; [www.chateauversailles.fr](http://www.chateauversailles.fr); Château de Versailles; adult/child €12/free, with passport ticket free; ☀ noon-6.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar) Northwest of Versailles' main palace is the Domaine de Trianon. Admission includes the pink-colonnaded **Grand Trianon**, built in 1687 for Louis XIV and his family to escape the rigid etiquette of the court; the ochre-coloured 1760s **Petit Trianon**, a favourite gift from Louis XVI to Marie Antoinette, redecorated in 1867 by consort of Napoléon III, Empress Eugénie; and the 1784-completed **Hameau de la Reine** (Queen's Hamlet), a mock village

of thatched cottages where Marie Antoinette played milkmaid.

### **Versailles Royal Stables**

STABLES

(Les Écuries Royales; av Rockefeller) The **Grande Écurie** (Great Stables) houses the royal carriage gallery called **Musée des Carrosses** (Gallery of Coaches; ☀ 12.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** – and is the stage for the prestigious **Académie du Spectacle Équestre** (Academy of Equestrian Arts; ☎ 01 39 02 62 70; [www.chateauversailles.fr](http://www.chateauversailles.fr); stable tour adult/child €7/free, show adult/child from €22/16; ☀ stable hours vary throughout the year, shows 6pm Sat & 3pm Sun Feb-Dec). The academy presents spectacular equestrian shows, for which tickets sell out weeks in advance; book ahead online. In the stables' main courtyard is a *manège* where horses and their riders train. Show tickets and training sessions include a stable visit.

The **Petite Écurie** (Little Stables) **FREE** houses **La Galerie des Sculptures et des**

# Versailles

## A DAY IN COURT

Visiting Versailles – even just the State Apartments – may seem overwhelming at first, but think of it as a house where people ate, drank, worked, slept and conspired and you'll be on the right path.

Some two decades into his long reign, Louis XIV began turning his father's hunting lodge into a palace large enough to house his entire court (to keep closer tabs on the 6000-strong army of courtiers). Sparing no expense, the Sun King employed the greatest artists and craftspeople of the day and by 1682 he'd created the most extravagant dormitory in history.

The royal schedule was as accurate and predictable as a Swiss watch. Although it's impossible to recreate the king's day on a visit, the following itinerary does allow you to pass all of the rooms of interest. You'll start with the **1 Royal Chapel**, where morning Mass was held, followed by the **2 Hercules Drawing Room** and **3 Diana Drawing Room**, both sites of evening entertainment, while the **4 King's Library** was visited after lunch. The **5 Hall of Mirrors** was for the royal procession, and the **6 Council Chamber** for late-morning meetings with ministers. The day would have begun in the **7 King's Bedchamber** and the **8 Queen's Bedchamber**, where the royal couple was roused at about the same time.

## VERSAILLES BY NUMBERS

**Rooms** 700 (11 hectares of roof)

**Windows** 2153

**Staircases** 67

**Gardens and parks** 800 hectares

**Trees** 200,000

**Fountains** 50 (with 620 nozzles)

**Paintings** 6300 (measuring 11km laid end to end)

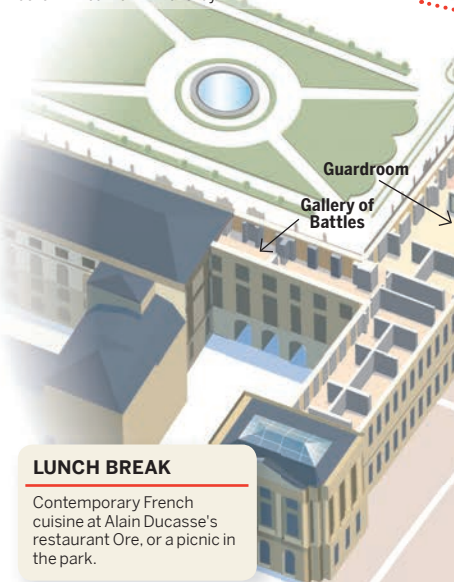
**Statues and sculptures** 2100

**Objets d'art and furnishings** 5000

**Visitors** 8.1 million per year

### Queen's Bedchamber Chambre de la Reine

The queen's life was on constant public display and even the births of her children were watched by crowds of spectators in her own bedchamber. **DETOUR »** The Guardroom, with a dozen armed men at the ready.



### LUNCH BREAK

Contemporary French cuisine at Alain Ducasse's restaurant Ore, or a picnic in the park.

### Hercules Drawing Room Salon d'Hercule

This salon, with its stunning ceiling fresco of the strong man, gave way to the State Apartments, which were open to courtiers three nights a week. **DETOUR »** Apollo Drawing Room, used for formal audiences and as a throne room.



## Hall of Mirrors

### Galerie des Glaces

The solid-silver candelabra and furnishings in this extravagant hall, devoted to Louis XIV's successes in war, were melted down in 1689 to pay for yet another conflict. **DETOUR»**

The antithetical Peace Drawing Room, adjacent.



WALTER G. SHUTTERBOOK ©

## King's Bedchamber

### Chambre du Roi

The king's daily life was anything but private and even his *lever* (rising) at 8am and *coucher* (retiring) at 11.30pm would be witnessed by up to 150 sycophantic courtiers.

## Council Chamber

### Cabinet du Conseil

This chamber, with carved medallions evoking the king's work, is where the monarch met his various ministers (state, finance, religion etc), depending on the days of the week.

## King's Library

### Bibliothèque du Roi

The last resident, bibliophile Louis XVI, loved geography and his copy of *The Travels of James Cook* is still on the shelf here. You can only visit this room on a private tour.

## Diana Drawing Room

### Salon de Diane

With walls and ceiling covered in frescoes devoted to the mythical huntress, this room contained a large billiard table reserved for Louis XIV, a keen player.

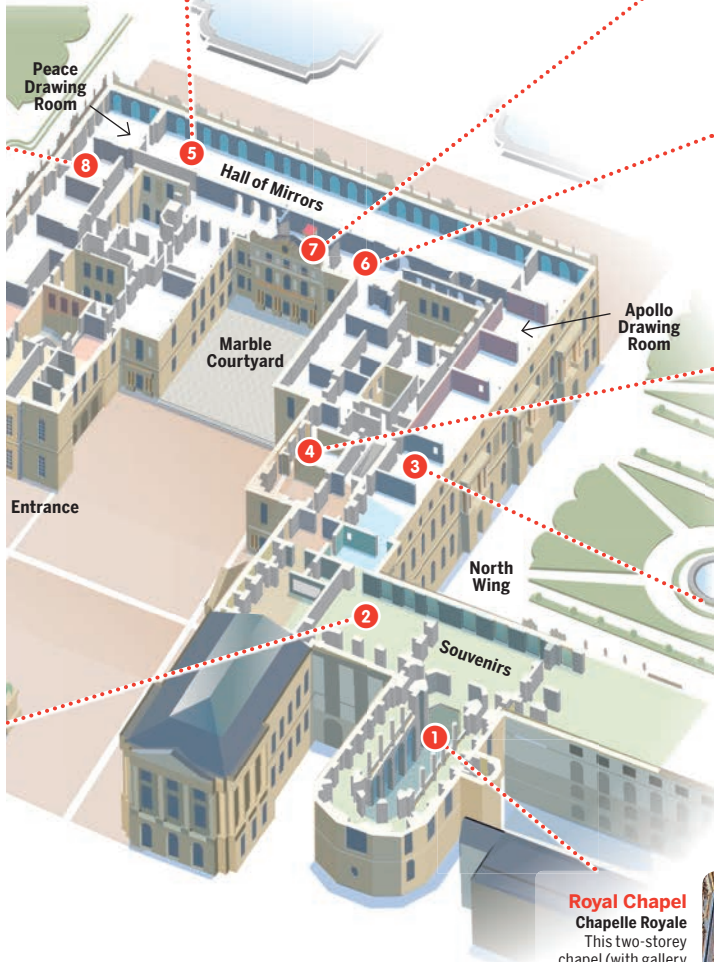
## Royal Chapel

### Chapelle Royale

This two-storey chapel (with gallery for the royals and important courtiers, and the ground floor for the B-list) was dedicated to St Louis, patron of French monarchs. **DETOUR»** The sumptuous Royal Opera.



COALTO / BUDGETTRAVEL ©



## SAVVY SIGHTSEEING

Avoid Versailles on Monday (closed), Tuesday (Paris' museums close, so visitors flock here) and Sunday, the busiest day. Also, book tickets online so you don't have to queue.

**Moulages**, which features marble sculptures from Versailles' gardens and Greek, Etruscan and Roman casts from Musée du Louvre.

### Salle du Jeu de Paume HISTORIC BUILDING

([www.chateauversailles.fr/decouvrir/domaine/salle-jeu-paume](http://www.chateauversailles.fr/decouvrir/domaine/salle-jeu-paume); 1 rue du Jeu de Paume; ☎ 2-6pm Tue-Sun, longer hours during special exhibitions) **FREE** In May 1789 Louis XVI convened the États-Généraux, made up of more than 1118 deputies representing the nobility, clergy and the Third Estate ('common people'), to moderate dissent. Denied entry, the Third Estate's reps met separately on this 1686-built royal tennis court, formed a National Assembly and took the Serment du Jeu de Paume (Tennis Court Oath), swearing not to dissolve it until Louis XVI accepted a new constitution.

Less than a month later, a mob in Paris stormed the prison at Bastille.

### Tours

**Château de Versailles Guided Tours** TOURS ([www.chateauversailles.fr](http://www.chateauversailles.fr); Château de Versailles; tours €10, plus palace entry) To access areas that are otherwise off limits and to learn more about Versailles' history, prebook a 1½-hour guided tour of the Private Apartments of Louis XV and Louis XVI and the Opera House or Royal Chapel. Tours also cover the most famous parts of the palace.

Tours of Le Hameau de la Reine (Queen's Hamlet) are in French only.

### Paris City Vision BUS

([www.pariscityvision.com](http://www.pariscityvision.com); adult/child half-day tour incl palace entry from €72/62, full day from €89/79) Guided half-day and full-day minibus trips from Paris to Versailles – check carefully, some are audioguided, others by a tour guide.

### Eating

Rue de Satory is lined with restaurants and cafes. More local options can be found on and around rue de la Paroisse, where you'll also find Versailles' **markets** (☺ food market 7am-2pm Tue, Fri & Sun, covered market 7am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, to 2pm Sun, flea market 11am-7pm Wed, Thu & Sat).

### Angelina CAFE ☼

([www.angelina-paris.fr](http://www.angelina-paris.fr); Domaine de Trianon, Château de Versailles; dishes €5-13; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) Eateries within the Versailles estate include tearoom Angelina, famed for its dec-

adent hot chocolate. It also serves quiches, gourmet sandwiches, salads, a soup of the day and spectacular pastries. In addition to this branch by the Petit Trianon, there's another inside the palace.

### La Table du 11 GASTRONOMY ☼☼☼

(☎ 01 75 45 63 70; [www.latabledu11.com](http://www.latabledu11.com); 10 rue de Satory; 4-course lunch menu €55, 5-/7-course dinner menus €80/105; ☎ 12.30-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) For an appropriately sumptuous meal in this stately town, Michelin-starred La Table du 11 fits the bill. Dark-blue flooring matches its façade; dishes on the daily changing menu include roast onion with a garlic, parmesan and onion tuile and onion foam, lobster with white truffle, radish leaves and mushrooms, and caramelised apple with Chantilly cream and liquorice powder.

It also has a more modestly priced bistro.

### Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 01 39 24 88 88; [www.versailles-tourisme.com](http://www.versailles-tourisme.com); 2bis av de Paris; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon, 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 11am-5pm Mon, 8.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) Sells the passport to Château de Versailles and detailed visitors' guides.

### Getting There & Away

#### BUS

Bus 171 (€2 or one t+ metro/bus ticket, 35 minutes) links Paris' Pont de Sèvres metro station (15e) with place d'Armes at least every 15 minutes from 5am to 12.30am.

From the Eiffel Tower, Versailles Express ([www.versaillesexpress.com](http://www.versaillesexpress.com); return €25, 45 minutes) runs to the Château de Versailles; reserve ahead online.

#### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Follow the A13 from Porte d'Auteuil and take the exit marked 'Versailles Château'.

#### TRAIN

Versailles has several train stations; the most convenient way to reach the château is to take RER C5 (return €7.10, 40 minutes, frequent) from Paris' Left Bank RER stations to Versailles-Château-Rive Gauche station.

## Giverny

POP 510

The tiny country village of Giverny is a place of pilgrimage for devotees of impressionism, though the summer months herald the tour-



bus crowds, who shatter the bucolic peace. Monet lived here from 1883 until his death in 1926, in a rambling house surrounded by flower-filled gardens; it's now the immensely popular *Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet*.



Note that the principal sights are closed from November to Easter, along with most accommodation and restaurants, so there's little point visiting out of season.

## Sights

### ★ *Maison et*

#### *Jardins de Claude Monet*

MUSEUM

( 02 32 51 28 21; [www.fondation-monet.com](http://www.fondation-monet.com); 84 rue Claude Monet; adult/child €10.50/6.50;  9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct) Monet's home for the last 43 years of his life is now a delightful house-museum. His pastel-pink house and Water Lily studio stand on the periphery of the **Clos Normand**, with its symmetrical laid-out gardens bursting with flowers. Monet bought the **Jardin d'Eau** (Water Garden) in 1895 and set about creating his trademark lily pond, as well as the famous **Japanese bridge** (since rebuilt).

The charmingly preserved house and beautiful bloom-filled gardens (rather than Monet's works) are the draws here.


Draped with purple wisteria, the Japanese bridge blends into the asymmetrical foreground and background, creating the intimate atmosphere for which the 'painter of light' was renowned.

Seasons have an enormous effect on Giverny. From early to late spring, daffodils, tulips, rhododendrons, wisteria and irises appear, followed by poppies and lilies. By June, nasturtiums, roses and sweet peas are in flower. Around September, there are dahlias, sunflowers and hollyhocks.

Combined tickets are available with Paris' Musée Marmottan Monet (p82) and Musée de l'Orangerie (p95).

### Musée des Impressionnistes Giverny

GALLERY

( 02 32 51 94 65; [www.mdig.fr](http://www.mdig.fr); 99 rue Claude Monet; adult/child €7.50/5;  10am-6pm Easter-Oct) About 100m northwest of the *Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet* is the Giverny Museum of Impressionisms. It was set up in partnership with the Musée d'Orsay, among other institutions, and the pluralised name reinforces its coverage of all aspects of impressionism and related movements in its permanent collection and temporary exhibitions. Lectures, readings, concerts and

documentaries also take place regularly. The audioguide is €4. Admission on the first Sunday of the month is free.

## Sleeping & Eating

### *Le Clos Fleuri*

B&amp;B €€

( 02 32 21 36 51; [www.giverny-leclosfleuri.fr](http://www.giverny-leclosfleuri.fr); 5 rue de la Dime; s/d €110/120;  Apr-Oct;  ) Big rooms with king-size beds and exposed wood beams overlook the hedged gardens of this delightful B&B within strolling distance of the *Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet*. Each of its three rooms is named after a different flower; green-thumbed host Danielle speaks fluent English. Cash only.

### *La Pluie de Roses*

B&amp;B €€

( 02 32 51 10 67; [www.givernylapluiederoses.fr](http://www.givernylapluiederoses.fr); 14 rue Claude Monet; d/tr from €130/150;  ) You'll be won over by this adorable private home cocooned in a dreamy, peaceful garden. Inside, the three rooms (two of which can accommodate families) are so comfy it can be hard to wake up, but the superb breakfast on a verandah awash with sunlight is always further motivation to cast off the duvet. Payment is by cash only.

### *Hôtel La Musardière*

HOTEL €€

( 02 32 21 03 18; [www.lamusardiere.fr](http://www.lamusardiere.fr); 123 rue Claude Monet; d €95-145, f €145-240;  ) This two-star 10-room hotel dating back to 1880 and evocatively called the 'Idler' is set amid a lovely garden less than 100m northeast of the *Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet*. Breakfast costs €14 and savouring a crêpe in the hotel restaurant is a genuine treat. Family rooms sleep three or four people.


### ★ *Le Jardin des Plumes*

MODERN FRENCH €€€

( 02 32 54 26 35; [www.jardindesplumes.fr](http://www.jardindesplumes.fr); 1 rue du Milieu; lunch menu €55, 3-/5-/7-course dinner menus €90/102/115, mains €35-47;  12.15-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm Wed-Sun, hotel closed Jan;  ) This gorgeous sky-blue-trimmed property's airy white dining room is a handsome stage for chef Eric Guerin's exquisite and inventive Michelin-starred cuisine, which justifies the trip from Paris alone.

There are also four rooms (€230) and four suites (€330 to €390), combining vintage and contemporary furnishings. It's less than 10 minutes' walk to the *Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet*. Breakfast is €19.

## Information

**Tourist Office** ( 02 32 51 39 60; [www.cape-tourisme.fr](http://www.cape-tourisme.fr); 37 chemin du Roy/D5;



🕒 10am-5.45pm Easter-Oct) A few blocks from the Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet.

## **i** Getting There & Around

The closest train station is at Vernon, from where shuttle buses, taxis and cycle/walking tracks run to Giverny.

### BICYCLE

Rent bikes (cash only) at the **Café L'Arrivée de Giverny** (📞 02 32 21 16 01; 1-3 place de la Gare, Vernon; per day €14; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sun), opposite the train station in Vernon, from where Giverny is a signposted 5km along a direct (and flat) cycle/walking track.

### BUS

Shuttle buses (single/return €5/10, 20 minutes, three to five daily Easter to October) meet most trains from Paris at Vernon. There are limited seats, so arrive early for the return trip from Giverny. Buy tickets on board with cash or credit card. The shuttle schedule is on [www.sngo-giverny.fr](http://www.sngo-giverny.fr); free wi-fi on board.

### TAXI

**Taxis** (📞 02 32 51 10 24) usually wait outside the train station in Vernon and charge around €18 for the one-way trip to Giverny. There's no taxi rank in Giverny, however, so you'll need to phone for one for the return trip to Vernon, or take the shuttle bus.

### TRAIN

From Paris' Gare St-Lazare there are up to 15 daily trains to Gare Vernon-Giverny (from €9, 45 minutes to one hour), 7km to the west of Giverny in the town of Vernon. Trains also run to/from Rouen in Normandy (from €9, one to 1½ hours, at least every two hours).

## Fontainebleau

POP 15,300

Fresh air fills your lungs on arriving in the classy town of Fontainebleau, arguably the best springboard for outdoorsy pursuits in the Paris area. The surrounding Forêt de Fontainebleau, a rejuvenating expanse of pine forest and oak trees, lazy sandy clearings and curiously shaped boulders, is a haven for walkers, cyclists and, above all, rock climbers of all nationalities. The town itself grew up around its magnificent château, one of the most beautifully decorated and furnished in France, but consider saving the palace for a rainy day – a trip to the forest is best savoured *en plein air*.

## Sights

### ★ Château de Fontainebleau PALACE

(📞 01 60 71 50 70; [www.musee-chateau-fontainebleau.fr](http://www.musee-chateau-fontainebleau.fr); place du Général de Gaulle; adult/child €12/free, 1st Sun of month Sep-Jun free; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Sep, to 5pm Wed-Mon Oct-Mar) The resplendent, 1900-room Château de Fontainebleau's list of former tenants and guests reads like a who's who of French royalty and aristocracy. Every square centimetre of wall and ceiling space is richly adorned with wood panelling, gilded carvings, frescoes, tapestries and paintings.

Visits take in the **Grands Appartements** (State Apartments), which contain several outstanding rooms. An informative 1½-hour multimedia guide (€4) leads you around the main areas.

The first château on this site was built in the early 12th century and enlarged by Louis IX a century later. Only a single medieval tower survived the energetic Renaissance-style reconstruction undertaken by François I (r 1515-47), whose superb artisans, many of them brought from Italy, blended Italian and French styles to create what is known as the First School of Fontainebleau. The *Mona Lisa* once hung here amid other fine works of art in the royal collection.

During the latter half of the 16th century, the château was further enlarged by Henri II (r 1547-59), Catherine de Médicis and Henri IV (r 1589-1610), whose Flemish and French artists created the Second School of Fontainebleau. Even Louis XIV got in on the act: it was he who hired landscape artist André Le Nôtre, celebrated for his work at Versailles, to redesign the gardens.

Fontainebleau was beloved by Napoléon Bonaparte, who had a fair bit of restoration work carried out. Napoléon III was another frequent visitor. During WWII the château was turned into a German headquarters. After it was liberated by Allied forces under US General George Patton in 1944, part of the complex served as the Allied and then NATO headquarters from 1945 to 1965.

The spectacular **Chapelle de la Trinité** (Trinity Chapel), the ornamentation of which dates from the first half of the 17th century, is where Louis XV married Marie Leszczyńska in 1725 and where the future Napoléon III was christened in 1810. **Galerie François 1er**, a jewel of Renaissance architecture, was decorated from 1533 to 1540 by Il Rosso, a Florentine follower of Michel-

## FORÊT DE FONTAINEBLEAU

The **Forêt de Fontainebleau** (Fontainebleau Forest) stretches for 50km from Fontainebleau in the east to Étampes in the west, taking in many small communities along the way, such as Milly-la Forêt and Noisy-sur-École. The many trails here include parts of the **GR1** and **GR11**. Purchase a topo map or walking guide at the tourist office, or try out the **Promenade des Points de Vue**, which leaves from behind the train station. This mellow 12km loop usually takes around four hours, but you can cut it short by walking to the first overlook (30 minutes) and then turning back. Pick up a free map from the tourist office.

But more than any other activity, Fontainebleau is known for its **bouldering** (unroped climbing; *bloc* in French): this is the premier destination in Europe and its thousands of sandstone boulders attract climbers from around the world. It's so big that you can spend a lifetime here and never exhaust the possibilities; a guidebook is essential. The good news is that unlike most bouldering areas, Font has scores of problems that even beginners and children can try – all you need are a pair of shoes and a crashpad (a landing pad that protects you if you fall). Rent them at **S'Cape Shop** (☎01 75 43 19 60; www.scape-shop.com; 21 rue Paul Séramy; crashpads €10-12, climbing shoes €6; ☺10am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 1pm Sun) or sign up for a trip with **Globe Climber** (☎01 64 70 77 69; www.globeclimber.com; from €160). More experienced climbers, note: if you don't want to bring your own crashpad with you, many accommodation options will loan or rent you one.

For more detailed info on bouldering at Font and its iconic colour-coded circuits, check out [www.boulderfont.info](http://www.boulderfont.info) and [www.bleau.info](http://www.bleau.info).

angelo. In the wood panelling, François I's monogram appears repeatedly along with his emblem, a dragon-like salamander. The **Musée Chinois de l'Impératrice Eugénie** (Chinese Museum of Empress Eugénie) consists of four drawing rooms created in 1863 for the Asian art and curios collected by Napoléon III's wife.

The **Salle de Bal**, a 30m-long ballroom dating from the mid-16th century that was also used for receptions and banquets, is renowned for its mythological frescoes, marquetry floor and Italian-inspired coffered ceiling. Its large windows afford views of the Cour Ovale (Oval Courtyard) and the gardens. The gilded bed in the 17th- and 18th-century **Chambre de l'Impératrice** (Empress' Bedroom) was never used by Marie Antoinette, for whom it was built in 1787. The gilding in the **Salle du Trône** (Throne Room), which was the royal bedroom before the Napoléonic period, is decorated in golds, greens and yellows.

As successive monarchs added their own wings to the château, five irregularly shaped courtyards were created. The oldest and most interesting is the **Cour Ovale** (Oval Courtyard), no longer oval but U-shaped due to Henri IV's construction work. It incorporates the keep, the sole remnant of the medieval château. The largest courtyard is the **Cour du Cheval Blanc** (Courtyard of the

White Horse), from where you enter the château. Napoléon, about to be exiled to Elba in 1814, bade farewell to his guards from the magnificent 17th-century double-horseshoe staircase here. For that reason the courtyard is also called the **Cour des Adieux** (Farewell Courtyard).

### Château de Fontainebleau Gardens & Park

GARDENS

(☺9am-7pm May-Sep, shorter hours Oct-Apr)

**FREE** On the northern side of the Château de Fontainebleau is the formal **Jardin de Diane**, created by Catherine de Médicis. Le Nôtre's formal, 17th-century **Jardin Français** (French Garden), also known as the Grand Parterre, is east of the **Cour de la Fontaine** (Fountain Courtyard) and the **Étang des Carpes** (Carp Pond). The informal **Jardin Anglais** (English Garden), created in 1812, is west of the pond. Excavated in 1609, the **Grand Canal** predates the Versailles canals by more than 50 years.

### Sleeping & Eating

Restaurants are prevalent in the town centre; rue Montebello has a large concentration. For fabulous food shops such as *fromageries* (cheese shops) and *boulangeries* (bakeries), head to rue des Sablons and rue Grande. Fontainebleau's **market** (place de la République; ☺7am-1pm Tue, Fri & Sun) takes place three times a week.

**La Demeure du Parc** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎01 60 70 20 00; www.lademeureduparc.fr; 36 rue Paul Séramy; d/ste from €286/514; ♿) A wisteria-draped courtyard garden with chestnut and apple trees is the centrepiece of this charming 27-room hotel. Deluxe-category rooms have their own terraces; ground-floor suites open onto small private gardens. The pick are the suites such as the literary-themed Bibliothèque and travel-themed Voyage (with its own telescope). Its contemporary French restaurant, **La Table du Parc** (mains €25-44; ☺noon-2.15pm & 7-10.15pm Wed-Sat, noon-2.15pm Sun; ♿), is one of Fontainebleau's finest.

Baby cots, high chairs and babysitting services are available.

**Dardonville** BAKERY €

(24 rue des Sablons; sandwiches €2.40-3.50; ☺7am-1.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 7am-1.30pm Sun) Melt-in-your-mouth macarons, in flavours including poppy seed and gingerbread, are refreshingly inexpensive at this beloved pâtisserie-*boulangerie*. Queues also form out the door for its amazing breads and great picnic treats like sandwiches and mini quiches.

**Crêperie Ty Koz** CRÊPES €

(☎01 64 22 00 55; www.creperiety-koz.com; 18 rue de la Cloche; crêpes & galettes €3-14; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Tucked away in a cobbled courtyard, this Breton hidey-hole cooks up authentic sweet crêpes and *simple* (single thickness) and *pourleth* (double thickness) *galettes* (savoury buckwheat crêpes).

**Le Ferrare** BRASSERIE €

(☎01 60 72 37 04; 23 rue de France; 2-/3-course menus €13.50/15.50; ☺8am-4pm Mon, to 10.30pm Tue-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat; ♿) Locals pile into this bar-brasserie, which has a blackboard full of Auvergne specialties such as *tripoux* (sheep's tripe) with *aligot* (potato and melted cheese) and bargain-priced *plats du jour* (daily specials).

**L'Axel** GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎01 64 22 01 57; www.laxel-restaurant.com; 43 rue de France; menus €60-110, lunch mains €48-95; ☺7.15-9.30pm Wed, 12.15-2pm & 7.15-9.30pm Thu-Sun) Chef Kunihisa Goto has gained a Michelin star for his inspired flavour combinations: turbot with candied artichoke and yuzu-butter sauce, veal sweetbreads with cinnamon-roasted carrot puree, and mango mousse in a white-chocolate coconut sphere

with banana and passion-fruit sorbet. Book several weeks ahead.

**Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎01 60 74 99 99; www.fontainebleau-tourisme.com; 4 place de la République; ☺10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Sun Apr-Oct, shorter hours winter; ♿) In a converted petrol station west of the château, with information on the town and forest.

**Getting There & Away**

Importantly, train tickets to Fontainebleau/Avon are sold at Paris' Gare de Lyon's SNCF Transilien counter/Billet Île-de-France machines, *not* SNCF mainline counters/machines. On returning to Paris, tickets include travel to any metro station.

Up to 40 daily SNCF Transilien (www.transilien.com) commuter trains link Paris' Gare de Lyon with **Fontainebleau-Avon station** (place de la Gare; €8.85, 40 minutes).

By car, take the A6 from Paris to the Fontainebleau exit.

**Vaux-le-Vicomte**

The privately owned **Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte** (☎01 64 14 41 90; www.vaux-le-vicomte.com; D215, Mancy; adult/child château & gardens €17/11, garden only €11/8, candlelight visits incl entry €19.90/14; ☺10am-7pm mid-Mar-early Nov, candlelight visits times vary) and its fabulous formal gardens, 20km north of Fontainebleau and 61km southeast of Paris, were designed and built by Le Brun, Le Vau and Le Nôtre between 1656 and 1661 as a precursor to their more ambitious work at Versailles.

The château's beautifully furnished interior is topped by a striking dome. Don't miss the stables' collection of 18th- and 19th-century carriages at the Musée des Équipages, or if at all possible, a candlelight visit.

During the same period as the candlelight visits, there are elaborate *jeux d'eau* (fountain displays) in the gardens many Saturdays in summer (check online). In the vaulted cellars, an exhibition looks at Le Nôtre's landscaping of the gardens.

The beauty of Vaux-le-Vicomte turned out to be the undoing of its original owner, Nicolas Fouquet, Louis XIV's minister of finance. It seems that Louis, seething that he'd been upstaged at the château's official opening, had Fouquet thrown into prison, where the unfortunate minister died in 1680.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Vaux-le-Vicomte is not an easy place to reach by public transport. The château is 6km northeast of Melun and 15km southwest of Verneuil-l'Étang.

Melun is served by RER line D2 from Paris' Gare de Lyon (€8.70, 40 minutes, frequent). Trains link Paris' Gare de l'Est (direction Provins; €8.70, 35 minutes, hourly) to Verneuil-l'Étang, from where the **Châteaubus shuttle** (📞 01 64 14 41 90; adult/child return day €10/5, evening €25/20; 🕒 noon-6pm mid-Mar-early Nov, to 11.30pm Sat May-early Oct) links Verneuil-l'Étang station with Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte (35 minutes, hourly). On Saturdays from mid-May to early October, the last bus returns directly to Gare de Lyon in Paris. Check that the bus is operational and reserve ahead via the château's website and bring cash or credit card for the bus.

At other times, you'll have to take a taxi. One-way day/evening prices are €18/32 from Melun, and €28/46 from Verneuil-l'Étang.

By car, follow the A6 from Paris and then the A5 (direction Melun), and take the 'St-Germain Laxis' exit. From Fontainebleau take the N6 and N36.

## Chantilly

POP 11,100

The elegant old town of Chantilly, 50km north of Paris, is small and select. Its imposing, heavily restored château is surrounded by parkland, gardens and the Forêt de Chantilly, offering a wealth of walking opportunities. Chantilly's racetrack is one of the most prestigious hat-and-frock addresses in Europe, and deliciously sweetened thick *crème Chantilly* was created here.

## **👁** Sights

### Château de Chantilly

CHATEAU

(📞 03 44 27 31 80; [www.domainedechantilly.com](http://www.domainedechantilly.com); off rue du Connétable; domain pass adult/child €17/13.50, domain & show pass €30/24; 🕒 10am-6pm late Wed-Mon Mar-Oct, 10.30am-5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Dec & Feb-Mar) A storybook vision amid an artificial lake and magnificent gardens, the Château de Chantilly contains a superb collection of paintings within the Musée Condé.

Left shambolic after the Revolution, the restored château consists of the attached Petit and Grand Châteaux, entered through the same vestibule. The estate's Grandes Écuries (p200) are just to the west.

## CHÂTEAU DE WHIPPED CREAM

Like every self-respecting French château three centuries ago, the palace at Chantilly had its own *hameau* (hamlet) complete with *laitier* (dairy), where the lady of the household and her guests could play at being milkmaids. But the cows at the Chantilly dairy took their job rather more seriously than their fellow bovines at other faux *crémeries* (dairy shops), and the *crème Chantilly* served at the hamlet's teas became the talk (and envy) of aristocratic 18th-century Europe. The future Habsburg emperor Joseph II paid a clandestine visit to this '*temple de marbre*' (marble temple), as he called it, to taste it himself in 1777.

*Chantilly* (or more properly *crème Chantilly*) is whipped unpasteurised cream with a twist. It's beaten with icing and vanilla sugars to the consistency of a mousse and dolloped on berries.

From Easter to October, visit the estate aboard a little 'train' (adult/child €5/3, 11am to 6pm) or hire four-person golf carts (€30 per hour).

The **Petit Château**, containing the Appartements des Princes (Princes' Suites), was built around 1560 for Anne de Montmorency (1492-1567), who served six French kings as *connétable* (high constable), diplomat and warrior, and died doing battle with Protestants in the Counter-Reformation. The highlight here is the **Cabinet des Livres**, a repository of 700 manuscripts and more than 30,000 volumes, including a Gutenberg Bible and a facsimile of the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, an illuminated manuscript dating from the 15th century that illustrates the calendar year for both the peasantry and the nobility. The **chapel**, to the left as you walk into the vestibule, has woodwork and stained-glass windows dating from the mid-16th century.

The adjoining Renaissance-style **Grand Château**, completely demolished during the Revolution, was rebuilt by the Duke of Aumale, son of King Louis-Philippe, from 1875 to 1885. It contains the **Musée Condé**, a series of 19th-century rooms adorned with paintings and sculptures haphazardly arranged according to the whims of the duke – he donated the château to the Institut de France on the condition the exhibits were

not reorganised and would remain open to the public. The most remarkable works, hidden in the Sanctuaire (Sanctuary), include paintings by Filippino Lippi, Jean Fouquet and (it's thought) Raphael.

Guided tours (45 minutes; €5) of the lavish **Appartements Privés du Duc et de la Duchesse d'Aumale** (the Duke and Duchess' private suites) are available in English by prior reservation.

**Château de Chantilly Gardens** GARDENS  
(admission incl in domain pass, gardens & park only adult/child €8/6; ☀️ 10am-8pm Wed-Mon late Mar-Oct, 10.30am-6pm Wed-Mon Nov-Dec, Feb & Mar) Sprawling over 115 hectares, the wondrous gardens of the Château de Chantilly (p199) encompass the formal Jardin Français (French Garden), with flower beds, lakes and a Grand Canal all laid out by Le Nôtre in the mid-17th century, northeast of the main building; and the 'wilder' Jardin Anglais (English Garden), begun in 1817, to the west. East of the Jardin Français is the rustic Jardin Anglo-Chinois (Anglo-Chinese Garden), created in the 1770s.

The foliage and silted-up waterways of the Jardin Anglo-Chinois surround the **hameau**, a mock village dating from 1774, whose mill and half-timbered buildings inspired the Hameau de la Reine (Queen's Hamlet) at Versailles. *Crème Chantilly* (sugar-whipped cream) was invented here.

**Grandes Écuries** STABLES  
(Grand Stables; www.domainedechantilly.com; 7 rue du Connétable) The Grandes Écuries, built between 1719 and 1740 to house 240 horses and 400-plus hounds, stand west of the château near Chantilly's famous hippodrome (racecourse), inaugurated in 1834. The stables contain the **Musée du Cheval** (Horse Museum; ☎️ 03 44 27 31 80; entry incl in domain only & domain & show pass; ☀️ 10am-6pm late Mar-Oct, 10.30am-5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Dec & Feb-Mar), included in domain-only and domain and show passes; displays span riding equipment to rocking horses.

Visitors big and small will be mesmerised by the equestrian show included in the combined domain and show pass. Longer **equestrian shows** (adult/child €22/17) and spectacles are listed online.

The stables' pampered equines live in luxurious wooden stalls built by Louis-Henri de Bourbon, the seventh Prince de Condé, who was convinced he would be reincarnated as a horse (hence the extraordinary grandeur).

**Forêt de Chantilly** FOREST  
Once a royal hunting estate, the 63-sq-km Forêt de Chantilly is criss-crossed by walking and riding trails. Long-distance trails here include the **GR11**, which links the Château de Chantilly with the town of **Senlis**; the **GR1**, from **Luzarches** (famed for its cathedral, parts of which date from the 12th century) to Ermenonville; and the **GR12**, which heads northeast from four lakes known as the Étangs de Commelles to the Forêt d'Halatte.

Chantilly's tourist office (p201) stocks maps and guides.

## Sleeping

**La Ferme de la Canardière** B&B €€  
(☎️ 03 44 62 00 96; www.fermecanardiere.fr; 20 rue du Viaduc; s €110-130, d €145-165, f €235; 📞 📺 📶) Delicately embroidered cushions and cherrywood furniture add to the romantic ambience of this three-room family-run property on a 27-hectare estate, which is everything a French B&B should be. Allow plenty of time for breakfast (included in the price) on the terrace in summer before plunging into the pool. An open fireplace warms the lounge in chilly weather.

**Hôtel de Londres** HOTEL €€  
(☎️ 01 64 22 20 21; www.hoteldelondres.com; 1 place du Général de Gaulle; d €138-228; 📞 📺 📶) Classy, cosy and beautifully kept, the 'Hotel London' faces the château. Its 16 rooms are furnished in warm reds and royal blues. Most have air-conditioning and the priciest rooms (such as room 5) have balconies overlooking the palace. Breakfast is €16.

## Eating

Try sugar-whipped *crème Chantilly* in cafes and restaurants throughout town. Chantilly's **market** (place Omer Vallon; ☀️ 8.30am-12.30pm Wed & Sat) takes place on Wednesday and Saturday.

**ID Cook L'Atelier Gourmand** DELI €  
(☎️ 03 44 54 21 82; www.idcook-chantilly.fr; 78 rue du Connétable; ☀️ 10.30am-2pm & 4-8pm Tue-Fri, 10.30am-8pm Sat) If it's not market day (and even if it is), this deli is a fabulous spot to pick up ingredients for a forest picnic. Charcuterie, smoked and marinated fish, foie gras, premade salads, preserves, cheeses, breads, chocolates, beer, wine and much more cram the shelves.



## SENLIS

Just 10km east of Chantilly (50km north of Paris), Senlis is an enchanting medieval town of winding cobblestone streets, Gallo-Roman ramparts and towers. It was a royal seat from the time of Clovis in the 5th and 6th centuries to Henri IV (r 1589–1610), and contains three small but well-formed museums. The town's greatest highlight, however, is its Gothic **Cathédrale de Notre Dame** (place Notre Dame; ☺ 8am–7pm) **FREE**, built between 1150 and 1191. The cathedral is unusually bright, with original stained glass. The 78m-high south tower dates from 1240. On the western side, facing place du Parvis Notre Dame, the magnificent carved-stone Grand Portal (1176) has statues and a central relief relating to the life of the Virgin Mary. It's believed to have been the inspiration for the portal at the cathedral in Chartres.

Accommodation is scarce in Senlis; if you're travelling with a car, there are some lovely options in the surrounding countryside, otherwise you're best overnighing in nearby Chantilly or taking a day trip from Paris.

Eateries are scattered throughout the historic centre. The town's **market** (place de la Halle; ☺ 8am–noon Tue & Fri) runs twice a week.

Senlis's **Tourist Office** (☎ 03 44 53 06 40; www.senlis-tourisme.fr; place du Parvis; ☺ 10am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Tue–Sun Mar–Oct, to 5pm Nov–Feb; 📞) sits just opposite the cathedral.

Buses (€3, 25 minutes) link Senlis with Chantilly's bus station (adjoining its train station) about every half-hour on weekdays and hourly on Saturday, with around half a dozen departures on Sunday.

By car from Paris, follow the A1 and take exit 8. From Chantilly, take the D924.

### Le Boudoir

FRENCH €

(☎ 03 44 55 44 49; www.leboudoir-chantilly.fr; 100 rue du Connétable; lunch menu €10–25, dishes €5–13; ☺ 11am–6pm Mon, 10am–7pm Tue–Sat, 11am–7pm Sun) You can be sure of the quality at this charming tearoom – with its comfy sofas, a sunny pavement terrace and a shaded courtyard garden, it's a perfect place to try *crème Chantilly* (including on hot chocolate) or to enjoy a light lunch (salads, savoury tarts and so on).

### Le Vertugadin

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 44 57 03 19; www.vertugadin.com; 44 rue du Connétable; 3-course menu €32, mains €22–36; ☺ 7.15–10pm Tue, noon–2pm & 7.15–10pm Wed–Sat, noon–2pm Sun; 🍴) This elegant white-shuttered town house serves classical cuisine such as meat, game and terrines accompanied by sweet onion chutney. A warming fire roars in the hearth in winter, and summer welcomes diners to the walled garden.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 44 67 37 37; www.chantilly-tourisme.com; 73 rue du Connétable; ☺ 9.30am–12.30pm & 1.30–5.30pm Mon & Wed–Sat, 9.30am–12.30pm Tue year-round, 10.30am–1pm & 2.30–5pm Sun May–Sep) Can help with accommodation and has details of walks through town, along Chantilly's two

canals and around the racecourse, as well as walking and mountain-bike trails in the forest.

## i Getting There & Away

RER D (direction Creil) links Gare de Lyon, Châtelet–Les Halles and Gare du Nord with Chantilly-Gouvieux train station (€8.70, 25 to 45 minutes, up to four hourly).

Driving from Paris, the fastest route is via the Autoroute du Nord (A1/E19); use exit 7 (signposted Chantilly). The N1 then N16 from Porte de la Chapelle/St-Denis is cheaper.

## Chartres

POP 39,800

Step off the train in Chartres and the two very different steeples – one Gothic, the other Romanesque – of its glorious 13th-century cathedral loom above. Follow them to check out the cathedral's dazzling blue stained-glass windows and its collection of relics, including the Sainte Voile (Holy Veil) said to have been worn by the Virgin Mary when she gave birth to Jesus, which have lured pilgrims since the Middle Ages.

After visiting the town's museums, don't miss a stroll around Chartres' carefully preserved old city. Adjacent to the cathedral, staircases and steep streets lined with half-timbered medieval houses lead

## Chartres



## Chartres

## 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale Notre Dame ..... C2

## 📍 Sights

- 2 Cathédrale Notre Dame Crypt ..... C2  
 3 Centre International du Vitrail ..... C2  
 4 Clocher Vieux ..... C2  
 5 Collégiale St-André ..... D1  
 6 Église St-Aignan ..... D4  
 7 Musée des Beaux-Arts ..... C2  
 8 Portail Royal ..... C2  
 9 Tour Nord ..... C2

## 👤 Activities, Courses &amp; Tours

- 10 Cathédrale Notre Dame Tours ..... C2  
 11 Le Petit Chart' Train ..... C2  
 12 Night Walking Tours ..... D3

## 🛏 Sleeping

- 13 Hôtel du Bœuf Couronné ..... B3  
 14 Le Grand Monarque ..... A4

## 🍷 Eating

- Georges ..... (see 14)  
 15 La Chocolaterie ..... C3  
 16 La Passacaille ..... B2  
 17 Le Tripot ..... B3  
 18 Les Feuillantines ..... D3  
 19 Marché Couvert ..... D3

## 🍷 Drinking &amp; Nightlife

- 20 L'Escalier ..... D2

## 🛒 Shopping

- 21 Flower Market ..... C3

downhill to the narrow western channel of the Eure River, romantically spanned by footbridges.

## 📍 Sights

Allow 1½ to two hours to walk the signposted *circuit touristique* (tourist circuit), tak-

ing in Chartres' key sights. Free town maps from the tourist office also mark the route.

## Cathedral Area

**★ Cathédrale Notre Dame** CATHEDRAL  
([www.cathedrale-chartres.org](http://www.cathedrale-chartres.org); place de la Cathédrale; ☀ 8.30am-7.30pm daily year-round, also to 10pm Tue, Fri & Sun Jul & Aug) One of Western civilisation's crowning architectural achievements, the 130m-long Cathédrale Notre Dame de Chartres is renowned for its brilliant-blue stained-glass windows and sacred holy veil. Built in the Gothic style during the first quarter of the 13th century to replace a Romanesque cathedral that had been devastated by fire – along with much of the town – in 1194, effective fundraising and donated labour meant construction took only 30 years, resulting in a high degree of architectural unity.

Today, it is France's best-preserved medieval cathedral, having been spared post-medieval modifications, the ravages of war and the Reign of Terror.

The cathedral's west, north and south entrances have superbly ornamented triple portals, but the west entrance, known as the **Portail Royal**, is the only one that predates the fire. Carved from 1145 to 1155, its superb statues, whose features are elongated in the Romanesque style, represent the glory of Christ in the centre, and the Nativity and the Ascension to the right and left, respectively. The structure's other main Romanesque feature is the 105m-high **Clocher Vieux** (Old Bell Tower), also called the Tour Sud (South Tower). Construction began in the 1140s; it remains the tallest Romanesque steeple still standing.

A visit to the 112m-high **Clocher Neuf** (North Tower; adult/child €6/free; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun May-Aug, shorter hours Sep-Apr), also known as the Tour Nord (North Tower), is worth the ticket price and the climb up the long spiral stairway (350 steps). A 70m-high platform on the lacy flamboyant **Gothic spire**, built from 1507 to 1513 by Jehan de Beauce after an earlier wooden spire burned down, affords superb views of the three-tiered flying buttresses and the 19th-century copper roof, turned green by verdigris.

The cathedral's 176 extraordinary **stained-glass windows**, almost all of which date back to the 13th century, form one of the most important ensembles of medieval stained glass in the world. The three

most exquisite windows, dating from the mid-12th century, are in the wall above the west entrance and below the rose window. Survivors of the fire of 1194 (they were made some four decades before), the windows are revered for the depth and intensity of their tones, famously known as 'Chartres blue'.

In Chartres since 876, the venerated **Sainte Voile** (Holy Veil) – a yellowish bolt of silk draped over a support, which is believed to have been worn by the Virgin Mary when she gave birth to Jesus – is displayed at the end of the cathedral's north aisle behind the choir.

The cathedral's 110m **crypt** (adult/child €5/4; ☀ up to 5 tours daily), a tombless Romanesque structure built in 1024 around a 9th-century predecessor, is the largest in France. Thirty-minute tours in French (with a written English translation) start at the cathedral-run **shop** (☎ 02 37 21 59 08; ☀ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 12.20-5.30pm Sun) selling souvenirs near the Portail Royal.

**Guided tours** (☎ Anne Marie Woods 02 37 21 75 02, Malcolm Miller 02 37 28 15 58; [visitcathedrale@dioceschartres.com](mailto:visitcathedrale@dioceschartres.com); tours €10; ☀ noon Mon-Sat Easter-Oct & 2.45pm Mon-Sat May-Sep, noon by request Nov-Mar) of the cathedral, in English, with Chartres experts Malcolm Miller or Anne Marie Woods, depart from the shop.

Multilingual audioguides cost €3.20 for Clocher Neuf and €4.20 for the cathedral, or €6.20 for both.

**Centre International du Vitrail** MUSEUM  
(International Stained-Glass Centre; ☎ 02 37 21 65 72; [www.centre-vitrail.org](http://www.centre-vitrail.org); 5 rue du Cardinal Pie; adult/child €7/5.50; ☀ 2-5.45pm) After viewing the stained glass in Chartres' cathedral, nip into the town's International Stained-Glass

### DON'T MISS

#### THE HOLY VEIL

The most venerated object in Chartres' cathedral is the **Sainte Voile**, the 'Holy Veil' said to have been worn by the Virgin Mary when she gave birth to Jesus. It originally formed part of the imperial treasury of Constantinople but was offered to Charlemagne by the Empress Irene when the Holy Roman Emperor proposed marriage to her in 802. Charles the Bald presented it to the town in 876; the cathedral was built because the veil survived the 1194 fire.

Centre, in a half-timbered former granary, to see superb examples close up.

### Musée des Beaux-Arts

MUSEUM

(📍 02 37 90 45 80; [www.chartres.fr/culture/musee-des-beaux-arts](http://www.chartres.fr/culture/musee-des-beaux-arts); 29 Cloître Notre Dame; 🕒 10am-12.30pm & 2-8pm Thu, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Fri & Sat, 2-6pm Sun May-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Apr)

**FREE** Chartres' fine-arts museum, accessed via the gate next to Cathédrale Notre Dame's north portal, is in the former Palais Épiscopal (Bishop's Palace), built in the 17th and 18th centuries. Its collections include 16th-century enamels of the Apostles made for François I, a collection of paintings by Chaim Soutine and polychromatic wooden sculptures from the Middle Ages.

### 👁️ Old City

Chartres' beautiful medieval old city is north-east and east of the cathedral. Highlights include the 12th-century **Collégiale St-André** (place St-André), a Romanesque church that's now an exhibition centre; **rue de la Tannerie** and its extension **rue de la Foulerie**, lined with flower gardens, mill-races and the restored remnants of riverside trades; and **rue des Écuycers**, with many structures dating from around the 16th century.

### Église St-Pierre

CHURCH

([www.cathedrale-chartres.org](http://www.cathedrale-chartres.org); place St-Pierre; 🕒 8.30am-6pm) Flying buttresses hold up the 12th- and 13th-century Église St-Pierre. Once part of a Benedictine monastery founded in the 7th century, it was outside the city walls and thus vulnerable to attack; the fortress-like, pre-Romanesque bell tower attached to it was used as a refuge by monks, and dates from around 1000. The fine, brightly coloured clerestory windows in Église St-Pierre's nave, choir and apse date from the early 14th century.

### Église St-Aignan

CHURCH

([www.cathedrale-chartres.org](http://www.cathedrale-chartres.org); place St-Aignan; 🕒 8.30am-6pm) Église St-Aignan is interesting for its wooden barrel-vault roof (1625), arcaded nave and painted interior of faded blue and gold floral motifs (c 1870). The stained glass and the Renaissance Chapelle de St-Michel date from the 16th and 17th centuries.

### 🌟 Festivals & Events

#### Chartres en Lumières

LIGHT SHOW

([www.chartresenlumieres.com](http://www.chartresenlumieres.com); 🕒 dusk-1am mid-Apr-late-Oct, to 10.30pm late-Oct-Dec) During the warmer months, some two dozen Char-

tres landmarks are spectacularly lit every night. You can also see them from aboard **Le Petit Chart' Train late circuits** ([www.lepetittraindecharters.fr](http://www.lepetittraindecharters.fr); adult/child €7/4, late circuits €8/5; 🕒 10.45am-2pm late Mar-late Oct, late circuits 10.30pm mid-Apr-mid-Oct) or check for **night walking tours** (📍 02 37 18 26 26; [www.chartres-tourisme.com](http://www.chartres-tourisme.com); adult/child €14/7; 🗄️ by reservation) in English, bookable through Chartres' tourist office.

### 🛏 Sleeping

Chartres is a convenient stop between Paris and the Loire Valley.

#### Hôtel du Bœuf Couronné

HOTEL €€

(📍 02 37 18 06 06; [www.leboeufcouronne.com](http://www.leboeufcouronne.com); 15 place Châtelet; d €95-120; 📶) The red-curtained entrance lends a theatrical air to this two-star Logis guesthouse in the centre of everything. Its summertime terrace restaurant has cathedral-view dining and the bar mixes great cocktails. Cathedral views also extend from some of its 17 modern rooms.

#### Le Grand Monarque

HOTEL €€

(📍 02 37 18 15 15; [www.bw-grand-monarque.com](http://www.bw-grand-monarque.com); 22 place des Épars; d from €120; 📶) With teal-blue shutters gracing its 1779 façade, a lovely stained-glass ceiling and a treasure trove of period furnishings, old B&W photos and knick-knacks, the epicentral Grand Monarque is a historical gem. Some rooms have air-conditioning; staff are charming. A host of hydrotherapy treatments are available at its spa. Its elegant restaurant, Georges (p205), has a Michelin star.

Family rooms have sofa beds; cots and babysitting services are available.

### 🍴 Eating & Drinking

Food shops and restaurants surround the **covered market** (place Billard; 🕒 8am-1pm Wed & Sat, organic market 5-8pm Wed), just off rue des Changes, south of the cathedral.

#### La Passacaille

ITALIAN €

(📍 02 37 21 52 10; [www.lapassacaille.fr](http://www.lapassacaille.fr); 30 rue Ste-Même; 2-/3-course menus €17.60/20.90, pizzas €13-16, pastas €13-16; 🕒 11.45am-2pm & 6.45-10pm Thu & Sun-Tue, 11.45am-2pm & 6.45-10.30pm Fri & Sat; 🗄️) This welcoming spot has particularly good pizzas (try the Montagnarde with tomato, mozzarella, Reblochon cheese, potatoes, red onions, cured ham and crème fraîche) and homemade pasta with toppings including *pistou* (pesto), also made on the

premises. Tables spill onto the square out front in summer.

### La Chocolaterie

PASTRIES €

(☎02 37 21 86 92; [www.lachocolaterie-chartres.fr](http://www.lachocolaterie-chartres.fr); 14 place Marceau; dishes €2.50-4.20; ☀8am-7.30pm Tue-Sat, from 10am Sun & Mon) Soak up local life overlooking the open-air **flower market** (place du Cygne; ☀8am-7.30pm Tue, Thu & Sat). This tearoom-pâtisserie's hot chocolate and macarons (flavoured with orange, apricot, peanut, pineapple and so on) are sublime, as are its sweet homemade crêpes and miniature madeleine cakes.

### Le Tripot

BISTRO €€

(☎02 37 36 60 11; [www.letripot.wixsite.com/chartres](http://www.letripot.wixsite.com/chartres); 11 place Jean Moulin; 2-/3-course lunch menus €16/19, dinner menus €28-38, mains €22; ☀noon-1.45pm & 7.30-9.15pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.45pm Sun) Tucked off the tourist trail and easy to miss even if you do chance down its narrow street, this atmospheric space with low beamed ceilings is a treat for authentic and adventurous French fare like saddle of rabbit stuffed with snails or grilled turbot in truffled hollandaise sauce. Locals are onto it, so booking ahead is advised.

### Les Feuillantines

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎02 37 30 22 21; [www.restaurantlesfeuillantines.eatbu.com](http://www.restaurantlesfeuillantines.eatbu.com); 4 rue du Bourg; menus €25-36, mains €20-22; ☀noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍷) Take a seat in the sleek interior or beneath a market umbrella in the rear courtyard to dine on superb dishes such as sea bream with potatoes and tomato emulsion, bacon-wrapped veal with lentils, roast duck with butternut squash and cider jus, before finishing with its house-speciality chocolate sphere served with orange sorbet and sweet Chantilly cream.

### L'Escalier

BAR

(☎07 86 09 50 38; [www.facebook.com/escalier-salonbar](http://www.facebook.com/escalier-salonbar); 1 rue du Bourg; ☀4pm-1am Wed & Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; 🍷) On a steep corner near its namesake staircase in Chartres' hilly old city, this deceptively large, very local spot has a wonderful terrace. Look out for live music performances.

### Le Saint-Hilaire

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎02 37 30 97 57; [www.restaurant-saint-hilaire.fr](http://www.restaurant-saint-hilaire.fr); 11 rue du Pont St-Hilaire; 2-course midweek lunch menu €21, €2-/3-course menus €32/42; ☀noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) At this pistachio-painted, wood-beamed charmer, local products are ingeniously used in dishes such as snails with leeks and Nottonville Abbey goat's cheese crème, and cinnamon candied pear with gingerbread. Don't miss its lobster menu in season, or the aromatic cheese platters any time of year.

### Georges

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎02 37 18 15 15; [www.bw-grand-monarque.com](http://www.bw-grand-monarque.com); 22 place des Épars; menus €59-103; ☀noon-1pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Even if you're not staying at lavish hotel Le Grand Monarque (p204), its refined Georges restaurant is worth seeking out for its Michelin-starred multicourse *menus* and mains such as ginger-marinated salmon with pickled veggies and crustacean bouillon, or blackberry-marinated roast lamb with chestnut purée and green beans. Desserts (confit of grapefruit with Campari gelato, for instance) are inspired.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 37 18 26 26; [www.chartres-tourisme.com](http://www.chartres-tourisme.com); 8 rue de la Poissonnerie; ☀10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun) Housed in the half-timbered Maison du Saumon, a former fish merchant's premises dating from the 16th century, with an exhibition on Chartres' history. Rents 1½-hour English-language audioguide tours (€5.50/8.50 per one/two) of the medieval city as well as binoculars (€2), fabulous for seeing details of the cathedral close up.

The Cathédrale Notre Dame Shop (p203) is also helpful.

## i Getting There & Away

Frequent SNCF trains link Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€18, 55 to 70 minutes) with Chartres' **train station** (place Pierre Semard), some of which stop at Versailles-Chantiers (€15.30, 45 to 60 minutes). The **bus station** (place Pierre Semard) is next to the train station.

If you're driving from Paris, follow the A6 from Porte d'Orléans (direction Bordeaux-Nantes), then the A10 and A11 (direction Nantes) and take the 'Chartres' exit.



## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

5.96 million

### TOP SEASIDE TOWN

Boulogne-sur-Mer (p223)

### BEST BEACH

Le Touquet (p225)

### BEST CATHEDRAL

Cathédrale Notre Dame (p235)

### BEST WWI MUSEUM

Historial de la Grande Guerre (p230)

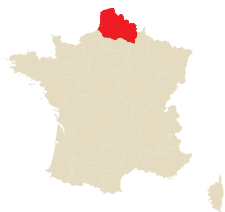


### WHEN TO GO

**Feb & Mar** Pre-Lenten carnivals bring out marching bands and costumed revellers.

**Jun–Aug** Splendid weather makes summer a perfect time to explore the Côte d'Opale.

**Sep** The world's largest flea market, the Braderie, takes over Lille on the first weekend in September.



## Lille, Flanders & the Somme

**H**auts-de-France (Upper France) is one of the country's least heralded regions, but with dramatic land and sea views, deeply rooted culture, fresh seafood, age-old Flemish recipes and local beers, it competes with the best France has to offer. The area comprises the former *régions* of Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Picardie, taking in the lands of the Ch'tis (residents of France's northern tip) and the Picards. Lille is awash with magnificent architecture, outstanding museums, creative enterprises and an energetic student vibe. Arras, Amiens and Laon captivate with Gothic treasures, and Compiègne preserves the dazzle of Napoléon III's Second Empire. Beyond the cities, WWI memorials and cemeteries have a heartbreaking beauty.

### INCLUDES

Lille . . . . .	209	Baie de Somme . . . . .	226
Flanders & Artois . . . . .	216	St-Valery-sur-Somme . . . . .	228
Arras . . . . .	217	Somme Battlefields Memorials . . . . .	229
Côte d'Opale . . . . .	219	Amiens . . . . .	235
Calais . . . . .	221	Compiègne . . . . .	238
Boulogne-sur-Mer . . . . .	223	Laon . . . . .	239
Le Touquet . . . . .	225		





## Lille, Flanders & the Somme Highlights

- 1** **Lille** (p209) Discovering one of France's finest collections of art in French Flanders' engaging capital.
- 2** **Amiens** (p235) Marvelling at Amiens' breathtaking Gothic cathedral.
- 3** **Côte d'Opale** (p219) Rambling along the spectacular, windswept coast facing the White Cliffs of Dover.
- 4** **Historial de la Grande Guerre** (p230) Pondering the horror and sacrifice of WWI in Péronne.
- 5** **La Cité Souterraine de Naours** (p233) Exploring this astonishing Roman-quarried cave system used by wartime troops.
- 6** **Cassel** (p216) Enjoying Flemish landscapes, architecture and cuisine.
- 7** **Baie de Somme** (p226) Spotting seals lounging on the sandbanks of this magical area.
- 8** **Arras** (p217) Joining the Saturday market.
- 9** **Ring of Remembrance memorial** (p231) Reflecting on the human price of WWI.
- 10** **Compiègne** (p238) Visiting the opulent Louis XV–built palace.

## History

In the Middle Ages the Nord *département* (the sliver of France along the Belgian border), together with much of Belgium and part of the Netherlands, belonged to a feudal principality known as Flanders (Flandre or Flandres in French, Vlaanderen in Dutch). French Flanders takes in the areas of French Westhoek (around Dunkirk) and Walloon Flanders (around Lille).

Today, many people in the French Westhoek area still speak French Flemish (French Flemish: *Fransch vlaemsch*; French: *flamand français*; Dutch: *Frans-Vlaams*), a regional language that closely resembles West Flemish, though it differs to standard Dutch, which was based on northern Netherlands dialects. In Walloon Flanders the traditional language is *picard*, also known as *ch'ti*, *chtimi* or *rouchi*.

The area south of the Somme estuary and Albert, Picardy (Picardie), historically centred on the Somme *département*, saw some of the bloodiest fighting of WWI. The popular British WWI love song 'Roses of Picardy' was penned here in 1916 by Frederick E Weatherley.

In 2016 the former *régions* of Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Picardie merged, becoming the *région* of Hauts-de-France.

## Getting There & Away

By Eurostar train ([www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)) Lille is just 90 minutes from London's St Pancras International train station. Eurotunnel Le Shuttle ([www.eurotunnel.com](http://www.eurotunnel.com)) can get you and your car from Folkestone to Calais, via the Channel Tunnel, in a mere 35 minutes. Frequent car ferries link Dover with Calais (90 minutes) and Dunkirk (two hours).

On the Continent, fast Eurostar and TGV trains connect Lille with Brussels (35 minutes); TGVs also make travel from Lille to Paris' Gare du Nord (one hour) and Charles de Gaulle Airport (50 minutes) a breeze.

## LILLE

POP 232,800

Capital of the Hauts-de-France *région*, Lille may be France's most underrated metropolis. Recent decades have seen the country's fourth-largest city (by greater urban area) transform from an industrial centre into a glittering cultural and commercial hub. Highlights include its enchanting old town with magnificent French and Flem-

ish architecture, renowned art museums, stylish shopping, outstanding cuisine, a nightlife scene bolstered by 67,000 university students, and some 1600 designers in its environs.

The Lillois have a well-deserved reputation for friendliness – and they're so proud of being friendly that they often mention it!

Thanks to the Eurostar and the TGV, Lille makes an easy, environmentally sustainable weekend destination from London, Paris, Brussels and beyond.

## Sights & Activities

★ **Palais des Beaux Arts** MUSEUM  
(Fine Arts Museum; ☎03 20 06 78 00; [www.pba-lille.fr](http://www.pba-lille.fr); place de la République; adult/child €7/4; ☀2-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Wed-Sun; 🚶 République-Beaux-Arts) Inaugurated in 1892, Lille's illustrious Fine Arts Museum claims France's second-largest collection after Paris' Musée du Louvre. Its cache of sublime 15th- to 20th-century paintings includes works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Manet. Exquisite porcelain and faïence (pottery), much of it of local provenance, is on the ground floor, while in the basement you'll find classical archaeology, medieval statuary and 18th-century scale models of the fortified cities of northern France and Belgium.

**Musée d'Art Moderne, d'Art Contemporain et d'Art Brut – LaM** MUSEUM  
(☎03 20 19 68 68; [www.musee-lam.fr](http://www.musee-lam.fr); 1 allée du Musée, Villeneuve-d'Ascq; adult/child €7/5, 1st Sun of month free; ☀museum 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, sculpture park 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) Colourful, playful and just plain weird works of modern and contemporary art by masters such as Braque, Calder, Léger, Miró, Modigliani and Picasso are the big draw at this renowned museum and sculpture park in the Lille suburb of Villeneuve-d'Ascq, 9km east of Gare Lille-Europe. Take metro line 1 to Pont de Bois, then bus L4 six stops to 'LaM'.

★ **La Piscine Musée d'Art et d'Industrie** GALLERY  
(☎03 20 69 23 60; [www.roubaix-lapiscine.com](http://www.roubaix-lapiscine.com); 23 rue de l'Espérance, Roubaix; adult/child €9/6; ☀11am-6pm Tue-Thu, 11am-8pm Fri, 1-6pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 Gare Jean Lebas) An art deco municipal swimming pool built between 1927 and 1932 is now an innovative museum showcasing fine arts (paintings, sculptures, drawings) and applied arts (furniture, textiles, fashion) in a delightfully watery environment: the pool is still filled and sculptures are reflected

## Lille

## LILLE, FLANDERS &amp; THE SOMME LILLE



in the water. It reopened in 2018 with a new wing and 2000 sq metres of additional exhibition space. It's 12km northeast of Gare Lille-Europe in Roubaix.

### Hôtel de Ville

**HISTORIC BUILDING**  
 (☑) 03 20 49 50 00; [www.lille.fr](http://www.lille.fr); place Augustin Laurent CS; belfry adult/child €7/5.50; ☎ belfry 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm; 🏛 Mairie de Lille) Built between 1924 and 1932, Lille's city hall is topped by a slender, 104m-high belfry that was designated a Unesco-listed monument in 2004. Climbing 100 steps leads to a lift that whisks you to the top for a stunning panorama over the town. An audioguide costs €2; binocu-

lars are available for €1. Ring the doorbell to gain entry.

### Wazemmes

**AREA**  
 (🚇 Gambetta) For an authentic taste of grassroots Lille, head to the ethnically diverse, family-friendly *quartier populaire* (working-class quarter) of Wazemmes, 1.3km southwest of place du Général de Gaulle, where old-school proletarians and immigrants live harmoniously alongside students and trendy *bobos* (bourgeois bohemians).

The neighbourhood's focal point is the cavernous **Marché de Wazemmes** ([www.halles-wazemmes.com](http://www.halles-wazemmes.com); place de la Nouvelle Aven-



## Lille

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Palais des Beaux Arts ..... B5

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Cathédrale Notre-Dame-de-la-Treille ..... B2  
 3 Chambre de Commerce ..... B2  
 4 Hôtel de Ville ..... D5  
 5 Le Tripostal ..... D3  
 6 Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse ..... B1  
 7 Opéra ..... B2  
 8 Vieille Bourse ..... B3

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 9 Grand Hôtel Bellevue ..... B3  
 10 Hôtel de la Treille ..... B1  
 11 Hôtel L'Arbre Voyageur ..... C2  
 12 L'Hermitage Gantois ..... C5

### 🍷 Eating

- 13 L'Assiette du Marché ..... B1  
 14 Le Barbier qui Fume ..... B1  
 15 Le Bistrot Lillois ..... C1  
 16 Le Clair de Lune ..... C1  
 17 Meert ..... B2  
 18 Papà Raffaele ..... B1

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 19 La Capsule ..... A1  
 20 Le Privilège ..... A2  
 21 L'Illustration Café ..... A2  
 22 Tamper! Espresso Bar ..... B1

### 🎭 Entertainment

- 23 Billeterie Fnac ..... B3

### 🛍 Shopping

- 24 Maison Benoit ..... B1

ture; ☂ covered market 8am-8pm Tue-Sat, to 3pm Sun, street market 7am-2pm Tue, Thu & Sun; 🍷 Gambetta), Lille's favourite food market. The adjacent outdoor market is the place to be on Sunday morning – it's a real carnival scene. Rue des Sarrazins and rue Jules Guesde are lined with shops, restaurants and Tunisian bakeries, many owned by, and catering to, the area's North African residents.

Wazemmes is famed for its outdoor concerts and street festivals, including La Louche d'Or (The Golden Ladle; 1 May), a soup festival that has spread to cities across Europe.

### 🏛 Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse

GALLERY

(☎ 03 28 36 84 00; www.lille.fr; 32 rue de la Monnaie; adult/child €3.60/free, audioguide €2; ☎ 2-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Wed-Sun; 🕒 Rihour) Within a red-brick 15th- and 17th-century poorhouse, this absorbing museum features ceramics, earthenware wall tiles, religious art, 17th- and 18th-century paintings and furniture, and a detailed exhibit on the history of Lille. A rood screen separates the Salle des Malades (Hospital Hall), hosting contemporary art exhibitions, from a mid-17th-century chapel (look up to see a mid-19th-century painted ceiling).

### 📮 Le Tripostal

ARTS CENTRE

(☎ 03 20 14 47 60; www.facebook.com/letripo; av Willy Brandt; prices vary; ☎ 10am-7pm Wed-Sat, hours can vary; 🕒 Gare Lille-Flandres) Splashed with street-art murals, this cavernous red-brick postal sorting centre was transformed into an arts centre in 2004, when Lille was the European Capital of Culture. Changing

art and photography exhibitions (most free) usually feature the work of local artists; there's also a bar, a canteen-style restaurant, a kids' play area and a design shop. Look out too for events such as DJ sets, live music gigs and workshops.

### 🏰 Citadelle

FORTRESS

(https://citadellelille.fr; av du 43e Régiment d'Infanterie; ☎ 10) At the northwestern end of bd de la Liberté, this massive, star-shaped fortress was designed by renowned 17th-century French military architect Vauban after France captured Lille in 1667, and completed in 1670. Made of some 60 million bricks, it now serves as the headquarters of the 12-nation, NATO-certified Rapid Reaction Corps – France. The only way to visit is by **guided tour** (☎ 03 59 57 94 00; www.lilletour.ism.com; €7.50; ☎ 3pm & 4.30pm Sun Jun-Aug, 3rd Sun of month Sep-May).

Outside the 2.2km-long ramparts is central Lille's largest public park, the Parc de la Citadelle, spanning 60 hectares.

### 🎆 Festivals & Events

#### 🍷 Braderie de Lille

MARKET

(www.braderie-de-lille.fr; ☎ early Sep) On the first weekend in September, Lille's entire city centre – 200km of footpaths – is transformed into what's billed as the world's largest flea market. It runs nonstop – yes, all night long – from 2pm on Saturday to 11pm on Sunday, when street sweepers emerge to tackle the mounds of mussel shells and old *frites* (fries) left behind by the merry-makers.

## LILLE CITY PASS

The Lille City Pass (24/48/72 hours €25/35/45) gets you into almost all the museums in greater Lille and affords unlimited use of public transport. The 72-hour option throws in sites around the Nord-Pas de Calais *région*, including Arras, Dunkirk and Cassel, and free use of regional TER trains for 24 hours. Buy it at Lille's tourist office or through its website.

## Marché de Noël

CHRISTMAS MARKET

(www.noel-a-lille.com; place Rihour; ☺mid-Nov-late Dec) **FREE** The neoclassical and Flemish buildings of place Rihour provide a magical backdrop for one of France's most enchanting Christmas markets. In the lead-up to Christmas, some 90 wooden stalls sell decorations, spiced biscuits, mulled wine and other seasonal treats; a funfair also sets up here.

## Sleeping

### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎03 20 57 08 94; www.hifrance.org; 235 bd Paul Painlevé; dm incl breakfast & sheets €26; @☺; 🚿) **M** Porte de Valenciennes) With a façade sporting the colours of Europe, Lille's youth hostel opened in 2015. The 55 spartan rooms have metal bunks, lockers and showers (with timer buttons), but only 12 have attached toilets. There's bike storage, a laundry and a self-catering kitchen. Wi-fi is available only in the lobby. It's 1.7km southeast of Gare Lille-Flandres.

### ★ Hôtel L'Arbre Voyageur

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎03 20 20 62 62; http://hotelarbrevoyageur.com; 45 bd Carnot; r from €150; ☺☺; 🚿) **M** Gare Lille-Flandres) Behind a fretted glass-and-steel facade in the former Polish consulate's post-Soviet building, the Hôtel L'Arbre Voyageur has 48 stylised rooms (including four suites) with custom-made furniture and minibars stocked with free soft drinks, and a bamboo- and palm-filled courtyard. Green initiatives span solar panels to a free drink for guests who don't want their linen changed every day.

### Grand Hôtel Bellevue

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 20 57 45 64; www.grandhotelbellevue.com; 5 rue Jean Roisin; r from €102; ☺@☺; 🚿) **M** Rihour) Opened in 1913, this venerable establishment has 64 spacious rooms with high ceil-

ings, all-marble bathrooms, gilded picture frames and a mix of inlaid-wood antiques and ultramodern furnishings. Higher-priced rooms have sweeping views of place du Général de Gaulle.

### Hôtel de la Treille

HOTEL €€

(☎03 20 55 45 46; www.hoteldelatreille.com; 7-9 place Louise de Bettignies; r €75-150; ☺; 🚿) **M** Gare Lille-Flandres) In a superb spot smack in the middle of Vieux Lille, a few steps from dining and shopping options galore, Hôtel de la Treille's 42 stylish rooms offer views of the lively square out front, the cathedral or a quiet interior courtyard.

### ★ L'Hermitage Gantois

HOTEL €€

(☎03 20 85 30 30; www.hotelhermitagegantois.com; 224 rue Pierre Mauroy; r from €100; 🚿@☺☺; 🚿) **M** Mairie de Lille) This five-star hotel creates enchanting, harmonious spaces by complementing its rich architectural heritage, such as the Flemish-Gothic façade, with refined ultramodernism. The 89 rooms are sumptuous, with Philippe Starck accessories alongside Louis XV-style chairs and bathrooms that sparkle with Carrara marble. The still-consecrated chapel dates from 1637; there are also a 12m pool and a *hammam* (Turkish steam bath).

## Eating

The city has a flourishing culinary scene. Keep an eye out for *estaminets* (traditional Flemish eateries, with antique knick-knacks on the walls and plain wooden tables) serving Flemish specialities.

Dining hotspots in Vieux Lille include rue de Gand, home to small, moderately priced French and Flemish restaurants, and rue de la Monnaie and its side streets, alleys and courtyards.

### ★ Meert

PASTRIES €

(☎03 20 57 07 44; www.meert.fr; 27 rue Esquemoise; waffles & pastries €3-8, tearoom dishes €4.50-12, restaurant mains €26-32; ☺shop 2-7.30pm Mon, 9.30am-7.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7.30pm Sat, 9am-7pm Sun, tearoom 2-7pm Mon, 9.30am-10pm Tue-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat, 9am-6.30pm Sun, restaurant noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun; ☺; 🚿) **M** Rihour) Famed for its *gaufres* (waffles) made with Madagascar vanilla, Meert has served kings, viceroys and generals since 1761. The sumptuous chocolate shop's coffered ceiling, painted wooden panels, wrought-iron balcony and mosaic floor date from 1839. Its *salon de thé*



## THE GIANTS

In far northern France and nearby Belgium, *géants* (giants) – wickerwork body masks up to 8.5m tall animated by someone (or several someones) inside – emerge for local carnivals and on feast days to dance and add to the general merriment. Each has a name and a personality, usually based on the Bible, legends or local history. Giants are born, baptised, grow up, marry and have children, creating, over the years, complicated family relationships. They serve as important symbols of town, neighbourhood and village identity.

Medieval in origin – and also found in places such as the UK, Catalonia, the Austrian Tyrol, Mexico, Brazil and India – giants have been a tradition in northern France since the 16th century. More than 300 of the creatures now 'live' in French towns, including Arras, Boulogne, Calais, Cassel, Dunkirk and Lille. France and Belgium's giants were recognised by Unesco as 'masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity' in 2005.

Your best chance to see them is at pre-Lenten carnivals, during Easter and at festivals held from May to September, often on weekends. Dates and places appear in the free, annual poster-brochure *C'est quand les géants?*, available at tourist offices and online at [www.calendrier-des-geants.eu](http://www.calendrier-des-geants.eu) (the pandemic paused the poster and website, but they should return).

(tearoom) is a delightful spot for a morning arabica or a mid-afternoon tea. Also here is a French gourmet restaurant.

### Papà Raffaele

PIZZA €

(<https://papafamiglia.com>; 5 rue St-Jacques; pizza €7.50-15; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Mon-Thu, noon-2pm & 6.30-11pm Fri, noon-3pm & 6.30-11pm Sat & Sun; 📍📱; 🕒 Gare Lille-Flandres) The queues at Papà Raffaele are as legendary as its pizzas (it doesn't take reservations), so come early or late to this post-industrial space with recycled timber tables, vintage chairs and cured meats hanging from the ceiling. Wood-fired pizzas (like Cheesus Christ, with six cheeses) are made with Naples-sourced ingredients; coffee, craft beers and wine are all Italian. Takeaway is available.

### Le Bistrot Lillois

FRENCH, FLEMISH €

(☎ 03 20 14 04 15; 40 rue de Gand; mains €13-25; ☺ noon-2pm & 6-10pm Tue-Sun; 🕒 Rihour) Dishes both Flemish and French are served here under hanging hops. The highlight of the menu is *os à moëlle* (bone marrow); Flemish dishes worth trying include *carbonade flamande* (braised beef slow-cooked with beer, onions, brown sugar and gingerbread) and *potjevleesch* (jellied chicken, pork, veal and rabbit; served cold). Book ahead for dinner, or try arriving promptly at 7.30pm.

### ★ L'Assiette du Marché

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 20 06 83 61; [www.assiettedumarche.com](http://www.assiettedumarche.com); 61 rue de la Monnaie; 2-/3-course menus from €20/25, mains €16-25; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Sun-Thu, to 11pm Fri & Sat; 🕒 Rihour) Entered via a grand archway, a 12th-century

aristocratic mansion – a mint under Louis XIV, hence the street's name, and a listed historical monument – is the romantic setting for contemporary cuisine (tuna carpaccio with Champagne vinaigrette, roast duckling with glazed turnips and smoked garlic). Dine under its glass roof, in its intimate dining rooms, or on its cobbled courtyard in summer.

### Le Barbier qui Fume

BARBECUE €€

(☎ 03 20 06 99 35; [www.lebarbierquifume.fr](http://www.lebarbierquifume.fr); 69 rue de la Monnaie; 3-course lunch/dinner menu from €18/28, mains €11-30; ☺ 10.30am-3pm & 6-11pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-11pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun; 🕒 Rihour) Charred aromas waft from this former barber shop (hence the name: the Smoking Barber), which now houses a ground-floor butcher and upstairs restaurant specialising in premium meats (pork knuckle, lamb shoulder, beef ribs) and poultry (pigeon, duck) smoked on-site over beechwood. There's a handful of tables next to the butcher's counter, and more out on the terrace.

### Le Clair de Lune

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 20 51 46 55; [www.restaurant-leclairdelune.fr](http://www.restaurant-leclairdelune.fr); 50 rue de Gand; 2-/3-course midweek lunch menus from €16/20, dinner menus €28/38, mains €18-28; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Mon, Tue & Thu, noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm Fri, noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Sat, 12.30-2.30pm & 7-10pm Sun; 🕒 Rihour) Creations such as duck carpaccio with gingerbread vinaigrette, beef fillet with red wine and chocolate jus, and guinea fowl with smoked bacon *crème* have seen Sébastien Defrance's elegant restaurant awarded the prestigious

title Maître Restaurateur, a French government recognition of quality local produce and homemade cooking, in 2017. Around half of the 50-strong wine list is available by the glass.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Lille is a bastion of the area's long-standing tradition of beer brewing; look out for beers from the region around town. Small, stylish bars line rue Royale and rue de la Barre, while university students descend on the bars along rue Masséna and rue Solférino, as far southeast as Marché Sébastopol. In warm weather, cafes on place du Général de Gaulle and place du Théâtre spill onto table-filled terraces.

### Tamper! Espresso Bar

COFFEE

(☎03 20 39 28 21; 10 rue des Vieux Murs; ☀9am-4pm Wed & Thu, to 6pm Fri & Sat, to 5pm Sun; ☎; ☑Rihour) Beans roasted by Berlin's The Barn are brewed using filter, Aeropress, siphon or piston methods at this hip cafe with bare brick walls and vintage American jazz on the turntable. It also serves iced teas and coffee, fresh OJ, homemade lemonade and smoothies, along with pastries and cakes.

Granola, eggs and French toast are among the options at breakfast; at lunch there are quiches, tartines (open sandwiches), salads and soups.

### ★ La Capsule

CRAFT BEER

(☎03 20 42 14 75; www.bar-la-capsule.fr; 25 rue des Trois Mollettes; ☀5.30pm-1am Mon-Wed, 5.30pm-3am Thu & Fri, 4pm-3am Sat, 5.30pm-midnight Sun; ☎; ☑Rihour) Spread across three levels – a vaulted stone cellar, a beamed-ceilinged ground floor and an upper level reached by a spiral staircase – Lille's best craft-beer bar has 28 varieties on tap and over 100 by the bottle. Most are French (such as Lille's Lyd-éric and Paris' BapBap) and Belgian (eg Cantillon), but small-scale brewers from around the world are also represented.

### L'illustration Café

BAR

(☎03 20 12 00 90; www.bar-illustration.fr; 18 rue Royale; ☀noon-1am Mon & Tue, 12.30pm-1am Wed, noon-3am Thu & Fri, 2.30pm-3am Sat, 3pm-1am Sun; ☑Rihour) Adorned with art nouveau woodwork and changing exhibits by local painters, this laid-back bar attracts artists, musicians, budding intellectuals and teachers in the mood to read, exchange weighty ideas or just shoot the breeze. The mellow soundtrack mixes jazz, blues, indie rock, French *chan-*

*sons* and African and Cuban beats. Check the Facebook page for details of concerts.

### Le Privilège

GAY

(☎03 20 21 12 19; www.facebook.com/privilège.lille; 2 rue Royale; ☀5pm-1am Sun-Wed, 5pm-3am Thu & Fri, 3pm-3am Sat; ☎; ☑Rihour) In a former bookshop, Lille's premier gay bar has a vaulted cellar, a ground-floor bar/dance floor strung with mirrored disco balls, and an upper-level bar. Most nights see DJs spinning disco, pop and electronica. Tuesdays is retro ('80s and '90s tunes); on Wednesdays it hosts drag karaoke.



## Entertainment

Lille's free French-language entertainment guide *Sortir* (<http://hautsdefrance.sortir.eu>), issued every Wednesday, is available at the tourist office, cinemas, event venues and bookshops. For arts exhibitions and events, check [www.lille3000.com](http://www.lille3000.com).

Lille's **Opéra** (☎tickets 08 20 48 90 00; www.opera-lille.fr; place du Théâtre; ☑Rihour) hosts opera, dance and classical concerts.

Buy entertainment tickets at **Fnac** ([www.fnacspectacles.com](http://www.fnacspectacles.com); 20 rue St-Nicolas; ☀10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat; ☑Rihour).

### Le Splendid

LIVE MUSIC

(☎03 20 33 17 34; www.le-splendid.com; 1 place du Mont de Terre; ☑Porte de Valenciennes) A former cinema with balcony seating is now one of Lille's best live music venues, with a capacity of 900. Local and international rock, indie

## SHOP TALK

The snazziest fashion and homewares boutiques are in Vieux Lille, in the area bounded by rue de la Monnaie, rue Esquermoise, rue de la Grande Chaussée and rue d'Angleterre. Design shops concentrate on rue du Faubourg des Poste, 3km southwest of the centre.

Keep an eye out for gourmet shops with locally made specialities such as chocolate. At **Maison Benoit** (☎03 20 31 69 03; <https://maison-benoit.com>; 77 rue de la Monnaie; ☀10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun; ☑Rihour), second-generation artisan chocolatier Dominique Benoit creates pralines and other chocolates using traditional techniques and inspired flavour pairings, such as Cointreau and caramel, Bavarian vanilla and cherries, Périgord walnuts and chicory...



and pop acts all play here; there are 70 to 100 concerts per year.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (📞 03 59 57 94 00; www.lille-tourism.com; Palais Rihour; ☀️ 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 1.15-4.30pm Sun; 🚶 Rihour)

## **i** Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Aéroport de Lille** (LIL; www.lille.aeroport.fr; rte de L'Aéroport, Lesquin) is situated 11km southeast of the centre. It's linked to destinations around France and southern Europe by a variety of low-cost carriers. To get to/from the city centre (Gare Lille-Europe), you can take a shuttle bus (return €8, 20 minutes, hourly).

### BUS

Lille's **bus station** (bd de Turin; 🚏 Gare Lille-Flandres) is just outside Gare Lille-Europe. Isilines (<https://en.oui.sncf/en/isilines>) and Ouibus (<https://en.oui.sncf/en/ouibus>) operate domestic services to destinations throughout France. Eurolines ([www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com)) and Flixbus ([www.flixbus.com](http://www.flixbus.com)) run international services to destinations including London.

### TRAIN

Lille's two main train stations, Gare Lille-Flandres and the modern Gare Lille-Europe, are 400m apart on the eastern edge of the city centre. They are one stop apart on metro line 2.

**Gare Lille-Europe** (🚉; 🚏 Gare Lille-Europe) Topped by what looks like a 20-storey ski boot, this ultramodern station handles Eurostar trains to London, TGV/Thalys/Eurostar trains to Brussels-Midi, half of the TGVs to Paris Gare du Nord and most province-to-province TGVs.

**Gare Lille-Flandres** (🚉; 🚏 Gare Lille-Flandres) This renovated, classic-style station is used by half of the TGVs to Paris Gare du Nord and all intraregional TER services.

Services include the following:

**Brussels-Midi** By TGV €30, 35 minutes, at least 12 daily.

**Charles de Gaulle Airport** From €41, one hour, at least hourly.

**London (St Pancras International)** By Eurostar €110 to €180, 90 minutes, 10 daily.

**Paris Gare du Nord** €28, one hour, at least hourly.

## **i** Getting Around

### BICYCLE

Operated by Transpole, Lille's bike-sharing scheme **V-Lille** ([www.ilevia.fr/cms/ville/](http://www.ilevia.fr/cms/ville/); day/week subscription €1.60/7, 1st 30min free,

every subsequent 30min €1; 🕒 24hr) has 2200 bikes at stations across town.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Lille's two speedy metro lines (1 and 2), two tramways (R and T), two Citadine shuttles (C1, which circles the city centre clockwise, and C2, which goes counterclockwise) and many urban and suburban bus lines – several of which cross into Belgium. Check [www.ilevia.fr](http://www.ilevia.fr) for all local transport info.

Public-transport tickets (€1.70, plus €0.20 for a reusable ticket) are sold on buses but must be purchased before boarding a metro or tram; there are ticket machines at each stop. A Pass' Journée (24-hour pass) costs €5 and needs to be time-stamped each time you board; two- to seven-day passes are also available. A Pass Soirée, good for unlimited travel after 7pm, costs €2.35.

There's a **ticket office** (📞 03 20 40 40 40; www.ilevia.fr; Gare Lille-Flandres; ☀️ 6.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat; 🚏 Gare Lille-Flandres) adjacent to the Gare Lille-Flandres metro station.

## FLANDERS & ARTOIS

### Cassel

POP 2350

Perched at the summit of French Flanders' highest hill – though at 176m it's hardly Mont Blanc – the fortified, quintessential Flemish village of Cassel offers panoramic views of the verdant Flanders plain.

Because of its elevated position, Cassel served as Maréchal Ferdinand Foch's headquarters at the beginning of WWI. In 1940 it was the site of intensive rearguard resistance by British troops defending Dunkirk during the evacuation.

Cassel's citizens are enormously proud of Reuze Papa and Reuze Maman, the resident *géants* (giants; wickerwork body masks animated by people inside), who are feted each Easter Monday.

### **i** Sights

The **Grand' Place**, Cassel's focal point, is ringed by austere red-brick buildings with steep slate roofs.

### Musée de Flandre

GALLERY

(📞 03 59 73 45 59; www.museedeflandre.lenord.fr; 26 Grand' Place; adult/child €6/free; ☀️ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun)

## DON'T MISS

## NORTHERN BREWS

French Flanders brews some truly excellent *bière blonde* (lager) and *bière ambrée* (amber beer) with an alcohol content of up to 8.5%.

While in the area, beer lovers should be sure to try some of these local varieties, which give Belgian brewers a run for their money: 3 Monts, Amadeus, Ambre des Flandres, Brasserie des 2 Caps, Ch'ti, Enfants de Gayant, Grain d'Orge, Hellemus, Jenlain, L'Angélu, La Wambrechies, Moulins d'Ascq, Raoul, Septante 5, St-Landelin, Triple Secret des Moines and Vieux Lille.

The Museum of Flanders has a worthwhile, well-presented collection of Flemish art, both old and modern, including canvases in the 15th-century Flemish primitive style and two dramatic paintings of the Battle of Cassel (1677). Multimedia guides are free.

## Sleeping & Eating

### L'Art Doize

HOTEL €

(Le Foch; ☎03 28 42 47 73; www.hotel-foch.net; 41 Grand' Place; r from €75; ♿) Four of L'Art Doize's six spacious rooms have views of the square and all have antique-style beds. The restaurant serves excellent traditional French cuisine (two-/three-course *menus* from €19/25). The decor reflects the 'art' in the name, with bold colours and creative design.

### ★T Kasteelhof

FLEMISH €

(☎03 28 40 59 29; 8 rue St-Nicolas; mains €7-14; ☺11am-10pm Thu-Sun, closed Jan & early Oct) At the 'highest *estaminet*' (traditional Flemish restaurant) in Flanders', facing Cassel's hill-top windmill, you can quaff Flemish beer (including Kassels Bier, only available here), sip *vin de chicorée* (made with red wine and chicory) and dine on dishes such as *carbonade* (braised beef stewed with beer). For dessert, try the chicory *crème brûlée*. The tiny shop sells Flemish edibles.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 28 40 52 55; www.coeurdeflandre.fr; 20 Grand' Place; ☺9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat Nov-Feb)

## Getting There & Away

Cassel is midway between Calais (59km) and Lille (49km). The village is served by trains from Dunkirk (€6.80, 25 minutes, up to five daily) and Lille (€11.10, 40 minutes, up to two per hour); the station is 2.5km downhill from the centre.

## Arras

POP 40,600

An unexpected gem of a city, Artois' former capital Arras (the final 's' is pronounced) has an exceptional ensemble of Flemish-style arched buildings – the main squares are especially lovely at night – and two subterranean WWI sites. The city makes a good base for visits to the Battle of the Somme memorials.

## Sights & Activities

### ★Grand' Place & Place des Héros SQUARE

Arras' two ancient market squares, the Grand' Place and the almost adjacent, smaller place des Héros (also known as the Petite Place), are surrounded by 17th- and 18th-century Flemish Baroque houses topped by curvaceous gables. Although the structures vary in decorative detail, their 345 sandstone columns form a common arcade unique in France. Like 80% of Arras, both squares – especially handsome at night – were heavily damaged during WWI, so many of the gorgeous façades were reconstructed after the war.

### Hôtel de Ville

HISTORIC BUILDING

(☎03 21 51 26 95; place des Héros; city-hall tours adult/child €4.40/3.20, belfry adult/child €3.50/2.40, boves tour prices vary; ☺9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Sun early Apr-mid-Sep, shorter hours mid-Sep-early Apr, boves closed Jan) Arras' Flemish Gothic city hall dates from the 16th century but was completely rebuilt after WWI. Four *gèants* live in the lobby. For a panoramic view, take the lift (plus 43 stairs) up the 75m-high, Unesco-listed belfry. Or, for a subterranean perspective, head down into the *souterrains* (caves) under the square, also known as *boves*, which were turned into British command posts, hospitals and barracks during WWI.

Tours of the *boves* (40 minutes; in English upon request) generally begin at 11am, with at least two more departures in the afternoon; reserve in advance and confirm pricing. City-hall tours run at 3pm Sunday year-round, with an additional tour at 3pm Monday to Friday July and August. Tickets are sold at the tourist office (on the ground floor).

## CITY PASS

Arras' tourist office sells several city passes; the main **Arras City Pass** (adult/child €9.20/5.10) includes admission to most of the city's top attractions and the Hôtel de Ville's belfry.

### Carrière Wellington

HISTORIC SITE

(Wellington Quarry; ☎ 03 21 51 26 95; www.carriere-wellington.com; rue Arthur Delétoile; private tours per person from €26; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun, closed Jan, longer hours summer) Staging ground for the spring 1917 offensive, Wellington Quarry is a 20m-deep network of old chalk quarries expanded during WWI by tunnellers from New Zealand. Hour-long guided tours in French and English combine imaginative audiovisuals, evocative photos and period artefacts. Signs painted in black are British and from WWI; those in red are French from WWII, when the site was used as a bomb shelter. It's signposted 1km south of the train station. Access is by lift.

The temperature in the tunnels is a constant and chilly 11°C.

### Sleeping

Place du Maréchal Foch, in front of the train station, has a number of midrange hotels.

### Hôtel Les 3 Luppars

HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 21 60 02 03; www.hotel-les3luppars.com; 49 Grand' Place; r from €85; @☎) Occupying the Grand' Place's only non-Flemish-style building (it's Gothic and dates from the 1400s), Les 3 Luppars (derived from 'Leopards') has a private courtyard and 42 rooms, 10 with fine views of the square. The decor is basic, but the location is great and the atmosphere is welcoming. Amenities include a sauna.

### Grand Place Hôtel

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 91 19 19 79; http://grandplacehotel.fr; 23 Grand' Place; r/ste/apt from €102/120/150; ☎☎) Behind one of the Grand' Place's few Flemish Baroque façades to escape wartime damage, this newish hotel has a dozen rooms done out in stylish black and white. Some suites and the apartments sleep four, while the loft sleeps six; apartments and the loft also come with kitchenettes.

### Hôtel de l'Univers

HOTEL €€

(☎ 09 70 38 55 01; www.univers.najeti.fr; 3-5 place de la Croix Rouge; r from €95; ☎) Ensclosed in a 16th-century former Jesuit monastery, this

fashionable inn is arrayed in a horseshoe shape around a quiet neoclassical courtyard. Heavy drapes, tassels and bedspreads give the 38 spacious rooms an elegant feel.

There's just one family room, so be sure to book. Reserve ahead too for courtyard parking, as spaces are limited.

### Eating

Lots of restaurants are tucked away under the arches of the Grand' Place, place des Héros and – connecting the two – rue de la Taillerie.

### Marché à Arras

MARKET €

(place des Héros, Grand' Place & place de la Vacquerie; ☀ 8am-1pm Wed & Sat) Arras' twice-weekly food market stretches across the city's three central squares; Saturday's market is especially huge.

### Le Petit Rat Porteur

BRASSERIE €

(☎ 03 21 51 29 70; 11 rue de la Taillerie; mains €10-20; ☀ 11.30am-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun) Beloved for its marvellous vaulted cellar and friendly staff, this buzzing brasserie has a great range of salads alongside regional standards including *potjevleesch* (aspic potted meat) and *waterzooi* (chicken stew).

### Assiette au Bœuf

GRILL €

(☎ 03 21 15 11 51; http://assietteauboeuf.fr; 56 Grand' Place; menus lunch €12-16, dinner €17-22; ☀ noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm; ♿) Hugely popular with locals for its great-value steaks, this Grand' Place restaurant also serves burgers and mixed grills.

### La Faisanderie

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 21 48 20 76; www.restaurant-la-faisanderie.com; 45 Grand' Place; 3-course lunch menu €25, 2-/3-course dinner menu €31/36, mains €16-20; ☀ 7-9.30pm Tue, noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) In a superb vaulted brick cellar, this formal restaurant serves a range of classical dishes prepared with carefully selected ingredients: oysters *naturelles*, Pernod-flambéed prawns, beef fillet with morel sauce or turbot with seared endives and beer sauce. The wine list is outstanding.

### Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 21 51 26 95; www.explorearras.com; place des Héros, Hotel de Ville; ☀ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Sun early Apr–mid-Sep, shorter hours mid-Sep–early Apr; ☎)

## **i** Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

Contact the tourist office for details of bicycle rentals, which are an excellent way to explore the countryside and memorials.

### TRAIN

Arras' station is 750m southeast of the two main squares.

**Amiens** €13.10, 40 minutes, five to 10 daily.

**Lens** €4.60, 15 minutes, up to two per hour.

**Lille-Flandres** €11.50, 40 minutes, up to two per hour.

**Paris Gare du Nord (TGV)** €21, 50 minutes, seven to 13 daily.

## Lens

POP 30,100

Destroyed in WWI and battered again in WWII, Lens is an industrial city that boasts a popular and innovative branch of Paris' Louvre museum.

### Sights

#### Louvre-Lens

MUSEUM

( 03 21 18 62 62; www.louvre-lens.fr; 99 rue Paul Bert; temporary exhibitions adult/child €10/5; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) **FREE** The innovative Louvre-Lens, opened in 2012, showcases hundreds of treasures from Paris' venerable Musée du Louvre in state-of-the-art exhibition spaces. The centrepiece, the 120m-long Galerie du Temps, displays a semi-permanent collection of 200-plus objects from the dawn of civilisation to the mid-1800s. Unlike the original Louvre, the collection here can easily be taken in and savoured in a single afternoon.

The glass-walled Pavillon de Verre is used for themed temporary exhibits that change three times a year. For kids 11 and under there are 1½-hour art workshops (in French).

Free half-hourly shuttle buses link the Louvre-Lens with Lens' train station. Unless you're dining at the museum's restaurant (or you have a disability) it's not possible to park on-site; the nearest car parks are 400m west on rue Paul Bert or at Bollaert-Delelis Stadium, 1km east.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Lens is served by TGV trains from Paris' Gare du Nord (€23, 1¼ hours, three to five daily), and regional TER trains from Lille-Flandres (€8.30, 45 minutes, up to five daily) and Arras (€4.60, 15 minutes, at least hourly).

## CÔTE D'OPALE

Stretching 120km from the Belgian border to the Baie de Somme (Somme estuary), the sublimely beautiful Opal Coast – named for the interplay of greys and blues in the sea and sky – features lofty chalk cliffs, rolling green hills, windswept beaches, scrub-dotted sand dunes and charming seaside towns that have been a favourite of British beach lovers since the Victorian era.

The coast is dotted with the remains of Nazi Germany's Atlantic Wall, a line of fortifications, artillery emplacements and massive, reinforced-concrete bunkers built to prevent the Allied invasion that in the end took place in Normandy.

## Calais to Boulogne

The most spectacular section of the Côte d'Opale is between Calais and Boulogne-sur-Mer. This 40km stretch, a mirror image of the White Cliffs of Dover, can be visited by car (take the D940), on foot (the GR120 trail, marked with red and white blazes, hugs the coast) or by local bus.

To the south, the relatively flat coastline is broken by the estuaries, wetlands and tidal marshes created by the Canche, Authie and Somme rivers. Much of this area is privately owned – and used for hunting ducks and teals – but there are several attractive beach resorts and plenty of excellent spots for bird-watching and seal spotting.

### Sights

#### Cap Blanc-Nez

LANDMARK

Southwest of Calais, just past Sangatte, the coastal dunes give way to cliffs that culminate in windswept, 134m-high Cap Blanc-Nez, which affords breathtaking views of the Bay of Wissant, the port of Calais, the Flemish countryside (pockmarked by Allied bomb craters, such as those on the slopes of Mont d'Hubert) and the distant chalk cliffs of Kent. A grey stone obelisk honours the WWI Dover Patrol. Paths lead to a number of massive WWII German bunkers.

#### Cap Gris-Nez

LANDMARK

(off D191) Topped by a lighthouse and a radar station that keeps track of the hundreds of ships that pass by here each day, the 49m-high cliffs of Cap Gris-Nez are only 28km from the white cliffs of the English coast. The name, which means 'grey nose' in French, is a corruption of the archaic

English 'craig ness', meaning 'rocky promontory'. The area is a stopping-off point for millions of migrating birds. The car park is a good starting point for hikes.

**Musée du Mur de l'Atlantique** MUSEUM  
(Atlantic Wall Museum; ☎ 03 21 32 97 33; www.bat-terietodt.com; rte du Musée, Hameau de Haringzelle, Audinghen; adult/child €9/6; ☀ 10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 2-5.30pm mid-Feb-Mar & to mid-Nov) WWII hardware, including a massive, rail-borne German artillery piece with a range of 86km, is displayed at this well-organised museum, housed in a colossal German pill-box. It's located 400m off the D940 from the Maison du Site des Deux Caps tourist office. Last admission is one hour before closing.

**Musée 39-45** MUSEUM  
(☎ 03 21 87 33 01; www.musee3945.com; 2 rue des Garennes, Ambleteuse; adult/child €9/6; ☀ 10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, to 4pm Oct, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Mar, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov) Popular period songs play as you stroll past dozens of life-size tableaux of WWII military and civilian life at this modern museum. The dashing but wildly impractical French officers' dress uniforms of 1931 hint at possible reasons that France fared so badly on the battlefield in 1940. The museum screens archival films.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hôtel-Restaurant L'Escale** HOTEL ☼☼  
(☎ 03 21 85 25 00; www.hotel-lescale.com; 4 rue de la Mer, Escalles; r from €125; ☀ closed early January Feb; 📞 📺) Welcoming and cosy-modern, this family-run hotel in the tiny village of Escalles has 44 rooms spread across three buildings with bright feature walls in shades of red and purple, matching bedspreads and

fabrics. Three rooms are wheelchair accessible. The restaurant serves French classics (especially fish) that you can wash down with a local 2 Caps craft beer.

**★ La Marie Galante** SEAFOOD ☼☼  
(☎ 03 21 83 02 32; http://la-marie-galante.business.site; 173 rue Edouard Quenu, Audresselles; mains €17-33, seafood platters €16-65; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 6.30-7.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-1.30pm & 6.30-7.30pm Sun Feb-Dec) All the seafood here is from the surrounding waters, including Audresselles crab and lobster. Piled-high seafood platters are the house speciality, but there are also superb mains such as lobster medallions with Champagne sauce, freshly shucked oysters, or sole with garlic-and-herb butter. The red-roofed building is framed by blue shutters and fronted by an umbrella-shaded terrace.

**★ La Sirène** SEAFOOD ☼☼☼  
(☎ 03 21 32 95 97; www.lasirene-capgrisnez.com; 376 rue de la Plage, Audinghen; 3-course menu €32, mains €16-26, seafood platters €24-74; ☀ noon-2pm & 7.30-9pm Tue-Sat, noon-2pm Sun Apr-Aug, noon-2pm & 7.30-9pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-9pm Sat Sep-Mar; 📞) At the foot of Cap Gris-Nez, this whitewashed beachfront cottage has picture windows with glorious sea views. All of the fresh seafood is sourced from Audresselles and Boulogne-sur-Mer, oysters, prawns, langoustines, lobster, whelks, mussels and succulent crab included. Reserve ahead in summer and for Sunday lunch year-round.

## Information

**Maison du Site des Deux Caps** (☎ 03 21 21 62 22; www.lesdeuxcaps.fr; Ferme d'Haringzelle, Audinghen; ☀ 9.30am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat Feb, Mar,

## DUNKIRK

In 1940, Dunkirk (French: Dunkerque; French Flemish: Duunkerke, meaning 'church of the dunes') became world famous thanks to the heroic evacuation of Allied troops. Destroyed by German attacks, it was rebuilt after the war – though, alas, during one of the most uninspired periods in the history of Western architecture. While the modern city has precious little charm, it does offer visitors worthwhile museums, a family-friendly beach and colourful pre-Lent carnivals.

On clear days, from the top of Dunkirk's landmark 58m-high belfry, **Le Beffroi** (☎ 03 28 66 79 21; www.dunkerque-tourisme.fr; rue de l'Amiral Ronarch; adult/child €4/3; ☀ 10-11.45am & 2-5.45pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5.45pm Sat, 10-11.30am & 2-3.30pm Sun), you can see as far as Dover on a clear day. A Unesco World Heritage-listed monument since 2004, the 15th-century tower is serviced by a lift that whisks visitors up to its 50 bells, which chime every 15 minutes.



Nov & Dec) Serves as an information centre for the 'two capes', the area around and between Cap Blanc-Nez and Cap Gris-Nez, and sells hiking maps. From April to October it rents out bicycles, both standard (per half/whole day €7/10) and electric (€10/15).

**Wissant Tourist Office** (☎ 03 21 82 48 00; <http://terredes2capstourisme.fr>; 1 place de la Mairie, Wissant; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 3-6pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-noon & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat Oct-Mar)

## **i** Getting There & Away

The northern section of the Côte d'Opale, between Calais and Boulogne-sur-Mer, is served by buses run by the Oscar regional network ([www.passpass.fr](http://www.passpass.fr)); €1 to all destinations, up to five daily).

## Calais

POP 75,900

A mere 34km from the English port of Dover (Douvres in French), Calais makes a convenient launching pad for exploring the majestic Côte d'Opale. Beaches extend around the town centre, whose handful of museums are well worth a look.

## **👁** Sights

**Cité Internationale de la Dentelle et de la Mode** MUSEUM  
(International Centre of Lace & Fashion; ☎ 03 21 00 42 30; [www.cite-dentelle.fr](http://www.cite-dentelle.fr); 135 quai du Commerce; adult/child €7/5; ☀ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Oct, to 5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Mar) Innovative exhibits trace the history of lacemaking – the industry that once made Calais a textile powerhouse – from hand knotting (some stunning samples are on display) through the Industrial Revolution. The highlight is watching a century-old mechanical loom with 3500 vertical threads and 11,000 horizontal threads bang, clatter and clunk according to instructions provided by perforated Jacquard cards. Signs are in English and French.

**Hôtel de Ville** TOWER, ARCHITECTURE  
(☎ 03 21 46 20 53; [www.calais.fr](http://www.calais.fr); place du Soldat Inconnu; Hôtel de Ville adult/child €3/1.50, belfry €5/3, combination ticket €7/4; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm, closed Mon Oct-mid-Apr) Inaugurated in 1925, Calais' Hôtel de Ville (city hall) melds Flemish and Renaissance styles, as does its 78m-high, Unesco-listed *beffroi* (belfry), topped by gilded statues that glint

in the sun. A lift zips you to the top of the belfry for 360-degree views. Timber paneling, stained glass and a magnificent garden are highlights of the Hôtel de Ville, as is the Rodin sculpture out front.

**Burghers of Calais** STATUE  
(place du Soldat Inconnu) In front of Calais' ornate Hôtel de Ville stands the first cast of Rodin's famous sculpture *Les Bourgeois de Calais* (The Burghers of Calais; 1889), which portrays six local leaders (burghers) in 1347 as they surrender to besieging English forces, knowing that they will soon be executed – but hoping that their sacrifice will mean their fellow Calaisiens will be spared.

**Musée Mémoire 1939–1945** MUSEUM  
(☎ 03 21 34 21 57; [www.musee-memoire-calais.com](http://www.musee-memoire-calais.com); Parc St-Pierre; adult/child incl audioguide €8/6; ☀ 10am-6pm May-Sep, 11am-5pm Mon & Wed-Sat Feb-Apr, Oct & Nov) Housed in a massive concrete bunker built as a German naval headquarters, this WWII museum displays thousands of period artefacts, including weapons, uniforms and proclamations across 22 themed rooms. It's situated in the middle of flowery Parc St-Pierre.

**Beaches**  
**Blériot Plage** BEACH  
This broad, gently sloping sandy beach stretching for 8km is safe for swimming and gets packed in summer.

**Plage de Calais** BEACH  
Children can splash in the shallow, clear waters of Calais' cabin-lined city beach (patrolled by lifeguards in summer), while its fine sand is ideal for sunbathing. From the beach, you can watch huge car ferries as they sail majestically to and from Dover.

## **🛏** Sleeping

**Centre Européen de Séjour** HOSTEL €  
(☎ 03 21 34 70 20; [www.auberge-jeunesse-calais.com](http://www.auberge-jeunesse-calais.com); rue du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny; dm/s incl breakfast €26/31; 📶) Great for meeting fellow travellers, this efficiently run, 162-bed youth hostel is just 150m southeast of the beach and 1km northwest of the city centre. There's a bar, a lounge area with table football and a pool table, and 84 modern (if spartan) one- to three-bed rooms; bathrooms are attached but shared by two rooms.

**Hôtel Meurice** HOTEL €  
(☎ 03 21 34 57 03; [www.hotel-meurice.fr](http://www.hotel-meurice.fr); 5-7 rue Edmond Roche; r from €67; 📶) 🍷 Dating from

the 1950s after the earlier 1771-built hotel was destroyed in WWII, Hôtel Meurice received a facelift in 2018, including the installation of solar panels. A carpeted staircase with wrought-iron balustrades leads to its 39 rooms (there's also a lift); family rooms have a double and two single beds. Studded leather armchairs are strewn throughout its timber-panelled bar.

### Le Cercle de Malines

B&amp;B €

(☎ 03 21 96 80 65; [www.lecercledemalines.fr](http://www.lecercledemalines.fr); 12 rue de Malines; s/d/f from €75/85/150; 🍷) Built in 1884, this stately town house has been elegantly furnished in a modern spirit, with generous public areas and a wisteria-draped walled garden. Among its five spacious rooms, top choices are La Leavers, with its claw-footed Victorian bathtub, and Guipure, with a private sauna; family room Chantilly sleeps four. Rooms are on the 1st and 2nd floors (no lift).



### Eating

Restaurants ring place d'Armes, Calais' main public square, and also line adjacent rue Royale.

### ★ Le Grand Bleu

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 21 97 97 98; [www.legrandbleu-calais.com](http://www.legrandbleu-calais.com); 8 rue Jean-Pierre Avron; 2-/3-course lunch menus €21/25, 3-course dinner menus €25-50, mains €19-30; ☀️ noon-2pm Thu-Tue, 7-9pm Mon & Thu-Sat) Run by talented *avantgardiste* chef Matthieu Colin (formerly of Paris institution Ledoyen), royal-blue-painted Le Grand Bleu is known for its *cuisine élaborée* (creatively transformed versions of traditional dishes) such as veal samosas with sweetbreads and red carrots or snails with chorizo butter. The weekday *menus* offer fabulous value. Book a table on the luminous terrace to enjoy harbour views.

### Histoire Ancienne

BISTRO €€

(☎ 03 21 34 11 20; [www.histoire-ancienne.com](http://www.histoire-ancienne.com); 20 rue Royale; 2- & 3-course menus €21-34; ☀️ noon-2pm Mon, noon-2pm & 6.45-9.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍷) Bistro-style French dishes, such as grilled pig's trotters with *Béarnaise* sauce, sea bass with *beurre blanc* (emulsified butter sauce) and chocolate-drenched profiteroles, are served in a classic dining room with a zinc bar.

### Restaurant Aquar'Aïle

SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 03 21 34 00 00; <http://aquaraile.fr>; 255 rue Jean Moulin; menus from €35, mains €25-40; ☀️ noon-2pm & 6.30-9.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-2pm Sun) A

20th-century apartment block framed by lurid green-glass balconies is the unlikely setting for sublime seafood. Occupying the top floor, the dining room has white-clothed tables, and panoramic windows overlooking the port, beach and Dover beyond. Try prized Marennes-Oléron oysters, monkfish with crushed celery and watercress emulsion, salt crust-baked whiting, brown-butter sole *meunière* or lobster bouillabaisse.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 21 96 62 40; [www.calais-cotedopale.com](http://www.calais-cotedopale.com); 12 bd Georges Clemenceau; ☀️ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun May-Aug, 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat Sep-Apr; 📖) Has brochures on Calais and the Côte d'Opale and sells the discount Visit'Pass (€11), which provides entry into most major sights. It's just north across the bridge from the train station.

## i Getting There & Away

### BOAT

Each day up to 50 car ferries from Dover dock at Calais' car-ferry terminal, situated about 1.5km northeast of place d'Armes. It's patrolled by police and surrounded by high, concertina-topped fences to prevent stowaways on ferries to the UK.

Two companies, **P&O Ferries** ([www.poferries.com](http://www.poferries.com); av du Commandant Cousteau) and **DFDS Ferries** ([www.dfdsseaways.co.uk](http://www.dfdsseaways.co.uk); av du Commandant Cousteau), operate regular trans-Channel services. P&O accepts foot passengers; DFDS only takes passengers with vehicles.

### BUS

Buses on the Oscar regional networks ([www.passpass.fr](http://www.passpass.fr)) link Calais with Boulogne-sur-Mer via the beautiful Côte d'Opale (€1 to all destinations, up to five daily). The bus stop, marked by a blue-and-yellow sign, is right outside Calais' city-centre train station, Gare Calais-Ville.

Eurolines ([www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com)) and FlixBus ([www.flixbus.com](http://www.flixbus.com)) link Calais with London.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

To reach the Channel Tunnel's high-security vehicle-loading area at Coquelles, 6km southwest of Calais' town centre, follow the road signs on the A16 to 'Tunnel Sous La Manche' (Tunnel Under the Channel) and get off at exit 42.

### TRAIN

Calais has two train stations, linked by free shuttle buses.

**Gare Calais-Fréthun** A TGV station 10km southwest of town near the Channel Tunnel entrance; has direct TGVs to Paris' Gare du

Nord (from €20, two hours, hourly or better) as well as the Eurostar to London St Pancras (from €70, one hour, two daily).

**Gare Calais-Ville** In the city centre; has direct services to Boulogne-sur-Mer (€8.50, 40 minutes, at least hourly) and Lille-Flandres (€19, 1½ hours, at least hourly).

## Boulogne-sur-Mer

POP 42,200



Boulogne-sur-Mer's Haute-Ville (Upper City) is perched high above the rest of town and girded by a 13th-century wall. Centred on the Grande Rue and rue Adolphe Thiers, the Basse-Ville (Lower City) is a bustling if uninspiring assemblage of postwar structures, but its waterfront is home to Nausicaá, one of the world's largest aquariums, with beaches stretching along the coast nearby. As this is France's most important fishing port, just-landed seafood is a highlight of visiting.

### Sights & Activities

Boulogne's wide beach begins just north of Nausicaá aquarium, across the mouth of the Liane from a whirring wind farm on the former site of a steelworks. Other fine beaches include Le Portel, 2.5km southwest of Boulogne (take bus C), and Equihen Plage, about 5km to the south (take bus A). All are easily accessible by bike.

### Nausicaá

AQUARIUM

( 03 21 30 99 99; www.nausicaa.fr; bd Ste-Beuve; adult/child €26/19;  9.30am-6.30pm, closed 3 weeks Jan) At this vast manta ray-shaped aquarium – one of the world's largest – huge tanks with floor-to-ceiling windows – make you feel as though you're swimming with the sharks. All up, there are more than 60,000 creatures, including sea turtles, California sea lions, South American caimans and African penguins, some of them hatched right here. Kids of all ages can engage with ecologically conscious exhibits and activities, including fish petting, feeding sessions and sea-lion shows throughout the day. Signage is in English.

A new wing opened in 2018 with a 21m-long underwater viewing window, an underwater tunnel and a balcony providing bird's-eye views.

### Haute-Ville

HISTORIC SITE

(Ville Fortifiée) Boulogne's hilltop Upper City is an island of centuries-old buildings and

cobblestone streets. You can walk all the way around this 'Fortified City' atop the ancient stone walls – look for signs for the Promenade des Remparts.

Highlights here include the **Basilique Notre Dame** (Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception; 2 Parvis Notre Dame; basilica free, crypt adult/child €5/3;  basilica 10am-noon & 2-6pm Apr-Aug, shorter hours Sep-Mar, crypt 10am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Oct-Apr), the **Château-Musée** (Castle Museum;  03 21 10 02 20; http://musee.ville-boulogne-sur-mer.fr; 1 rue de Bernet; adult/child €6/4;  museum 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Wed-Mon, courtyard 7am-7pm daily), the neoclassical **Hôtel Desandrouin** (Palais Impérial; 3 place Godefroy de Bouillon) and the 18th-century **Hôtel de Ville** (place de la Résistance;  8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Thu) **FREE** with a medieval belfry.

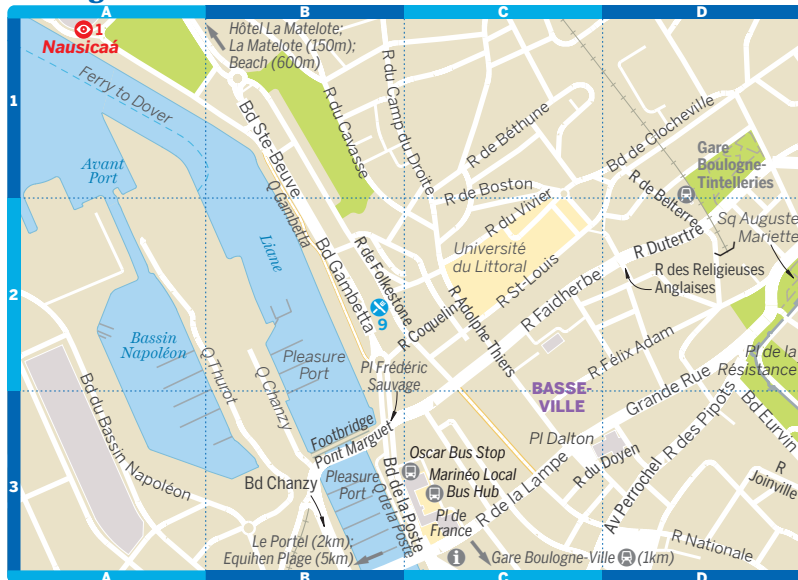
### Sleeping & Eating

#### **Hôtel La Matelote**

HOTEL €€

( 03 21 30 33 33; www.la-matelote.com; 70-80 bd Ste-Beuve; r from €130;                          

## Boulogne-sur-Mer



### Boulogne-sur-Mer

#### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Nausicaâ.....A1

#### 📍 Sights

- 2 Basilique Notre Dame.....E2  
 3 Château-Musée.....E2  
 4 Haute-Ville.....E2  
 5 Hôtel de Ville.....E2  
 6 Hôtel Desandrouin.....E2

#### 🛏 Sleeping

- 7 Les Terrasses de l'Enclos.....E2

#### 🍴 Eating

- 8 L'Îlot Vert.....E2  
 9 Quai 42.....B2

rosés) at this contemporary wine bar set back from bd Gambetta on a pedestrianised square, with upturned barrels inside and out. Live acoustic music plays on Friday and Saturday evenings from June to September.

#### L'Îlot Vert

BISTRO ☕

(☎ 03 21 92 01 62; www.lilotvert.fr; 36 rue de Lille; mains from €22, menus from €36; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) 'Bistronomique' cuisine and contemporary design make this chic spot stand out. Dishes on the daily changing menu (no à la carte) might include smoked

turbot with samphire foam, dorade (gilthead bream) with wild-garlic emulsion, confit pork with micro herbs and mini gallettes (savoury buckwheat crêpes), and pineapple-and-mint tart with caramel meringue. Its cobbled, ivy-draped rear courtyard has umbrella-shaded tables.

#### 📍 Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 21 10 88 10; www.boulonnaisautop.com; 30 rue de la Lampe; ☺ 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 10.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Sun Apr-mid-Nov; 📞) In the centre. Helpful staff and plenty of English brochures.

#### 📍 Getting There & Around

##### BICYCLE

**Cycléco** (☎ 03 91 18 34 48; https://cycleco-boulogne-sur-mer.fr; Pont Marguet, forum Jean Noël; per hr/day standard bike from €2/9, electric bike from €4/15; ☺ 10am-6.30pm Apr-Oct) Hires out regular and electric bicycles in the warm season, ideal for getting to the beaches at Equihen Plage and Le Portel.

##### BUS

Buses run by the Oscar regional network (www.passpass.fr) link Boulogne's place de France with Calais via the Côte d'Opale (€1 to all destinations, up to five daily).





## A SACRED DETOUR: VALLÉE DE L'AUTHIE

Nestled in the bucolic Authie valley 27km northeast of Le Crotoy, the strikingly beautiful 12th-century **Abbaye de Valloires** (☎ 03 22 29 62 33; www.abbaye-valloires.com; Argoules; abbey & gardens tour adult/child €16/9, abbey tour €8/5.50; 🕒 tours by reservation mid-Mar–mid-Nov, gardens 10am–7pm May–Sep, 10.30am–6pm Apr & Oct–mid-Nov, accommodation year-round), rebuilt between 1687 and 1756, merits a detour for its harmonious Cistercian architecture and Baroque interiors. One of northern France's most intact old monasteries, it retains its cloister, sacristy, chapter house and refectory. The church has a magnificent organ loft and a wrought-iron choir screen. Covering 8 hectares, the landscaped gardens have over 5000 plants, including rare apple trees and roses.

The complex has been owned since the 1920s by a not-for-profit association that still runs foster and nursing homes on the premises, which is why visitors must join a guided tour; call ahead for details on English tours. Year-round the abbey welcomes overnight guests in 16 large, simply furnished rooms and suites; singles/doubles start at €65/70. The on-site restaurant serves dishes using organic produce from the kitchen gardens and can arrange picnic baskets.

Bond film here). The 115 rooms and suites are classically furnished; amenities include a spa, an indoor pool and a Michelin-starred restaurant.

### Les Canailles

BISTRO €€

(☎ 03 21 05 03 03; 73 rue de Paris; 2-/3-course menus €28/32, mains €18; 🕒 6–11pm Tue–Fri, noon–2pm & 6–11pm Sat & Sun) At this chic wine bar–bistro with corks strewn in the window, over 90 all-natural wines are available by the glass or bottle and pair perfectly with seasonally changing gourmet dishes: raw mackerel, pomegranate and peanuts or beef tartare with buckwheat and Jerusalem artichoke, mains such as confit pork with mustard pickles, and delectable desserts.

### ★ Perard

SEAFOOD €€€

(☎ 03 21 05 03 33; www.perard-letouquet.fr; 67 rue de Metz; 3-/4-course menus from €28/38, mains €23–60; 🕒 noon–2.30pm & 7–10pm; 🚶) One of France's most famous seafood restaurants, frequented by a host of celebrities, 1960s-opened Perard combines a casual oyster bar with seating at high stools, a fishmonger and a restaurant with a retractable glass roof. It's renowned for its sublime lobster bouillabaisse; other menu highlights might include skate-wing with capers and samphire or monkfish with morels.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 21 06 72 00; www.letouquet.com; av du Verger, Jardin des Arts; 🕒 9am–1pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–1pm & 2–6pm Sun)

## i Getting There & Away

### Le Touquet–Côte d'Opale Airport (LTQ;

☎ 03 21 05 03 99; www.aeroport-letouquet.com; allée de la Royale Air Force) is located 2.9km southeast of Le Touquet. From June to September, Lyddair (www.lyddair.com) serves Lydd Airport in Kent, England; the flight time is 15 minutes. The airport has a Hertz car-rental desk.

The nearest train station, Étaples-Le Touquet, is 6km east of Le Touquet. The two towns are linked by *navettes* (shuttle buses; €1).

## BAIE DE SOMME

Famed for its galloping tides and the seals that lounge on the Pointe du Hourdel sandbanks, this sparkling estuary – at 72 sq km, the largest in northern France – affords delightful, watery views as the cycle of the tides exposes and conceals vast expanses of marshland and sand. The area's wetlands provide hugely important habitats for hundreds of bird species. You can explore the bay by boat, kayak, outrigger canoe and – at low tide with a guide – on foot.

Both Le Crotoy, on the northern bank, and St-Valery-sur-Somme, on the south side, make excellent bases for exploring the area.

## Le Crotoy

POP 1900

Occupying a wonderfully picturesque spot on the northern bank of the Baie de Somme, laid-back Le Crotoy is a lovely place to relax. Its broad, sandy beach is the only one

in northern France to have a southerly exposure, giving it more sunshine than others in the area. Jules Verne wrote *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) while living here.

## Sleeping & Eating

Several restaurants can be found along rue de la Porte du Pont and the waterfront's promenade Jules Noiret.

### Les Tourelles

HOTEL **CC**

(☎03 22 27 16 33; www.lestourelles.com; 2-4 rue Pierre Guerlain; r from €95; 🕒 closed 3 weeks Jan, restaurant noon-2pm & 7-9pm; 📶📶) Overlooking Le Crotoy's beach, this atmospheric old-time hotel has 35 rooms, 13 with fabulous bay views; try room 33, which occupies one of the cone-roofed *tourelles* (turrets). Five rooms are accessible by lift. Kids aged four to 14 can stay in a dormitory with 10 bunks (€33 per child including breakfast).

The restaurant serves excellent seafood, most of it locally sourced.

### Le Carré Gourmand

FRENCH **CC**

(☎03 22 27 46 72; www.facebook.com/lecarregourmandbaiedesomme; 53 rue de la Porte du Pont; 3-course menu from €30; 🕒 noon-2pm & 7-10pm Mon & Thu-Sat, noon-2pm Tue & Sun; 📶) Each day offers a different three-course blackboard menu at this intimate restaurant

with exposed bricks, crisp tablecloths and a shady street-side terrace. Artistically presented dishes incorporate ingredients from the area such as *agneau de pré-salé* (salt-marsh lamb), Le Crotoy duck, and Baie de Somme kelp and samphire. The small, local wine list comprises just four whites and four reds.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 22 23 62 65; www.terre-setmerveilles-baiedesomme.com; 1 rue Carnot; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hours Sep-May) Can book boating and walking tours of the Baie de Somme.

## Getting There & Away

The SNCF train station in Noyelles-sur-Mer, 9km southeast of Le Crotoy, has direct services to Amiens (€11.40, 40 minutes, six to eight daily) and Boulogne-sur-Mer (€12.90, 50 minutes, five to six daily). From late March to October (and some winter weekends), steam trains run by the not-for-profit Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme (p228) link Noyelles-sur-Mer with Le Crotoy.

Year-round, Trans 80 (<https://trans80.hautsdefrance.fr>) buses connect Le Crotoy with Noyelles-sur-Mer (€1, 15 minutes, up to eight daily).

## WORTH A TRIP

### STOP WITH THE BIRDS

An astonishing 300 bird species have been sighted at the 2-sq-km **Parc du Marquenterre Bird Sanctuary** (☎03 22 25 68 99; www.parcduarquenterre.fr; 25bis chemin des Garennes, St-Quentin-en-Tourmont; adult/child €10.50/7.90, binoculars €4/2; 🕒 10am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 6pm early Feb-Mar & Oct, to 5pm Nov-early Feb), an important migratory stopover between the UK, Iceland, Scandinavia and Siberia and the warmer climes of West Africa. Marked walking circuits (2km to 6km) take you to marshes, dunes, meadows, freshwater ponds, a brackish lagoon and 13 observation posts. Year-round, the park's guides – carrying telescopes on tripods – are happy to help visitors, especially kids, spot and identify birds. It's situated 9.5km northwest of Le Crotoy.

The park consists of land reclaimed from the sea in the 1960s by the construction of Dutch-style polders. Birds can be seen here year-round. Some species spend the winter, others migrate through in spring and autumn, and yet others – including white storks, grey herons, night herons, cattle egrets, little egrets, pied avocets and Eurasian spoonbills – nest from March or April to June or July. Allow at least two hours for a visit.

One-hour guided introductory walks (free) begin daily at 10.30am and 2pm; call ahead if you'd like a tour in English. The immediate vicinity has a number of lovely day-hike paths, including Sentier des Crocs (15km). The park rents out bicycles (€15/11 for a whole/half day) for rides in the area, like the Circuit de l'Avocette. Other tours include early-morning or evening birdsong tours outside of park opening hours, horse-drawn carriage rides along the seashore and bird-photography lessons; prices for adults/children start at €18/10.

## St-Valery-sur-Somme

POP 2500

A cargo and fishing port as late as the 1980s, St-Valery-sur-Somme has a charming maritime quarter, a pocket-size walled city with cobbled streets, a white-sand beach and a scenic promenade that stretches along the seafront. Like an impressionist seascape, the deep brick reds of St-Valery's houses are complemented by sea hues that range from sparkling blue to overcast grey, and are accented by dashes of red, white and blue from flapping French flags. Grey and harbour seals can often be spotted off Pointe du Hourdel, 8km northwest of town.

### Sights & Activities

In the quaint, seaside **Quartier des Marins**, the narrow lanes (like rue de Moulins) are lined with miniature houses made of brick, many whimsically decorated with marine motifs. Up the hill is the walled **Cité Médiévale** (or Ville Médiévale; medieval town), whose narrow alleyways are paved with cobblestones and smooth pebbles.

Tides ([www.maree.info](http://www.maree.info)) have long set the pace of maritime life here and still do, at least as far as outdoor activities on the bay are concerned. High tide is a whopping 8m to 11m above low tide; high tides with a coefficient of 100 or more submerge the entire bay, including the salt marshes.

### Église St-Martin de St-Valery-sur-Somme



CHURCH

( 03 22 60 83 01; [www.amiens.catholique.fr](http://www.amiens.catholique.fr); 16 rue de la Porte de Nevers;  8am-6pm Jul & Aug, to 5pm Sep-Jun) **FREE** St-Valery-sur-Somme's Église St-Martin was built from shingle and flint, giving it a chequerboard appearance, guarded by fantastical gargoyles. Construction started in 1488 and the church was con-

secrated in 1500, but wasn't completed until 1559. Inside are four models of 17th-century warships. The stained-glass windows date from the 19th century.

### Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme

RAIL

(CFBS;  03 22 26 96 96; [www.chemindefer-baiedesomme.fr](http://www.chemindefer-baiedesomme.fr); quai Lejoille; return to Le Crotoy adult/child €15/11;  daily Jul-Sep, certain days Jun & Oct) Kids and adults alike will relish an old-time train ride. Staffed by passionate volunteers, the not-for-profit CFBS runs one to three round trips a day around the bay to Le Crotoy and west to Cayeux-sur-Mer. Passengers travel on trains assembled from the group's collection of historic steam and diesel engines, carriages, wagons and autorails, all dating from 1889 to 1954.

### Tours

#### Rando-Nature en Somme

WALKING

( 03 22 26 92 30; [www.randonature-baiede-somme.com](http://www.randonature-baiede-somme.com); quai Perret; adult/child €13/7;  9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mar-Oct, reduced hours Nov-Feb) This well-regarded outfit offers guided nature walks on the estuary, including Traversons la Baie ('we cross the bay'; 7km to 8km one way depending on tides) and Les Phoques et la Baie (seal-watching at Pointe du Hourdel; 5km return). Circuits begin at seven *points de rendez-vous* (meeting places) around the bay – the website has details. Reserve ahead.

### Bateaux de la Baie de Somme

BOATING

( 03 22 60 74 68; [www.bateau-baie-somme.com](http://www.bateau-baie-somme.com); quai Perret; adult €13-22, child €9-15;  late Mar-mid-Nov & school holidays Feb) Offers boat excursions around the bay lasting 40 minutes to two hours. For some real excitement, go seal-watching on a 12-person open-air Zodiac (€35 per person for one hour). Departure times are determined by the tides.

### Sleeping & Eating

Rue de la Ferté has the highest concentration of restaurants. Local specialities include *agneau de pré-salé*, available from June to mid-February, and seaweed and other delicacies foraged from the coast.

### Relais Guillaume de Normandy

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

( 03 22 60 82 36; [www.relaisguillaumedenorandy.com](http://www.relaisguillaumedenorandy.com); 46 quai du Romerel; r from €90;  closed mid-Dec-mid-Jan;   Right on the water-

### BEACH TALK

A 3.5km **promenade** runs along the waterfront. The **Sentier du Littoral**, marked with yellow blazes, takes walkers west to Le Hourdel (8.5km) and around the bay to Le Crotoy (14km).

St-Valery-sur-Somme's sandy beach is at the western end of town but currents can be strong; there's a safer swimming beach 12km further west at Cayeux-sur-Mer.

front in a mock-Tudor mansion from the early 1900s, this vintage hotel has a five-storey tower and period touches such as a mosaic entryway and creaky wooden stairs. Half of the 14 rooms have bay views. The in-house restaurant (closed Tuesday) serves traditional French cuisine. Breakfast costs €12.50. Reserve well ahead in summer and on weekends.

### Au Vélocipède

B&amp;B €€

(☎03 22 60 57 42; <http://auvelocipede.fr>; 1 rue du Puits Salé; r from €107;





Regiment belonged, stands at the entrance to the site. On 1 July 1916, this regiment stormed entrenched German positions and was nearly wiped out; until a few years ago, a plaque noted bluntly that 'strategic and tactical miscalculations led to a great slaughter'. A path leads to an orientation table at the top of the Caribou mound, where a bronze caribou statue is surrounded by plants native to Newfoundland.

### Vimy Ridge Canadian National Historic Site

MEMORIAL

(📍03 21 50 68 68; [www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr](http://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr); chemins des Canadiens, Vimy; 🕒 memorial site 24hr, visitor centre 10am-6pm May-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Apr) **FREE** After the war the French attempted to erase signs of battle and return northern France to agriculture and normalcy. Conversely, the Canadians remembered their fallen by preserving part of the crater-pocked battlefield as it was when the guns fell silent. The resulting chilling, eerie moonscape of Vimy, 11km north of Arras, is a poignant place to comprehend the hell of the Western Front. During visitor-centre opening hours, bilingual Canadian students lead free guided tours of reconstructed tunnels and trenches.

Of the more than 66,000 Canadians who died in WWI, 3598 lost their lives in April 1917 taking Vimy Ridge. Its highest point – site of a heavily fortified German position – was later chosen as the site of Canada's national WWI memorial, built from 1925 to 1936. It features 20 allegorical figures, carved from huge blocks of white Croatian limestone, that include a cloaked, downcast female figure representing a young Canada grieving for her dead. The names of 11,285 Canadians who 'died in France but have no known graves', listed alphabetically and within each letter by rank, are inscribed around the base.

In the surrounding forest, the zigzag trench system is clearly visible, as are countless shell craters. Because human remains still lie buried among the trees, the entire site has been declared a graveyard.

### Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery & Museum

CEMETERY, MUSEUM

(📍03 59 61 15 14; [www.musee-bataille-fromelles.fr](http://www.musee-bataille-fromelles.fr); 2 rue de la Basse Ville, Fromelles; cemetery free, museum adult/child €6.50/4; 🕒 cemetery 24hr, museum 9.30am-5.30pm Wed-Mon early Mar-mid-Jan) The death toll was horrific – 1917 Australians and 519 Britons killed in just one

day of fighting – yet the Battle of Fromelles was largely forgotten until 2008, when the remains of 250 of the fallen were discovered. They are now buried in the Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery. Next door, the Musée de la Bataille de Fromelles evokes life in the trenches with reconstructed bunkers, photographs and biographies.

On 19 July 1916, a poorly planned offensive using inexperienced Australian and British troops was launched to divert German forces from the Battle of the Somme. After the surviving Australians retreated to their pre-battle front lines, hundreds of their comrades-in-arms lay wounded in no man's land. For three days the survivors made heroic efforts to rescue them, acts of bravery commemorated by the *Cobbers* sculpture in the Australian Memorial Park, 2km northwest of the museum. Ross McMullin, writing for the Australian War Memorial ([www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)), described the battle as the worst 24 hours in Australia's entire history.

It is likely that one of the soldiers on the victorious German side was a 27-year-old corporal in the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment named Adolf Hitler.

After the failed and catastrophic assault, the Germans buried many of the Australian and British dead in mass graves behind their lines. Most were reburied after the war, but five pits were not found for more than 90 years. DNA testing has established the identity of 144 Australians.

The 'Battle of Fromelles Walking Guide' has details on a 10km walking or driving tour of 10 WWI sites near Fromelles, which is 18km west of Lille.

### ★ Ring of Remembrance

MEMORIAL

(L'Anneau de la Mémoire; 📍03 21 74 83 15; [www.memorial418.com](http://www.memorial418.com); chemin du Mont de Lorette, Ablain-St-Nazaire; 🕒 Ring of Remembrance 8.30am-11pm Apr-Nov, to 8pm Dec-Mar, Notre-Dame de Lorette 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar) **FREE** It's hard not to be overwhelmed by the waste and folly of the Western Front as you walk past panel after panel engraved with 579,606 tiny names: WWI dead from both sides who are listed in strict alphabetical order, without reference to nationality, rank or religion. Across the road from the memorial is a vast French military cemetery, Notre-Dame de Lorette; 6000 unidentified French soldiers are interred in the base of the Lantern Tower (1921). It's 13km west of Lens.

**Lens' 14-18 Museum**

MUSEUM

(📍03 21 74 83 15; [www.lens14-18.com](http://www.lens14-18.com); 102 rue Pasteur, Souchez; 🕒10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** Housed in four black concrete cubes, this WWI museum provides an in-depth introduction to WWI on the Western Front. Over 300 extraordinary photos, carefully selected by historians from French, British and German archives, detail daily life and death in the trenches; also on display are some 60 hours of archival film. It's situated 2km west (down the hill) from the Ring of Remembrance (p231) (Notre-Dame de Lorette), on a hill overlooking Lens.

**Musée Franco-Australien**

MUSEUM

(Franco-Australian Museum; 📍03 22 96 80 79; [www.museeausralien.com](http://www.museeausralien.com); 9 rue Victoria, Villers-Bretonneux; adult/child €6/3; 🕒9.30am-6pm) Some 2400 Australian soldiers were killed or wounded in the April 1918 assault that wrested Villers-Bretonneux from German control. In the 1920s, Australian children donated funds to rebuild the town's primary school, creating bonds of friendship that remain strong to this day. Part of Victoria School is now a museum featuring highly personal artefacts donated by Australian ex-servicemen and their families. It's located 20km east of Amiens via the D1029.

**Somme American Cemetery**

CEMETERY

(📍03 23 66 87 20; [www.abmc.gov](http://www.abmc.gov); rue de la Libération, Bony; 🕒9am-5pm) **FREE** In late September 1918, just six weeks before the end of WWI, American units – flanked by their British, Canadian and Australian allies – launched an assault on the Germans' heavily fortified Hindenburg Line. Some of the fiercest fighting took place near the village of Bony, 24km east of Péronne, on the sloping site now occupied by the 1844 Latin crosses and Stars of David of this serene cemetery. The small Visitors Building has information on the battle.

One regiment of the 27th Infantry Division, a National Guard unit from New York, suffered 337 dead and 658 wounded on a single day. The names of 333 men whose remains were never recovered are inscribed on the walls of the Memorial Chapel, reached through massive bronze doors.

**Thiepval Memorial & Museum**

MEMORIAL, MUSEUM

(📍03 22 74 60 47; [www.historial.org](http://www.historial.org); rue de l'Ancre, Thiepval; memorial free, museum adult/child €6/3; 🕒9.30am-6pm Mar-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Feb) Its silhouette instantly recognisable from

afar, this 45m-high memorial to the missing of the Somme, 7.5km northeast of Albert, is inscribed with the names of more than 72,000 British and South African soldiers whose remains were never recovered or identified. Designed by Edwin Lutyens, it was built from 1928 to 1932 on the site of a German stronghold that was stormed on 1 July 1916, the bloody first day of the Battle of the Somme.

The museum, run by Péronne's outstanding Historial de la Grande Guerre (p230), displays uniforms and large installations such as a replica of French fighter ace Georges Gwynemer's aeroplane. The visitor centre's bookshop has an excellent selection of English books on WWI.

Its adjacent joint French and Commonwealth cemetery expresses Franco-British fraternity in death as in life.

**Ulster Memorial Tower**

MEMORIAL

(📍03 22 74 81 11; [www.visit-somme.com](http://www.visit-somme.com); rte de St-Pierre-Divion, Thiepval; 🕒10am-5pm Tue-Sun Mar-Nov) **FREE** The 5000 Ulstermen who perished in the Battle of the Somme are commemorated by this 21m-high Gothic-style tower, an exact replica of Helen's Tower at Clanboye, County Down, where the Ulster Division trained. Dedicated in 1921, it has long been a Unionist pilgrimage site; a black obelisk known as the Orange Memorial to Fallen Brethren (1994) stands in an enclosure behind the tower. It's 1.2km northwest of Thiepval.

Virtually untouched since the war, nearby Thiepval Wood can be visited on a guided tour (donation requested); check the website for times and dates.

**Neuve-Chapelle Memorial**

MEMORIAL

([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); 413 rue du Bois, Richebourg; 🕒24hr) **FREE** The Mémorial Indien, 27km southwest of Lille, records the names of 4653 soldiers and labourers of the Indian Army who 'have no known grave'. The 15m-high column, flanked by two tigers, is topped by a lotus capital, the British Crown and the Star of India. The units (31st Punjabis, 11th Rajputs, 2nd King Edward's Own Gurkha Rifles) and the ranks of the fallen – Sepoy (infantry private), Havildar (sergeant) – are engraved on the walls.

**La Grande Mine**

LANDMARK

(Lochnagar Crater Memorial; [www.lochnagarc crater.org](http://www.lochnagarc crater.org); rte de la Grande Mine, La Boisselle; 🕒24hr) **FREE** Just outside the hamlet of La Boisselle, 4.5km northeast of Albert, this enormous

crater looks like the site of a meteor impact. Some 100m across and 30m deep, it was created on the morning of the first day of the First Battle of the Somme (1 July 1916) by 27 tonnes of ammonal (an explosive made from ammonium nitrate and aluminium powder) laid by British sappers in order to create a breach in the German front lines.

### Mémorial Sud-Africain Delville Wood

MEMORIAL, MUSEUM

(South African National Memorial & Museum; ☎03 22 85 02 17; [www.delvillewood.com](http://www.delvillewood.com); rte de Ginchy, Longueval; ☺memorial 24hr, museum 10am-5.30pm Apr-mid-Oct, to 4pm Feb, Mar & mid-Oct-Nov) **FREE** The memorial (1926) and star-shaped museum (1986), a replica of Cape Town's Castle of Good Hope, stand in the middle of Delville Wood, where in July 1916 the 1st South African Infantry Brigade was nearly wiped out in hand-to-hand fighting that obliterated all the trees. In 2016 the names of all the South Africans who died in WWI were inscribed on a memorial wall.

During the 1916 offensive, pre-existing paths through Delville Wood were named for well-known streets in London and Edinburgh. Today, the area is still considered a cemetery because so many bodies were never recovered. Inside the museum, apartheid-era bronze murals portray black members of the South African Native Labour Corps (black South Africans were banned from combat roles) without shirts – despite the often chilly European weather. The memorial and museum are 15km east of Albert.

### Ayette Indian & Chinese Cemetery

CEMETERY

([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); Vieux Chemin de Bucquoy, Ayette; ☺24hr) **FREE** Towards the end of WWI, tens

of thousands of Chinese labourers were recruited by the British government to perform noncombat jobs in Europe, including the gruesome task of recovering and burying Allied war dead. Some 80 of these *travailleurs chinois* (Chinese labourers) and Indians who served with British forces are buried in this Commonwealth cemetery, which is 15km south of Arras, just off the D919 at the southern edge of the village of Ayette.

Many Chinese labourers died in the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918–19. Their grave-stones are etched in Chinese and English with inscriptions such as 'A good reputation endures forever', 'A noble duty bravely done' and 'Faithful unto death'. The nearby graves of Indians are marked in Hindi or Arabic.

### Australian National War Memorial

MEMORIAL

(☎03 60 62 01 40; <https://sjmc.gov.au>; rte de Villers-Bretonneux, Fouilloy; ☺memorial 24hr, museum 9.30am-6pm mid-Apr–Oct, to 5pm Nov–mid-Apr) **FREE** During WWI, 416,809 Australians – 8% of the country's population – volunteered for overseas military service; 46,000 met their deaths on the Western Front (14,000 others perished elsewhere). The names of 10,722 Australian soldiers whose remains were never found are engraved at the base of the Australian National War Memorial's 32m-high tower, which stands atop a gentle hill where Australian and British troops repulsed a German assault in April 1918. Behind the tower, the **Sir John Monash Centre** museum has interactive displays.

The viewing area atop the tower, damaged by German gunfire in 1940, affords panoramic views of a large Commonwealth cemetery with 779 Australian graves and

#### DON'T MISS

### SUBTERRANEAN DISCOVERY

Believed to date from the 3rd century CE, **La Cité Souterraine de Naours** (Caves of Naours; ☎03 22 93 71 78; <http://citesouterrainedenaours.fr>; 5 rue des Carrières, Naours; adult/child incl audioguide €11/7, incl 90min guided tour €12/9; ☺10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 11am-4.30pm Tue-Sun Feb, Mar & Nov) is an extraordinary underground 'city' of quarried tunnels that was started by the Romans and expanded over the centuries, incorporating 28 galleries and 300 rooms, including three chapels, multiple town squares, a bakery (with working ovens) and livestock barns. Only rediscovered in 1887, it was used by Allied forces in WWI and as a Nazi HQ in WWII. The temperature below ground is a constant 9.5°C; bring a jacket (and a torch/flashlight).

Soldiers' graffiti from both wars can be seen throughout the cave system. Guided tours are in English and French. The site is 18km north of Amiens.

the one-time battlefield. An Anzac Day Dawn Service is held here every 25 April at 5.30am. The memorial is 3km north of Villers-Bretonneux along the D23.

### Fricourt German Cemetery CEMETERY

(<https://kriegsgraeberstaetten.volksbund.de/friedhof/fricourt>; 21 rue de Pozières, Fricourt; ☎24hr)

**FREE** A stark reminder of the extensive loss of life on both sides of WWI, this cemetery is the burial place of 17,027 fallen German soldiers. Only 5000 of the graves are individual; the remainder of the dead lie in four mass graves. Many remains were interred from other cemeteries around the Somme in 1920.

## Activities

### Aero Dom SCENIC FLIGHTS

(☎07 83 54 39 01; [www.aero-dom.fr](http://www.aero-dom.fr); rte de Paris, Roupay Aerodrome; 20/30/60min flight €80/100/175; ☎by reservation) If you have a head for heights, get a swooping aerial view over the Somme battlefields and memorials aboard a gyrocopter flight, where you sit behind the pilot in an open cockpit. Itineraries can be customised depending on your interest. Heated jackets and helmets are provided. Flights depart 24km southeast of Péronne.

### Amiens Balloon BALLOONING

(☎06 07 68 74 44; [www.amiensballoon.com](http://www.amiensballoon.com); 7 rue du Laboureur, Sains-en-Amiénois; per person from €220; ☎by reservation) Float over the Somme aboard a hot-air balloon, with commentary in English and French. Flight time is one hour, but the whole experience lasts four hours; bring a jacket and wear flat shoes. Children under 1.2m tall (and expectant mothers) aren't permitted. The departure point is 11km south of Amiens; routes depend on wind direction.

## Tours

Tourist offices (including those in Amiens, Arras, Albert and Péronne) can help book tours of battlefield sites and memorials. Recommended tour companies:

**Battlefields Experience** (☎03 22 76 29 60; [www.thebattleofthesomme.co.uk](http://www.thebattleofthesomme.co.uk); half/full day per person incl museum entry fees €75/150)

**Chemins d'Histoire** (☎06 23 67 77 64; [www.cheminsdhistoire.com](http://www.cheminsdhistoire.com); full day per person from €120)

**Sacred Ground Tours** (☎06 75 66 59 02; [www.sacredgroundtours.com.au](http://www.sacredgroundtours.com.au); full day per person from €200)

**Terres de Mémoire** (☎03 22 84 23 05; [www.terresdememoire.com](http://www.terresdememoire.com); full day per person from €130; ☎Mon-Sat)

**True Blue Digger Tours** (☎06 01 33 46 76; <http://trueblue-diggertours.com>; half day per person from €75)

**Walkabout Digger Tours** (☎06 64 54 16 63; <http://walkaboutdiggertours.free.fr>; full day per person from €120)

## Sleeping & Eating

Amiens and Arras have a good range of accommodation options, but many visitors choose to stay in small hotels or B&Bs situated in towns closer to the battlefields, such as Péronne, Albert or Pozières. The latter towns all have ample restaurants and shops selling picnic supplies.

### Butterworth Farm B&B €

(☎03 22 75 26 46; [www.butterworth-cottage.com](http://www.butterworth-cottage.com); rte de Bazentin/D73, Pozières; s/d/f from €65/80/110;   Run by Bernard, the mayor of Pozières, and his wife, Marie, this well-tended B&B on their family farm has six individually decorated rooms with themes such as *Out of Africa*. Guests can unwind in the garden filled with flowers and herbs; copious breakfasts include quiche and freshly squeezed orange juice.

### La Basilique HOTEL €€

(☎03 22 75 04 71; [www.hotelbasiliquesomme.fr](http://www.hotelbasiliquesomme.fr); 3-5 rue Gambetta, Albert; r from €90;  In the heart of Albert, right across the square from the basilica, this well-kept hotel has 10 neat rooms with French windows, bright bathrooms and richly patterned feature walls. The in-house restaurant specialises in *cuisine du terroir* (regional specialities made with quality local ingredients) such as duck breast with sour-cherry sauce (two/three-course menus from €18/22).

### Hôtel de la Paix HOTEL €€

(☎03 21 22 28 28; [www.hotel-de-la-paix-bapaume.com](http://www.hotel-de-la-paix-bapaume.com); 11 av Abel Guidet, Bapaume; r from €85;   Clean, comfortable and streamlined, this 17-room hotel has a good on-site restaurant serving traditional French cuisine (mains €16 to €30). Family rooms come with a single or pull-out sofa bed. It's centrally situated for visiting Somme battlefields and memorials; Bapaume was an area of strategic importance that saw fierce fighting in both WWI and WWII.

## Hôtel Le Saint-Claude

HOTEL 

( 03 22 79 49 49; [www.hotelsaintclaude.com](http://www.hotelsaintclaude.com); 42 place du Commandant Louis Daudré, Péronne; r from €90; ) Originally a *relais de poste* (coaching inn), the Saint-Claude is in the centre of Péronne just 200m from the medieval château housing the Historial de la Grande Guerre. The 40 contemporary rooms are decorated in chic greys and creams and are spread over three floors; some have château views. The table-strewn walled courtyard is hot and sunny in summer.

## Information

**Albert Tourist Office** ( 03 22 75 16 42; [www.tourisme-paysduquelicot.com](http://www.tourisme-paysduquelicot.com); 9 rue Gambetta, Albert;  9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun May-Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Sat Sep-Apr)

**Péronne Tourist Office** (Office of Haute Somme Tourism;  03 22 84 42 38; [www.hautesomme-tourisme.com](http://www.hautesomme-tourisme.com); 1 rue Louis XI, Péronne;  9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, shorter hours Nov-Mar)

## Getting There & Around

You'll need your own transport (a car or bike) to visit most of the Somme battlefields and memorials. Bicycles can be rented at the tourist office in Albert (standard bike half/full day €8/12, electric bike €10/20).

Villers-Bretonneux has rail services to/from Amiens (€4, 15 minutes, up to 10 daily). The train station is 600m southeast of the Musée Franco-Australien (take rue de Melbourne) and a walkable 3km south of the Australian National War Memorial (a round-trip taxi from Villers-Bretonneux costs around €28).

Albert is linked by train to Amiens (€7, 25 minutes, up to two per hour) and Arras (€8, 25 minutes, every two hours).

## AMIENS

POP 132,800

One of France's mightiest Gothic cathedrals is reason enough to visit Amiens, the former capital of Picardy. The mostly pedestrianised city centre, tastefully rebuilt after WWII, is complemented by lovely green spaces along the Somme River. Jules Verne lived the last 34 years of his life here; his former home is now a museum. Some 30,000 students from the Université de Picardie Jules Verne give the town a youthful energy.



Amiens is an ideal base for visits to many of the Battle of the Somme memorials.

## Sights & Activities

Place Gambetta, the city's commercial hub, is three blocks southwest of the cathedral. Amiens' Quartier Anglais (English Quarter), 1.5km southeast of the train station, is a little piece of England built in the 1890s for the British managers of a textile factory (part of Sebastian Faulks' novel *Birdsong* is set here).

## Cathédrale Notre Dame

CATHEDRAL

( 03 22 92 03 32; [www.cathedrale-amiens.fr](http://www.cathedrale-amiens.fr); 30 place Notre Dame; cathedral free, north tower adult/child €6/free, treasury €4/free;  cathedral 8.30am-5.15pm daily, north tower to mid-afternoon Wed-Mon) A Unesco World Heritage Site, the largest Gothic cathedral in France (at 145m long) and the largest in the world by volume was begun in 1220 to house the skull of St John the Baptist. It's renowned for its soaring Gothic arches (42.3m high over the transept), unity of style and immense interior; look for the 17th-century statue known as the *Ange Pleureur* (Crying Angel) behind the Baroque high altar.



The octagonal, 234m-long labyrinth on the black-and-white floor of the nave is easy to miss as the soaring vaults draw the eye upward. Part of the skull of St John the Baptist, framed in gold and jewels, can be seen in the *trésor* (treasury). Plaques in the south transept honour American, Australian, British, Canadian and New Zealand soldiers who perished in WWI.

To get a sense of what you're seeing, it's worth hiring a multilingual audioguide at Amiens' tourist office (p237). Weather permitting, visitors willing to brave 307 steps can climb the north tower for spectacular views; tickets are sold in the boutique to the left as you walk through the west façade. The cathedral is closed to visitors during religious ceremonies.

A free 45-minute light show bathes the cathedral's façade in vivid medieval colours nightly from mid-June to the third weekend in September, and from early December to 1 January. The photons start flying at 10.45pm in June, 10.30pm in July, 10pm in August, 9.45pm in September and 7pm in December.

## **Maison de Jules Verne**

MUSEUM

(Maisons des Illustres;  03 22 45 45 75; [www.amiens.fr](http://www.amiens.fr); 2 rue Charles Dubois; adult/child €7.50/4, audioguide €2;  10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon &



## Amiens



## Amiens

**Top Sights**

- 1 Cathédrale Notre Dame..... B2

**Sights**

- 2 Belfry d'Amiens..... A2  
 3 Maison de Jules Verne ..... B4  
 4 Tour Perret..... C3

**Sleeping**

- 5 Hôtel Marotte..... B3  
 6 Hôtel Victor Hugo..... C2

**Eating**

- 7 Halle au Frais..... A1  
 8 Le Tire Bouchon..... C1  
 9 Marché sur l'Eau ..... C1

Wed-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun) Jules Verne (1828–1905) wrote some of his best-known works of brain-tingling – and eerily prescient – science fiction under the eaves of this turreted home, where he lived from 1882 to 1900. The 700 models, prints, posters and other items inspired by Verne's boundless imagination afford a fascinating opportunity to check out the future as he envisioned it over a century ago, when going around the world in 80 days sounded utterly fantastic.

**Belfroy d'Amiens**

TOWER

(☎ 03 22 22 58 90; place au Fil; belfry & cathedral tour adult/child €6/3, belfry only €4/2; 🕒 belfry 10.30am-7.30pm Sun & Tue-Thu, to 9pm Fri & Sat) Constructed between 1406 and 1410, Amiens' massive square belfry – a Unesco-listed monument – has a mid-18th-century top reaching 52m, which was rebuilt after it was damaged in 1940 by German bombing. The tourist office runs two guided tours per month, one including a cathedral tour, plus

night-time visits in July and August – check the website and reserve well ahead.

### Hortillonnages Cruises

BOATING

(☎03 22 92 12 18; [www.hortillonnages-amiens.fr](http://www.hortillonnages-amiens.fr); 54 bd Beauvillé; adult/child from €18/5; ☀9am-noon & 1.30-6pm Apr-Oct) Covering some 3 sq km, Amiens' market gardens have supplied the city with vegetables and flowers since the Middle Ages. Today, their peaceful 65km of *rieux* (waterways), home to seven working farms, more than 1000 private gardens and countless water birds, can be visited on tours aboard gondola-like boats with raised prows.

From mid-June to mid-October, the Hortillonnages host contemporary art installations accessible on foot, by bicycle or by rental *barque* (boat).

### Sleeping & Eating

#### Hôtel Victor Hugo

HOTEL €

(☎03 22 91 57 91; [www.hotel-a-amiens.fr](http://www.hotel-a-amiens.fr); 2 rue de l'Oratoire; r €52-70; ☎) This bargain-priced, family-run hotel has 10 simple but comfortable rooms. The best-value rooms – if you don't mind a long stair climb – are under the eaves on the top floor, offering rooftop views and streaming natural light.

#### ★ Hôtel Marotte

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎03 60 12 50 00; [www.hotel-marotte.com](http://www.hotel-marotte.com); 3 rue Marotte; r from €175; ☎) Modern French luxury is at its most romantic at this boutique hotel. All 12 light-drenched rooms are huge (at least 35 sq metres), but the two sauna suites (100 sq metres), sporting free-standing stone bathtubs weighing 1.5 tonnes, are really luxury apartments; one opens to a rooftop terrace.

#### Le Tire Bouchon

FRENCH €

(☎03 22 52 30 79; [www.facebook.com/letirebouchon80](http://www.facebook.com/letirebouchon80); 1 bd du Cange; 2-/3-course menus from

€16/19, mains €12-18; ☀kitchen 11.30am-3pm & 6.30-10.30pm, bar 11.30am-midnight Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri, to 3am Sat) With a table-filled riverside terrace, this contemporary wine bar is ideal for a glass and a small sharing plate such as bone marrow with lemon zest, duck-and-fig terrine or sardine rillettes with capers, but it also has more substantial dishes such as steak tartare or the house-special burger with Somme-produced Rollot cheese. Live music, especially blues and jazz, plays on some weekends.

### Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 22 71 60 50; [www.visit-amiens.com](http://www.visit-amiens.com); 23 place Notre Dame; ☀9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun Oct-Mar; ☎)

### Getting There & Around

#### BICYCLE

Amiens' **Vélam** (☎08 20 20 02 99; [www.velam.amiens.fr](http://www.velam.amiens.fr); subscription per day €1, 1st 30min free, per subsequent 30min €2-4) bike-sharing scheme has numerous docking stations around town.

#### BUS

Regional services operate from Amiens' bus station, just north of the train station.

#### TRAIN

Amiens is an important rail hub. The following towns have direct services.

**Arras** €13.10, 45 minutes, hourly.

**Boulogne-sur-Mer** €21.70, 1¼ hours, seven to nine daily.

**Compiègne** €14.20, 1¼ hours, eight to 13 daily.

**Laon** €19, 1½ hours, five to 11 daily.

**Lille-Flandres** €22.20, 1½ hours, six to 12 daily.

**Paris Gare du Nord** From €24, one to 1½ hours, 14 to 21 daily.

**Rouen** €21.40, 1¼ hours, four to seven daily.

### PICNIC PERFECT

Stock up on a picnic of local produce at the market before heading out for the day to the Somme battlefields and memorials.

**Marché sur l'Eau** (place Parmentier; ☀8am-12.30pm Sat) Fruit and veggies grown in the city's market gardens, the Hortillonnages, and across the region are sold at this one-time floating market, now held on dry land.

**Halle au Frais** ([www.leshalles-amiens.fr](http://www.leshalles-amiens.fr); 22b rue du Général Leclerc, place Maurice Vast; ☀9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri & Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun) Two dozen stalls sell picnic supplies, including cheeses, breads and wine, at this covered market within Amiens' Les Halles shopping complex.

SNCF buses link Amiens' train station with the Haute-Picardie TGV station (€10, 45 minutes, six to eight daily), 40km east of the city.

## COMPIÈGNE

POP 40,200

Just 60km north of Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport, the prosperous 'imperial city' of Compiègne reached its glittering zenith under Emperor Napoléon III (r 1852–70), whose legacy is alive and well in his opulent *palais* (palace) and the adjacent gardens and forests. Both the 1918 armistice that ended WWI and the French surrender of 1940 were signed in a wooded area just outside town.

On 23 May 1430, Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc) – honoured by two statues in the partly medieval city centre – was captured at Compiègne by the Burgundians, who later sold her to their English allies.

### Sights

#### ★ Palais de Compiègne

PALACE

(Palais Impérial; ☎03 44 38 47 00; <http://palais-decompiègne.fr>; place du Général de Gaulle; adult/child €7.50/free; ☺palace 10am–6pm Wed–Mon, Grands Appartements 10am–6pm Wed–Mon mid–Mar–Oct, to 4pm Nov–mid–Mar, park 8am–7pm daily mid–Apr–mid–Sep, to 6pm daily Mar–mid–Apr & mid–Sep–Oct, to 5pm daily Nov–Feb) This 1337-room palace, originally built for Louis XV, hosted Napoléon III's dazzling hunting parties, which drew aristocrats from all around Europe. A single ticket grants access to the sumptuous Grands Appartements, where highlights include the empress's bedroom and a ballroom lit by 15 chandeliers (English audioguide available); the Musée du Second Empire, illustrating the lives of Napoléon III and his family; and the Musée de la Voiture, featuring vehicles that predate the internal combustion engine.

From about April to mid-November, you can have lunch or a drink in the Jardin des Roses (rose garden). Almost all parts of the palace are now wheelchair accessible.

Stretching southeast from the château, the 20-hectare, English-style Petit Parc links up with the Grand Parc and the Forêt de Compiègne, a forest that surrounds Compiègne on the east and south and is criss-crossed by rectilinear paths. The area is a favourite venue for hiking and cycling (maps and bike-rental details available at the tourist office) as well as horse riding.

### Mémorial de l'Internement et de la Déportation – Camp de Royallieu

MUSEUM

(Internement & Deportation Memorial; ☎03 44 96 37 00; [www.memorial-compiegne.fr](http://www.memorial-compiegne.fr); 2bis av des Martyrs de la Liberté; adult/child €5/free; ☺10am–6pm Tue, Sat & Sun, 2–6pm Wed–Fri) Situated about 3km southwest of the city centre, the French military base of Royallieu was used as a Nazi transit and internment camp known as Frontstalag 122 from 1941 to 1944; three of the 24 original barracks now house a moving memorial museum.

### Mémorial de l'Armistice

HISTORIC SITE

(☎03 44 85 14 18; [www.musee-armistice-14-18.fr](http://www.musee-armistice-14-18.fr); rte de Soissons; adult/child €7/5; ☺10am–6pm daily Apr–Sep, to 5.30pm Wed–Mon Oct–Mar) The armistice that put an end to WWI was signed in a thick forest 6.5km east of Compiègne, inside the railway carriage of the Allied supreme commander. On 22 June 1940, in the same railway car, the French were forced to sign the armistice that recognised Nazi Germany's domination of France. These momentous events are commemorated with monuments, memorabilia, newspaper clippings and 800 stereoscopic (3D) photos.

Taken to Berlin for exhibition, the railway carriage used in 1918 and 1940 was destroyed in April 1945 on Hitler's personal orders, lest it be used for a third surrender – his own. The wooden rail wagon now on display is of the same type as the original, though some of the interior furnishings, hidden during WWII, were the ones actually used in 1918.

From Compiègne, take the road towards Soissons.

### Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation is limited, but the town can easily be visited on a day trip from Paris. Most of Compiègne's rather lacklustre hotels can be found near the train station and along the Oise River. Room prices drop on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

#### Hôtel du Nord

HOTEL €

(☎03 44 83 22 30; [www.hoteldunordcompiegne.com](http://www.hoteldunordcompiegne.com); 1 place de la Gare; r from €77; ☺) Around the corner from the train station, this well-run establishment has 20 quiet but compact rooms, some with little balconies and river views. Downstairs, its excellent restaurant, **La Table d'Elisa** (menus from €26, mains €15–35; ☺noon–2pm & 7–9.30pm Mon–Fri, 7–9.30pm Sat, noon–2pm Sun; ☺☺☺), serves seafood

## WORTH A TRIP

## A FRENCH-AMERICAN MUSEUM

Inside the 1612-built Château de Blérancourt, 33km northeast of Compiègne, the **Musée Franco-Américain** (📍03 23 39 60 16; <http://museefrancoamericain.fr>; Château de Blérancourt, Blérancourt; museum adult/child €10/free, gardens free; ☀️ museum 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Wed-Mon, gardens 8am-7pm) has been revamped after a decade of archaeological excavations and renovations. The two countries' relationship over the centuries is chronicled through art, historical exhibits and the Jardins du Nouveau Monde, which is planted with flowers, shrubs and trees native to the Americas, including Virginia magnolia, maple, oak and sweetgum trees, chosen for their autumn foliage.

and other local specialities with a creative twist.

★ **Les Accordailles**

BISTRO €

(📍03 44 40 03 45; [www.lesaccordailles.com](http://www.lesaccordailles.com); 24 rue d'Ulm; lunch menus from €15, dinner menus from €29, mains €12-18; ☀️ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue & Thu-Sat, noon-2pm Wed & Sun; 🍷🍴🌱) Everything at this bistro facing the Palais de Compiègne is organic, including the wines and liqueurs. Morel-stuffed chicken breast with truffled potato gratin, and entrecôte (rib steak) with garlic butter and roasted figs are standouts; every day there are vegetarian options such as Camembert and calvados (apple-flavoured brandy) tartines and vegan choices like beetroot mousse with quinoa and root vegetables.

i **Information**

**Tourist Office** (📍03 44 40 01 00; [www.compiègne-tourisme.fr](http://www.compiègne-tourisme.fr); place de l'Hôtel de Ville; ☀️ 9.15am-12.15pm & 1.45-6.15pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.15pm & 2.15-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 1.45-5.15pm Mon, 9.15am-12.15pm & 1.45-5.15pm Tue-Sat Oct-May)

i **Getting There & Away**

Compiègne's train station, 1km northwest of the château, has direct services to Paris' Gare du Nord (€15.40, 50 minutes, at least hourly) and Amiens (€14.20, one hour, at least hourly).

## LAON

POP 25,100

Enclosed within a 7km-long wall pierced by three fortified gates, Laon's medieval Ville Haute (Upper City) has a magnificent Gothic **cathedral** (📍03 23 20 26 54; rue du Cloître; ☀️ 9am-9pm Jul & Aug, to 7pm Sep-Jun) **FREE** and 84 listed historic monuments, the densest concentration anywhere in France. The narrow streets, alleyways and courtyards reward keen-eyed wandering. About 100 vertical metres below sits the Ville Basse (Lower City), completely rebuilt after being flattened in WWII.

Laon served as the capital of the Carolingians until the dynasty's demise in 987 at the hands of Hugh Capet (founder of the Capetian dynasty), who preferred ruling from Paris.

The **tourist office** (📍03 23 20 28 62; [www.tourisme-paysdelaon.com](http://www.tourisme-paysdelaon.com); Hôtel-Dieu de Laon, place du Parvis, Ville Haute; ☀️ 10am-6pm Jun-Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-5.30pm Sun Sep-May; 🗺️) has an excellent walking-tour map of Laon (free) and audio-guides (€5) for walks around the cathedral (one hour) and the Cité Médiévale (medieval city; one to four hours). It's next to the cathedral in a 12th-century hospital decorated with 13th-century frescoes.

About 20km south of Laon along the D18 highway, the 30km-long ridge known as the **Chemins des Dames** was the site of fierce fighting during WWI at the Second Battle of the Aisne, a bloody French offensive, in 1917.

i **Getting There & Away**

The train station, in the Ville Basse, has direct services to Paris' Gare du Nord (€24.10, 1½ hours, eight to 14 direct daily), Amiens (€19, 1½ hours, four to 12 daily) and Reims (€10.40, 45 minutes, three to 12 daily).

## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

3.3 million

### CAPITAL CITY

Rouen

### BEST CHEESE

Camembert (p270)

### BEST BEACH

Deauville (p266)

### BEST BISTRO

L'Espiguette (p246)



### WHEN TO GO

**Jun** D-Day commemorations are held on the landing beaches and at nearby memorials and cemeteries.

**Jul** Médiévales de Bayeux celebrate the city's glorious history with medieval re-enactments.

**Sep** The Deauville American Film Festival is the accessible cousin of Cannes.







## Normandy

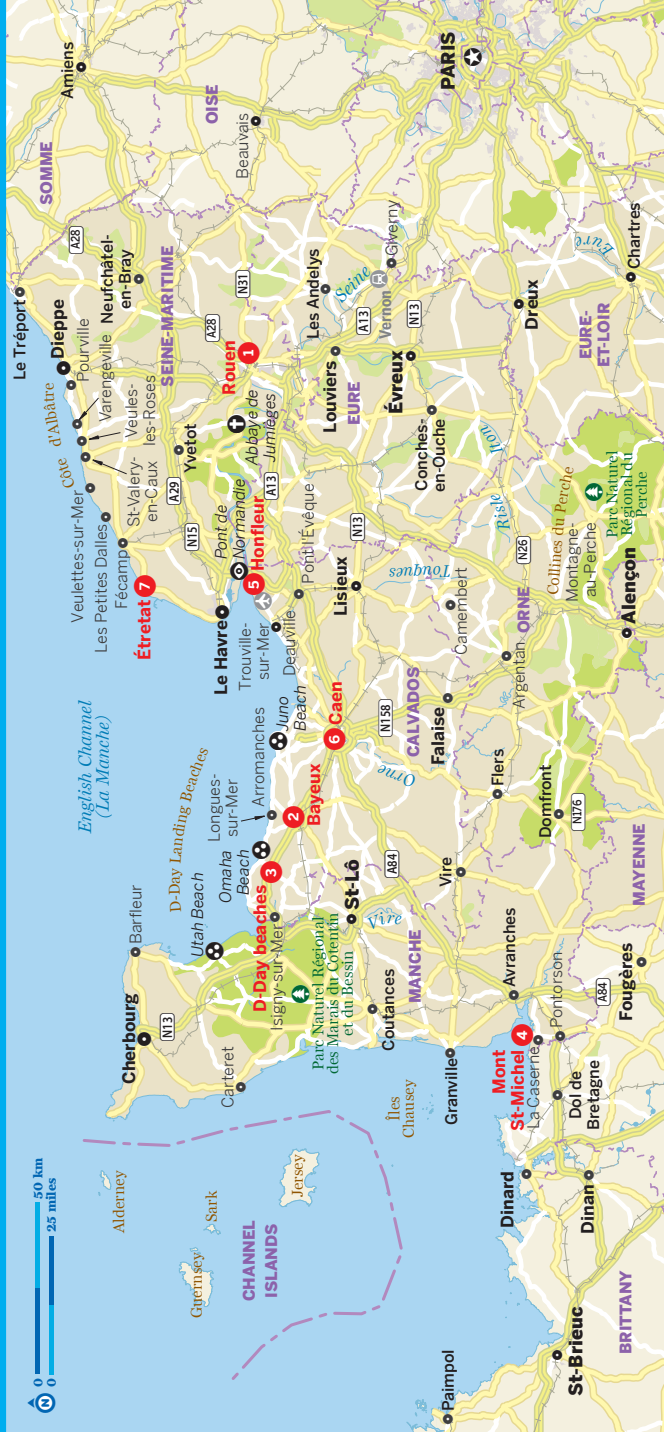
**F**rom the Norman invasion of England in 1066 to the D-Day landings of 1944, Normandy has played an outsized role in European history. This rich and often brutal past is brought vividly to life by the iconic island monastery of Mont St-Michel; the incomparable Bayeux Tapestry with its cartoon scenes of 11th-century life; and the transfixing cemeteries and memorials along the D-Day beaches, places of solemn pilgrimage. Lower-profile charms include dramatic coastal landscapes, plenty of pebbly beaches, some of France's finest museums, quiet pastoral villages and architectural gems ranging from medieval Rouen – home of Monet's favourite cathedral – to the maritime charms of Honfleur to the postwar modernism of Le Havre.

### INCLUDES

Seine-Maritime.....	243	Bayeux.....	254
Rouen.....	243	D-Day Beaches.....	257
Dieppe.....	247	Caen.....	262
Côte d'Albâtre.....	249	Honfleur.....	268
Le Havre.....	252	Manche.....	271
Calvados.....	254	Cherbourg.....	271
		Mont St-Michel.....	272

# Normandy Highlights

- 1 Rouen's old town** (p243) Strolling among half-timbered houses and Gothic churches.
- 2 Bayeux Tapestry** (p254) Travelling back to 1066 with the world's oldest comic strip.
- 3 D-Day beaches** (p257) Pondering the price of freedom at the landing sites and nearby war cemeteries.
- 4 Mont St-Michel** (p272) Watching the tide rush in from the ramparts and the extraordinary monastery.
- 5 La Fleur de Sel** (p270) Feasting at one of Normandy's best eateries, in charming Honfleur.
- 6 Caen** (p262) Exploring the mighty castle ramparts and the historic sights of this handsome town.
- 7 Étretat** (p251) Marvelling at the famous twin cliffs and free-standing limestone arches.



## SEINE-MARITIME

The Seine-Maritime *département* (administrative division) stretches along the chalk-white cliffs of the Côte d'Albâtre (Alabaster Coast) from Le Tréport via Dieppe to Le Havre, France's second-busiest port (after Marseille). With its history firmly bound up with the sea, the region offers visitors an engaging mix of small seaside villages and dramatic clifftop walks.

When you fancy a break from the bracing sea air, head inland to the lively, ancient and good-looking metropolis of Rouen, a favourite haunt of Claude Monet and Simone de Beauvoir and one of the most intriguing and history-infused cities in France's northeast.

### Rouen

POP 110,200

With its soaring Gothic cathedral, beautifully restored medieval quarter, imposing ancient churches, excellent museums and vibrant cultural life, Rouen is one of Normandy's most engaging and historically rich destinations.

The city has endured a turbulent history. It was devastated by fire and plague several times during the Middle Ages, and was occupied by the English during the Hundred Years War. The young French heroine Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc) was tried for heresy and burned at the stake in the central square in 1431. And during WWII, Allied bombing raids laid waste to large parts of the city, especially south of the cathedral.

### Sights & Activities

#### Cathédrale Notre Dame



CATHEDRAL

( 02 35 71 85 65; [www.cathedrale-rouen.net](http://www.cathedrale-rouen.net); place de la Cathédrale;  2-7pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 8am-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Mar) **FREE**

Rouen's stunning Gothic cathedral, built between the late 12th and 16th centuries, was famously the subject of a series of canvases painted by Monet at various times of the day and year. The 75m-tall **Tour de Beurre** (Butter Tower) was financed by locals in return for being allowed to eat butter during Lent – or so the story goes. A sound-and-light spectacular is projected on the façade every night from June (at 11pm) to late September (at 9.30pm).

#### Historial Jeanne d'Arc



MUSEUM

( 02 35 52 48 00; [www.historial-jeannedarc.fr](http://www.historial-jeannedarc.fr); 7 rue St-Romain; adult/child €10.50/7.50;  10am-6pm Tue-Sun) For an introduction to the great 15th-century heroine and the events that

earned her fame – and shortly thereafter condemnation – don't miss this excellent site. It's less of a museum and more of an immersive, theatre-like experience, where you walk through medieval corridors and watch (and hear via headphones, in seven languages) the dramatic retelling of Joan's visions, her victories, the trial that sealed her fate, and the mythologising that followed in the years after her death.



#### Église St-Maclou

CHURCH

( 02 32 08 13 90; [www.rouen.fr/eglise-saint-maclou](http://www.rouen.fr/eglise-saint-maclou); 7 place Barthélémy;  10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon, Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Nov-Mar) This supreme example of the Flamboyant Gothic-style church was built between 1437 and 1521, but much of the decoration dates from the Renaissance. The church was heavily damaged in WWII and later restored. Note the detailed wood panelling in the porch of the church; also observe how many of the statues on the exterior stonework are missing their heads (victims of the Wars of Religion). Half-timbered houses that incline at curious angles can be found on nearby side streets.



#### Musée des Beaux-Arts

GALLERY

( 02 35 71 28 40; [www.mbarouen.fr](http://www.mbarouen.fr); esplanade Marcel Duchamp;  10am-6pm Wed-Mon) **FREE** Housed in a very grand structure flung up in 1870, Rouen's simply outstanding fine-arts museum features canvases by Rubens, Modigliani, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley (lots) and, of course, several works by Monet, as well as a fine collection of Flemish oils. There's also one jaw-dropping painting by Caravaggio as well as a very serene cafe. Drop your bag in the lockers provided and follow the route through the galleries, arranged chronologically.

#### Musée Le Secq des Tournelles

MUSEUM

( 02 35 71 28 40; [www.museeelsecqdestournelles.fr](http://www.museeelsecqdestournelles.fr); 2 rue Jacques Villon;  2-6pm Wed-Mon) **FREE** Home to one of the world's premier collections of wrought iron, this riveting (excuse the pun) museum is an astonishing sight, showcasing the extraordinary skills of pre-industrial iron- and locksmiths in a magnificent setting across two floors within a desanctified 16th-century church. There's everything from elaborate penknives to candle snuffs, beds, fortified chests, candelabra, miniature pistols and intricate keys.

#### Musée de la Céramique

MUSEUM

( 02 76 30 39 26; [www.museedelaceramique.fr](http://www.museedelaceramique.fr); 1 rue du Faucon;  2-6pm Wed-Mon) **FREE** The

## Rouen



## Rouen

**Top Sights**

- 1 Abbatiale Saint-Ouen ..... D2  
2 Historial Jeanne d'Arc ..... C3

**Sights**

- 3 Cathédrale Notre Dame ..... C3  
4 Église Ste-Jeanne-d'Arc ..... A2  
5 Église St-Maclou ..... C3  
6 Gros Horloge ..... B2  
7 Musée de la Céramique ..... B1  
8 Musée des Beaux-Arts ..... C1  
9 Musée Le Secq des Tournelles ..... C1  
10 Palais de Justice ..... B2

- 11 Place du Vieux Marché ..... A2

**Sleeping**

- 12 Hôtel de Bourgtheroulde ..... A2  
13 Hôtel Le Cardinal ..... B3

**Eating**

- 14 Citizen ..... C2  
Comptoir des Halles ..... (see 16)  
15 Dame Cakes ..... C3  
16 Hallettes du Vieux Marché ..... A2  
17 Les Nymphéas ..... A2  
18 L'Espiguette ..... C2

Ceramics Museum, housed in a 17th-century building with a fine courtyard, is known for its 16th- to 19th-century faience (tin-glazed earthenware) and porcelain. Don't miss sculptural pieces such as the exquisite celestial sphere (1725) on the upper floor.

**Place du Vieux Marché**

SQUARE

The old city's main thoroughfare, rue du Gros Horloge, runs from the cathedral west to place du Vieux Marché, where 19-year-old Joan of Arc was burned at the stake for heresy in 1431.

## LES ANDELYS

From Rouen, a lovely day trip can be made to the landlocked Eure *département* ([www.eure-tourisme.fr](http://www.eure-tourisme.fr)), where Richard the Lionheart's brooding 12th-century castle **Château Gaillard** (☎ 02 32 21 31 29; [www.cape-tourisme.fr/chateau-gaillard-2020](http://www.cape-tourisme.fr/chateau-gaillard-2020); adult/child €3.50/3; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon late Mar-Oct) affords breathtaking panoramas of the majestic Seine. Beneath it slumbers the pretty village of Les Andelys, 40km south of Rouen. **La Chaîne d'Or** (☎ 02 32 54 00 31; [www.hotel-lachainedor.com](http://www.hotel-lachainedor.com); 25 rue Grande, Petit Andely; weekday lunch menus €15-32, other menus €52-70, mains €26-36; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-8.30pm Thu-Tue mid-Apr-mid-Oct, noon-1.30pm Sun year-round, closed Tue, Wed & Sun dinner mid-Oct-mid-Apr) is one of the most classy, traditional and romantic French restaurants for miles around, and the adjoining 12-room hotel is a gem of a rustic hideaway if you find you don't want to leave.

The **tourist office** (☎ 02 32 21 31 29; [www.lesandelys-tourisme.fr](http://www.lesandelys-tourisme.fr); 2 rue Grande, Petit Andely; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun, shorter hours Oct-Mar) has information on walking routes around town. From Rouen, take a train to Gaillon-Aubevoye, then hop on bus 290 (€2) for the 30-minute onward journey.

### Église Ste-Jeanne-d'Arc

CHURCH

(☎ 02 32 08 32 40; place du Vieux Marché; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Thu, 2-6pm Fri-Sun) Dedicated in 1979, the arresting Église Ste-Jeanne-d'Arc, with its fish-scale exterior, marks the spot where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. The church is a lot prettier on the inside, with one entire staggered wall devoted to stained glass, faced by a well-designed semi-circle of knee-height pews.

### Gros Horloge

TOWER

(☎ 02 32 08 01 90; [www.rouen.fr/gros-horloge](http://www.rouen.fr/gros-horloge); rue du Gros Horloge; adult/child €7/3.50; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 2-6pm Oct-Mar) Spanning rue du Gros Horloge, the Great Clock's Renaissance archway has a gilded, one-handed medieval clock face on each side. High above, a Gothic belfry, reached via spiral stairs, affords spectacular views. The excellent audioguide is a great introduction to Rouen's colourful history and is available in eight languages.

### Palais de Justice

ARCHITECTURE

(place Maréchal Foch & rue aux Juifs) The ornately Gothic Law Courts, little more than a shell at the end of WWII, have been restored to their early 16th-century glory. On rue Jeanne d'Arc, however, you can still see the very pockmarked façade, which shows the damage sustained during bombing raids in 1944. Around the corner on pedestrianised rue aux Juifs, you can peer into the spire-and-gargoyle-adorned courtyard.

### ★ Abbaye Saint-Ouen

CHURCH

([www.rouen.fr/abbatiale-saint-ouen](http://www.rouen.fr/abbatiale-saint-ouen); place du Général de Gaulle; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Thu,

Sat & Sun, to 5pm Nov-Mar) This largely empty 14th-century abbey is a sublime example of the Rayonnant Gothic style, with a colossal interior dappled with the light from the gorgeous stained glass; it's quite a mind-blowing spectacle. The entrance is through the lovely garden on the south side, facing rue des Faulx.

### Panorama XXL

GALLERY

(☎ 02 35 52 95 29; [www.panoramaxxl.com](http://www.panoramaxxl.com); quai de Boisguilbert; adult/child €9.50/6.50; ☀ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) In a large, circular column on the waterfront, Panorama XXL is a massive 360-degree exhibition offering in-depth exploration of a particular astonishing landscape, created with photographs, drawings, digital images and recorded audio. Past years have featured the Great Barrier Reef, Amazonia, Ancient Rome and Rouen in 1431 – often with sunrise and sunset generating different moods, as well as storms. A 15m-high viewing platform in the middle of the room gives a fine vantage point over the scene.

A joint ticket with Historial Jeanne d'Arc (p243) is €15 for adults and €12 for children.

### Colline Sainte-Catherine

HILL

(rue Henri Rivière) To size up Rouen, climb this hill rising up next to the Seine. It's a 15-minute walk to the summit, from where Monet once painted a view of the city. Sunrise or sunset casts the city in a fine photographic light, but wear good shoes as the climb can be slippery. As you walk along rue Henri Rivière, look out for the concrete steps to your right straight after the long, brown building, which lead to wooden steps up the hill.



## WORTH A TRIP

## MEDIEVAL MEANDER

With its ghostly white-stone ruins glowing against bright green grass and dark green trees, the **Abbaye de Jumièges** (☎ 02 35 37 24 02; www.abbayedejumieges.fr/en/discover; 24 rue Guillaume le Conquérant, Jumièges; adult/child €7.50/free; ☀ 9.30am-6.30pm mid-Apr–mid-Sep, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm mid-Sep–mid-Apr) is one of Normandy's most evocative medieval relics. The church was begun in 1020, and William the Conqueror attended its consecration in 1067. The abbey declined during the Hundred Years War but enjoyed a renaissance under Charles VII, flourishing until revolutionaries booted out the monks in 1790 and allowed the buildings to be mined for construction material.

Jumièges is 28km from Rouen. To get there, take the westbound D982 and then, from Duclair, the D65.

## Sleeping

**Auberge de Jeunesse Robec** HOSTEL €  
(☎ 02 35 08 18 50; www.fuaj.org; 3 rue du Tour; dm €25-35; ☀ reception 7am-noon & 4.30-8.30pm; 📶) The two- to eight-bed rooms at this modern, 88-bed hostel are comfortable and functional. It's set 2km east of the cathedral off rte de Darnétal; from the city centre, take bus T2 or T3 to the 'Auberge de Jeunesse' stop.

★ **La Boulangerie** B&B €  
(☎ 06 12 94 53 15; www.laboulangerie.fr; 59 rue St-Nicaise; s/d from €67/77; 📶) Tucked away in a quiet side street 1.2km northeast of the cathedral, this adorable B&B sits above a historic (and very good) bakery and has three bright, pleasingly decorated rooms that feature artwork and exposed-beam ceilings. Charming host Aminata is a mine of local information. Parking available nearby for €5.

**Les Cabanes du Clos Masure** COTTAGE €€  
(☎ 07 70 36 84 21; www.cabanesclosmasure.fr; 873 rue du Bornier; cabins from €140) Sleep in the rustling treetops in wood cabins located some 30 minutes northeast of Rouen at this fun place. It's also a working farm with cows and chickens running about, and a good choice for families with small children (cabins are little but cosy and sleep up to six). Breakfast (included in rates) is put in a basket, which you hoist up.

**Hôtel Le Cardinal** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 02 35 70 24 42; www.cardinal-hotel.fr; 1 place de la Cathédrale; s/d from €88/98; 📶) Facing the cathedral's famous west façade and with large portraits of namesake cardinals overlooking the small lobby, this 15-room hotel is one of the best midrange deals in central Rouen. All but two of the bright rooms have romantic cathedral views, and eight doubles (including the suites) come with balconies or terraces. Buffet breakfast is €12.

**Hôtel de Bourgtheroulde** LUXURY HOTEL €€€  
(☎ 02 35 14 50 50; www.hotelsparouen.com; 15 place de la Pucelle; r from €200; 📶 🍷 🍴 📺) Rouen's finest hostelry (it's part of the Marriott empire) serves up a sumptuous mix of early 16th-century architecture – Flamboyant Gothic, to be precise – and sleek, modern luxury. The 78 rooms are spacious and gorgeously appointed. Amenities include a pool (18m), sauna and spa in the basement; the Atrium Bar has live piano music on Saturday evening.

## Eating

**Hallettes du Vieux Marché** MARKET €  
(place du Vieux Marché; ☀ 7am-7pm Tue-Sat, 7.30am-1pm Sun) This covered market by the Église Ste-Jeanne-d'Arc has an excellent *fromagerie* (cheese shop) as well as fishmongers and other purveyors of food.

**Dame Cakes** PASTRIES €  
(☎ 02 35 07 49 31; www.damecakes.fr; 70 rue St-Romain; lunch menus €15-20, tea & cake €9; ☀ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; 📶) Walk through the grand early 20th-century façade and you'll discover a delightfully civilised selection of pastries, cakes and chocolates. From noon to 3pm you can tuck into delicious quiches, gratins and salads in the attached *salon de thé* (tea room). Lovely.

**Citizen** CAFE €  
(4 rue de l'Écureuil; mains €7-14; ☀ noon-7pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Sat) With its black lines, industrial fixtures and groovy tunes playing overhead, Citizen is undeniably hip. More important is the excellent coffee, and the tasty bites on hand (granola, fresh fruit and *fromage blanc* for breakfast; smoked-salmon salad for lunch), plus beers from Brooklyn Brewery. The outdoor seating on the plaza is popular when the sun is out.

★ **L'Espiguette** BISTRO €  
(☎ 02 35 71 66 27; 25 place St-Amand; weekday lunch menus €15, mains €17-24; ☀ 6.30pm-12.30am Mon, 8.30am-12.30am Tue-Fri, 11.30am-1am Sat)

& Sun) This charmingly decorated eatery serves excellent bistro classics – the likes of *osso bucco* (veal casserole), fillet of sole or beef tartare – with the day's offerings up on a chalkboard. It's quite popular with locals, so reserve ahead, even at lunchtime (the lunch *menu* is a great deal). Grab a seat at one of the outdoor tables on a warm day.

### Comptoir des Halles

SEAFOOD €

(☎02 32 10 64 79; place du Vieux Marché; mains €10-20; ☺11am-3pm Tue-Sat) Rouen's covered market bursts with the region's bounty. Among several excellent eateries, casual yet polished **Bar à Huitres** stands out for its fresh seafood. Sit at the horseshoe-shaped bar and choose from specials that change daily based on what's fresh, from giant shrimp to dorado and fillet of sole. Naturally, there are also several varieties of *huîtres* (oysters) on offer.

### Les Nymphéas

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎09 74 56 46 19; www.lesnymphéas-rouen.fr; 7-9 rue de la Pie; weekday lunch menus €27, other menus €45-65, mains €33-58; ☺12.15-2pm & 6.30-8.15pm Tue-Sat, 12.15-2pm Sun) With its formal tables arrayed under 16th-century beams, Les Nymphéas has long been a top address for fine dining in Rouen. Young chef Alexandre Dessaux serves up French cuisine that manages to be both traditional and creative. Reservations are a must on weekends. A vegan menu is available for either €30 or €39.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 32 08 32 40; www.tourisme.com; 25 place de la Cathédrale; ☺9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sun May-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr)

## i Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

**Cy'clic** (☎08 00 08 78 00; http://cyclic.rouen.fr; ☺5am-1am), Rouen's version of Paris' Vélip', lets you rent a city bike from a pool of 250 bikes at 26 locations around town. Credit-card registration for one/seven days costs €1/5, plus a deposit of €150. Use is free for the first 30 minutes; the 2nd/3rd/4th and subsequent half-hours cost €1/2/4 each.

### BUS

Rouen is not very well served by buses, although there's a useful, but very slow, service to Le Havre (€3, three hours, four to five daily) from the **bus station** (☎02 32 08 19 75; 11 rue des Charrettes).

### TRAIN

The train station, **Rouen-Rive-Droite** (place Bernard Tissot), is 1.2km north of the cathedral. Direct services include the following:

**Caen** €7 to €28, 1¼ hours, five or six daily

**Dieppe** €5 to €12, 45 minutes, 10 to 16 daily Monday to Saturday, seven Sunday

**Le Havre** €5 to €16, one hour, 16 to 20 daily Monday to Saturday, 10 Sunday

**Paris Gare St-Lazare** €9 to €25, 1¼ to 1½ hours, 25 daily Monday to Friday, 13 to 18 Saturday and Sunday

## Dieppe

POP 28,600

A seaside resort since 1824, Dieppe hasn't been chic for over a century, but the town's lack of cuteness and pretension can be refreshing. During WWII the city was the focal point of the only large-scale Allied raid on Nazi-occupied France before D-Day, a catastrophic event commemorated in one of the town's top museums.

Dieppe was one of France's most important ports in the 16th and 17th centuries, when ships regularly sailed from here to West Africa and Brazil. Many of the earliest French settlers in Canada set sail from Dieppe.

## 📍 Sights & Activities

### Musée de Dieppe

MUSEUM

(☎02 35 06 61 99; www.dieppe.fr; rue de Chastes; adult/child €4.50/free; ☺10am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-May, 10am-6pm Wed-Sun Jun-Sep) Built between the 14th and 18th centuries, this imposing clifftop castle affords spectacular views of the coast. Inside, the museum explores the city's maritime history as well as displaying a remarkable collection of carved ivory. There are also local scenes painted by artists such as Pissarro and Renoir between 1870 and 1915, when Dieppe was at the height of its popularity with the fashionable, holidaying classes.

### Cité de la Mer

MUSEUM

(Estran; ☎02 35 06 93 20; www.estrancitedelamer.fr; 37 rue de l'Asile Thomas; adult/child €7.50/4; ☺9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Sat & Sun) The 'City of the Sea' brings Dieppe's long maritime and fishing history to life, with kid-friendly exhibits that include model ships and a fish-petting *bassin tactile*. Sea creatures native to the English Channel swim in a dozen aquariums. Ask for an English-language brochure at the ticket desk.

## THE DIEPPE RAID

On 19 August 1942 a mainly Canadian force of over 6000, backed up by 300 ships and 800 aircraft, landed on 20km of beaches between Berneval-sur-Mer and Varengeville-sur-Mer. The objectives: to help the Soviets by drawing Nazi military power away from the Eastern Front and – so the film *Dieppe Uncovered* (2012) revealed – to ‘pinch’ one of the Germans’ four-rotor Enigma encoding machines (the effort failed). The results of the Dieppe Raid were nothing short of catastrophic: 73% of the men who took part ended up killed, wounded or missing in action. But lessons learnt at great cost here proved invaluable in planning the Normandy landings two years later.

For insights into the operation, visit Dieppe’s **Memorial du 19 Août 1942** ([www.dieppe-operationjubilee-19aout1942.fr](http://www.dieppe-operationjubilee-19aout1942.fr); place Camille St-Saëns; adult/child €3.50/free; ☎ 2-6.30pm Wed–Mon late May–Sep, to 6pm Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun & holidays late Mar–mid-May, Fri, Sat & Sun Oct–mid-Nov, closed mid-Nov–Mar).

### Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery CEMETERY

(Cimetière Canadien; [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); 14 rue des 4 Vents, Hautot-sur-Mer; ☎ 24hr) **FREE** Many of the Canadians who died in the Dieppe Raid of 1942 are buried at this peaceful site framed by rolling fields. The cemetery is situated 4km towards Rouen; from the centre, take av des Canadiens (the continuation of av Gambetta) south and follow the signs.

### Beach BEACH

(☎) Dieppe’s often windy beach is a 1.8km-long stretch of smooth pebbles, rather like the beach at Brighton across the channel. The vast lawns were laid out in the 1860s by that seashore-loving imperial duo Napoléon III and his wife, Eugénie. There are several play areas for kids.

### Tours

#### Navigation Normande BOATING

(☎ 06 07 08 94 15; [www.peche-location-dieppe.fr](http://www.peche-location-dieppe.fr); quai Henri IV; adult/child from €12/8.50; ☎ week-ends & school holidays Apr–Nov & mid-Jul–mid-Aug) Hop aboard one of these boat excursions (35 to 90 minutes) along the dramatic cliffs of the Côte d’Albâtre to get the coastline in perspective. The company also offers sea fishing.

### Sleeping

#### Villa Les Capucins B&B €

(☎ 02 35 82 16 52; [www.villadescapucins.jimdo.com](http://www.villadescapucins.jimdo.com); 11 rue des Capucins; d/tr from €80/100) Run by a retired woman, this B&B is a good surprise, not least for the marvellous sense of peace that envelops the property (it’s a former convent) – all just a two-minute walk east of the harbour. The four rooms are nicely appointed, with antique furniture, framed artwork and homey touches, and the ravishing landscaped garden is perfect for unwinding.

### Les Arcades HOTEL €

(☎ 02 35 84 14 12; [www.lesarcades.fr](http://www.lesarcades.fr); 1-3 arcades de la Bourse; r €77-97; ☎) Perched above a colonnaded arcade from the 1600s, this well-managed and long-established place enjoys a great location by the port. The decor, in tans and browns, is unexciting, but 12 of the 21 rooms have fine port views (the cheaper ones face the road). Breakfast is €11.

### Hôtel de la Plage HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 35 84 18 28; [www.plagehotel-dieppe.com](http://www.plagehotel-dieppe.com); 20 bd de Verdun; r €75-130; ☎) One of several somewhat faded seafront places, this hotel has 40 modern, mod-con rooms of varying shapes and sizes, including family rooms; those at the front have balconies and afford knockout views of the sea. Cheaper rooms face into the courtyard. Parking €10.

### Eating

Dieppe has a decent range of quality seafood restaurants. Quai Henri IV, along the north side of the harbour, is lined with touristy choices.

### Le Turbot FRENCH €

(☎ 02 35 82 63 44; 10-14 quai Cale; mains €16-28, menus from €16; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7.15-9.30pm Tue–Sat) A prime place for lunch or dinner, this family-run Norman bistro decked out in sea paraphernalia serves outstanding seafood. Fresh-off-the-boat dishes, such as monkfish, Dover sole, scallops, and ray in cream sauce and capers, vie with deftly prepared meat dishes. At €17, the prix-fixe *menu* (which also includes a buffet selection of seafood entrées) is good value.

### À La Marmite Dieppoise SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 02 35 84 24 26; [www.marmitedieppoise.fr](http://www.marmitedieppoise.fr); 8 rue St-Jean; menus €21-45, mains €15-45; ☎ noon-2pm

& 7-9pm Tue-Sat, noon-2pm Sun) This Dieppe institution is applauded for its hearty and rich *marmite dieppoise* (cream-sauce stew made with mussels, prawns and four kinds of fish – though you can also order it with lobster), served in a rustic dining room: it's a dish to remember. Other specialities include Normandy-style fish and, from October to May, scallops.

### Les Voiles d'Or

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 02 35 84 16 84; www.lesvoilesdor.fr; 2 chemin des Falaises; mains €35-42, lunch menus €35, dinner menus €59-85; ☀ noon-1pm & 8-9pm Wed-Sat, noon-1pm Sun) For cutting-edge cuisine concocted from top-quality ingredients, this Michelin-starred place is worth seeking out. Chef Christian Arhan has a soft spot for local seafood, but the menu also includes savoury meat dishes. Just next door is Villa Bali-Dieppe (same owners), an excellent B&B featuring three rooms decorated in a Balinese style (doubles €130). It's near Église Notre-Dame de Bon Secours.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 32 14 40 60; www.dieppe-tourisme.com; Pont Jehan Ango; ☀ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Sun May-Sep)

## i Getting There & Away

### BOAT

**DFDS Ferries** (www.dfds.com) runs trans-Channel car ferries linking Dieppe's **ferry terminal** (Terminal Transmanche; quai de la Marine), on the eastern side of the port's entrance channel, with the English port of Newhaven.

### TRAIN

The train station is just south of the harbour. Services include the following:

**Le Havre** €22 to €34, two to three hours, eight to 11 daily

**Paris Gare St-Lazare** €22, two to three hours, nine daily Monday to Friday, two to four Saturday and Sunday

**Rouen** €5 to €12, 45 minutes, 10 to 16 daily Monday to Saturday, seven Sunday

To get to Paris and Le Havre, you have to change trains in Rouen.

## Côte d'Albâtre

Stretching along the Norman coast for 130km, the vertical, bone-white cliffs of the Côte d'Albâtre (Alabaster Coast) are strikingly reminiscent of the limestone cliffs of Dover, right

across the Channel. The dramatic coastline, sculpted over aeons by wind and waves, is dotted with attractive villages, fishing harbours, resort towns, pebbly beaches, eroded rock forms and gorgeous gardens.

## St-Valery-en-Caux

POP 4100

This delightful coastal village, 32km west of Dieppe, has a large fishing and pleasure port, a lovely beach and half a dozen hotels. It is also the site of a Franco-British WWII cemetery. In January 1945 a runaway troop train crashed here, killing 89 American soldiers.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel Henri IV

HOTEL €

(☎ 02 35 97 19 62; 16 rue du Havre; r from €60; ☎) This well-located, ivy-wreathed 19-room old-school hotel has a medley of rooms, the best of which look out over the boats bobbing about in the green waters of the harbour. Some furnishings are a bit worn, but the building has character (exposed-beam ceilings in some rooms), renovated bathrooms are in good shape, and the owner is amiable and helpful.

### Restaurant du Port

SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 02 35 97 08 93; www.restaurant-du-port-76.fr; 18 quai d'Amont; menus €27-46, mains €13-38; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, noon-2pm Thu & Sun) A treat for lovers of fish and seafood (*fruits de mer*), this restaurant down by the port has been doing good business since 1989. À la carte offerings include oysters, fresh crab and turbot marinated in hollandaise sauce. The seafood platters are a sight to behold.

## i Getting There & Away

For freedom of movement, most travellers arrive in St-Valery-en-Caux by car. If you're relying on public transport, bus 61 (€2, four to seven daily,

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

#### COASTAL CAPERS

**GR21 Hiking Trail** (www.gr-infos.com/gr21.htm) On the plateau above the cliffs, walkers can follow the dramatic long-distance GR21 hiking trail, which parallels the coast from Le Tréport all the way to Le Havre. *Le Pays des Hautes Falaises* (Land of the High Cliffs) is a free map available at tourist offices, detailing 46 coastal and inland walking circuits ranging from 6km to 22km.

one hour) provides regular service to/from Dieppe.

## Fécamp

POP 19,100

Fécamp is a lively fishing port with an attractive harbour, dramatic cliffs and a long monastic history. It is best known for producing Bénédictine, a fiery 'medicinal elixir' concocted here by a Venetian monk in 1510. Lost during the Revolution, the recipe was rediscovered in the 19th century.

The Abbatale de la Ste-Trinité was a sacred place of pilgrimage during the Middle Ages for drops of Jesus' blood enshrined there.

## Sights & Activities

### Abbatale de la Ste-Trinité

ABBEY

(place des Ducs Richard; ☺ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Oct-Mar) **FREE** Built from 1175 to 1220 by Richard the Lionheart, towering Abbatale de la Ste-Trinité was the most important pilgrimage site in Normandy until the construction of Mont St-Michel, thanks to the drops of Jesus' blood that, legend has it, miraculously floated to Fécamp in the trunk of a fig tree, landing on a beach nearby. Across from the abbey are the remains of a fortified **château** built in the 10th and 11th centuries by the earliest dukes of Normandy.

### Palais de la Bénédictine

FOOD & DRINK

(☎ 02 35 10 26 10; www.benedictinedom.com; 110 rue Alexandre Le Grand; adult €18; ☺ bar & shop 10.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm daily, longer hours summer) This ornate neo-Renaissance factory, opened in 1900, is where all the Bénédictine liqueur in the world is made. Self-guided tours take you to a mini-museum of 13th- to 19th-century religious artworks and then to the production facilities, where you can admire copper alembics and smell some of the 27 herbs used to make the famous digestif. There's a tasting at the end.

### Les Pêcheries

MUSEUM

(Musée de Fécamp; ☎ 02 35 28 31 99; 3 quai Capitaine Jean Recher; adult/child €7/free; ☺ 10am-6pm May-Sep, to 6pm Wed-Mon Oct-Apr) Fécamp's flagship museum is a terrific addition to town, situated in the middle of the harbour, 300m northwest of the tourist office and showcasing local history, the town's fishing industry, local artists and traditional Norman life. The dramatic, glassed-in observation platform on top offers great views across Fécamp.

## Plage de Fécamp

BEACH

Fécamp's 800m-long, smooth-pebble breezy beach stretches southward from the narrow channel connecting the port with the open sea. In July and August it's loads of fun, and you can rent catamarans, kayaks, paddle boats and windsurfers.

## Cap Fagnet

VIEWPOINT

The highest point on the Côte d'Albâtre, Cap Fagnet (110m) towers over Fécamp from the north, offering fantastic views up and down the coast. The site of an important German *blockhaus* and radar station during WWII, today it's topped by a chapel, and there are five wind turbines a short walk to the east (there's a plan to erect 83 more turbines offshore, due to generate power from 2021). Cap Fagnet is a 1.5km walk from the centre.

## Sleeping

### Hôtel Vent d'Ouest

HOTEL €

(☎ 02 35 28 04 04; www.hotelventdouest.tm.fr; 3 rue Gambetta; r €60-95) Small and welcoming, with a smart breakfast room and 15 pleasant rooms decorated in yellow and blue. Call ahead if you'll be checking in after 8pm. The hotel is situated 200m east (up the hill) from the port, next to Église St-Étienne.

### Le Grand Pavois

HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 35 10 01 01; www.hotel-grand-pavois.com; 15 quai de la Vicomté; r €103-150; ☑ ☺) This reliable three-star hotel has a fine location overlooking the marina, and it's an easy stroll to the beach. The welcome is warm, and the spacious rooms have attractive furnishings and comfortable mattresses, though the big windows – and the view! – are undoubtedly the best features.

## Eating

Tourist-oriented crêperies and restaurants, many specialising in fish and mussels, line the south side of the port, along quai de la Vicomté and nearby parts of quai Bérigny.

### Le Daniel's

FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 76 39 95 68; www.facebook.com/ledaniels.fr; 5 place Nicolas Selle; lunch menus €15-18, dinner menus €24-42; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) Tucked down a narrow lane just a short stroll from the marina, this delightful spot serves up market-fresh fare that highlights delicacies from the region, including Valmont trout, creamy rich oysters and braised veal. The service is warm, and the plates are beautifully presented – great value. Just be sure to call ahead for a table, as it's not big.



## La Marée

SEAFOOD €€

(☎) 02 35 29 39 15; www.restaurant-maree-fecamp.fr; 77 quai Bérigny; mains €17-28, menus €19-24; ☀ noon-2pm & 7.30-9pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, noon-2pm Thu & Sun; (♿) Locals claim that you won't find better seafood anywhere in town than here: fish and seafood – that's all that matters at quayside La Marée, Fécamp's premier address for maritime dining, with outside terrace.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎) 02 35 28 51 01; www.fecamp-tourisme.com; quai Sadi Carnot; ☀ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun; (♿) Has useful English-language brochures and maps and free luggage lockers. Situated at the eastern end of the pleasure port, across the parking lot from the train station.

## i Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

The tourist office rents bicycles for €9/14/40 per day/weekend/week.

### BUS

Scenic bus 24, operated by **Keolis** (☎) 02 35 28 19 88; www.keolis-seine-maritime.com), goes to Le Havre's train station (€2, 1½ hours, seven or more daily) via Étretat and various small villages. The tourist office has schedules.

### TRAIN

Fécamp's train station is a block east of the eastern end of the pleasure port.

**Le Havre** €5 to €8, 45 minutes, eight to 15 daily

**Paris Gare St-Lazare** from €20, 2¾ hours, six to nine daily

**Rouen** from €12, 1½ hours, 10 to 13 daily

You usually have to change trains at Bréauté-Beuzeville, connected to Fécamp by an 18km spur.

## Étretat

POP 1400

Delightful Étretat's dramatic coastal scenery – it's framed by twin cliffs – made it a favourite of painters such as Camille Corot, Eugène Boudin, Gustave Courbet and Claude Monet. With the vogue for sea air at the end of the 19th century, fashionable Parisians came and built extravagant villas.

The village has never gone out of style and every weekend it still swells with visitors, who sit on the shingle beach, wander up and down the shoreline or clamber up to the fantastic vantage points above the chalk cliffs.

## DON'T MISS

### VEULES-LES-ROSES

With its wonderfully relaxing atmosphere and lovely setting, Veules-les-Roses is one of the Côte d'Albâtre's gems. The pebbly beach is never too crowded and the flowery village is supremely picturesque, with elegant mansions and an imposing church. The small river running through the village adds to the bucolic appeal – it also makes it into the record books as France's shortest river flowing into the sea. Look out for the *ressonnières* (ponds where watercress is grown). You can find Veules-les-Roses 8km east of St-Valéry-en-Caux.

Most travellers arrive in Veules-les-Roses by car. If you're using public transport, take a train to Dieppe and transfer to bus 61 operated by Nomad (www.normandie.fr/seine-maritime-lignes-regulieres).

## i Sights & Activities

The pebbly **beach** is separated from the town centre by a dyke. To the left as you face the sea, you can see the **Falaise d'Aval**, renowned for its beautiful arch – and the adjacent **Aiguille**, a needle of rock poking high up from the waves. To the right as you face the sea towers the **Falaise d'Amont**, atop which a memorial marks the spot where two aviators were last seen before attempting to cross the Atlantic in 1927.

The tourist office has a map of trails around town and can also provide details on sail-powered cruises aboard a **two-masted schooner** (March to October).

## i Sleeping

### ★ Detective Hôtel

HOTEL €

(☎) 02 35 27 01 34; www.detectivehotel.com; 6 av Georges V; r from €80; (♿) Run by a former detective with an impressive moustache, this establishment was inspired by Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot. Each of the 14 charming rooms bears the name of a fictional gumshoe whose time and place have inspired the decor. In some, the first mystery you'll face is how to find the secret door to the hidden bathroom. Utterly original.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎) 02 35 27 05 21; www.lehavre-etretat-tourisme.com; place Maurice

Guillard; ☉ 10am-1pm & 2-6.30pm daily Apr-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar)

## **i** Getting There & Away

**Keolis** (☎ 02 35 28 19 88; www.keolis-seine-maritime.com) Scenic bus 24 (seven or more daily) goes to Le Havre's train station (€2, one hour) and to Fécamp (€2, 30 minutes).

## Le Havre

POP 172,000

A Unesco World Heritage Site since 2005 and a regular port of call for cruise ships, Le Havre is a love letter to modernism, evoking, more than any other French city, France's postwar energy and optimism. All but obliterated in September 1944 by Allied bombing raids that killed 3000 civilians, the centre was completely rebuilt by the Belgian architect Auguste Perret – mentor to Le Corbusier – whose bright, airy modernist vision remains, miraculously, largely intact.

Attractions include a museum full of captivating impressionist paintings, a soaring modernist church with a mesmerising stained-glass tower, hilltop gardens with views over the city and a medieval church that rose again from the ashes of war.

## **👁** Sights

### ★ Musée d'Art

#### Moderne André Malraux

GALLERY

(MuMa; ☎ 02 35 19 62 62; www.muma-lehavre.fr; 2 bd Clemenceau; adult/child €10/6; ☉ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun) Near the waterfront, this luminous and tranquil space houses a fabulous collection of vivid impressionist works – the finest in France outside Paris – by masters such as Monet (who grew up in Le Havre), Pissarro, Renoir and Sisley. You'll also find works by the Fauvist painter Raoul Dufy, born in Le Havre, and paintings by Eugène Boudin, a mentor of Monet and another Le Havre local.

### Église St-Joseph

CHURCH

(www.uneteauhavre.fr/fr/eglise-saint-joseph; 130 bd François 1er; ☉ 10am-6pm) Perret's masterful, 107m-high Église St-Joseph, visible from all over town, was built using bare concrete from 1951 to 1959. Some 13,000 panels of coloured glass make the soaring, sombre interior particularly striking when it's sunny. Stained-glass artist Marguerite Huré created a cohesive masterpiece in her collaboration with Perret, and her use of shading and colour was thoughtfully conceived, evoking dif-

ferent moods depending on where the sun is in the sky – and the ensuing colours created by the illumination.

### Jardins Suspendus

GARDENS

(☎ 02 35 19 45 45; rue du Fort; gardens free, greenhouses €2; ☉ 10.30am-8pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar) The Jardins Suspendus (Hanging Gardens) is an old hilltop fortress transformed into a beautiful set of gardens, whose greenhouses and outdoor spaces feature exquisite flowers, trees and grasses from five continents, as fine views range over the harbour. It's a 30-minute uphill walk from the centre, or you can catch bus 1 along bd François 1er near the beach.

### Le Volcan

CULTURAL CENTRE

(Espace Oscar Niemeyer; ☎ 02 35 19 10 20; www.levolcan.com; place du Général de Gaulle; ☉ library 10am-7pm) Le Havre's most conspicuous landmark, designed by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer and opened in 1982, is also the city's premier cultural venue. One look and you'll understand how it got its name, which means 'the volcano' – it's quite a sight, especially framed against a blue sky. Extensive renovations saw the complex reopen with a new concert hall and an ultramodern *mediathèque* (multimedia library). It's situated at the western end of the Bassin du Commerce, the city centre's former port.

### Appartement Témoin

ARCHITECTURE

(☎ 02 35 22 31 22; 181 rue de Paris; adult/child €5/free; ☉ tours 3.30pm & 4.30pm Wed & Fri, 2.30pm, 3.30pm & 4.30pm Sat, 10.30am, 11.30am, 2.30pm, 3.30pm & 4.30pm Sun) Furnished in impeccable early 1950s style, this lovingly decorated bourgeois apartment can be visited on a one-hour guided tour that starts at 181 rue de Paris (Maison du Patrimoine). The apartment is a remarkable time capsule of Le Havre's postwar boom days, complete with clothes, newspapers, furniture and appliances exactly as you would have seen in a downtown apartment in the decade of the city's reconstruction. Reservations are recommended as there are 19 places per visit.

### Cathédrale Notre-Dame

CHURCH

(rue de Paris; ☉ hours vary) When Le Havre's concrete expanses and straight lines over-power you, stop by this lovely Baroque church, which somehow eluded the intense bombing efforts of the Allies. The cathedral originally dates to the early 16th century and is the oldest building in the centre of town; the interior is a repository of calm.

## Sleeping

### Hôtel le Petit Vatel

HOTEL €

(☎02 35 41 72 07; www.lepetitvotel.com; 86 rue Louis Brindeau; s/d from €60/70; @☎) This central spot earns high marks for comfortable rooms, a good location and very kind staff. Rooms receive decent natural light, the mattresses are fresh, and the tiled bathrooms are spick and span. There's a small, sunny lounge on the ground floor. Breakfast is €9.

### Oscar Hôtel

HOTEL €€

(☎02 35 42 39 77; www.hotel-oscar.fr; 106 rue Voltaire; r €57-120; ☎) A treat for architecture aficionados, this bright and very central hotel brings Auguste Perret's mid-20th-century legacy alive. The rooms are authentic retro, with hardwood floors and large windows, as is the tiny 1950s lounge. Reception closes at 8.30pm. It's situated across the street from Le Volcan, with some rooms looking straight onto it. Breakfast is €9.

### ★Vent d'Ouest Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎02 35 42 50 69; www.ventdouest.fr; 4 rue de Caligny; r/ste/apt from €125/140/175; ☎) This terrific and stylish luxe establishment is all nautical downstairs and has cheerfully painted rooms upstairs arranged with sisal flooring and attractive furnishings; ask for one with a balcony. There are lovely common areas where you can while away the hours with a book if the weather sours, including an enticing cafe-bar with leather armchairs.

## Eating

### Les Halles Centrales

MARKET €

(www.leshallescentrales-lehavre.fr; rue Voltaire; ☎8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) The food stalls at Le Havre's main market include a patisserie, a *fromagerie* and many tempting fruit stands; there's also a small supermarket here. You can find it a block west of Le Volcan.

### Cafeteria du Musée Malraux

FRENCH €

(☎02 35 19 62 75; 2 bd Clemenceau; mains €8-16; ☎10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun) Upstairs in the Musée Malraux, this is a fine, contemporary-styled choice where you can tuck into well-executed French classics, with the bonus of ample harbour views.

### Les Pieds Dans L'Eau

SEAFOOD €

(☎02 35 47 97 45; promenade de la Plage; mains €13-20; ☎noon-10pm) Amid the many simple restaurants set on the beach promenade, this place always draws a crowd for its reasonably priced seafood plates and ample prix-fixe

*menus*. The mussels (served seven ways) are a highlight, as are the oysters and grilled *dorade* (gilt-head bream).

### ★La Taverne Paillette

BRASSERIE €€

(☎02 35 41 31 50; www.taverne-paillette.com; 22 rue Georges Braque; lunch menus €16-32, mains €15-28; ☎noon-midnight) Solid brasserie food is served up at this Le Havre institution whose origins go back to the late 16th century. Expect bowls overflowing with mussels, generous salads, gargantuan seafood platters and, in the Alsatian tradition, eight types of *choucroute* (sauerkraut). Diners leave contentedly well fed, and many are here for its famous beer too.

## Information

**Maison du Patrimoine** (☎02 35 22 31 22; 181 rue de Paris; ☎10am-7pm daily Jul-Sep, 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun Oct-Jun)

The tourist office's city-centre annexe has an exhibition on Perret's postwar reconstruction of the city.

**Tourist Office** (☎02 32 74 04 04; www.lehavre-etretat-tourisme.com; 186 bd Clemenceau; ☎9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar) Has a map in English for a two-hour walking tour of Le Havre's architectural highlights and details on cultural events. Situated at the western edge of the city centre, one block south of La Plage tram terminus.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

Le Havre's car-ferry terminal, situated 1km southeast of Le Volcan, is linked with the English port of Portsmouth via **Brittany Ferries** (www.brittany-ferries.co.uk). Ferries depart daily and offer very cheap fares.

### BUS

The bus station is next to the train station.

**Nomad** (☎09 70 83 00 14; www.nomadcar14.fr) Heading south, bus 20 (four to six daily) goes to Honfleur (€4.90, 30 minutes) and Deauville and Trouville (€4.90, one hour).

**Keolis** (☎02 35 28 19 88; www.keolis-seine-maritime.com) For the Côte d'Albâtre, take scenic bus 24 (seven or more daily) to Étretat (€2, one hour) and Fécamp (€2, 1½ hours).

### TRAIN

The train station, Gare du Havre, is 1.5km east of Le Volcan, at the eastern end of bd de Strasbourg. The tram stop out front is called 'Gares'.

**Fécamp** €5 to €8, 45 minutes, seven to 11 daily  
**Paris Gare St-Lazare** €15 to €30, 2¼ hours, 15 daily Monday to Friday, seven to nine Saturday and Sunday

**Rouen** €5 to €16, one hour, 16 to 20 daily  
Monday to Saturday, 10 Sunday

## CALVADOS

The Calvados *département* ([www.calvados-tourisme.com](http://www.calvados-tourisme.com)) stretches from Honfleur in the east to Isigny-sur-Mer in the west and includes Caen, Bayeux and the D-Day beaches. The area is famed for its rich pastures and farm products, including butter, cheese, cider and an eponymous apple brandy.

The origins of the name 'Calvados' are opaque. One (tenuous) theory points to a (possibly mythical) ship of the Spanish Armada called *San El Salvador*, sent by Philip II of Spain to attack England, which was shipwrecked off the Normandy coast. Another, more convincing argument attests that the name derives from a pair of rocks off the Normandy coast known as *calva dorsa*.

## Bayeux

POP 13,500

Two cross-Channel invasions, almost 900 years apart, gave Bayeux a front-row seat at defining moments in Western history. The dramatic story of the Norman invasion of England in 1066 is told in 58 vivid scenes by the world-famous and quite astonishing Bayeux Tapestry, embroidered just a few years after William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy, became William the Conqueror, King of England. On 6 June 1944, 160,000 Allied troops, supported by almost 7000 naval vessels, stormed ashore along the coast just north of

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

#### NATURE WATCH

Inland from Utah Beach, to the south and southwest, is the 1480-sq-km **Parc Naturel Régional des Marais du Cotentin et du Bessin** (☎02 33 71 65 30; [www.parc-cotentin-bessin.fr](http://www.parc-cotentin-bessin.fr)), a vast expanse of waterways, marshes, moors and hedgerows. The Maison du Parc (visitor centre) is in St-Côme-du-Mont, 50km west of Bayeux, just off the N13. For details on hiking and cycling in the park and elsewhere in the Manche *département*, visit [www.manche-tourism.com](http://www.manche-tourism.com) and click on 'Walks, rambles and rides' under the 'Explore' tab.

town. Bayeux was the first French town to be liberated (on the morning of 7 June 1944) and is one of the few places in Calvados to have survived WWII practically unscathed. A very attractive and historic town, Bayeux makes an ideal base for exploring the D-Day beaches and is crammed with 13th- to 18th-century buildings and a fine Gothic cathedral.

## Sights

A 'triple ticket' good for all three of Bayeux' outstanding municipal museums costs €15/13.50 per adult/child (€12/10 for two museums).

### ★ Bayeux Tapestry

MUSEUM

(La Tapisserie de Bayeux; ☎02 31 51 25 50; [www.bayeuxmuseum.com](http://www.bayeuxmuseum.com); 15bis rue de Nesmond; adult/child €9.50/7.50; ☀9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm, closed Jan) The world's most celebrated embroidery depicts the conquest of England by William the Conqueror in 1066 from an unashamedly Norman perspective. Commissioned by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, William's half-brother, for the opening of Bayeux' cathedral in 1077, the well-preserved cartoon strip tells the dramatic, bloody tale with verve and vividness as well as some astonishing artistry. Particularly incredible are its length - nearly 70m - and fine attention to detail.

Fifty-eight action-packed scenes of pageantry and mayhem occupy the centre of the work, while religious allegories and illustrations of everyday 11th-century life, some of them bawdy and naughty, adorn the borders. The final showdown at the Battle of Hastings is depicted in graphic fashion, complete with severed limbs and decapitated heads (along the bottom of scene 52). Halley's Comet, which blazed across the sky in 1066, appears in scene 32.

A 16-minute film gives the conquest historical, political and cultural context, including crucial details on the grooming habits of Norman and Saxon knights. Also well worth a listen is a lucid and highly informative panel-by-panel audioguide plus a special audioguide for kids, both in English.

A joint ticket for admission to the Bayeux Tapestry and the Musée Mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie or the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Baron Gérard is €12 (or €15 for all three).

### ★ Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Baron Gérard

MUSEUM

(MAHB; ☎02 31 92 14 21; [www.bayeuxmuseum.com](http://www.bayeuxmuseum.com); 37 rue du Bienvenu; adult/child €7.50/5.50;

☉ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm, closed Jan) Make sure you drop by this museum – one of France's most gorgeously presented provincial museums – where exhibitions cover everything from Gallo-Roman archaeology through medieval art to paintings from the Renaissance and on to the 20th century, including a fine work by Gustave Caillebotte. Other highlights include impossibly fine local lace and Bayeux-made porcelain. The museum is housed in the former bishop's palace.

A combined ticket for admission to Musée Mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Baron Gérard and the Bayeux Tapestry is adult/child €15/13.50.

### Cathédrale Notre Dame

CATHEDRAL

(☎ 02 31 92 48 48; rue du Bienvenu; ☉ 9am-7pm Jul-Sep, 9am-6pm Apr-Jun & Oct-Dec, 9am-5pm Jan-Mar) **FREE** Most of Bayeux' spectacular Norman Gothic cathedral dates from the 13th century, though the crypt (take the stairs on the north side of the choir), the arches of the nave and the lower parts of the entrance towers are 11th-century Romanesque. The central tower was added in the 15th century; the copper dome dates from the 1860s. The crypt, with its colourful frescoes, is a highlight. Several plaques and stained-glass windows commemorate American and British sacrifices during the world wars.

### Musée Mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie

MUSEUM

(Battle of Normandy Memorial Museum; ☎ 02 31 51 46 90; www.bayeuxmuseum.com; bd Fabien Ware; adult/child €7.50/5; ☉ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm, closed Jan) Using well-chosen photos, personal accounts, dioramas and wartime objects, this first-rate museum offers an excellent introduction to the Battle of Normandy. A 25-minute film is screened in both French and English. A selection of hardware – tanks and artillery pieces – is displayed outside.

### Bayeux War Cemetery

CEMETERY

(www.cwgc.org; 1945 bd Fabien Ware; ☉ 24hr) **FREE** The largest of 18 Commonwealth military cemeteries in Normandy, this peaceful site contains 4848 graves of soldiers from the UK and 10 other countries, including Germany. Across the road is a memorial to 1807 Commonwealth soldiers whose remains were never found; the Latin inscription across the top reads: 'We, once conquered by William, have now liberated the Conqueror's native land'.

### Conservatoire de la Dentelle

MUSEUM

(Lace Conservatory; ☎ 02 31 92 73 80; www.den.telledeluxeuil.com; 6 rue du Bienvenu; ☉ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, to 5pm Mon & Thu) **FREE** Lacemaking (*dentellerie*), brought to Bayeux by nuns in 1678, once employed 5000 people. The industry is sadly long gone, but at the Conservatoire you can watch some of France's most celebrated lacemakers create intricate designs using dozens of bobbins and hundreds of pins; a small shop also sells some of their delicate creations. The half-timbered building housing the workshop, decorated with carved wooden figures, dates from the 1400s.

### Sleeping

#### Camping des Bords de L'Aure

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 02 31 92 08 43; www.camping-bayeux.fr; bd d'Eindhoven; campsites from €15) This three-star municipal campground in the north of Bayeux has 140 pitches pleasantly located near the Aure River. Campers have free access to the municipal swimming pool, a short walk to the south. You can also rent out mobile homes (from €80 per night). Check the website for a map of the campground.

#### Hôtel Reine Mathilde

HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 31 92 08 13; www.hotel-bayeux-reinemathilde.fr; 23 rue Larcher; r €90-185; ☎) Occupying a superbly central location, this friendly hotel has an assortment of comfortable, sleek and spacious rooms in the annexe, a converted barn by the Aure River. Rooms, named after historical figures, are attractively designed, with beamed ceilings, elegant lines, excellent lighting and modern bathrooms; studios have a small kitchenette. A decent restaurant is also on-site.

#### Hotel Churchill

HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 31 21 31 80; www.hotel-churchill.fr; 14-16 rue St-Jean; r €80-180; ☎) Run by affable former first-division footballer Eric Pean, this terrific 46-room old-town place by the cathedral has very decent accommodation, with 14 spotless modern rooms in the recent extension. The hotel arranges daily morning shuttle-bus trips to Mont St-Michel.

#### Hôtel d'Argouges

HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 31 92 88 86; www.hotel-dargouges.com; 21 rue St-Patrice; r €75-170, apt from €170; ☉ closed Dec & Jan; ☎) Occupying a very stately 18th-century residence with a lush little garden, this graceful and serene hotel has 28 comfortable rooms with exposed beams, thick





## Bayeux

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Bayeux Tapestry ..... D4  
2 Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Baron Gérard ..... C3

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Cathédrale Notre Dame ..... C3  
4 Conservatoire de la Dentelle ..... B3

### 🚗 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 5 Normandy Sightseeing Tours ..... D3

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 6 Hotel Churchill ..... D3  
7 Hôtel d'Argouges ..... A2  
8 Hôtel Reine Mathilde ..... C3  
9 Villa Lara ..... D3

### 🍴 Eating

- 10 Au Ptit Bistrot ..... C3  
11 Chez Paulette ..... B3  
12 La Rapière ..... D3  
13 La Reine Mathilde ..... C2  
14 L'Alchimie ..... D3

### Au Ptit Bistrot

FRENCH €€

(☎02 31 92 30 08; [www.facebook.com/aupittibistrot](http://www.facebook.com/aupittibistrot); 31 rue Larcher; lunch menus €18-21, dinner menus €32-36, mains €19-28; ☺noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) Near the cathedral, this friendly, welcoming eatery whips up creative, beautifully prepared dishes that highlight the Norman bounty without pretension. Recent hits include braised beef cheek with red wine, polenta, grapefruit tapenade and vegetables, or roast pigeon with mushrooms and mashed parsnip. The kids' menu is €12. Reservations essential.

### L'Alchimie

FRENCH €€

(☎02 14 08 03 97; 49 rue St-Jean; menus €13-25; ☺noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat) On a street lined with restaurants, L'Alchimie has a simple but elegant design that takes nothing from the beautifully presented dishes. Choose from the day's specials listed on a chalkboard menu, which might include hits such as *brandade de morue* (baked codfish pie) or *pastilla de poulet au gingembre et cumin* (chicken pastilla with ginger and cumin). Book ahead.

### La Rapière

FRENCH €€

(☎02 31 21 05 45; [www.larapriere.net](http://www.larapriere.net); 53 rue St-Jean; lunch menus €18-22, dinner menus €36-46, mains €20-28; ☺6.30-7.15pm Tue & Wed, noon-1pm & 6.30-7.15pm Thu-Sat) Housed in a late 1400s mansion composed of stone walls and big wooden beams, this atmospheric restaurant specialises

in Normandy staples such as terrines, duck and veal with Camembert. The various fixed-price *menus* assure a splendid meal.

## 📍 Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 31 51 28 28; [www.bayeux-bessin-tourisme.com](http://www.bayeux-bessin-tourisme.com); Pont St-Jean; ☺9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year)

## 📍 Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

**Vélos** (☎02 31 92 89 16; [www.velosbayeux.com](http://www.velosbayeux.com); 5 rue Larcher, Impasse Islet; per half/full day adult bike from €7.50/10, child bike from €5/7.50; ☺7.30am-8.30pm) Year-round bike rental from a fruit-and-veggie store a few paces from the tourist office.

### BUS

**Nomad** (☎09 70 83 00 14; [www.nomadcar14.fr](http://www.nomadcar14.fr)) Buses 70 and 74 (bus 75 in July and August) link Bayeux' train station and place St-Patrice with many of the villages, memorials and museums along Omaha, Gold and Juno D-Day beaches.

### TRAIN

Bayeux' train station is 1km southeast of the cathedral. Some direct services are listed following:

**Caen** €5 to €8, 15 to 20 minutes, at least hourly

**Cherbourg** €7 to €20, one hour, 15 daily Monday to Friday, eight to 10 daily Saturday and Sunday

**Paris Gare St-Lazare** €15 to €22, 2½ hours, three daily

**Pontorson (Mont St-Michel)** €7 to €24, two hours, three daily

To get to Deauville, change at Lisieux. For Rouen you have to change at Caen.

## D-Day Beaches

Code-named 'Operation Overlord', the D-Day landings were the largest seaborne invasion in history. Early on the morning of 6 June 1944, swarms of landing craft – part of an armada of more than 6000 ships and boats – hit the beaches of northern Normandy and tens of thousands of Allied soldiers began pouring onto French soil.

The majority of the 135,000 Allied troops who arrived in France that day stormed ashore along 80km of beaches north of Bayeux, code-named (from west to east) Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. The landings on D-Day – known as 'Jour J' in French – were followed by the 76-day Battle of Normandy,

## DON'T MISS

## NORMANDY BRIDGE

A cable-stayed bridge, **Pont de Normandie** (car one way €5.50) opened in 1995, stretching in a soaring 2km arch over the Seine between Le Havre and Honfleur. It's a typically French affair, as much sophisticated architecture as engineering, with two huge inverted-V-shaped columns holding aloft a delicate net of cables. Crossing it is quite a thrill – and the views of the Seine are magnificent. In each direction there's a narrow footpath and a bike lane.

during which the Allies suffered 210,000 casualties, including 37,000 troops killed. German casualties are believed to have been around 200,000; another 200,000 German soldiers were taken prisoner. About 14,000 French civilians also died.

Caen's Le Mémorial (p263) and Bayeux' Musée Mémorial (p255) provide comprehensive overviews of the events of D-Day. Dozens of villages near the landing beaches have museums focusing on local events; all but a few are privately owned.

You can join a tour, but if you've got wheels, just follow the D514 along the D-Day coast or several signposted circuits around the battle sites – look for signs reading 'D-Day–Le Choc' in the American sectors and 'Overlord–L'Assaut' in the British and Canadian sectors. The area is also sometimes called the Côte de Nacre (Mother-of-Pearl Coast). A free booklet called *The D-Day Landings and the Battle of Normandy*, available from tourist offices, has details of the eight major visitors' routes.

Maps of the D-Day beaches are available at *tabacs* (tobacconists), tourist offices and bookshops in Bayeux and elsewhere. When visiting the D-Day sites, do not leave valuables in your car.

## Tours

Accessible and handy introductions to the beaches, guided minibus tours – lots of local companies offer them – can be an excellent way to get a sense of the D-Day beaches and their place in history. Book online or through tourist offices.

**Normandy Sightseeing Tours** TOURS  
(☎02 31 51 70 52; www.normandy-sightseeing-tours.com; 6 rue St-Jean, Bayeux; adult/child morning €65/45, full day €110/70) This experienced

Bayeux-based outfit offers informative morning tours of the various D-Day beaches and cemeteries, as well as all-day excursions. Check the website for further details.

**Normandy Tours** TOURS  
(☎02 31 92 10 70; www.normandy-landing-tours.com; 26 place de la Gare, Bayeux; adult/student €77/62) Offers well-regarded four- to five-hour tours of the main sites starting at 8.15am and 1.15pm on most days, as well as personally tailored trips. Based at Bayeux' Hôtel de la Gare, facing the train station.

## Getting There & Away

**Nomad** (☎09 70 83 00 14; www.nomadcar14.fr) links Bayeux' train station and place St-Patrice with many of the villages along the D-Day beaches. Those under 26 get about a 20% discount on the fares.

Bus 70 (two to four daily Monday to Saturday, more frequently and on Sunday and holidays in summer) goes to Colleville-sur-Mer (Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery; €2.50, 35 minutes); some services continue to Pointe du Hoc near Cricqueville-en-Bessin (€4.90) and Grandcamp-Maisy (€4.90).

Bus 74 (bus 75 in July and August; three or four daily Monday to Saturday, more frequently and on Sunday and holidays in summer) heads to Arromanches (€2.50, 10 minutes), Gold Beach (Ver-sur-Mer; €3.70, 30 minutes) and Juno Beach (Courseulles-sur-Mer; €3.70, one hour).

## Omaha Beach

The most brutal fighting on D-Day took place on the 7km stretch of coastline around Vierville-sur-Mer, St-Laurent-sur-Mer and Colleville-sur-Mer, 15km northwest of Bayeux, known as 'Bloody Omaha' to US veterans. More than seven decades on, little evidence of the carnage unleashed here on 6 June 1944 remains, except for the harrowing American cemetery and concrete German bunkers, though at very low tide you can see a few remnants of the Mulberry Harbour.

These days Omaha is a peaceful place, a beautiful stretch of fine golden sand partly lined with dunes and summer homes. Circuit de la Plage d'Omaha, trail-marked with a yellow stripe, is a self-guided tour along the beach.

## Sightings

**Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial** MEMORIAL  
(☎02 31 51 62 00; www.abmc.gov; Colleville-sur-Mer; ☀9am–6pm Apr–Sep, to 5pm Oct–Mar) **FREE**



## THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY

In early 1944, an Allied invasion of continental Europe seemed inevitable. Hitler's disastrous campaign on the Russian front and the Luftwaffe's inability to control the skies over Europe had left Germany vulnerable. Both sides knew a landing was coming – the only questions were where and, of course, when.

Several sites were considered by Allied command. After long deliberation, it was decided that the beaches along Normandy's northern coast – rather than the even more heavily fortified coastline further north around Calais, where Hitler was expecting an attack – would serve as a surprise spearhead into occupied Europe.

Code-named 'Operation Overlord', the invasion began on the night of 5 June 1944 when three paratroop divisions were dropped behind enemy lines. At about 6.30am on the morning of 6 June, six amphibious divisions stormed ashore at five beaches, backed up by an unimaginable 6000 sea craft and 13,000 aeroplanes. The initial landing force involved some 45,000 troops; 15 more divisions were to follow once successful beachheads had been established.

The narrow Straits of Dover had seemed the most likely invasion spot to the Germans, who'd set about heavily reinforcing the area around Calais and the other Channel ports. Allied intelligence went to extraordinary lengths to encourage the German belief that the invasion would be launched north of Normandy: double agents, leaked documents and fake radio traffic, buttressed by phony airfields and an entirely fictitious American army group, supposedly stationed in southeast England, all suggested that the invasion would centre on the Pas de Calais.

Because of the tides and unpredictable weather patterns, Allied planners had only a few dates available each month in which to launch the invasion. On 5 June, the date chosen, the worst storm in 20 years set in, delaying the operation. The weather had improved only marginally the next day, but General Dwight D Eisenhower, Allied commander-in-chief, gave the go-ahead: 6 June would be D-Day.

In the hours leading up to D-Day, French Resistance units set about disrupting German communications. Just after midnight on 6 June, the first Allied troops were on French soil. British commandos and glider units captured key bridges and destroyed German gun emplacements, and the American 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions landed west of the invasion site. Although the paratroops' tactical victories were few, they caused confusion in German ranks and, because of their relatively small numbers, the German high command was convinced that the real invasion had not yet begun.

White marble crosses and Stars of David stretch off in seemingly endless rows at the Normandy American Cemetery, situated on a now-serene bluff overlooking the bitterly contested sands of Omaha Beach. The **visitor centre** has an excellent multimedia presentation on the D-Day landings, told in part through the stories of individuals' courage and sacrifice. Free 45-minute English-language tours of the cemetery, also focusing on personal stories, depart daily at 2pm and, from mid-April to mid-September, at 11am.

Featured in the opening scenes of Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, this place of pilgrimage is one of the largest American war cemeteries in Europe and is an incredibly emotional sight, containing the graves of 9387 American soldiers, including 33 pairs of brothers who are buried side by side (another 12 pairs of brothers are buried sepa-

rately or memorialised here). Only about 40% of American war dead from the fighting in Normandy are interred in this cemetery – the rest were repatriated at the request of their families.

Overlooking the gravestones is a large colonnaded memorial centred on a statue called *The Spirit of American Youth*, maps explaining the order of battle, and a wall honouring 1557 Americans whose bodies were not found (men whose remains were recovered after the memorial was inaugurated are marked with a bronze rosette). A small, white-marble **chapel** stands at the intersection of the cross-shaped main paths through the cemetery.

The Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial is 17km northwest of Bayeux; by car, follow the signs to the 'Cimetière Militaire Americain'. There is a large car park on-site.



**Overlord Museum**

MUSEUM

(☎02 31 22 00 55; [www.overlordmuseum.com](http://www.overlordmuseum.com); D514, Colleville-sur-Mer; adult/child €8.40/6.10; ☀10am-5.30pm mid-Feb-Mar, Oct & Nov, to 6.30pm Apr, May & Sep, 9.30am-7pm Jun-Aug, closed Jan-mid-Feb) This excellent museum has an astonishing collection of restored WWII military equipment from both sides; the human dimension of the war is brought movingly to life with photos, audio clips, letters and personal stories and recollections. The museum is situated just up the hill from the Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial. You could easily spend a few hours here, so plan your visit accordingly as you will need time for both the museum and the cemetery.

**Arromanches-les-Bains**

In order to unload the vast quantities of cargo needed by the invasion forces without having to capture – intact! – one of the heavily defended Channel ports (a lesson of the 1942 Dieppe Raid), the Allies set up prefabricated marinas, code-named Mulberry Harbours, off two of the landing beaches. A total of 146 massive cement caissons were towed over from England and sunk to form two semicircular breakwaters in which floating bridge spans were moored. In the three months after D-Day, the Mulberries facilitated the unloading of a mind-boggling 2.5 million men, 4 million tonnes of equipment and 500,000 vehicles.

Today, Arromanches-les-Bains is an important D-Day stop for the remains of the Mulberry Harbours caissons visible in the waters and the exhibits at the Musée du Débarquement, dedicated to the history of the artificial harbours and their significance in the war effort.

**📍 Sights****Mulberry Harbours Caissons**

RUINS

The harbour established at Omaha was completely destroyed by a ferocious gale (the worst storm to lash the Normandy coast in four decades) just two weeks after D-Day, but the impressive remains of three dozen caissons belonging to the second, Port Winston (named after Churchill), can still be seen off Arromanches-les-Bains, 10km northeast of Bayeux. At low tide you can even walk out to one of the caissons from the beach, but they are being gradually eroded by the sea.

**Arromanches****360° Circular Cinema**

THEATRE

(☎02 31 06 06 44; [www.arromanches360.com](http://www.arromanches360.com); chemin du Calvaire; adult/child €6.50/5.50; ☀usually 10am-6pm, closed most days Nov-Jan) The best view of Port Winston and nearby Gold Beach is from the hill east of town, site of the popular Arromanches 360° Circular Cinema, which screens archival footage of the Battle of Normandy every half hour (on the hour and at half past the hour); it is run by the Caen-Normandie Mémorial (p263). Entrance is free for WWII veterans.

**Musée du Débarquement**

MUSEUM

(Landing Museum; ☎02 31 22 34 31; [www.musee-arromanches.fr](http://www.musee-arromanches.fr); place du 6 Juin; adult/child €8/6; ☀9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Sep-Nov & Feb-Jun) Down in Arromanches itself and right on the beach, the Musée du Débarquement makes for a very informative stop before visiting the beaches. Dioramas, models and two films explain the logistics and importance of the artificial harbour of Port Winston. Guided tours are available in English, French and German. The museum had a revamp in 2019; new features include a model of Port Winston.

**Juno Beach**

Dune-lined Juno Beach, 12km east of Arromanches around Courseulles-sur-Mer, was stormed by Canadian troops on D-Day. A Cross of Lorraine marks the spot where General Charles de Gaulle came ashore shortly after the landings. He was followed by Winston Churchill on 12 June and George VI on 16 June. A bunker is by the beach, which can be accessed on tours, led by the Juno Beach Centre.

**📍 Sights****Juno Beach Centre**

MUSEUM

(☎02 31 37 32 17; [www.junobeach.org](http://www.junobeach.org); voie des Français Libres, Courseulles-sur-Mer; museum adult/child €7/6, incl park €12/10; ☀9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov, Dec, Feb & Mar, closed Jan) Juno Beach's only specifically Canadian museum, the nonprofit Juno Beach Centre has multimedia exhibits on Canada's role in the war effort and the landings; at the time of writing, the temporary collection displayed 52,022 bright red poppies, one for each Canadian who died in France. There is also a short film screened before visitors enter the permanent collection. The park around the

## POINTE DU HOC

At 7.10am on 6 June 1944, 225 US Army Rangers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James Earl Rudder scaled the impossibly steep, 30m-high cliffs of Pointe du Hoc. Their objective was to disable five 155mm German artillery guns perfectly placed to rain shells onto the beaches of Utah and Omaha. Unbeknown to Rudder and his team, the guns had been transferred inland shortly before, but they nevertheless managed to locate the massive artillery pieces and put them out of action.

By the time the Rangers were finally relieved on 8 June – after repelling fierce German counterattacks for two days – 81 of the rangers had been killed and 58 more had been wounded.

Today the site, **Pointe du Hoc Ranger Memorial** (📍02 31 51 62 00; [www.abmc.gov](http://www.abmc.gov); ☀️9am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar), which France turned over to the US government in 1979, looks much as it did right after the battle, with the earth still pitted with huge bomb craters. The German command post (topped by a dagger-shaped memorial) and several concrete bunkers and casemates, scarred by bullet holes and blackened by flame-throwers, can be explored. As you face the sea, Utah Beach is 14km to the left. A visitor centre has multimedia exhibits.

museum has German bunkers and other artefacts.

### Bény-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery

CEMETERY

([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); D35) The Bény-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery holds 2032 graves. It is 4km south of Courseulles-sur-Mer, near Reviers.

### Longues-sur-Mer

Part of the Nazis' Atlantic Wall, the massive concrete casemates and 150mm German guns at Longues-sur-Mer, 6km west of Arromanches, were designed to hit targets some 20km away, including both Gold Beach (to the east) and Omaha Beach (to the west). Seven and a half decades after their installation, the guns and their stolid concrete casemates survive and constitute one of the highlights along the coast. In their now silent and disused form, they serve as a fitting testament to the collapse of the German occupation.

Parts of the classic D-Day film *The Longest Day* (1962) were filmed both here and at Pointe du Hoc. On clear days, Bayeux' cathedral is visible 8km to the south.

The **tourist office** (📍02 31 21 46 87; [www.bayeux-bessin-tourisme.com](http://www.bayeux-bessin-tourisme.com); Site de la Batterie; ☀️10am-1pm & 2-6pm Apr-Oct) has details of guided tours (adult/child €5/3) to the German artillery batteries at Longues-sur-Mer, available on weekends from April to October (and daily in July and August). View the excellent website for a full list of events in the region.

### Utah Beach

Situated midway between Bayeux and Cherbourg, this beach – the Allies' right (western) flank on D-Day – stretches for 5km near the village of La Madeleine. It was taken, with only light resistance, by the US 4th Infantry Division. D-Day events are commemorated by a number of monuments and the impressive **Musée du Débarquement de Utah Beach** (Utah Beach Landing Museum; 📍02 33 71 53 35; [www.utah-beach.com](http://www.utah-beach.com); Plage de la Madeleine; adult/child €8/5; ☀️9.30am-7pm Jun-Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-May, closed Jan), a few kilometres inland in Ste-Marie-du-Mont.

### Caen



POP 106,300

Founded by William the Conqueror in the 11th century, Caen – capital of the Basse Normandie region – was massively damaged during the 1944 Battle of Normandy, but considerable history and heritage survive to make it a very good-looking city, especially in its central areas. Visitors will discover the imposing bastions of a superb medieval château, two ancient abbeys and a clutch of excellent museums, including an outstanding and enthralling museum of war and peace, largely dedicated to D-Day, WWII and its aftermath.







With its decent hotels, superb collection of restaurants, atmospheric streets and manageable size, Caen is a terrific place to explore; the easygoing city is also a launch pad for the nearby D-Day sights spread out along the coast.



## Sights

### **Caen-Normandie Mémorial** MEMORIAL



( 02 31 06 06 44; [www.memorial-caen.fr](http://www.memorial-caen.fr); esplanade Général Eisenhower; adult/child pass €14.50/free;  9am-7pm daily Apr-Sep, 9.30am-6pm daily Oct, 9.30am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) For an insightful and vivid account of the entire war, with special focus on the Battle of Normandy, the large Mémorial is unparalleled – it's one of Europe's premier WWII museums. The museum uses film, animation and audio testimony, as well as many original artefacts, to graphically evoke the realities of war, the trials of occupation and the joy of liberation. It is situated 3km northwest of the city centre, reachable by bus 2 from place Courtonne.

### **Château de Caen** CHATEAU

([www.musee-de-normandie.caen.fr](http://www.musee-de-normandie.caen.fr);  grounds 8am-10pm;  **FREE** Looming above the centre of the city, Caen's magnificent castle walls – massive battlements overlooking a now dry moat – were established by William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, in 1060. Visitors can spend half a day exploring its many features. Walk around the ramparts and visit the 12th-century **Église St-Georges** ( 02 31 30 47 90;  9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun), which holds an information centre with a diorama of the castle, and the **Échiquier** (Exchequer;  02 31 30 47 60;  9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun), which dates from about 1100 and is one of the oldest civic buildings in Normandy. The castle affords splendid visuals over the town at sunset.

The **Jardin des Simples** ( 10am-8pm) is a garden of medicinal and aromatic herbs cultivated during the Middle Ages, some of them poisonous. There are also two worthwhile museums in the castle grounds, and a good restaurant-café. The mighty 12th-century **donjon** ( 10am-8pm) only survives today as vestiges and foundations.



### **Musée des Beaux-Arts** GALLERY

(Fine Arts Museum;  02 31 30 47 70; [www.mba.caen.fr](http://www.mba.caen.fr); Château de Caen; adult/child €3.50/free, incl temporary exhibition €5.50;  9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) This well-curated museum takes you on a tour of Western art from the 15th to the 21st centuries, including works depicting landscapes and interiors found around Normandy.

The collection includes works by Rubens, Tintoretto, Géricault, Monet, Bonnard, Bou-



din, Dufy and Courbet. Situated inside the Château de Caen.

### **Abbaye-aux-Hommes** MONASTERY



(Abbaye-St-Étienne;  02 31 30 42 81; esplanade Jean-Marie-Louvel; church free, cloisters €3;  church 9.30am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, 2-6.30pm Sun, cloister 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Sat & most Sun) Caen's most important medieval site is the Men's Abbey – now city hall – and, right next door, the magnificent, multi-turreted **Église St-Étienne** (St Stephen's Church), with its Romanesque nave, Gothic choir and **William the Conqueror's tomb** (rebuilt; the original was destroyed by a 16th-century Calvinist mob and, in 1793, by fevered revolutionaries).

The complex is 1km southwest of the Château de Caen.

### **Abbaye-aux-Dames** ABBEY



(Abbaye-de-la-Trinité;  02 31 06 98 75; [www.abbayes-normandie.com](http://www.abbayes-normandie.com); place Reine Mathilde;  8am-1.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri) Highlights at the Women's Abbey complex in the east of the town centre, once run by the Benedictines, include **Église de la Trinité** – look for Matilda's tomb behind the main altar and the striking pink stained-glass windows just beyond. Free tours (at 2.30pm and 4pm daily) take you through the interior, but you can snoop around the courtyard and the church on your own at other times, except during Mass.

### **1944 Radar Museum** MUSEUM

( 02 31 36 24 24; [www.musee-radar.fr](http://www.musee-radar.fr); rte de Basly, Douvres-la-Délivrande; adult/child €5.50/free;  10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep-Nov, to 7pm Jul & Aug) Located 5km north of Caen within two restored German bunkers (bunker H 622 and bunker L 479), this museum is interesting for anyone of a technical bent or those who wish to understand more about the role of radar in WWII. You can see a large German *Würzburg* radar antenna as well as three other radars in what was one of the most important German radar stations in Normandy. The site was captured by British forces on 17 June 1944.

## Sleeping

### **Hôtel des Quatrans** HOTEL €

( 02 31 86 25 57; [www.hotel-des-quatrans.com](http://www.hotel-des-quatrans.com); 17 rue Gémare; r from €80; ) This typically modern hotel has an excellent central location, with 47 comfy, unfussy rooms in white and chocolate. The breakfast buffet can be



(€13.50), plus salads and lighter fare. Service is brusque.

### L'Atelier du Burger

BURGERS €

(☎02 31 50 13 44; www.latelier-duburger.fr; 27 rue Écuyère; mains €7.50-11; ☺ noon-11pm; 🍷) Near the end of bar-lined rue Écuyère, this place does a busy trade in juicy, thick burgers piled high with guacamole, grilled onions and other toppings. The burgers are truly top-notch, and so are the chips; there's also a veggie option. It's an informal and relaxed place: order at the counter, grab your own drink, and take a seat in the stone-walled back room or on the small terrace.

There's a smaller branch at **6 rue Buquet** (☎02 31 39 55 03; mains €7.50-9; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm; 🍷).

### Café Mancel

FRENCH €€

(☎02 31 86 63 64; www.cafemancel.com; Château de Caen; menus €18-25; ☺ 9am-9.30pm Tue-Sat, to 2pm Sun) In the same building as the Musée des Beaux-Arts (p263) within the Château de Caen, this stylish place serves up delicious, traditional French cuisine – everything from pan-fried Norman-style beefsteak to hearty Caen-style *tripes*, delivered by attentive staff. There's a lovely sun terrace, which also makes a fine spot for a drink outside of busy meal times.

### Le Bouchon du Vaugueux

BISTRO €€

(☎02 31 44 26 26; www.bouchonduvaugueux.com; 12 rue Graindorge; lunch menus €16-25, dinner menus €23-38; ☺ noon-1.45pm & 7-9.45pm Tue-Sat; 🍷) The giant wine cork marks the spot at this tiny *bistrot gourmande* (gourmet bistro), which matches creative modern cooking with a first-rate wine selection (from €4 a glass), sourced from small producers all over France. Pork products are a speciality. Staff are happy to translate the chalkboard menu and there's a kids' menu. Reservations recommended; get a table outside.

### À Contre Sens

FRENCH €€

(☎02 31 97 44 48; www.acontresens.fr; 8-10 rue des Croisiers; mains €21-44, menus from €44; ☺ 7.30-9.15pm Tue, noon-1.15pm & 7.30-9.15pm Wed-Sat) À Contre Sens' stylish interior and serene atmosphere belie the hotbed of creativity to be found in the kitchen. Under the direction of chef Anthony Caillot, meals are thoughtfully crafted and superbly presented. Expect dishes such as seaweed risotto with apple and coriander or veal with herbs, endive and ham.

## WORTH A TRIP

### CAEN DAY TRIPPER

#### The highly informative **Le Mémorial Falaise – La Guerre des Civils**

(Civilians in Wartime Memorial; ☎02 31 06 06 45; www.memorial-falaise.fr; 12 place Guillaume le Conquérant; adult/child €7.50/6.50; ☺ 10am-5.30pm Apr-Oct), in the town of Falaise, 41km southeast of Caen, gets you under the skin of a civilian during the battle of Normandy. The life of civilians in the conflict is brought into stark relief through relics and artefacts of war, the stories of survivors, interactive tablets and a film that reveals the horror of the conflict and its aftermath. The museum is located near the Château de Falaise.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 31 27 14 14; www.caenlamer-tourisme.fr; 12 place St-Pierre; ☺ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar)

## Getting There & Around

### BOAT

**Brittany Ferries** (www.brittany-ferries.co.uk) links the English port of Portsmouth with Ouistreham, 14km northeast of Caen.

### BUS

Bus 20, run by **Nomad** (☎09 70 83 00 14; www.nomadcar14.fr; place Courtonne; ☺ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat), links the bus station (next to the train station) with Deauville and Trouville-sur-Mer (€4.90, two hours, four to seven daily); bus 20 also runs, along with the faster Prestobus 39, to Honfleur (bus 20, €4.90, 2½ hours, seven to 13 daily; express Prestobus 39 (€12.10, one hour, one or two daily) and Le Havre (bus 20, €4.90, 2½ hours; express Prestobus 39 €17, 1½ hours, six to 10 daily). When arriving or departing, your Nomad ticket is valid for an hour on Caen's local buses and trams.

**Twisto** (www.twisto.fr) bus 12EX links Caen with the ferry port of Ouistreham.

### TRAIN

The train station is 1.5km southeast of the Château de Caen.

**Bayeux** €6, 15 to 20 minutes, at least hourly  
**Cherbourg** €7 to €24, 1¼ hours, eight to 15 daily



**Deauville and Trouville** (via Lisieux) €10 to €16, 1¼ to two hours, six to 11 daily

**Paris Gare St-Lazare** €15 to €37, two hours, 13 daily

**Pontorson (Mont St-Michel)** €7 to €28, 2½ hours, three daily

**Rouen** €7 to €28, 1¾ hours, five or six daily

## Deauville

POP 3600

Good-looking and chic Deauville has been a playground for wealthy Parisians ever since it was founded by Napoléon III's half-brother, the Duke of Morny, in 1861. Expensive, flashy and brash, it's packed with designer boutiques, deluxe hotels and meticulously tended public gardens, and hosts two race-tracks (Deauville-La Touques Racecourse and Deauville-Clairefontaine Racecourse) and the high-profile Deauville American Film Festival.

The port town is 15km southwest of Honfleur, separated from equally popular Trouville-sur-Mer by the River Touques, which flows into the sea here. Deauville is hugely popular with denizens of Paris, who flock here year-round on weekends – and all week long from June to September and during Paris' school holidays.

### Activities

One of the most popular **beaches** in Normandy, which is hundreds of metres wide at low tide, attracts the well-heeled, who strut their stuff along the long boardwalk, lined with a row of 1920s beach huts.

### Festivals & Events

**Deauville American Film Festival** FILM

(☎02 31 14 14 74; [www.festival-deauville.com](http://www.festival-deauville.com); ☺early Sep) Deauville has a fair bit of Beverly Hills glitz and glamour, so it's an appropriate venue for a festival celebrating American cinema. Held for 10 days from early September, the event has been running since 1975; tickets cost €35 for one day or €160 for the whole festival. Students to the age of 26 can get tickets for one day/the whole festival for €16/110.

### Sleeping & Eating

There's not a great selection of hotels in Deauville – there's a superior selection in Trouville-sur-Mer next door. Prices are high-end and reservations are recommended in

July and August, and year-round on weekends and holidays; and lowest from October to Easter, except during Paris' school holidays, and most of the year on weekdays.

### L'Essentiel

FUSION **€€**

(☎02 31 87 22 11; 29 rue Mirabeau; lunch menus €27-32, dinner menus €66-75, mains €31-39; ☺noon-2pm & 7.30-11pm Thu-Mon) One of Deauville's top dining rooms, L'Essentiel serves up an imaginative blend of French ingredients with Asian and Latin American accents. Start off with codfish croquettes with sweet-potato aioli before moving on to scallops with broccoli yuzu, or wagyu flank steak with roasted turnips and smoked cashew juice.

### Le Comptoir et la Table

MODERN FRENCH **€€**

(☎02 31 88 92 51; [www.lecomptoiretlatable.fr](http://www.lecomptoiretlatable.fr); 1 quai de la Marine; mains €28-42; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm) Seasonal ingredients fresh from the market are here transformed into delicious dishes, some of Italian inspiration, served in appealingly maritime surroundings. Specialities include risotto with cream of truffles and scallops, and grilled lobster. A further plus is the attentive service. You can find Le Comptoir et la Table along the waterfront, about four blocks northwest of the Deauville-Trouville bridge.

### Information

**Deauville Tourist Office** (☎02 31 14 40 00; [www.indeauville.fr](http://www.indeauville.fr); quai de la Gare; ☺10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun)

### Getting There & Away

#### BUS

Deauville and Trouville's joint bus station is next to the Trouville-Deauville train station.

**Nomad** (☎09 70 83 00 14; [www.nomadcar14.fr](http://www.nomadcar14.fr)) Bus 20 goes to Caen (€4.90, two hours, seven to 12 daily), Honfleur (€2.50, 30 minutes, four to seven daily) and Le Havre (€4.90, 1¼ hours, four to seven daily).

#### TRAIN

The Trouville-Deauville train station is in Deauville, right next to Pont des Belges (the bridge to Trouville). Getting here usually requires a change at Lisieux.

**Caen** (via Lisieux) €16, 1¼ to two hours, six to 11 daily

**Paris Gare St-Lazare** €15 to €35, two hours, two to three direct trains daily

**Rouen** (via Lisieux) from €24, 1¼ to two hours, five to eight daily

## Trouville-sur-Mer

POP 4500

Unpretentious Trouville-sur-Mer – usually known simply as Trouville – is both a veteran beach resort, graced with impressive mansions from the late 1800s, and a working fishing port. Popular with middle-class French families, the town was frequented during the 19th century by painters and writers (eg Mozin and Flaubert), lured by the 2km-long sandy beach and the laid-back seaside ambience.


The port town is right next to Deauville and is similarly very popular with Parisians, who descend on Trouville at weekends and during the summer, vastly swelling the population.

### Sights & Activities

Trouville has a waterfront casino, a wide beach and the **Promenade des Planches** (boardwalk). At the latter, 583m long and outfitted with Bauhaus-style pavilions from the 1930s, you can swim in a freshwater swimming pool and windsurf; there's also a playground for kids. Trouville's most impressive 19th-century villas are right nearby.

### **Musée Villa Montabello**

MUSEUM

( 02 31 88 16 26; [www.trouville.fr](http://www.trouville.fr); 64 rue du Général Leclerc; adult/child €3/free, Sun free; ☺ 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Wed-Sun Jul-Sep, 2-5.30pm Wed-Sun, 10am-noon Sat & Sun Oct-early Dec & Feb-Jun) In a grand mansion dating to 1865, this municipal museum recounts Trouville's history and features works by Charles Mozin, Eugène Isabey and Charles Pecrus. The Musée Villa Montabello is situated 1km northeast of the tourist office, near the beach (and signed off the beach). The two towns and beach scenes of Trouville and Deauville play a starring role in the impressionist works in the small permanent collection.

### Sleeping

#### **La Maison Normande**

HOTEL €€

( 02 31 88 12 25; [www.la-maison-normande.com](http://www.la-maison-normande.com); 4 place de Lattre de Tassigny; d €68-160; 📞) The 17 rooms in this late 17th-century half-timbered Norman house vary considerably in size and style and are eminently serviceable, offering very good value indeed. Prices rise greatly on summer weekends. Breakfast is €8.50.

#### **Le Flaubert**

HOTEL €€

( 02 31 88 37 23; [www.flaubert.fr](http://www.flaubert.fr); rue Gustave Flaubert; r from €140; 📞) With a fresh and breezy seafront perspective and lovely, bright accommodation, Le Flaubert is a peach. Each room has its own personality, with ample wood, wicker chairs and the occasional pastel shade, but it's the position right by the beach that seals it. Sea-view rooms go like hot cakes, so book early in summer. Breakfast included; parking €12 per day.

#### **Le Fer à Cheval**

HOTEL €€

( 02 31 98 30 20; [www.hotel-trouville.com](http://www.hotel-trouville.com); 11 rue Victor Hugo; r €60-120, ste from €170; 📞) Enclosed in three beautiful turn-of-the-20th-century buildings, this welcoming 52-room hotel has comfortable, modern rooms with big double-glazed windows, stylish decor and bright bathrooms. It's situated two short blocks inland from the riverfront. Breakfast is either a buffet in the breakfast room or a continental version served in your room. Prices rise on Fridays and Saturdays.

### Eating

There are lots of restaurants and buzzing brasseries along riverfront bd Fernand Moureaux; many specialise in fresh fish, mussels and seafood. The area has a fantastic atmosphere on summer evenings. Inland, check out the small restaurants and cafes along and near rue d'Orléans and on pedestrianised rue des Bains.

#### **Marché aux Poissons**

SEAFOOD €

(Fish Market; 152 bd Fernand Moureaux; ☺ 9am-7pm) The sizeable Marché aux Poissons is *the* place in Trouville to head for fresh oysters with lemon and other maritime delicacies. Even if you don't have access to a kitchen, there's cooked peel-and-eat shrimp, mussels, sea urchins and scallops, to enjoy at a table out front. Located on the waterfront 250m south of the casino.

#### **Les Vapeurs**

BRASSERIE €€

( 02 31 88 15 24; [www.facebook.com/lesvapeurs](http://www.facebook.com/lesvapeurs); 160 bd Fernand Moureaux; mains €18-38; ☺ noon-11.30pm) Across from the fish market, Les Vapeurs has been going strong in Trouville since 1927. The huge menu is a showcase for seafood platters, oysters (from €15 for six), mussels in cream sauce, grilled haddock, lobster and classic brasserie fare (like steak tartare). It's served amid an old-time ambience, with black-and-white photos, a touch

of neon, and wicker chairs at the outdoor tables in front. There are dishes for the young ones too.

### Tivoli Bistro

BISTRO €€

(☎02 31 98 43 44; 27 rue Charles Mozin; menus from €30, mains €12-30; ☺12.15-1.15pm & 7.15-9.30pm Fri-Tue) You won't find a cosier place in Trouville than this much-loved hideaway, tucked away on a narrow side street a block inland from the riverfront. It's famous for its delicious *sole meunière* (Dover sole; €32.50) and exquisite homemade terrine, or you can just stop by for a quick serving of tasty *moules marinière* (€12).

## i Information

**Trouville Tourist Office** (☎02 31 14 60 70; www.trouillesurmer.org; 32 bd Fernand Moureaux; ☺10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun Sep-Jun, 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug) Has a free map of Trouville and sells map-brochures for two self-guided architectural tours of town and also two rural walks.

## Honfleur

POP 7400

Long a favourite with painters such as Monet, Normandy's most charming port town is a popular day-trip destination for Parisian families. Though the centre can be overrun with visitors on warm weekends and in summer, it's hard not to love the rugged maritime charm of the Vieux Bassin (Old Harbour), which evokes maritime Normandy of centuries past.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Honfleur was one of France's most important ports for commerce and exploration. Some of the earliest French expeditions to Brazil and Newfoundland began here, and in 1608 Samuel de Champlain set sail from Honfleur to found Québec City.

## 📍 Sights

Honfleur is spread around the roughly rectangular Vieux Bassin and, along its south-eastern side, the Enclos, the once-walled old town. Église Ste-Catherine is northwest of the Vieux Bassin (up the hill).

Honfleur is superb for aimless ambling, especially if you have a walking map from the tourist office. One option is to head north from the Lieutenance along quai des Passagers to **Jetée de l'Ouest** (Western Jetty), which forms the western side of the Avant Port, out to the broad mouth of the

Seine. Possible stops include the **Jardin des Personnalités**, a park featuring figures from Honfleur history; the beach; and **Naturospace** (☎02 31 81 77 00; www.naturospace.com; bd Charles V; adult/child €9/7; ☺10am-5pm Feb, Mar & Oct–mid-Nov, to 6.30pm Apr-Jun & Sep, to 7.30pm Jul & Aug), a lush greenhouse filled with free-flying tropical butterflies and birds that's situated 500m northwest of the Lieutenance.

The tourist office also has audioguides for a 1½-hour walking tour of the town.

**Le Pass Musées** (adult/child €13/10) is a bargain and gets you into all four municipal museums: Les Maisons Satie, Musée Eugène Boudin, Musée d'Ethnographie et d'Art Populaire Normand and Musée de la Marine.

### Vieux Bassin

HISTORIC SITE

The old harbour, with its bobbing pleasure boats, is Honfleur's focal point. On the western side, quai Ste-Catherine is lined with tall, taper-thin houses – many protected from the elements by slate tiles – dating from the 16th to 18th centuries. The **Lieutenance** (12 place Ste-Catherine), at the mouth of the old harbour, was once the residence of the town's royal governor. Just northeast of the Lieutenance is the **Avant Port**, home to Honfleur's dozen fishing vessels, which sell their catch at the **Marché au Poisson** (Fish Market; Jetée de Transit; ☺8am-noon or later Thu-Sun).

Small children will get a kick out of a ride on the carousel, situated opposite the Lieutenance.

### Église Ste-Catherine

CHURCH

(☎02 31 89 23 30; place Ste-Catherine; ☺9am-7pm) Initially intended as a temporary structure, this extraordinary wooden church was built by local shipwrights during the late 15th and early 16th centuries after its stone predecessor was destroyed during the Hundred Years War. Wood was used so money would be left over to strengthen the city's fortifications, though there are elements of stone (such as some of the pillar bases). From the inside, the remarkable twin naves and double-vaulted roof resemble two overturned ships' hulls.

### ★ Les Maisons Satie

MUSEUM

(☎02 31 89 11 11; www.musees-honfleur.fr; 67 bd Charles V & 90 rue Haute; adult/child €6.30/free; ☺10am-7pm Wed-Mon May-Sep, 11am-6pm Wed-Mon Oct-Apr) This unusual and intriguing

ing complex captures the whimsical spirit of the eccentric avant-garde composer Erik Satie (1866–1925), who lived and worked in Honfleur and was born in one of the two half-timbered *maisons Satie* (Satie houses). Visitors wander through the beguiling rooms, each concealing a surreal surprise, as a headset plays Satie's strangely familiar music. Les Maisons Satie is situated 350m northwest of the northern end of the Vieux Bassin.

### Musée Eugène Boudin

GALLERY

(☎02 31 89 54 00; www.musees-honfleur.fr; 50 rue de l'Homme de Bois; adult/child Jun-Oct €8/free, Nov-May €6/free; ☺10am-6pm Wed-Mon Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Jun & Sep, shorter hours Oct-Mar) This museum features superb 19th- and 20th-century paintings of Normandy's towns and coast, including works by Dubourg, Dufy and Monet. One room is devoted to Eugène Boudin, an early impressionist and marine painter (he was the son of a sailor), who was born in Honfleur in 1824 and whom Baudelaire called the 'king of skies' for his luscious skyscapes.

## Sleeping

### Hôtel Monet

HOTEL €

(☎02 31 89 00 90; www.hotel-monet-honfleur.com; rue Charriere du Puits; r €60-110;  ) Up the hill, out of the action and run by welcoming Sylvie and Christophe, this delightful small hotel has modern, neat rooms and a sweet little cafe in the lobby. All rooms come with a terrace, and the included breakfast can be served there or in your room.


### La Petite Folie

B&amp;B €€

(☎06 43 29 95 09; www.lapetitefolie-honfleur.com; 44 rue Haute; ) Penny Vincent, an American, and her French husband, Thierry, are the gracious hosts at this elegant home, built in 1830 and still adorned by the original stained glass and tile floors. Each room has a different design, with original artwork, and the best are filled with vintage furnishings and overlook the pretty garden. The lovely apartments have kitchenettes.

### La Cour Ste-Catherine


BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎07 87 04 49 16; www.coursaintecatherine.com; 74 rue du Puits; r €140-200;  ) With a lovely courtyard garden that flowers with tulips and *Magnolia grandiflora*, this charming and tranquil place has adorable rooms, some charmingly tucked away under the eaves of the garret. There are six

rooms and two apartments in all. Breakfast is included.

### Le Fond de la Cour

B&amp;B €€

(☎06 72 20 72 98; www.lefonddelacour.com; 29 rue Eugène Boudin; d €100-150, cottages €145-200; ) Watched over by a dog, a cat and some chickens, the accommodation here (including a studio and a cottage, which sleeps up to four) is light, airy and immaculate. The energetic Amanda, a native of Scotland, goes to great lengths to make you feel at home. Breakfast, with eggs, croissants, crêpes, bread and Normandy cheese, is included in all rates.

### À l'École Buissonnière

B&amp;B €€

(☎06 16 18 43 62; www.a-lecole-buissonniere.com; 4 rue de la Foulerie; d/ste from €100/120; ) Occupying a former girls' school built in the 1600s, this handsomely restored B&B has five luxurious rooms with antique wood furnishings, some with terrace for sun-catching. For lunch, stop by the *bar à fromages* (cheese bar) or ask your hosts to prepare a picnic lunch (€25). Guests can also borrow a bike (no charge). Parking is €10 per night.

### La Maison de Lucie

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎02 31 14 40 40; www.lamaisondelucie.com; 44 rue des Capucins; r from €180;  ) This marvellous and intimate nine-room, three-suite hideaway is a gem. Some bedrooms, panelled in oak, have Moroccan-tile bathrooms and fantastic views across the harbour to the Pont de Normandie. The shady terrace is a glorious place for a summer breakfast (from €14). A chic jacuzzi-spa (€40 for two people, 45 minutes) in the brick-vaulted cellar rounds things off. No lift.

## Eating

### Marché

MARKET €

(place Ste-Catherine; ☺8.30am-1pm Wed & Sat) Place Ste-Catherine hosts a traditional food market on Saturday and a *biologique* (organic) market on Wednesday. There's usually a vendor selling made-to-order crêpes. The market is next to Église Ste-Catherine.

### La Cidrerie

CRÊPES €

(☎02 31 89 59 85; www.creperie-lacidrerie-honfleur.com; 26 place Hamelin; mains €5-14; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Thu-Mon) For an inexpensive and casual meal, La Cidrerie is a superb choice, serving up a winning combination of piping-hot *galettes* (savory buckwheat crêpes) and fizzy Norman ciders served in bowls. You can choose from over a dozen

## CAMEMBERT COUNTRY

Some of the most enduring names in the pungent world of French *fromage* come from Normandy, including **Pont l'Évêque**, **Livarot** and, most famous of all, **Camembert**, all of which are named after towns south of Honfleur, on or near the D579.

It's thought that monks first began experimenting with cheesemaking in the Pays d'Auge area of Normandy sometime in the 11th century, but the present-day varieties didn't emerge until around the 17th century. The invention of Camembert is generally credited to Marie Harel, who was supposedly given the secret of soft cheesemaking by an abbot from Brie on the run from revolutionary mobs in 1790. Whatever the truth of the legend, the cheese was a huge success at the local market in Vimoutiers, and the *fabrication* of Camembert quickly grew from cottage production into a veritable industry. The distinctive round wooden boxes in which Camembert is wrapped have been around since 1890; they were designed by a local engineer to protect the soft disc of cheese during its bruising long-distance travel.

If you're interested in seeing how the cheese is made, you can take a tour of **Maison du Camembert** (☎ 02 33 12 10 37; www.maisonducamembert.com; adult/child €4/2; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-5pm Apr-Sep, closed Mon & Tue Mar & Oct, closed Nov-Feb), an early 19th-century farm restored by Président, one of the largest Camembert producers. It's in the centre of the town of Camembert, about 60km south of Honfleur.

savoury options, then finish with a dessert crêpe (try one with homemade caramel sauce). There's also warm cider – perfect if (when) the weather sours.

### Bistro des Artistes

FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 31 89 95 90; 14 place Berthelot; mains €20-28; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Thu-Tue) This small and dainty eatery near Église Ste-Catherine is managed by Anne-Marie Carneiro, who greets guests, waits tables and cooks. Service can therefore be a bit slow, but dishes are magnificent, and everything is made in-house, including the hearty bread brought to your table. The menu – on a chalkboard – changes frequently but always features beautifully turned-out dishes.

### L'Endroit

FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 31 88 08 43; www.restaurantlendroitihonfleur.com; 3 rue Charles et Paul Bréard; menus €29-35, mains €24-26; 🕒 noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Wed-Sun Sep-Jun, daily Jul & Aug; 🍷) In an eclectic and artfully designed space with an open kitchen, L'Endroit serves beautifully prepared dishes that showcase the bounty of Normandy's fields and coastline. The menu is brief, with just a few roasted meats and seafood dishes on offer, but the high-quality cooking, friendly service and appealing surrounds (including a secret roof terrace for smokers) wins plaudits.

### ★ La Fleur de Sel

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 02 31 89 01 92; www.lafleurdesel-honfleur.com; 17 rue Haute; menus from €34; 🕒 12.15-1.30pm &

7.15-9.30pm Wed-Sun) Honfleur-raised Vincent Guyon cooked in some of Paris' top kitchens before returning to his hometown to make good and open his own (now celebrated) restaurant. Guyon uses the highest-quality locally sourced ingredients and plenty of invention (with roast meats and wild-caught seafood featuring ginger and kaffir-lime vinaigrettes, Camembert foams and hazelnut tempura) in his beautifully crafted dishes. Reserve ahead.

### SaQuaNa

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 02 31 89 40 80; www.alexandre-bourdas.com; 22 place Hamelin; breakfast menus from €9, dinner menus from €100; 🕒 7am-9pm Wed-Sun) This celebrated two-Michelin-starred restaurant dazzles with its exquisite, brilliantly inventive dishes. Chef Alexandre Bourdas trained in Japan (*sakana* means fish in Japanese, but it also plays on French artistry in the realm of 'S*aveur* (flavour), Q*ualité* (quality) and N*ature*'), and he brings elements of the Far East to incredibly fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 31 89 23 30; www.honfleur-tourism.co.uk; quai Lepaulmier; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Sun Sep-Jun, 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jul & Aug; 🗺)

## i Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (quai Lepaulmier), two blocks east of the tourist office, has schedules posted in the window.



**Nomad** (☎09 70 83 00 14; www.nomadcar14.fr) Services include Deauville and Trouville-sur-Mer (€2.50, 30 minutes, four to seven daily), Caen (bus 20 €4.90, 2½ hours, seven to 13 daily; express Prestobus 39 €12.10, one hour, one or two daily) and Le Havre (€4.90, 30 minutes, four to six daily).

## MANCHE

The Manche *département* (www.manche-tourisme.com) encompasses the entire Cotentin Peninsula, stretching from Utah Beach northwest to Cherbourg and southwest to magnificent Mont St-Michel. The peninsula's northwestern corner has unspoiled stretches of rocky coastline sheltering tranquil bays and villages. The fertile inland areas, crisscrossed by hedgerows, produce an abundance of beef, dairy products and apples.

The British Crown dependencies of Jersey and Guernsey lie 22km and 48km offshore, respectively.

## Cherbourg

POP 36,500

At the tip of the Cotentin Peninsula, the port city of Cherbourg plays host to French warships, transoceanic cargo ships, cruise liners, yachts and passenger ferries from Britain and Ireland. It's a far cry from the romantic locale portrayed in Jacques Demy's 1964 musical film *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (The Umbrellas of Cherbourg), but it's home to an outstanding aquarium-sea museum.

During WWII, Cherbourg's port was destroyed by the Germans shortly after D-Day to prevent it from falling into Allied hands.

## Sights

### ★ Cité de la Mer

AQUARIUM

(☎02 33 20 26 69; www.citedelamer.com; Gare Maritime Transatlantique, allée du Président Menut; adult/child €19/12; ☀9.30am-6pm Sep-Jun, to 7pm Jul & Aug, closed Jan; 🚿) Cherbourg's art deco Gare Maritime Transatlantique (Transatlantic Ferry Terminal), built from 1928 to 1933, was designed so travellers could walk from their train directly to their ocean liner. These days it is still used by cruise ships such as the *Queen Mary 2*, but most of the complex houses a fine aquarium featuring Europe's deepest fish tank.

The complex is situated 1km northeast of the tourist office.

## 🍴 Sleeping

### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎02 33 78 15 15; www.fuaj.org; 55 rue de l'Abbaye; dm incl breakfast €24; ☎reception 9am-1pm & 4-11pm; 📶) Located 1km northwest of the tourist office, this excellent 99-bed hostel is housed in the French navy's old archives complex. Rooms have two to five beds, and there's a small kitchen for self-caterers. To get there, take bus 3 or 5 to the Chantier stop. It's closed for three weeks during the Christmas period.

### Hôtel de la Renaissance

HOTEL €

(☎02 33 43 23 90; www.hotel-rennaissance-cherbourg.com; 4 rue de l'Église; r €55-115; 📶) Staff here are welcoming, and most of the 12 large, well-kept rooms have great views of the port. The Renaissance is situated 400m northwest of the tourist office and by the Basilique de la Trinité. Reception closes at 9pm. Breakfast is €8; the garage is €6.50.

### ★ L'Erguillère

HOTEL €€

(☎02 33 52 75 31; www.hotel-lerguillere.com; 4 Port Racine, St-Germain-des-Vaux; r €90-160; 📶) The building itself is nothing special at this breezy nine-room place in Port Racine (reputed to be the smallest port in the country), but the astonishing sea views and adorable (smallish) bedrooms are. Owner Nicolas pushes the boat out to make guests feel at home. It's located above the small St Martin cove, 25km west of Cherbourg. Breakfast is €16.50.

## 🍴 Eating

Restaurants can be found along quai de Caligny, a block or two north of the tourist office, and along the streets leading inland from there, including rue Tour Carrée.

### Le Commerce

BRASSERIE €

(☎02 33 53 18 20; www.brasserie-du-commerce.fr; 42 rue François la Vieille; mains €9-16, menus €14-20; ☎8am-midnight Mon-Sat) When you (or your wallet) need a break from gourmet dining, head to this brash and boisterous brasserie, where pan-fried salmon, steak, chicken fajitas and other filling dishes are served in ample portions. It's a local favourite of all ages and open long hours, plus it's good value for money.

### Le Plouc 2

FRENCH €€

(☎02 33 01 06 46; https://leplouc2.business.site; 59 rue du Blé; menus €21-37; ☎noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Fri, 7-9.30pm Sat, noon-2pm Sun)

## SANTÉ!

Equal parts gallery, wine bar and taxi-dermy shop, **Le Ballon Rouge** (☎02 33 94 34 06; 9 rue du Port; ☉11am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Tue & Thu-Sat, 4-9pm Wed) is a bohemian outpost near the waterfront that embodies Cherbourg's most creative side. Stop in for a look at the changing artwork for sale, chat with the quirky owner, and enjoy an evening tipple amid half-deflated balloons, stuffed foxes and wildly eclectic tunes played on vinyl (from alt-rock to old French marching songs).

Locals keep coming back for Le Plouc 2's creative versions of traditional French favourites, prepared with seasonal ingredients and served in a cosy, wood-beamed dining room.

★ **Le Pily** GASTRONOMY €€€ (☎02 33 10 19 29; www.restaurant-le-pily.com; 39 rue Grande Rue; menus €56-100, mains from €18; ☉noon-1.45pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) Chef Pierre Marion is at the helm of the town's best restaurant, which has been serving Cherbourg gastronomes for over a decade. Expect a lively menu of seafood and meat dishes, with great care taken in the balancing of flavours and skilled presentation on the plate.

### **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 33 93 52 02; www.cherbourgtourisme.com; 14 quai Alexandre III; ☉9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Feb)

### **i** Getting There & Away

#### BOAT

Cherbourg's ferry terminal is 2km northeast of the tourist office.

**Brittany Ferries** (www.brittany-ferries.co.uk) Has services to the English ports of Poole and Portsmouth.

**Irish Ferries** (www.irishferries.com) Goes to Dublin.

**Stena Line** (www.stenaline.ie) Sails to Rosslare in Ireland.

#### TRAIN

The train station is at the southern end of the Bassin du Commerce (inner harbour), just west of Les Éléis shopping mall. Direct services go to the following destinations:

**Bayeux** €11 to €20, one hour, 15 daily Monday to Friday, eight to 10 daily Saturday and Sunday

**Caen** €14 to €24, 1¼ hours, eight to 15 daily

**Paris Gare St-Lazare** €20 to €52, 3¼ hours, eight daily Monday to Friday, four or five daily Saturday and Sunday

**Pontorson (Mont St-Michel)** €30, three hours, three to five daily (via Lison)

## Mont St-Michel

POP 35

It's one of France's most iconic images: the slender spires, stout ramparts and rocky outcrops of Mont St-Michel rising dramatically from the sea – or towering over slick, shimmering sands laid bare by the receding tide. Despite vast numbers of tourists, both the rock-top abbey and the narrow alleys below still manage to transport visitors back to the Middle Ages.

The bay around Mont St-Michel is famed for having Europe's highest tidal variations; the difference between low and high tides – only about six hours apart – can reach an astonishing 15m. The Mont is only completely surrounded by the sea every month or two, when the tidal coefficient is above 100 and high tide is above 14m (check online before you go, if this is what you want to see). Regardless of the time of year, the waters sweep in at an astonishing clip, said to be as fast as a galloping horse.

### History

Bishop Aubert of Avranches is said to have built a devotional chapel on the summit of the island in 708, following his vision of the Archangel Michael, whose gilded figure, perched on the vanquished dragon, crowns the tip of the abbey's spire. In 966, Richard I, Duke of Normandy, gave Mont St-Michel to the Benedictines, who turned it into a centre of learning and, in the 11th century, into something of an ecclesiastical fortress, with a military garrison at the disposal of both abbot and king.

In the 15th century, during the Hundred Years War, the English blockaded and besieged Mont St-Michel three times. The fortified abbey withstood these assaults and was the only place in western and northern France not to fall into English hands. After the Revolution, Mont St-Michel was turned into a prison. In 1966 the abbey was symbolically returned to the Benedictines as part

of the celebrations marking its millennium. Mont St-Michel and the bay became a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1979.

In recent decades, sand and silt built up hugely around the causeway – created in 1878 – linking the Mont to the mainland, threatening to turn the island into a permanent peninsula. To restore the site's 'maritime character', in 2014 the causeway was replaced by a 2km pedestrian and vehicle (primarily shuttle-bus) bridge designed to allow the tides and the River Couësson (kweh-no) – whose new *barrage* (dam) stores up high-tide water and then releases it at low tide – to flush away accumulated sediments. For the latest, see [www.projetmontsaintmichel.fr](http://www.projetmontsaintmichel.fr).

## Sights & Activities

The Mont's one main street, the **Grande Rue**, leads up the slope – past souvenir shops, eateries and a forest of elbows – to the abbey. The staircases and tiny passages that meander up the hill from the Grande Rue – one, opposite Restaurant La Croix Blanche, is just 50cm wide – will take you to the diminutive parish church, a tiny cemetery and other Mont-sized surprises. Finding your way around is easier if you pick up a detailed map of the Mont at the tourist office or the abbey's ticket counter.

Be prepared for lots of steps, some of them spiral – alas, it's one of the least accessible sites in France.

**★ Abbaye du Mont St-Michel** ABBEY  
(☎02 33 89 80 00; [www.abbaye-mont-saint-michel.fr](http://www.abbaye-mont-saint-michel.fr); adult/child incl guided tour €11/free; ☀9am-7pm May-Aug, 9.30am-6pm Sep-Apr, last entry 1hr before closing) The Mont's star attraction is the stunning ensemble crowning its top: the abbey. Most areas can be visited without a guide, but it's worth taking the 1¼-hour tour included in the ticket; English tours (usually) begin at 11am and 3pm from October to March, with three or four daily tours in spring and summer. You can also take a one-hour audioguide tour (€3), available in 10 languages. Admission is free the first Sunday of the month from November to March.

Benedictine monks hold services in the abbey at 6.50am from Tuesday to Friday; at 7.50am on Saturday, Sunday and holidays; at 11.15am on Sunday; at noon from Tuesday to Saturday; and at 6.20pm from Tuesday to Friday.

From Monday to Saturday from mid-July to August there are illuminated *nocturnes* (night-time visits) with live chamber music from 7pm to midnight.

**Abbatiale du Mont-Saint-Michel** CHURCH  
(Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey) Built on the rocky tip of the mountain cone, the transept rests on solid rock, while the nave, choir and transept arms are supported by the rooms below. This church is famous for its mix of architectural styles: the nave and south transept (11th and 12th centuries) are solid Norman Romanesque, while the choir (late 15th century) is Flamboyant Gothic.

**La Merveille** HISTORIC SITE  
The buildings on the northern side of the Mont are known as 'The Marvel'. The famous **cloître** (cloister) is surrounded by a double row of delicately carved arches resting on granite pillars. The early 13th-century, barrel-roofed **réfectoire** (dining hall) is illuminated by a wall of recessed windows – remarkable given that the sheer drop precluded the use of flying buttresses. The Gothic **Salle des Hôtes** (Guest Hall), dating from 1213, has two enormous fireplaces.

### WORTH A TRIP

#### COUTANCES

With its imposing cathedral and charming backstreets, the lovely old Norman town of Coutances makes for a nice detour on the way to Mont St-Michel from the D-Day beaches or Cherbourg. Its splendid, twin-towered Gothic **cathedral** (☎02 33 45 00 41; <http://cathedralecoutances.free.fr>; parvis Notre-Dame; ☀8am-7pm Nov-Mar, to 6pm Apr-Oct) **FREE** includes several 13th-century windows and a 14th-century fresco of St Michael skewering the dragon, and the nearby **Jardin des Plantes de Coutances** (☎02 33 19 08 10; 2 rue Quesnel Morinière; ☀9am-8pm Apr-Jun, to 11pm Jul & Aug, to 10pm Sep, to 6pm Oct, Feb & Mar, to 5pm Nov-Jan) **FREE** is a delight to meander, with its impeccably landscaped, flower-filled beds first planted in the mid-19th century.

TER trains connect Coutances with Caen, Cherbourg and Pontorson (the nearest station to Mont St-Michel).

# Mont St-Michel

## TIMELINE

**708** Inspired by a vision of **1 St Michael**, Bishop Aubert is inspired to 'build here and build high'.

**966** Richard I, Duke of Normandy, gives the Mont to the Benedictines. The three levels of the **2 abbey** reflect their monastic hierarchy.

**1017** Development of the abbey begins. Pilgrims arrive to honour the cult of St Michael. They walk barefoot across the mudflats and up the **3 Grande Rue** to be received in the almonry (now the bookshop).

**1203** The monastery is burnt by the troops of Philip Augustus, who later donates money for its restoration and the Gothic 'miracle'. **4 La Merveille**, is constructed.

**1434** The Mont's **5 ramparts** and fortifications ensure it withstands the English assault during the Hundred Years War. It is the only place in northern France not to fall.

**1789** After the Revolution, monasticism is abolished and the Mont is turned into a prison. During this period the **6 treadmill** is built to lift up supplies.

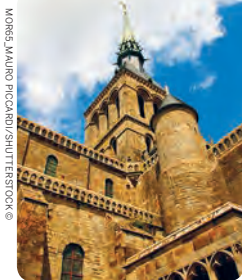
**1878** The Mont is linked to the mainland by a causeway.

**1979** The Mont is declared a Unesco World Heritage Site.

**2014** The causeway is replaced by a **7 bridge**.

## TOP TIPS

- ➔ Pick up a picnic lunch at the supermarket in La Caserne to avoid the Mont's overpriced fast food.
- ➔ Allow 30 to 45 minutes to an hour to get from the parking lot in La Caserne to the Mont.
- ➔ If you step off the island pay close attention to the tides – they can be dangerous and whisk you away.
- ➔ Don't forget to pick up the Abbey's excellent audioguide – it tells some great stories.



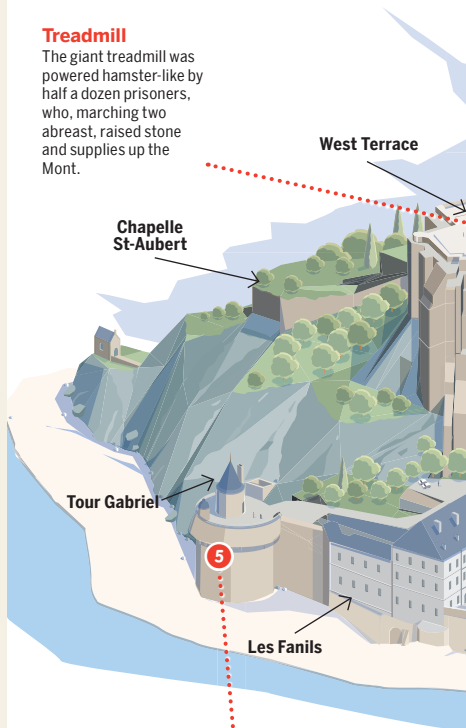
MORIS MAURO PICCARO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## Abbey

The abbey's three levels reflect the monastic order: monks lived isolated in church and cloister, the abbot entertained noble guests at the middle level, and lowly pilgrims were received in the basement. Tip: night visits run from mid-July to August, while admission is free the first Sunday of the month November to March.

## Treadmill

The giant treadmill was powered hamster-like by half a dozen prisoners, who, marching two abreast, raised stone and supplies up the Mont.



JULIA KUZNETSOVA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## Ramparts

The Mont was also a military garrison surrounded by machicolated and turreted walls, dating from the 13th to 15th centuries. The single entrance, Porte de l'Avancée, ensured its security in the Hundred Years War. Tip: Tour du Nord (North Tower) has the best views.

## BEST VIEWS

The view from the Jardin des Plantes in nearby Avranches is unique, as are the panoramas from Pointe du Grouin du Sud near the village of St-Léonard.

## St Michael Statue & Bell Tower

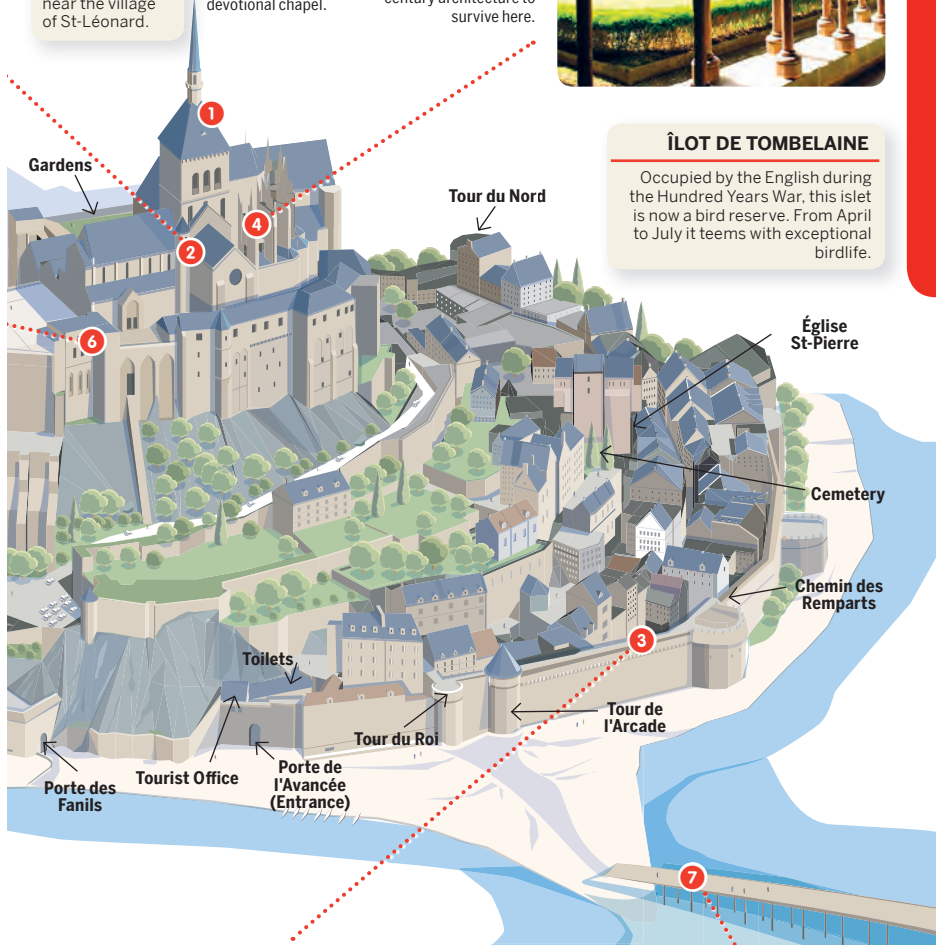
A golden statue of the winged St Michael looks ready to leap heavenward from the bell tower. He is the patron of the Mont, having inspired St Aubert's original devotional chapel.

## La Merveille

The highlights of La Merveille are the vast refectory hall lit through embrasured windows, the Knights Hall with its elegant ribbed vaulting, and the cloister (above), which is one of the purest examples of 13th-century architecture to survive here.



ELINA ELISEVA/SHUTTERSTOCK



## ÎLOT DE TOMBELAINE

Occupied by the English during the Hundred Years War, this islet is now a bird reserve. From April to July it teems with exceptional birdlife.

## Grande Rue

The main thoroughfare of the small village below the abbey, Grande Rue has charm despite its rampant commercialism. Don't miss the famous Mère Poulard shop here, for souvenir cookies.



SARAHW33/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Bridge

In 2014 the Mont's 136-year-old causeway was replaced by a bridge designed to allow seawater to circulate and thus save the island from turning into a peninsula.



Other features to look out for include the **promenoir** (ambulatory), with one of the oldest ribbed vaulted ceilings in Europe, and the **Chapelle de Notre Dame sous Terre** (Underground Chapel of Our Lady), one of the abbey's oldest rooms, rediscovered in 1903.

The masonry used to build the abbey was brought to the Mont by boat and pulled up the hillside using ropes.

### ★ **Chemin des Remparts** WALKING

For spectacular views of the bay and people trudging through the mud at low tide, you can walk along the top of the entire eastern section of the Mont's ramparts, from Tour du Nord (North Tower) to the Porte du Roy.

### 👉 **Tours**

When the tide is out (the tourist office has tide tables), you can walk all the way around Mont St-Michel, a distance of about 1km, with a guide (doing so on your own is very risky). Straying too far from the Mont can be dangerous: you could get stuck in wet sand – from which Norman soldiers are depicted being rescued in one scene of the Bayeux Tapestry – or be overtaken either by the incoming tide or by water gushing from the dam's eight sluice gates.

Experienced outfits offering guided walks into – or even across – the bay are based across the bay from Mont St-Michel in Genêts. Local tourist offices have details of other guiding companies. Reserve ahead. A good choice is **Découverte de la Baie du Mont-Saint-Michel** (☎02 33 70 83 49; www.decouvertebaie.com; 1 rue Montoise, Genêts; adult/child from €10/5.50; ☀9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm daily Apr-Oct, Mon-Fri Nov-Mar).

### 🛏 **Sleeping**

The most convenient hotels – most run by formulaic chains – are in La Caserne, 2km south of the Mont itself. The only way to drive into La Caserne is to get a gate code when you make your reservation. If you stay here or in a nearby B&B, you'll save the parking fee. If you stay up on the Mont itself, you'll have to leave your car in La Caserne.

**Camping du Mont St-Michel** CAMPGROUND €  
(☎02 33 60 22 10; www.camping-montsaintmichel.com; 35 rte du Mont Saint-Michel; campsites from €21; ☀Mar-Oct; 📞) Located in La Caserne, this campground puts you well within walking distance of Mont St-Michel. Placing a tent here costs €15 for one person and €18

for two; in the high season, it's €4 more per tent.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** HOSTEL €  
(Centre Duguesclin; ☎02 33 60 18 65; www.auberge.pontorson.fr; 21 bd du Général Patton, Pontorson; dm €15-17; ☀reception 8am-noon & 5-8pm, hostel closed Oct-Mar; 📞) This 63-bed hostel has kitchen facilities and four- to six-bed rooms. It's not located on Mont St-Michel but 9km away in Pontorson, linked to the rest of France by train and to the Mont by shuttle bus. Breakfast is €3.50.

**Vent des Grèves** B&B €  
(☎Estelle 02 33 48 28 89; www.ventdesgreves.com; 27 rte de la Côte, Ardevon; s/d from €50/60; 📞) Offering outstanding value, this friendly, family-run B&B has five modern, simply furnished rooms with magical views of the Mont. It's located an easily walkable 1km east of the shuttle stop in La Caserne.

**La Bourdatière** B&B €  
(☎02 33 68 11 17; www.la-bourdatiere.com; 8 rue Maurice Desfeux, Beauvoir; r from €45; ☀Apr-Oct; 📞) This charming stone farmhouse in Beauvoir village, around an hour on foot from Mont St-Michel, is excellent value. The decor of the four rooms is nothing special, but the place is comfy enough, and the rural setting and blissful gardens are tough to top, especially when compared to the more identikit hotels.

★ **La Jacotière** B&B €€  
(☎02 33 60 22 94; www.lajacotiere.fr; 46 rue de la Côte, Ardevon; r €90-130; 📞) Built as a farmhouse in 1906, this superbly situated and very popular family-run B&B has five comfortable rooms and one studio apartment. With views of Mont St-Michel, it's situated just 300m east of the shuttle stop in La Caserne.

**Hotel Gabriel** HOTEL €€  
(☎02 33 60 14 13; https://hotels.le-mont-saint-michel.com; rte du Mont St-Michel; r €100-175; 📞) Hotel Gabriel serves up lodging with a dash of style, courtesy of its boldly painted (if somewhat small) rooms with touches of pop art sprinkled about. The location is unbeatable: it's in La Caserne, just steps from the causeway (and shuttle stop) leading to Mont St-Michel.

**Hôtel Du Guesclin** HOTEL €€  
(☎02 33 60 14 10; www.hotelduguesclin.com; Grande Rue; r €105-145; ☀closed Wed night & Thu Apr-Jun & Oct-mid-Nov, hotel closed mid-Nov-Mar;

☎) One of the most affordable hotels on the Mont itself, the *Hôtel Du Guesclin* (*geck-la*) has 10 old-style rooms, five with priceless views of the bay. Not all rooms have wi-fi access, so check.

## Eating

The Grande Rue is jammed with crêperies and sandwich shops. Many of the eating options on the Mont are overpriced, overbooked and overbushy.

**Creperie-Boutique La Sirène** CRÊPES €  
 (📍 02 33 60 08 60; Grande Rue; mains €4-12; ☎ 10am-6pm) This decent crêperie is located near the bottom of the Grande Rue, up a 15th-century staircase from the souvenir shop.

**Restaurant Les Terrasses de la Baie** FRENCH €€  
 (📍 02 33 89 02 02; www.lemontsaintmichel.info; Grand Rue; menus €19-30; ☎ noon-2pm & 7-9pm) With high ceilings and big windows (and part of the *Hôtel Les Terrasses Poulard*), this bright and buzzing, always packed eatery serves up the usual assortment of Normandy bistro classics, as well as *galettes*. The waterfront views are a nice bonus.

## Information

**La Caserne Tourist Office** (📍 02 14 13 20 15; www.bienvenueaumontsaintmichel.com; ☎ 10am-6pm) Just before you approach the bridge, this is a handy port of call for brochures and info. Run by the company that built the bridge and parking lot, it has various displays on Mont St-Michel and a film, plus lots of brochures and an ATM. Lockers are not available.

**Mont St-Michel Tourist Office** (📍 02 33 60 14 30; www.ot-montsaintmichel.com; Grande Rue; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Sun Apr, May, Jun & Sep, shorter hours rest of year; ☎) Just as you enter *Porte de l'Avancée*, this place is up to your left. You can check the tide tables here, change money and buy a map of the Mont (€3). Next door are toilets and an ATM.

## Getting There & Away

For all manner of details on getting to the Mont, see [www.bienvenueaumontsaintmichel.com](http://www.bienvenueaumontsaintmichel.com).

### BUS

Intercity buses stop next to the Mont's parking lot in La Caserne, very near the shuttles to the Mont.

A bus (every hour or two, more frequently in July and August) links La Caserne (called 'Mont St-Michel' on schedules) with the village of Beauvoir (€1, five minutes) and the train station in Pontorson (€3, 20 minutes); times are coordinated with the arrival in Pontorson of some trains from Caen and Rennes.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Visitors who arrive by car must leave their vehicles in one of the land-side parking lots (€9.10 to €14.20 per 24 hours) situated a few hundred metres east of La Caserne's hotel strip. If you can find space, you can always park your car for free further away in the village of Beauvoir, but it's a much longer walk.

### TRAIN

The town of Pontorson, 7km south of the La Caserne parking area, is the area's main rail hub, connected to Mont St-Michel by shuttle bus (€3.20).

**Bayeux** €7 to €24, 2¼ hours, three daily

**Caen** €7 to €28, 2¼ hours, three daily

**Cherbourg** €32, 2½ to 3½ hours, three to five daily (via Lison)

**Rennes** €15, 50 minutes, three or four daily

## Getting Around

The parking area next to La Caserne is 2.5km south of Mont St-Michel. To get from there to the Mont, you can either walk or take the shuttle bus (free with your car-park ticket) that lets you off 300m from the Mont's main gate. Shuttles run 24 hours a day – regularly from 7am to midnight, when summoned by phone after that (call 02 14 13 20 15). Count on spending 45 minutes to an hour to get from the parking lot to the abbey. A shuttle bus (€3) also runs from the train station in Pontorson to Mont St-Michel.

A horse-drawn carriage from the La Caserne Tourist Office area to Mont St-Michel is €6.10.



KARTOUCHEV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



**1.** German guns, Longues-sur-Mer (p262) **2.** Caen-Normandie Mémorial (p263) **3.** Bayeux War Cemetery (p255) **4.** Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial (p258)



STEPHEN BRIDGER/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

2

## Normandy D-Day Sites

HUANG ZHENG/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

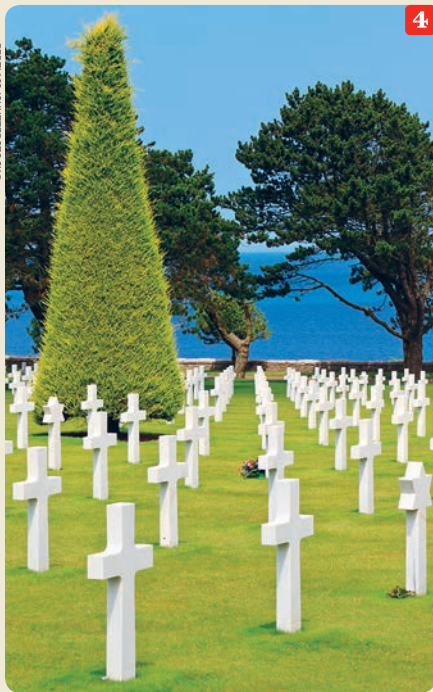


The bravery and sacrifice of Operation Overlord – the 6 June 1944 Allied landings known in history as D-Day – still pervades modern-day Normandy, and nowhere more so than on the broad, quiet beaches: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. Still dotted with German pillboxes, these beaches were where American, British, Canadian, Commonwealth, Polish, Free French and other soldiers stormed ashore in the early morning, beginning the long-awaited liberation of France.

As you gaze out over the brilliant golden sand from the Normandy American Cemetery, a place of solemn pilgrimage, or the Channel coast's quiet seaside villages, it's hard to picture the death, slaughter and heroism that took place here – but a number of excellent museums help put the world-changing events into historical and human context.

4

BERITLIZ/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



### UNMISSABLE D-DAY SITES

**Omaha Beach** (p258) Site of the landings' most ferocious fighting, 'Bloody Omaha' shouldn't be missed.

**Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial** (p258) This vast, transfixing war cemetery is extraordinarily moving.

**Caen-Normandie Mémorial** (p263) This astonishing museum is the best single museum devoted to the Battle of Normandy.

**Bayeux War Cemetery** (p255) The largest of Normandy's Commonwealth war cemeteries is next to a memorial for the many men whose remains were never found.

**Longues-sur-Mer Battery** (p262) The sole surviving large-calibre guns still visible, and visitable, in Normandy.



## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

3.34 million

### CAPITAL CITY

Rennes

### BEST OYSTERS

Marché aux Huîtres  
(p291), Cancale

### BEST GALETTES/ CRÊPES

Le Comptoir Breizh  
Café (p287), St-Malo

### BEST COASTAL HIKE

Pointe du Grouin  
(p290),  
Ille-et-Vilaine



### WHEN TO GO

#### Jun & early Jul

Enjoy the beaches,  
outdoor adventures  
and sunshine ahead  
of the crowds.

#### Jul & Aug

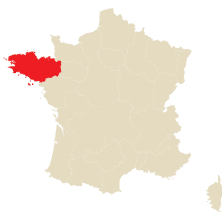
Plenty  
of highly colourful  
festivals and events  
await you throughout  
the region.

#### Dec-Feb

Be  
overawed by the  
elements during a  
wild winter storm  
along the Finistère  
coastline.







## Brittany

**B**rittany (Breizh in Breton) is a region for explorers. Its wild, dramatic coastline, medieval towns and dense forests make an excursion here well worth the detour. This is a land of prehistory and mysticism, proud tradition and culinary wealth. Brittany has a wonderfully undiscovered feel once you go beyond world-famous sights such as St-Malo, Dinard and Dinan. Unexpected gems – including the little-known towns of Roscoff, Quimper and Vannes, the megaliths of Carnac, the rugged coastlines of Finistère, the Presqu'île de Crozon and the Morbihan coast – reveal there's more to Brittany than delicious crêpes and homemade cider. Its much-loved islands are also big draws – don't miss Île d'Ouessant and the aptly named Belle Île.

### INCLUDES

St-Malo.....	283	Île d'Ouessant.....	299
Dinard.....	288	Quimper.....	304
Cancale.....	290	Concarneau.....	306
Dinan.....	291	Golfe du Morbihan...309	
Finistère.....	294	Carnac.....	309
Roscoff.....	294	Belle Île.....	313
Morlaix.....	296	Vannes.....	316
Brest.....	297	Rennes.....	320

## Brittany Highlights

- 1 St-Malo** (p283) Strolling along historic ramparts at sunset with panoramic views.
- 2 Megaliths** (p312) Cycling past prehistoric megaliths around Carnac.
- 3 Coastlines** (p301) Exploring the scenic Presqu'île de Crozon and Pointe du Raz.
- 4 Belle Île** (p313) Getting away from it all and frolicking in sun and sea.
- 5 Vannes** (p316) Soaking up the history and sights of this vibrant coastal city.
- 6 Île de Batz** (p295) Hiking and biking on this car-free little island.
- 7 Quiberon** (p312) Beach-hopping along the wild and sublime Côte Sauvage.
- 8 Josselin** (p318) Touring the turreted medieval castle of this fairy-tale forest village.
- 9 Cancale** (p291) Tucking into freshly shucked oysters at a casual harbourfront kiosk.
- 10 Dinan** (p291) Getting lost in the higgledy-piggledy old town.



## History

Brittany's earliest known neolithic tribes left a legacy of megalithic standing stones called menhirs and dolmens clustered across the region that continue to baffle historians. Celts arrived in the 6th century BCE, naming their new homeland Armorica (from *armor*, 'land near the sea') and the region was conquered by Julius Caesar in 56 BCE. Following the withdrawal of the Romans in the 5th century CE, another influx of Celts – driven from what is now Britain and Ireland by the Anglo-Saxon invasions – settled in Brittany, bringing Christianity with them.

In the 9th century, Brittany's national hero Nominoë (Nevenoe in Breton) revolted against Charles the Bald and French rule. Wedged between two more-powerful kingdoms, the duchy of Brittany was continually contested by France and England until a series of strategic royal weddings finally saw the region become part of France in 1532.

However, Brittany has managed to retain a separate regional identity. A drive for cultural and especially linguistic renewal is afoot, and a consciousness exists of Brittany's place within a wider Celtic culture embracing the other members of the Celtic League ([www.celticleague.net](http://www.celticleague.net)): Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and the Isle of Man.

## Getting There & Away

Ferries link St-Malo with Portsmouth and, via the Channel Islands, Poole in England. From Roscoff there are ferries to Plymouth as well as Cork and Rosslare in Ireland. Alternatively, airports in Brest, Quimper, Rennes, Dinard and, further to the south, Nantes, serve the UK and Ireland, as well as other European and domestic destinations.

Brittany's major towns and cities have good rail connections, including the high-speed TGV line between Le Mans and Rennes, but routes leave the interior poorly served. A handy website for calculating transit in the region whether by train, bus, boat, car or even bicycle is [www.mobibreizh.bzh](http://www.mobibreizh.bzh) (English, French and Breton).

The bus network is extensive, if generally infrequent, meaning that your own wheels are the best way to see most areas, particularly out-of-the-way destinations.

With gently undulating, well-maintained roads, an absence of road tolls and relatively little traffic outside the major towns, driving in Brittany is a real pleasure. Cycling is also extremely popular, and bike-rental places are usually easy to find.

## NORTH COAST

Enveloped by belle époque beach resorts, fishing villages and wave-lashed headlands, Brittany's central northern coast splendidly spans the *départements* of Ille-et-Vilaine and Côtes d'Armor. Verdant shallows give rise to the name Côte d'Émeraude (Emerald Coast) to the east; westwards, boulders bluish pink in profusion along the Côte de Granit Rose, while a scattering of charming offshore islands begs for exploration.

## St-Malo

POP 47,362

The enthralling mast-filled port town of St-Malo (Sant Malou in Breton) is a dramatic sight. With one of the world's greatest tidal ranges, brewing storms under blackened skies see waves lash the top of the ramparts ringing its beautiful walled city. Hours later, the blue sky merges with the deep cobalt sea as the tide recedes, exposing broad beaches and land bridges to small outcrop islands.

Construction of the walled city's fortifications began in the 12th century. The town became a key port during the 17th and 18th centuries as a base for both merchant ships and government-sanctioned privateers (basically pirates) against the constant threat of the English.

## Sights

### Intra-Muros

The tangle of streets in the walled city of St-Malo, known as Intra-Muros ('within the walls'), are a highlight of a visit to Brittany. Grand merchants' mansions and sea captains' houses line the narrow lanes, and open squares are tucked in its heart. For the best panoramas, stroll along the top of the **ramparts** and over the various *portes* (gates) that encircle the town.

During August 1944, the battle to drive German forces out of St-Malo destroyed around 80% of the old city, which has since been painstakingly restored.

### Château de St-Malo

CASTLE

( 02 99 40 71 11; [www.ville-saint-malo.fr/les-musees](http://www.ville-saint-malo.fr/les-musees); place Chateaubriand; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) The Château de St-Malo was built by the dukes of Brittany in the 15th and 16th centuries, and its keep, with walls 7m thick,

## St-Malo St-Servan

0 — 200 m  
0 — 0.1 miles



BRITANNY ST-MALO

## St-Malo St-Servan

## 📍 Sights

- 1 Fort de la Cité d'Alet ..... A4
- 2 Fort National ..... B1
- 3 Île du Grand Bé & Fort du Petit Bé ..... A2
- 4 Mémorial 39–45 ..... A4
- 5 Plage des Bas Sablons ..... B4
- 6 Tour Solidor ..... A5

## 🛏 Sleeping

- 7 Malouinière Le Valmarin ..... B5

offers eye-popping views of the old city. Much of the castle was closed at the time of

research as its local history museum is being converted into the **Musée d'Histoire Maritime de St-Malo**, due to open in 2022.

## Cathédrale St-Vincent

CATHEDRAL

(☎02 99 40 82 31; [www.cathedralesaintmalo.fr](http://www.cathedralesaintmalo.fr); place Jean de Châtillon; ☀9.30am–6pm) The city's ecclesiastical centrepiece was constructed between the 12th and 18th centuries. During the ferocious fighting of August 1944, the cathedral was badly mauled, with much of its original structure (including its south transept and spire) destroyed. The cathedral was rebuilt and reconsecrated in 1971. A mosaic plaque on the floor of the nave marks the spot where Jacques Cartier received the blessing of the bishop of St-Malo before his 'voyage of discovery' to Canada in 1535.

## La Demeure de Corsaire

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Hôtel Magon; ☎02 99 56 09 40; [www.demeure-decorsaire.com](http://www.demeure-decorsaire.com); 5 rue d'Asfeld; adult/child €5.50/4.50; ☀10–11.30am Mon–Sat, 2.30–5pm daily Jul, Aug & school holidays, to 3pm Tue–Sun rest of year, closed Dec & Jan) This 18th-century *hôtel particulier* (private mansion) and historic monument was built in 1725 for *corsair* (privateer) François-Auguste Magon de la Lande, one-time head of the French East India Company. Guided tours in French only, with description cards available in English.

## 👁 Outside the Walls

Districts with sights outside Intra-Muros include Paramé to the east and the pretty fishing port of St-Servan, 2km to the south.

## Fort National

RUINS

(☎06 72 46 66 26; [www.fortnational.com](http://www.fortnational.com); adult/child €5/3; ☀Easter holidays, Jun–Sep) The northern stretch of the walled city's ramparts looks across to the remains of this former prison built by Vauban in 1689. Standing atop a rocky outcrop, the fort is only accessible at low tide on a 35-minute guided tour. Check online or with the tourist office for exact times.

## Fort de la Cité d'Alet

FORT

(rue St-Pierre, St-Servan; ☀24hr) **FREE** Constructed in the mid-18th century, this fort was used as a German base during WWII. One of the bunkers now houses the **Mémorial 39–45** (☎02 99 82 41 74; [www.ville-saint-malo.fr/les-musees](http://www.ville-saint-malo.fr/les-musees); adult/child €6/3, incl Musée Jacques Cartier €10/5; ☀guided visits 10.15am, 11am, 2pm, 3pm & 4.30pm Jul & Aug, 2.30pm, 3.15pm & 4.30pm Tue–Sun Apr–Jun & Sep, shorter hours Oct), which

depicts St-Malo's violent WWII history and liberation in an evocative and moving way. There's a 45-minute film in French on the Battle of St-Malo (not shown on every tour). Some guided visits are conducted in English; call ahead to confirm times.

### Tour Solidor

TOWER

This St-Servan landmark dates to 1382; don't miss the superb views from the top of the tower. It houses the Musée International du Long Cours Cap-Hornier, which presents the life of the hardy sailors who followed the dangerous Cape Horn route around the southern tip of South America. The tower was closed for renovation at the time of research and due to reopen in 2022.

### Musée Jacques Cartier

MUSEUM

(☎02 99 40 97 73; [www.ville-saint-malo.fr/les-musees](http://www.ville-saint-malo.fr/les-musees); rue David MacDonald Stewart, Paramé; adult/child €6/3, incl Mémorial 39–45 €10/5; 🕒 tours 10am–noon & 2.30–6pm Jun–Sep, at 10am & 3pm Oct–May) This 16th-century manor house was the home of controversial explorer Jacques Cartier (1491–1557), who mapped the St Lawrence River and whose explorations laid the basis for France's claim to Canada. The museum illustrates the explorer's life, with visits by one-hour guided tour only (in French, but translation sheets are available).

### Grand Aquarium

AQUARIUM

(☎02 99 21 19 00; [www.aquarium-st-malo.com](http://www.aquarium-st-malo.com); av du Général Patton, Paramé; adult/child €17/12; 🕒 9.30am–9pm mid-Jul–mid-Aug, to 8pm early Jul & late Aug, 10am–6pm or 7pm mid-Jan–Jun & Sep–Dec; 📺; 📺1) Containing over 600 species of marine creature, this very popular aquarium about 5km south of the city centre features a 'Nautibus' ride – a simulated descent aboard an underwater submarine – and a *bassin tactile* (touch pool), where kids can touch rays, crabs and turbot. The exhibits on local marine life, tropical reefs and mangrove forests are also very strong.

### Beaches

You can splash in the protected tidal swimming pool west of the city walls at **Plage de Bon Secours** or climb its ladder to jump off into the sea. It's also a great place to catch sunset. The **Plage des Bas Sablons** is south of the Intra-Muros in the fishing port of St-Servan. The much larger **Grande Plage** stretches northeast. Less-crowded is **Plage de Rochebonne**, another 1km to the northeast.

### DON'T MISS

#### LOW-TIDE COASTAL ENCOUNTER

At low tide, cross the Plage de Bon Secours to walk out via Porte des Bés to **Île du Grand Bé & Fort du Petit Bé** (☎06 08 27 51 20; fort guided tours adult/child €5/3; 🕒 fort by reservation, depending on tides & weather), the rocky islet where the great St-Malo-born, 18th-century writer Chateaubriand is buried. About 100m beyond Grand Bé is the privately owned, Vauban-built, 17th-century Fort du Petit Bé. Once the tide rushes in, the causeway remains impassable for about six hours; check tide times with the tourist office.

### Tours

#### Compagnie Corsaire

BOATING

(☎08 25 13 81 00; [www.compagniecorsaire.com](http://www.compagniecorsaire.com); Quai de Dinan; 🕒 Apr–Sep) Compagnie Corsaire runs four-hour *pêche en mer* (deep-sea fishing) trips (€44). Boat tours and ferries leave from outside the Porte de Dinan and include: Bay of St-Malo (adult/child €21.20/12.90, 1½ hours), Cap Fréhel (€31.50/18.90, 2½ hours), Dinan (€33.50/20.10, 2¾ hours), Île Cézembre (€15.90/9.50, 20 minutes) and Îles Chauvaisey (€34.80/20.90, 1¼ hours). Check online for schedules.

### Sleeping

#### Intra-Muros

##### Hôtel San Pedro

HOTEL €

(☎02 99 40 88 57; [www.sanpedro-hotel.com](http://www.sanpedro-hotel.com); 1 rue Ste-Anne; s €53–60, tw €73, d €66–81; 📺) Tucked at the back of the old city, the San Pedro has a cool, crisp, neutral-toned decor with subtle splashes of yellow paint, friendly service, great breakfast (€9.50), private parking (€10) and a few bikes available for free. It features 12 rooms on four floors served by a small lift; two rooms (402 and 403) come with partial sea views.

##### Hôtel Le Nautilus

HOTEL €

(☎02 99 40 42 27; [www.hotel-lenautilus-saint-malo.com](http://www.hotel-lenautilus-saint-malo.com); 9 rue de la Corne de Cerf; s €52–88, d €59–98, tw €68–104, tr €82–110, f €92–116; 🕒 Feb–Nov; 📺) With efficient, friendly service and 15 comfortable though smallish rooms, this super-central two-star property offers





**★ Hôtel Quic en Groigne** HOTEL €€  
 (☎ 02 99 20 22 20; www.quic-en-groigne.com; 8 rue d'Estrées; d/f €91/121; ☺ mid-Feb–Dec; 📶) This lovely hotel has 15 clean and simple-style rooms and affords not only good value, but also excellent service and an ideal location on a quiet, old-town street just a short walk from a beach. The underground parking (€17; five spaces only) is a plus.

**La Maison des Armateurs** HOTEL €€  
 (☎ 02 99 40 87 70; www.maisondesarmateurs.com; 6 Grand' Rue; d €99-295, f/ste €180/430; ☺ closed Dec; 📶) Enthusiastically run by a helpful French-American couple, this sassy 45-room four-star hotel is all sexy minimalism: stylish furniture throughout, gleaming bathrooms with power showers, and cool chocolate, pale orange and neutral grey tones. Families can plump for the super-sized suites.

## Outside the Walls

**Auberge de Jeunesse – Éthic Étapes Patrick Varangot** HOSTEL €  
 (☎ 02 99 40 29 80; www.centrevarangot.com; 37 av du Révérend Père Umbricht, Paramé; dm incl breakfast €26.30; 📶; 🚻) This efficient hostel scores high on facilities, with a well-equipped communal kitchen, a restaurant open for lunch and dinner on weekdays, a bar, laundry service, private parking and free sports facilities. It has 285 beds, with each of the 96 rooms accommodating two to five beds and an en-suite bathroom. It's a five-minute walk from the beach.

**★ Malouinière Le Valmarin** HISTORIC HOTEL €€  
 (☎ 02 99 81 94 76; www.levallmarin.com; 7 rue Jean XXIII, St-Servan; s €89-129, d €98-169, f €149-230; 📶) If you're yearning for an aristocratic overlay to your St-Malo experience then this peaceful 18th-century *malouinière* (shipowner's mansion) should do the job nicely. It has 12 high-ceilinged rooms dressed in late 19th-century style, a wonderful bar and glorious gardens full of flowers and shade trees. It's a soothing escape from the St-Malo hubbub, on the edge of the village-like St-Servan quarter.

## Eating

Market mornings are Tuesday and Friday in the Intra-Muros at the **Halle au Blé** (☺ 8am-1pm Tue & Fri) market hall.

**Le Comptoir Breizh Café** CRÊPES €  
 (☎ 02 99 56 96 08; www.breizhcafe.com; 6 rue de l'Orme; crêpes €14.50-19.50; ☺ noon-2pm &

7-10.30pm Wed-Sun) This will be one of your most memorable meals in Brittany, from the delicious menu to the excellent service. The creative chef combines traditional Breton ingredients and *galette* and crêpe styles with Japanese flavours, textures and presentation, where seaweed meets local ham, organic eggs and roast duck. It's all about *les crêpes autremont* ('crêpes as they used to be'), as they say here.

**L'Absinthe** MODERN FRENCH €€  
 (☎ 02 99 40 26 15; www.restaurant-absinthe-cafe.fr; 1 rue de l'Orme; 2/3-course lunch menu €15/19, dinner menu €29-42, mains €19-28; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Sun-Thu, to 9.30pm Fri & Sat) Secreted away along a quiet St-Malo street, this superb eatery is housed in a 17th-century building. Ingredients fresh from the market are whipped into shape by talented chef Salomé Hadida and served in cosy, alluring surrounds. The wine list is another hit, with an all-French cast from white to red and rosé. The menu for vegetarians is €29 and for little gastronomes €13.

**Le Cambusier** MODERN FRENCH €€  
 (☎ 02 99 20 18 42; www.cambusier.fr; 6 rue des Cordiers; mains €21-25, dinner menu €32-43; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) With its ambient lighting, honey-coloured parquet flooring and large B&W shots of fishermen enlivening the dining room, Le Cambusier can do no wrong. Run by talented Breton chef Olivier Hubert, it's known across the city for its upmarket take on classic French cuisine. There's also an exceptionally well-chosen wine list. Under-12 foodies' menu is €14.

**Otonali** JAPANESE €€  
 (☎ 02 23 18 76 81; www.facebook.com/Otonali BreizhCafe; 6 rue de l'Orme; mains €20-26; ☺ 7-10.30pm Tue-Sun) The latest feather to deck St-Malo's epicurean cap is this Japanese *izakaya* (tavern) sharing space with Le Comptoir Breizh Café. Umami-rich offerings including wagyu beef ravioli with duck liver, and *karaage* (Japanese-style fried chicken) with black truffles. Sit at the counters and watch the *santoko* (Japanese all-purpose knives) fly.

## Drinking & Nightlife

**Le Cafe du Coin d'en Bas de la Rue du Bout de la Ville d'en Face du Port... La Java** CAFE  
 (☎ 02 99 56 41 90; www.lajavacafe.com; 3 rue Ste-Barbe; ☺ 8.12am-8.44pm Mon-Fri, from 8.13am

## DON'T MISS

FRANCE'S  
WORLD-FAMOUS BUTTER

This casual bistro, **Bistro Autour du Beurre** (☎ 02 23 18 25 81; www.lebeur-rebordier.com; 7 rue de l'Orme; w.lebeur-rebordier.com; 7 rue de l'Orme; 3-course weekday lunch menu €23, mains €22-38; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat Jul & Aug, noon-2pm Tue-Sat & 7-10pm Thu-Sat Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct, noon-2pm Tue-Sat & 7-10pm Fri & Sat Nov, Dec, Feb & Mar), showcases the cheeses and butters handmade by the world-famous Jean-Yves Bordier; you'll find his **shop** (☎ 02 99 40 88 79; 9 rue de l'Orme; ☺ 9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, plus 9am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, closed Mon Sep-Jun) next door. At the bistro, the butter sampler and bottomless bread basket are just the start to creative, local meals that change with the seasons. The establishment is in one of the few completely intact buildings from before WWII, and the interior contains historical fixtures.

Sat & Sun) This extraordinary and rather de-ranked cafe with the odd long name and opening times is an experience. Think museum, toyshop and work of art from an ever-so-slightly-twisted mind. Traditional French accordion music plays as the eyes of hundreds of dolls and puppets keep watch from shelves. And the drinks? Cocktails, beer and coffee.

**L'Aviso**

BAR

(☎ 07 68 15 01 07; 12 rue Point du Jour; ☺ 6pm-3am Thu-Sun, from 10pm Mon) This cosy place with jazzy tunes in the air serves more than 300 beers, mostly from Brittany and Belgium, with more than 10 – including two Breton ones – on tap as well.

**L'Alchimiste**

BAR

(7 rue St-Thomas; ☺ 5.30pm-1am Tue-Sat) Mellow tunes fill this magical and alluring place lined with old books. Take a seat at the bar draped on the wall behind with a red-tasselled theatre curtain; on the carved-timber mezzanine (including a pulpit), where a pile of books helps support the ceiling; or in the wood-heated basement (though the downstairs has little if any character).

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme Communautaire St-Malo Baie du Mont St-Michel; ☎ 08 25 13 52 00, 02 99 56 66 99; www.saint-malo-tourisme.com; esplanade St-Vincent; ☺ 9am-

7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm or 6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm or 6pm Sun Sep-Jun)

**i Getting There & Around****BICYCLE**

Hire bicycles and different-sized scooters from **Cycles Nicole** (☎ 02 99 56 11 06; www.cycles-nicole.com; 11 rue du Président Robert Schuman, Paramé; bicycle/scooter per day €13/39, week €69/196; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-6.45pm Tue-Sat).

**BOAT**

Brittany Ferries (www.brittany-ferries.com) sails between St-Malo and Portsmouth, and Condor Ferries (www.condorferries.co.uk) runs to/from Poole via Jersey or Guernsey, with connections to Portsmouth. Ferries leave from the **Gare Maritime du Naye** (Terre-Plein du Naye), 1km south of the Intra-Muros, which is served by the town-centre *navette* (shuttle bus).

Compagnie Corsaire (p285) runs a Bus de Mer shuttle service (adult/child one-way €5.80/4, return €8.50/5.60, 10 minutes, at least half-hourly) between St-Malo and Dinard, April to September. Outside the July–August peak season, both frequency and cost fall. Making the same run is **Captain Taxi** (☎ 06 81 00 90 66; www.captain-taxi.fr; adult/child one-way €7/5, return €10/7).

**BUS**

All intercity buses stop at the bus station alongside the train station. **MAT** (Malo Agglo Transports; ☎ 02 99 40 19 22; www.reseau-mat.fr) has local buses, and services to Cancale (€1.35, 30 minutes, every 30 to 40 minutes Monday to Saturday, and every 2½ hours Sunday). **BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) services run to Dinard (€2.50, 20 minutes, hourly), Dinan (€2.50, 50 minutes, three to eight daily) and Rennes (€5, one to 1½ hours, three to six daily).

**TRAIN**

St-Malo trains include services to Dinan (€10, one hour, nine daily; change in Dol de Bretagne), Paris Montparnasse (€55, 2½ hours, three direct TGVs daily) and Rennes (€15, 45 minutes to one hour, roughly hourly).

**Dinard**

POP 10,572

Seaside towns might be a common sight along the Breton coast, but Dinard (Dinarzh in Breton) has a sexy, sophisticated swagger all of its own. In the late 19th century well-to-do British aristocrats transformed the town into one of France's first (and finest) *stations balnéaires* (seaside resorts) and

built *belle époque* mansions along the lofty cliff-tops around town. The aristocrats have moved on, but the 'Nice of the North' still has an air of old-fashioned exclusivity, with its stripy beach-tents, smart restaurants and elegant seafront promenades.

## Sights & Activities

Central **Plage de l'Écluse** (Grande Plage) is the most popular beach, but when it gets too crowded, savvy Dinardais take refuge at the town's smaller beaches, including **Plage du Prieuré**, 1km to the south, and **Plage de St-Énogat**, 1km to the west.

**Promenade du Clair de Lune** GARDENS  
(☺ sound & light shows 9.30pm & 11pm Jul, 9pm & 11pm Aug) Spotted with palm trees, mimosas and exotic flowers, the turn-of-the-century 'Moonlight Walk' rolls out from the old harbour at the Anse du Bec and goes all the way south to the Plage du Prieuré, offering a wonderful panorama across the Rance Estuary to St-Malo. After dark in summer it becomes the centrepiece for a spectacular *son-et-lumière* (sound-and-light) show.

**Barrage de la Rance** BRIDGE  
Built in 1966, this 750m bridge over the Rance estuary carries the D168 between St-Malo and Dinard, lopping a good 30km off the journey. A feat of hydroelectrics, the Usine Marémotrice de la Rance (Rance Tidal Power Plant) below the bridge generates electricity by harnessing the lower estuary's extraordinarily high tidal range – a difference of 13.5m between high and low tide. The fascinating **visitor centre** (☎ 02 99 16 37 14; Usine Marémotrice de la Rance; ☺ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm) is on the western side of the bridge.

## Sleeping

Dinard's accommodation prices match its historical cachet: budget travellers may want to think about staying in St-Malo and catching the ferry or water taxi across.

**Camping Le Port Blanc** CAMPGROUND €  
(☎ 02 99 46 10 74; www.camping-port-blanc.com; rue du Sergent Boulanger; site per 2 adults from €21.50; ☺ Apr-Sep; ☹) This campground run by the municipality is about 2km southwest of Plage de l'Écluse with direct access to another beach.

**Hôtel Printania** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 02 99 46 13 07; www.printaniahotel.com; 5 av Georges V; s €65-120, d €88-130, tr €95-170, ste from €220; ☺ Mar-mid-Nov; ☹) You keep

expecting Hercule Poirot to pop his head around the corner of this charmingly old-world hotel. Modern and minimal it isn't, but if you're a sucker for antique dressers, gilded mirrors and richly patterned rugs, you'll be chuffed to bits. The 50 rooms vary in size and style, but don't even consider one without a sea view.

**Castelbrac** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€  
(☎ 02 99 80 30 00; www.castelbrac.com; 17 av Georges V; d €275-645, ste from €730; ☹ ☺ ☹) Sink into the lap of luxury at this grand hotel enjoying sweeping views of the water and St-Malo beyond. The 24 rooms all have sea views and are luxe-modern, with a treatments spa, small swimming pool and private summertime boat. Its Michelin-starred restaurant (*menus* lunch €28 and dinner €60 to €100) serves top-notch fish and seafood.

## Eating

Dinard's weekly open-air markets are on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings around the permanent market on **esplanade de la Halle**.

**L'Escalé à Corto** BISTRO €  
(☎ 02 99 46 78 57; 12 av George V; mains €17-27; ☺ 7.30-11pm Tue-Sun) Hidden away on a quiet street near the Anse du Bec, this fabulous (and very French) bistro specialises in all things seafood. The focus is firmly on food so while the decor might be somewhat scruffy, its signature dishes (langoustines in a Champagne sauce, sea bream in ginger-lime cream) could happily grace a much posher menu.

**Le Balafon** MODERN FRENCH €€  
(☎ 02 99 46 14 81; www.lebalafon-restaurant-dinard.fr; 31 rue de la Vallée; mains €18-26, lunch menu €19, dinner menu €29-39; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat, closed Thu dinner Sep-Apr)

### FOR THE BIRDS

If the Plage de l'Écluse looks eerily familiar, don't be surprised; the great cinematic shockmeister Alfred Hitchcock was a long-time Dinard fan and filmed some of the beach sequences of his classic avian thriller *The Birds* here in the early 1960s. A **statue** of the great man (with seagulls, fittingly, on both shoulders) takes pride of place at the entrance to the beach.

Away from the seafaring tourist bustle, this quality, modern, neighbourhood bistro serves freshly made meals using produce from the market opposite. The lunch *menu* consists of a couple of well-chosen and presented dishes. It's totally unpretentious, well priced and many locals rate it the best place in town. In fair weather, sit in the inviting courtyard.

### Le Petit Port

FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 99 46 16 41; quai de la Perle; mains €21-25, menu €35; ☀ noon-2pm & 745-10pm) A fine portside position set back from the downtown din makes this friendly restaurant a favourite getaway for Dinardais diners. A big picture window gives lovely views of the marina and St-Malo's skyline, while a colourful maritime mural conjures a cosy feel. Food is classic French often with an Asian spin; mainly à la carte with a good-value daily *menu*.

### Information

**Tourist Office** (Dinard Côte d'Émeraude Tourisme; ☎ 02 99 16 00 00, 08 21 23 55 00; www.dinardemeraudetourisme.com; 2 bd Féart; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Mar-Aug, Tue-Sat Sep-Apr) Books accommodation for free, runs walking tours and offers maps of self-guided tours of Dinard's architecture.

### Getting There & Around

#### AIR

**Aéroport Dinard Bretagne** (☎ 02 99 46 18 46; www.dinard.aeroport.fr; Pleurtuit), 6.5km south of Dinard, is served by Ryanair (www.ryanair.com) with flights to/from London Stansted and (seasonally) East Midlands Airport. Aurigny Air (www.aurignynew.com) flies to/from Guernsey. There's no public transport; a daytime/evening taxi from Dinard to the airport costs around €18/25.

#### BOAT

Compagnie Corsaire (p285) runs a Bus de Mer shuttle service (adult/child one-way €5.80/4, return €8.50/5.60, 10 minutes, at least half-hourly) between St-Malo and Dinard, April to September. Outside the July-August peak season, both frequency and cost fall. Making the same run is Captain Taxi (p288).

#### BUS

**BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bizh) buses link Dinard with St-Malo (€2.50, 30 minutes, hourly), Dinan (€2.50, 30 minutes, hourly) and Rennes (€7.50, 1½ hours, 14 daily Monday to Friday, six Saturday, five Sunday). Le

Gallic bus stop, outside the tourist office, is the most convenient.

## Cancale

POP 5211

Tucked into the curve of a shimmering shell-shaped bay, the idyllic and tranquil little fishing port of Cancale (Kankaven in Breton), 15km east of St-Malo, is famed for its offshore *parcs à huîtres* (oyster beds) that stretch for kilometres around the surrounding coastline. The excellent oysters are shipped across northern France to Paris and the rest of the world. There's not much of a beach here, but the waterfront is a relaxing place to stroll and soak up the atmosphere.

### Sights

#### Ferme Marine

FARM

(☎ 02 99 89 69 99; www.ferme-marine.com; corniche de l'Aurore; adult/child €8.50/5.50; ☀ guided tours in English 2pm, in French 11am, 3pm & 5pm Jul-mid-Sep, 3pm only mid-Feb-Jun & mid-Sep-Oct) If you ever wanted to crack open the science of *ostréiculture* (oyster farming), this well-organised, family-run factory, a couple of kilometres southwest of the port, offers hour-long guided tours which include a museum visit, a 15-minute film, a tour of the oyster beds and workshop, and a tasting.

### Sleeping

#### Hôtel La Voilerie

HOTEL €

(☎ 02 99 89 88 00; www.hotel-lavoilerie.fr; 8 rue Ernest Lamort; d €60-80; ☎) Situated at the southern end of Cancale's waterfront, this family hotel with a dozen rooms is an excellent choice for those on a budget. Some

#### DON'T MISS

#### POINTE DU GROUIN

A short 4km drive north or exhilarating 7km hike along the GR34 coastal trail from Cancale brings you to this sublime and stormy headland. Rock cleaves the water and fantastic views range over islands and rocks to the sea beyond, while Mont St-Michel is visible to the east. Wander around the well-worn trails and hike around here to your heart's content. A WWII-era bunker contains some chilling graffiti, and there are display panels with information on the rich local birdlife.



of the rooms are panelled in a rather rustic style and none is very large. But the welcome is warm, and the price is right. Free (though limited) parking.

### Les Chambres Breizh Café B&B €€

(☎ 02 99 89 61 76, 02 99 89 56 46; www.breizhcafe.com; 7 quai Thomas; s €108-128, d €118-138; 🍷) You'll need to book early to bag your spot at this delightful harbourfront *maison d'hôte*. It offers five fancy rooms on the 3rd and 4th floors all christened after apple varieties, ranging from Guillevic with balcony and views of the oyster parks to Kermerien with full-frame bay views and gleaming bathrooms. Rouget de Dol is a two-room suite and ideal for families.

## Eating

### ★ Breizh Café CRÊPES €

(☎ 02 99 89 61 76; www.breizhcafe.com; 7 quai Thomas; mains €8.50-17; ☺ noon-9pm) Not your average crêperie, the Breizh Café is renowned for its gourmet sweet crêpes and savoury *galettes* made from organic flours. The blonde-wood decor gives it a fresh, modern feel, and the crêpes are really first-class. Where else could you savour a *galette* stuffed with langoustines and Comté? Wash it all down with a tippie from its wide range of top-notch local ciders.

### Le Troquet SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 02 99 89 99 42; www.restaurantetroquet-cancale.fr; 19 quai Gambetta; mains €19-38, lunch menu €29; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Sat-Wed, daily Jul & Aug) Of the dozens of waterside restaurants at the port, this sleek and well-established contemporary *troquet* (cafe or bistro) run by *artisan cuisinier* Laurent Helleu is the pick of the shoal. His *raison d'être* is straightforward: locally bought, market-fresh ingredients, cooked with a minimum of fuss to bring forth natural flavours. Unsurprisingly, seafood features heavily. Don't miss the killer *far breton* (custardy prune flan cake).

### La Table Breizh Café JAPANESE €€€

(☎ 02 99 89 56 46; www.breizhcafe.com; 7 quai Thomas; lunch €38-48, dinner €85-160; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm Thu-Mon) This Michelin-starred restaurant is a triumph. Raphaël-Fumio Kudaka has created a menu of wonder with Breton ingredients at this fantastic outpost of Japanese cuisine, with such delights as *fruits de mer* (seafood) in *kabosukosho* (citrus fruit and pepper) vinaigrette with dried plums and rice salad; blue lobster with *yuzu* sauce; and

## DON'T MISS

### FRESH OYSTERS

One of the most authentic seafood experiences you'll ever have awaits you in Cancale at **Marché aux Huîtres** (www.marcheauxhuîtres-cancale.com; 1 rue des Parcs; dozen oysters €5.50; ☺ 9am-6pm). Local fishers sell their catch directly from stalls clustered by the Pointe des Crolles lighthouse. Point to the ones you want, and they'll be shucked, dashed with lemon and served before your eyes. Oysters, both the cupped (*creuse*) and flat (*plate*) variety are numbered according to size and quality. The latter – also called *belon* – are rarer and thus more expensive.

yellow chicken supreme seasoned with *miso* and sesame vinaigrette.

### ★ Le Coquillage GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 02 99 89 64 76; www.maisons-de-bricourt.com; rte du Buot au Point du Jour, Le Buot; menus €75-140; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm) Super-chef Hugo Roellinger's sumptuous restaurant is housed in the impressive Château Richeux, 4km south of Cancale. Roellinger's creations have earned him two Michelin stars, and the food takes in the culinary highlights of Brittany and Normandy, all beautifully cooked and imaginatively served. Book well ahead.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 08 25 13 52 00; www.saint-malo-tourisme.com; 44 rue du Port; ☺ 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm or 7pm; 🗺) Extremely helpful staff offering copious amounts of printed and verbal information.

## Getting There & Away

MAT (p288) has buses to/from St-Malo (€1.35, 30 minutes, every 30 to 40 minutes Monday to Saturday and every 2½ hours Sunday). Buses stop behind the Église St-Méen on place du Cher Frère Lucidas. Most visitors arrive by car to make the trip up to Pointe du Grouin though the coastal bus to St-Malo will drop you off there in July and August (€1.35, 10 minutes, every 45 minutes).

## Dinan

POP 11,526

When it comes to medieval mood, there aren't many Breton towns that can measure

up to Dinan (same in Breton). Picturesquely perched high above the fast-flowing Rance River, it boasts one of the loveliest old towns in northern France, a muddle of cobbled squares, creaking half-timbered houses and snaking ramparts tumbling down to the old port, where barges and riverboats still putter along beside the old-town quays.

## Sights

### ★ Rue du Jerzual

STREET

Lined with half-timbered houses, this astonishing cobbled street has been here since at least the 12th century. It leads downhill as rue du Petit Fort at a steep angle all the way to the **Vieux Pont** (Old Bridge) and a pretty little **port**, where the quayside cafes make an ideal place for some R&R before braving the steep climb back into town. Along the way, don't miss the oldest house, the 15th-century **Maison du Gouverneur** (Governor's House) at No 24.

### Basilique St-Sauveur

CHURCH

(14 place St-Sauveur; ☎ 9am-6pm) The west façade of this basilica has a remarkable Romanesque portal from the 12th century while the interior combines both the Romanesque and Flamboyant Gothic styles. The church contains a 14th-century cenotaph in its north transept reputed to contain the heart of Bertrand du Guesclin (1320-80), who fought many fierce battles to expel the English.

### Tour Ste-Catherine

TOWER

(rue Michel) **FREE** This tower, one of the oldest in the town's 13th-century walls, is just east of the Basilique St-Sauveur and faces the luxurious **Jardin Anglais** (English Garden), a former cemetery and now a pleasant park with some ancient trees. The 16m-high tower offers a postcard panorama over the river and the soaring 19th-century **Viaduc de Dinan**.

### Tour de l'Horloge

TOWER

(☎ 02 96 87 69 76; 23 rue de l'Horloge; adult/child €4/2.50; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 2-6pm Feb-May) Climb up to the little balcony of this 15th-century clock tower whose chimes ring on the quarter-hour.

### Château-Musée de Dinan

MUSEUM

(☎ 02 96 39 45 20; rue du Château; adult/child €7.50/3.50; ☎ 10.30am-7pm Apr-Sep, 1.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Dec) Dinan's partly ruined castle was begun in 1380 by Jean IV, Duke of Brit-

tany, and later refortified with two towers and a drawbridge two centuries later. First a ducal residence and later a prison, it now houses the town museum.

## Sleeping

### Hôtel de la Porte St-Malo

HOTEL €

(☎ 02 96 39 19 76; www.hotelportemalo.com; 35 rue de St-Malo; d & tw €63-98, tr €83-103, f €93-119) You'll find solid value and some serious charm at this stone hotel in the town's old quarter. Its 17 rooms are simply decorated but pleasant enough, and a great breakfast buffet (€9.50) is served in the stone-arched salon or cute interior courtyard. Parking costs €8.

### ★ La Maison Pavie

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 02 96 84 45 37; www.lamaisonpavie.com; 10 place St-Sauveur; d €120-160; ☎) If you ever dreamed of staying in a 15th-century half-timbered house, look no further than this sumptuous five-room B&B in the heart of Dinan. The building's medieval character and historic ambience have been lovingly preserved while modern comforts and designer fittings have been added – you have to see the architectural elements and furnishings of the rooms to believe them.

### Hôtel Arvor

HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 96 39 21 22; www.hotelarvordinan.com; 5 rue Pavie; d €82-135, tr & f from €125; ☎ Feb-Dec; ☎) It's hard to believe that this smart establishment with 24 rooms, modern bathrooms, fancy decorative touches and calming colour tones was once a Jacobin convent built in the 18th century. The charming tea room is a great place to relax after a long day's sightseeing. Excellent service and location.

## Eating

### Le Cosy

BISTRO €

(☎ 02 96 85 06 50; 11 rue de la Poissonnerie; starters/mains €6/14; ☎ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue, Wed & Sun, to 10pm Fri & Sat) Le Cosy is just that, with only 30 covers in a small dining room with an open kitchen. But what it lacks in size it makes up for with big flavour and the freshest of organic produce. Go for the scallops with plums or the seafood *choucroute* (sauerkraut), though there are veal dishes and burgers on the menu too.

### Crêperie Ahna

CRÊPES €

(☎ 02 96 39 09 13; 7 rue de la Poissonnerie; mains €4.50-11; ☎ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat) This

elegant, very red eatery has been run by the same family for four generations and deserves its reputation as one of the best crêperies in town. Unusual delights include a *galette* with duck and snail butter (€10.90) and wonderful sweet crêpes (€6.70 to €8.30). Also serves grilled-meat dishes and excellent ice cream.

### Le Cantorbery

FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 96 39 02 52; 6 rue Ste-Claire; mains €19-28, menus €35-45; ☀ noon-1.45pm Thu-Tue, 7-9.30pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat) This intimate restaurant in a 17th-century house is perfect for winning and dining your beloved over a romantic meal. Its traditional menu – based on beef, grilled fish and seafood, including *coquilles St-Jacques* (scallops) from St-Brieuc – changes with the seasons.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (Dinan-Cap Fréhel Tourisme; ☎ 02 96 87 69 76; www.dinan-capfrehel.com; 9 rue du Château; ☀ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sun; 📞) Modern information office just up from the Château-Musée de Dinan.

## i Getting There & Away

### BUS

Buses leave from place Duclos and the bus stop at the train station at bd Simone Veil. **BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) runs frequent buses to Dinard (€2.50, 30 minutes) and Rennes (€7.50, 1¼ hours, 14 daily Monday to Friday, six Saturday, five Sunday).

### TRAIN

Change in Dol de Bretagne for trains to Rennes (from €15.70, 1½ hours, nine daily) and St-Malo (from €10, 1½ hours, nine daily).

## Paimpol

POP 7508

Set around a former fishing (and now boating) harbour, Paimpol (Pempoull in Breton) is rich in history. It was the one-time home port of the Icelandic fishery when the town's fishermen would set sail to the seas around Iceland for seven months or more at a stretch. Paimpol is also rich in legends – the fishermen lost at sea are recalled in folk tales and *chants de marins* (sea shanties).

## 👁 Sights & Activities

### La Vapeur du Trieux

TOURIST TRAIN

(☎ 02 96 20 52 06; www.vapeurdutrieux.com; Gare de Paimpol, av du Général de Gaulle; adult/child return €26/16, one way €15/9; ☀ late Apr-mid-Sep) Steam-engine buffs and lovers of fine scenery will be in seventh heaven aboard the chuffing carriages of this 1917 steam train that plies the old railway line between Paimpol and the artists' town of Pontrieux, 20km to the southwest, where there's time for a pleasant meal and a stroll before the return journey. Reserve online at least one day ahead; trains usually leave at around 9.30am or 11am.

### Musée de la Mer

MUSEUM

(Sea Museum; ☎ 02 96 22 02 19; www.museemer.paimpol.fr; 11 rue de Labenne; adult/child €4.20/

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

### ÎLE DE BRÉHAT

Île de Bréhat (Enez Vriad in Breton) is actually two tiny islands 8km to the north of Paimpol, stretching just 3.5km from north to south and joined by a little bridge. It's known for its beautiful coastline – though beaches are sparse – and an unusually balmy climate. The most idyllic time to visit is in spring, when gorgeous Mediterranean wildflowers bloom in its gentle microclimate; Bréhat is known as the 'island of flowers'.

Bréhat is completely car-free, so the only way to get around is by bike or on foot. There are a number of *chambres d'hôte* and some simple snack shops and restaurants on the island; contact the local **tourist office** (Office de Tourisme de l'île de Bréhat; ☎ 02 96 20 04 15; www.brehat-infos.fr; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) in Le Bourg or visit its website for more information.

**Vedettes de Bréhat** (☎ 02 96 55 79 50; www.vedettesdebrehat.com; adult/child return €10.30/8.80) operates ferries to Île de Bréhat from Pointe de l'Arcoouest, 6km northwest of Paimpol, year-round. The trip takes 10 minutes. Bikes cost €16 return to transport, which is only possible on certain journeys. It's cheaper to rent a bike on the island; shops line the road when you get off the boat.

free; ☎ 2-6.30pm Sun-Fri) This excellent museum in a former cod-drying factory charts the region's maritime history. Peruse nautical artefacts, from seine nets and canvas sails to vintage posters and fishing outfits.

## Sleeping & Eating

Paimpol's Tuesday-morning **market** spreads over place du Martray and place Gambetta. At the weekend, vendors sell freshly shucked oysters at quai Duguay-Trouin.

### Hôtel de la Marne

HOTEL €

(☎ 02 96 16 33 41; www.hoteldelamarne-paimpol.fr; 30 rue de la Marne; d €55-100; 🏠) This granite inn ranks as highly in the dining stakes as it does in the sleeping. All nine rooms are beautifully and very neatly modernised, and the restaurant chef Mathieu Le Tinier cooks up top-notch regional cuisine (*menus* €29 to €57). It's 650m southwest of the harbour.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Guingamp-Baie de Paimpol; ☎ 02 96 20 83 16; www.guingamp-paimpol.com; place de la République; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 4.30-6.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, closed Sun Sep-Jun & Thu Oct-Mar; 🏠) Sells local rambling guides.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

**BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) runs eight buses daily to and from St-Brieuc (€2.50, 1½ hours), setting off from the train station. In summer, most continue to Pointe de l'Arcouest.

### TRAIN

There are six daily trains between Paimpol and Guingamp (€7.90, 45 minutes), where you can connect to Brest, St-Brieuc and Rennes.

## FINISTÈRE

France's westernmost *département*, Finistère (www.finisterebrittany.com; Penn ar Bed in Breton) has a wind-whipped rocky beach and cove-strewn coastline dotted with lighthouses and beacons lashed by waves. Wild and mysterious, Finistère is, for many travellers, the most enticing edge of an already fascinating region.

The name Finistère – Latin for 'end of the earth' – is apt for this domain, especially as one approaches the raw shore. Swathes of

## CENT SAVER

**Passeport Culturel** (<http://passeport.culturel.finistere.fr>) The Passeport Culturel booklet covers 33 sights in Finistère. The first sight is full price, but each subsequent sight is discounted and every fourth one is free. It is available free at participating sights.

this beautiful land are preserved in the **Parc Naturel Régional d'Armorique** (www.pnr-armorique.fr).

Finistère's southern extent, Cornouaille, got its name from early Celts who sailed from Cornwall to settle here. Today it is a major centre of Breton customs, culture and language.

## Roscoff

POP 3488

If you sail in by ferry, Roscoff (Rosko in Breton) offers a captivating first glimpse of Brittany, with granite houses dating from the 16th century lining the pretty docks, a superb Gothic church and a surrounding landscape of emerald-green fields full of cauliflowers, onions and artichokes. This onion-producing region gave rise to the 'Johnnies' who made a lucrative itinerant trade exporting their agricultural produce to the UK.

## Sights

### ★ Église Notre-Dame de Croaz Batz

CHURCH

(☎ 02 98 69 70 17; rue de l'Amiral Réveillère; ☎ 9.30am-5pm) With its spectacular Renaissance belfry rising above the flat landscape, the most arresting sight in Roscoff is this 16th-century Flamboyant Gothic church in the heart of the old town.

### Maison des Johnnies et de l'Oignon de Roscoff

MUSEUM

(☎ 02 98 61 25 48; 48 rue Brizeux; adult/child €4/free; ☎ tours 11am, 3pm & 5pm Tue-Fri mid-Sep-mid-Jun, 3pm & 5pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep) Photographs at this popular museum trace Roscoff's roaming pink-onion farmers, known as 'Johnnies', from the early 19th century. The onion farmers gave rise to the classic British stereotype of Frenchmen in berets carrying strings of onions on bicycles, as much of their business was in the UK. To-

day, the itinerant trade has largely vanished, though about 20 still make the trip annually but now by car. The visit is by guided tour; call ahead for exact tour times.

## Sleeping

### Camping Aux Quatre Saisons

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 02 98 69 70 86; [www.camping-aux4saisons.fr](http://www.camping-aux4saisons.fr); allée des Chênes Verts, Perharidy; site incl vehicle/adult/child €9/5.10/3; ☺ Easter-Sep; 🚻) Close to a long sandy beach in the grounds of a lovely 19th-century mansion, this popular seafront campground has a heated swimming pool. It's about 3km southwest of Roscoff.

### Hôtel aux Tamaris

HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 98 61 22 99; [www.hotel-aux-tamaris.com](http://www.hotel-aux-tamaris.com); 49 rue Édouard Corbière; d €60-100, sea view €80-120; 🍷) This smart, family-run place in an old granite building overlooking the water at the western end of town is an excellent choice, with 25 well-equipped, light, seabreeze-filled rooms, all with a pleasant maritime aura and yacht sails for ceilings. Half the rooms have sea views. Expect locally sourced goodies at breakfast (€7 to €11).

### Le Temps de Vivre

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 98 19 33 19; [www.letempsdevivre.net](http://www.letempsdevivre.net); 19 place Lacaze Duthiers; s €99, d €130-240; 🍷) This glamorous place is hidden away in a lovely stone mansion complete with its own tower just opposite the Église Notre-Dame de Croaz Batz. Some rooms have fantastic sea views, family rooms are available and excellent off-season offers are on the website.

## Eating

### ★ Le Surcouf

BRASSERIE €€

(☎ 02 98 69 71 89; [www.surcoufroscoff.fr](http://www.surcoufroscoff.fr); 14 rue de l'Amiral Réveillère; mains €16-30; ☺ noon-2pm & 6.30-9.30pm Sun-Fri, to 10pm Sat) Bang in the heart of Roscoff, this brasserie serves excellent seafood. You can choose your own crab and lobster from the window tank, tuck into the classic fish soup or opt for a heaped platter of fresh shellfish.

### ★ Le Brittany

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 02 98 69 70 78; [www.hotel-brittany.com](http://www.hotel-brittany.com); 22 bd Ste-Barbe; menus €75-169, mains €41-56) Splash out on the best of Breton seafood at this Michelin-starred restaurant on the seafront at the east end of town. Chef Loïc Le Bail sources top local ingredients and crafts creative, artfully presented dishes in a formal dining room with views of the sea.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Roscoff;

☎ 02 98 61 12 13; [www.roscoff-tourisme.com](http://www.roscoff-tourisme.com); quai d'Auxerre; ☺ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar; 🚻) Next to the handsome lighthouse.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

**Brittany Ferries** (☎ Roscoff 02 98 29 28 13, reservations in Ireland +353 21 427 7801, reservations in UK +44 330 159 7000; [www.brittany-ferries.com](http://www.brittany-ferries.com)) links Roscoff to Plymouth, England (five to nine hours, one to three daily) and, in Ireland, to Cork (14 to 18 hours, one

## WORTH A TRIP

### ÎLE DE BATZ

The Roscoff area may be light on beaches, but don't despair: you can ride the waves to the fabulous offshore island of Île de Batz (Enez Vaz in Breton), with a year-round population of just 475, and discover brilliant sand beaches without the crowds. The biggest and best, **Grève Blanche**, is on the island's northern shore.

A half-day is all you need to walk around this tiny speck of paradise (no cars allowed), but we suggest that you spend a night here to soak up its divine atmosphere. Lap up the joys of its mild island climate at the **Jardins Georges Delaselle** (☎ 02 98 61 75 65; [www.jardin-georgesdelaselle.fr](http://www.jardin-georgesdelaselle.fr); adult/child €5/2.50; ☺ 11am-6pm Apr-Oct), luxuriant gardens dating from 1897 with over 1500 plants from five continents.

Ferries (adult/child return €9/6, child under four €2, bike €9, 15 minutes each way), run by three different companies, sail between Roscoff and Île de Batz every 30 minutes between 8am and 8pm in July and August, with between eight and 11 sailings the rest of the year.

For more information on the island, consult [www.iledebatz.com](http://www.iledebatz.com).



weekly March to October) and Rosslare (12 to 15 hours, one weekly April to September).

Boats leave from Port de Blosson, about 2km east of the town centre.

## BUS

The bus and train stations are together on rue Ropartz Morvan. **BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) buses also depart from the ferry terminal (Port de Blosson) and pass by the town centre. Services include Brest (€4.50, 1½ to two hours, up to four daily) and Morlaix (€2.50, 40 minutes, five daily).

## TRAIN

Nine daily trains and SNCF buses go to Morlaix (€4.20, 40 minutes), where you can make connections to Brest, Quimper and St-Brieuc.

# Morlaix

POP 15,028

At the bottom of a deep valley sluicing through northeastern Finistère, Morlaix (Montoulez in Breton) is a good-looking town that makes a fine gateway to the coast. The narrow, finger-like town centre is filled with ancient half-timbered houses that spill down to a small port at the end of a large coastal inlet. Towering above all else is an imposing, arched 62m-high pink granite railway **viaduct** (Viaduc; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun), dating from 1861.

## Sights & Activities

**Maison de la Duchesse Anne** MUSEUM (☎ 02 98 88 23 26; www.mda-morlaix.com; 33 rue du Mur; adult/child €2/free; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat May-Sep) This magnificent 16th-century home is believed to be where the future French queen consort Anne of Brittany stayed when she visited Morlaix in

### DON'T MISS

#### CÔTE DE GRANIT ROSE

Running along the coast from Penvern to Trégastel et Ploumanac'h lies one of Brittany's natural wonders: a delightful and breezy coastline of pink-, salmon- and russet-coloured granite known as the Côte de Granit Rose. Plan time to walk among the marvellously shaped and hued natural boulders and the sepia and coral-coloured beaches.

1506. Overlooking place Allende, it is one of the finest examples of the local building style. The highlight is a Renaissance-style staircase engraved with the faces of the building's patron saints.

## Musée de Morlaix

MUSEUM

(☎ 02 98 88 07 75; www.musee.ville.morlaix.fr; place des Jacobins; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 10am-12.45pm & 2.15-6pm Jul-mid-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sat mid-Sep-Jun) Closed for restoration at the time of research, this museum showcases the area's history, archaeology and art. The museum also incorporates the beautifully preserved half-timbered house **La Maison à Pondalez** (☎ 02 98 88 68 88; 9 Grand' Rue; incl in ticket for Musée de Morlaix; ☎ 10am-12.45pm & 2.15-6pm Jul-mid-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sat mid-Sep-Jun), which remains open during the building works.

## Château du Taureau

FORTRESS

(☎ 02 98 62 29 73; www.chateaudutaureau.com; cruise & admission adult/child €15/9; ☎ Apr-Sep) Sail out to this amazing petite prison-fortress constructed in 1522 on a small islet in the Bay of Morlaix and refashioned by Vauban two centuries later. Most departures are from Keleenn beach in Carantec (15km northwest of Morlaix), while a few leave from the port of Diben in Plougasnou (17km north of Morlaix). Check online for schedules as timings depend on the tides.

## Sleeping

### Ty Pierre

B&B €

(☎ 02 98 63 25 75; http://lenaj.free.fr/typierre; 1bis place de Viarmes; s/d/tr with shared bathroom €34/50/65; ☎ Mar-Dec; 📞) Knick-knacks and artefacts picked up by Pierre-Yves Jacquet on his Asian travels now decorate this quirky *chambre d'hôte's* five spacious rooms. At this price there are no luxuries like a lift (count on climbing up three or four floors), and most rooms don't have their own bathroom. All in all, it's excellent value.

### ★ Manoir de Ker-Huella

B&B €€

(☎ 02 98 88 05 52; www.manoirdekerhuella.com; 78 voie d'accès au port; d €98-105; 📞) Built in 1898 by the director of the railways, this *chambre d'hôte* is in a wonderful grey-stone manor house set in park-like gardens high above the town. Despite the size of the building, there are actually only four guest rooms, all named after heroines from classic novels.

## DON'T MISS

## MORLAIX MEANDER

**Cairn du Barnenez** (📍 02 98 67 24 73; www.barnenez.fr; rte de Barnenez; adult/child €6/free; ☀️ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm May-Jun, 10am-6.30pm Jul-Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun Sep-Apr) is an enormous ancient series of hilltop tombs that's set spectacularly overlooking the Bay of Morlaix, on the edge of the modern-day village of Plouezoc'h, 10km north of Morlaix. Built between 4800 and 3900 BCE, the cairn measures 70m long and between 15m and 25m wide. It comprises two sets of tombs built in successive eras but attached to each other. You can walk through the centre of the cairn, where it was once, amazingly, used as a source of stone until the 1950s.

## Eating & Drinking

Rue Ange de Guernisac has several enticing restaurants. Morlaix' excellent **Saturday market** fills the centre of the old town from 8.30am to 2.30pm.

**Atipik Bilig** CRÊPES €  
(📍 02 98 62 47 62; 1 rue Ange de Guernisac; mains €7-17; ☀️ noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Fri-Tue; 🍷) Tucked inside a two-storey, 16th-century timbered house in the old town, this enticing crêperie whips up sweet crêpes, savoury *galettes*, substantial salads, tartines and cooling glasses of Breton cider.

The outdoor tables occupy a prime location.

**Grand Café de la Terrasse** BRASSERIE €€  
(📍 02 98 88 20 25; 31 place des Otages; mains €13-43; ☀️ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Mon-Sat) In the heart of town, Morlaix' showpiece is this magnificent 1873 brasserie with an original central spiral staircase, around which locals sip tea, coffee or something stronger; or sup on classic brasserie fare.

**Le Viaduc** FRENCH €€  
(📍 02 98 63 24 21; www.le-viaduc.com; 3 rampe St-Melaine; 2/3-course dinner menu €26.50/35.50, mains €19.50-25; ☀️ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun Sep-Jun, noon-2pm & 7-10pm daily Jul & Aug) A sterling reputation props up this ode to contemporary Breton cuisine, named after the railway viaduct towering above and framed by a stylish interior fea-

turing grey-stone walls, wood-panelled ceilings and groovy lighting. On the menu are fish and meat dishes, all skillfully cooked and presented.

**Le Tempo** BAR  
(📍 02 98 63 29 11; quai de Tréguier, Port de Plaisance; ☀️ 10am-1am Mon-Fri, from 5pm Sat) A spacious, bright and welcoming bar-brasserie overlooking the harbour and its boats, Le Tempo has a blackboard full of brasserie staples and plenty of brews on offer. Well worth the detour.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Morlaix; 📍 02 98 62 14 94; www.baiedemorlaix.bzh; 10 place Charles de Gaulle; ☀️ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun; 🗺️) Has a handy map of walking itineraries around town.

## Getting There & Away

Morlaix is on the main Paris train line. Services include Brest (€10, 45 minutes, 19 daily), Paris Montparnasse (€43 to €62, three hours, seven daily) and SNCF bus or train to Roscoff (€5, 40 minutes, seven daily).

**BreizhGo** (📍 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) buses link Morlaix with Roscoff (€2.50, 40 minutes, five daily).

## Brest

POP 142,748

A major port and military base, Brest is big, bold and dynamic. All but destroyed by Allied air attacks during WWII, Brest was swiftly rebuilt from the rubble in utilitarian fashion. Though it won't win any beauty contests, it's a lively port with a magnificent natural harbour, a university town, home to an elaborate aquarium and the springboard to the sea-swept Île d'Ouessant.

## Sights

**Océanopolis** AQUARIUM  
(📍 02 98 34 40 40; www.oceanopolis.com; port de Plaisance du Moulin Blanc; adult/child €19.80/14.60; ☀️ 9.30am-7pm mid-Jul-mid-Aug, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Aug-Mar, 9.30am-6pm Apr-mid-Jul, closed most of Jan; 🗺️; 📺 3) Much more than just an aquarium, this enormous 'aquatic world' is divided into three pavilions containing polar, tropical and Brittany (temperate) ecosystems. Highlights are the shark tanks, mangrove and rainforest

sections, colourful tropical reefs, seals and the Otter Trail. The numerous films and interactive displays are excellent. It's about 3km east of the city centre.

### Musée National de la Marine MUSEUM

(National Naval Museum; ☎ 02 98 22 12 39; www.musee-marine.fr; rue du Château, Château de Brest; adult/child €7/free; ☀ 10am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, from 1.30pm Wed-Mon Feb, Mar & Oct-Dec) Get to grips with Brest's maritime military history and its briny past at this museum housed within the fortified 13th-century Château de Brest, built to defend the harbour on the Penfeld River. Following the 1532 union of Brittany and France, the castle and its harbour became a royal fortress. The castle was heavily refortified by Vauban in the mid-17th century with his trademark combination of defensive towers and ramparts, which offer striking views.

## Festivals & Events

**Astropolis** MUSIC  
(www.astropolis.org; ☀ early Jul) Brest's celebrated electronic music fest takes place on the first weekend of July.

## Sleeping

### Hôtel de la Rade HOTEL €

(☎ 02 98 44 47 76; www.hoteldelarade.com; 6 rue de Siam; d €48-69; 🏠) This good-value, welcoming and very central place has 48 smart and stylishly simple rooms with small yet functional bathrooms. Rooms at the back have superb harbour views. Prices are lowest at the weekend and drop further in July and August – check the website.

### Hôtel Oceania Le Continental Brest HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 98 80 50 40; www.oceaniahotels.com; 41 rue Émile Zola, Square de la Tour d'Auvergne; s €68, d €122-149; 🏠) Every business person's favourite base in Brest, this retro downtown hotel offers plenty of atmosphere, thanks to its monumental art deco lobby, stained-glass windows and 73 large, luminous, stylish and tidy rooms, some with balcony. Considerable reductions on room rates apply at weekends, while booking through the website can save up to 50%. Breakfast is €16.

## Eating

### Crêperie du Roi Gradlon CRÊPES €

(☎ 02 98 80 17 28; 19 rue Fautras; menu from €12.50; ☀ 11.30am-2pm & 6-9.30pm Tue-Sat) The crêpes at this very popular, homey and af-

fordable crêperie really are worth writing home about. Service is very friendly, but the place can get packed.

### ★ La Chaumière MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 98 44 18 60; www.lachaumiere-brest.com; 25 rue Émile Zola; menus €19.50-34; ☀ noon-2pm Mon-Fri, 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Creative cuisine is what gives this modern-meets-traditional restaurant a high profile. Breton chef René Botquelen turns out succulent concoctions prepared with top-quality ingredients. A vegetarian *menu* is available for €16.

### Le Crabe Marteau SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 02 98 33 38 57; www.crabemarteau.fr; 8 quai de la Douane; mains €17-23; ☀ noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Sat) This eatery down by the port is famous for one thing and one thing only: crab served along with a *marteau* (hammer) to get inside! Savour them from the terrace facing the island ferries or in a rustically nautical interior. The seasonally adjusted menu also includes oysters, lobsters and freshly caught fish.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Brest Métropole; ☎ 02 98 44 24 96; www.brest-metropole-tourisme.fr; place de la Liberté; ☀ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun Jul & Aug, to 6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun; 🏠)

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Brest's **airport** (BES; ☎ 02 98 32 86 00; www.brest.aeroport.fr; off D67), 9km northeast of the city in Guipavas, has regular direct domestic and international flights. These include Finist'Air flights to Île d'Ouessant; Air France to Paris, Nice and Lyon; Ryanair to Marseille and Porto; easyJet to Lyon; Aegean Air to Heraklion, Crete; and Chalais Aviation to Bordeaux.

A shuttle run by **Bibus** (☎ 02 98 80 30 30; www.bibus.fr; ticket €1.50, day pass €3.95) connects the airport to the tram line A at Porte de Guipavas (€1.50, seven to 10 per day). A taxi to the centre costs around €22/32 day/night.

### BOAT

Ferries to Île d'Ouessant leave from Port de Commerce.

**Le Brestoâ** (☎ 07 78 37 03 23; www.lebrestoa.com; quai de la Douane) connects Brest's Port de Commerce with Le Fret on the Presqu'île de Crozon (adult/child one way €9.50/7.50, return €17/13, 30 minutes, twice daily at 9.30am and 5.30pm Tuesday to Sunday, April to September).

## BUS

Brest's **bus station** (☎ 02 98 90 88 89; place du 19e Régiment d'Infanterie) is beside the train station, and buses serve the whole region, including Le Conquet (€2.50, 40 minutes, six daily) and Roscoff (€4.50, 1½ hours, four daily).

## TRAIN

For Roscoff, change trains at Morlaix; Brest is the terminus of the Paris train line.

DESTINATION	COST (€)	TIME (HR)	FREQUENCY (DAILY)
Morlaix	10	30-45 mins	16
Paris Montparnasse	43-75	3½-4	around 10
Quimper	5-7.50	1¼	(SNCF bus or train) 11
Rennes	28-37	2	10

## Île d'Ouessant

POP 854

The Île d'Ouessant has something of a split personality. On a stormy winter day there's a palpable end-of-the-world feeling to the island known in Breton as 'Island of Terror' (Enez Eusa). But if you visit on a sunny day, the place can seem like a little paradise, with turquoise waters, abundant wildflowers and not much to do but stroll and picnic. The peace and calm of the island is best experienced by hiking its 45km craggy coastal path or hiring a bike and cycling. Try to spend the night here to fully appreciate its other-worldly nature.

## 📍 Sights & Activities

**Plage de Corz**, 600m south of Lampaul, Ouessant's only town, is the island's best beach. Another good spot to stretch out is **Plage du Prat** further south. Both are easily accessible by bike from Lampaul or Port du Stiff, where ferries dock.

**Musée des Phares et des Balises** MUSEUM (Lighthouse & Beacon Museum; ☎ 02 98 48 80 70; www.pnr-armorique.fr/destination-parc/nos-maisons-de-parc/musee-des-phares-et-balises; Phare du Créac'h; adult/child €6/4; ☀ 10.30am-6pm plus 9-11pm two nights a week Jul & Aug, 11.30am-5pm or 6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) The black-and-white-striped **Phare de Créac'h** is one of the world's most powerful lighthouses. Beaming two white flashes every 10 seconds and visible for over 60km, it serves as a beacon for more than 50,000 ships entering the Channel each year. At its base is the island's highly educational main museum, which tells the story of these vital navigational aids. There are also displays devoted to the numerous ships that have been wrecked off the island.

**Écomusée d'Ouessant** MUSEUM (Maison du Niou Huella; ☎ 02 98 48 86 37; www.pnr-armorique.fr; lieu-dit Niou Huella, north of D81; adult/child €2.80/2; ☀ 10.30am-6pm Jul & Aug, 11.30am-5pm or 6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) Two traditional local houses make up this small but rewarding ecomuseum. One recreates a traditional homestead, furnished like a ship's cabin, with furniture fashioned from driftwood and painted in bright colours to mask imperfections; the other explores the island's history and customs.

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

#### MEETING THE MOLÉNAIS

Scarcely 1km across, **Île Molène** (www.molene.fr; Molenez in Breton) feels even more remote than its neighbour, Île d'Ouessant, though it's closer to the mainland. It's car-free, virtually treeless and home to a declining population of just over 140 people. The island's only village is Le Bourg, a hamlet of whitewashed fishing cottages clustered around a granite quay and a church. A half-day is all you really need to walk the island's circumference.

Another option, which also allows you to investigate the nearby islets, is to hire a kayak or canoe, which can be arranged at the port on arrival. The island has several *chambres d'hôte*, a campground, a hotel and a list of other properties to rent – check the website for more information.

All ferries to Ouessant stop here en route.

## Sleeping

### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎ 02 98 48 84 53; www.auberge-ouessant.com; La Croix Rouge; dm incl breakfast €22, s €38; ☺ reception 7.30am-1pm & 6-8pm Feb-Nov; 🏠) This friendly and welcoming hostel on the hill above Lampaul has two- to six-person rooms and a small communal kitchen. Sheets cost an extra €5.40 per stay. It's popular with school and walking groups; reservations are essential. Dinner is €15.

### La Duchesse Anne

HOTEL €

(☎ 02 98 48 80 25; www.hotelduchesseanne.fr; Le Keo; d €66-85; ☺ Mar-Oct; 🏠) A really good choice, idyllically set on a cliff next to Baie de Lampaul on the edge of town, with nine unpretentious yet neat doubles, of which four pricier ones have staggering sunset-facing sea views. It also boasts one of the island's best restaurants (*menus* from €16) with a terrace overlooking the ocean.

### ★ Le Kéo

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 06 01 39 67 08; www.lekeoouessant.com; Le Keo; d €89-99; ☺ Apr-Oct; 🏠) This welcoming and individual townhouse B&B in the heart of Lampaul has an interior brimming with creative trappings and its four rooms all boast unique decor. Two have swoon-inducing sea views, and one – the Ouessantine – features a *lit clos* (traditional Breton bed in an alcove). The fantastic breakfast room has original wood panelling, and there's a lovely small garden.

## Eating

### Ty Korn

SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 02 98 48 87 33; Lampaul; mains €16-22, platters from €42; ☺ 11am-3pm & 5.30pm-1am Tue-Sat; 🏠) The ground floor of this popular place is a bar serving beers made from the same *blé noire* (buckwheat) as Breton *galettes*. Upstairs is an excellent restaurant with seafood a speciality. Save room for the divine *far breton à la glace sarrasin* (custardy prune flan cake with buckwheat ice cream).

### Ar Piliguet

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 98 03 14 64; www.arpiliguet.bzh; place de l'Église, Lampaul; mains €18.50-25, lunch menu €24; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Wed-Sun Mar-Oct, daily Jul & Aug; 📷) For picturesque, flavour-rich dining, head to Ar Piliguet, beautifully set in a traditional house next to the tourist office. Dishes are packed with fresh, local ingredients – enjoy them on the small terrace or in a snug interior full of stone and artistic

flourishes. Vegetarians are well catered for, and there's a good wine selection.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de l'île d'Ouessant; ☎ 02 98 48 85 83; www.ot-ouessant.fr; place de l'Église; ☺ 9am-6.15pm Mon-Sat, 10.15am-12.15pm Sun mid-Jul-late Aug, 10am-noon & 2-5.45pm Mon-Sat rest of year; 🏠) Sells walking brochures and has information on operators offering horse riding, sailing and other activities. The office can also provide a list of accommodation choices.

## Getting There & Around

### AIR

**Finist'Air** (☎ 02 98 84 64 87; www.finistair.fr; Kerlaouen) flies from Brest's airport to **Ouessant** (☎ 02 98 48 82 09; Kerlaouen) in a mere 15 minutes. There are two daily flights on weekdays and one on Saturdays (one way adult/child €74.20/43.70), with no flights between 14 July and 12 August.

### BICYCLE

Bike-hire operators have kiosks at the Port du Stiff ferry terminal and compounds just up the hill, as well as outlets in Lampaul. The going rate for town bikes is €10 to €15 per day, with mountain bikes (recommended) closer to €30. Cycling on the coastal footpath is forbidden – the fragile turf is strictly reserved for walkers.

### BOAT

Ferries for Île d'Ouessant depart from Brest and the tiny town of Le Conquet (Konk-Leon in Breton), Brittany's most westerly point. In high summer, reserve ferry tickets at least two days in advance and check in 45 minutes before departure to avoid enormous lines.

**Penn ar Bed** (☎ 02 98 80 81 60; www.pennarbed.fr; return adult €30-35, child €20-25) Sails from the Port de Commerce in Brest (2½ hours), from Le Conquet (1½ hours) and from Camaret-sur-Mer (one hour). Boats run between the first two and the island two to five times daily from May to September and once daily between October and April. Boats run from Camaret two to six times per week in July and August, and once weekly in May, June and early September. A bike costs €15.50.

**Finist'mer** (☎ 08 25 13 52 35; www.finist-mer.fr; adult/child return €34/24) Runs high-speed boats from Le Conquet (40 minutes), Lanildut (35 minutes) and Camaret (1½ hours) one to three times per day, with more sailings in July and August.

### BUS

**BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) buses link Brest with Le Conquet (€2.50, one hour, hourly).



## Presqu'île de Crozon

Stretching westwards into the Atlantic, the anchor-shaped Presqu'île de Crozon (Crozon Peninsula in English; Gourenez Kraozon in Breton) is one of the most scenic spots in Brittany. In previous centuries, this multi-fingered spit of land was a key strategic outpost; crumbling forts and ruined gun batteries can still be seen on many headlands, but these days it's the tucked-away coves, inviting beaches, thrilling panoramas, charming B&Bs and clifftop trails that attract thousands of visitors in summer.

### Landévennec

POP 343

The Aulne River flows into the Rade de Brest beside the pretty village of Landévennec (Landevenneg in Breton), home to the ruined Benedictine **Abbaye St-St Guénolé**. The abbey **museum** (☎02 98 27 35 90; www.musee-abbaye-landevennec.fr; adult/child €6/3; ☺10.30am-7pm daily Jul-mid-Sep, shorter hours Mar-May & Oct, closed Nov-Feb) here records the history of the settlement, founded by St Guénolé (Winwaloe in English; Gwenole in Breton) in 485 and the oldest Christian site in Brittany.

### Crozon & Morgat

POP 7697

The peninsula's largest town, Crozon (Kraozon in Breton) is the hub for the area. But although the town centre is pleasant enough, there's little reason to hang around.

Down the hill and on the water 2km south of Crozon, Morgat (Morgad in Breton) was built as a summer resort in the 1930s by the Peugeot brothers (of motor-vehicle fame), and it retains something of a period feel. It's one of the prettier resorts in this part of Brittany, with colourful houses piled up at one end of a long crescent-shaped sandy beach that has very safe bathing.

### Sights & Activities

Morgat has a picturesque beach, **Plage de Morgat**, that's popular with windsurfers and families, and protected by a breakwater and marina. To the west, there's sunbathing aplenty on the 2km-long **Plage de la Palue** and neighbouring **Plage de Lostmarc'h**. Swimming at the latter is forbidden due to strong currents; waves pack a punch and

### MEET A BEEKEEPER

**Ferme Apicole de Térénez** (☎02 98 81 06 90; www.fermeapicole.com; Térénez, Rosnoën; ☺9am-8pm) is an intriguing place, 8km west of Le Faou on the D791, abuzz with live bees that you can view in its honey museum. Depending on the season, you might also see busy-bee *apiculteurs* (beekeepers) Irène and Stéphane Brindeau using environmentally friendly cold-extraction methods to draw out the all-natural honey from among their 700 hives. There's honey-tasting and you can buy honey, nougat and other homemade honey products like *hydromel* (*chouchenn* in Breton; a fermented alcoholic drink made from honey and water).

They also have B&B accommodation, with singles €38 to €50, doubles €45 to €55 and triples €60. Guests get to use their bikes for free.

offer excellent intermediate-level surfing. Further north, **Plage de Goulien** is another wonderful stretch of golden sand.

### Cap de la Chèvre

NATURAL FEATURE

The peninsula's most southerly point, Cap de la Chèvre is 8km south of Morgat, and offers stupendous panoramas of the Baie de Douarnenez and the Pointe du Raz. You'll be amazed by the contrast between the Mediterranean-like eastern side of the peninsula and the much wilder western shore, which is clearly Atlantic.

### Pointe de Dinan

NATURAL FEATURE

The cliffs of Pointe de Dinan, 6.5km west of Crozon, provide a dramatic outlook over the sands of Anse de Dinan and the rock formations locally known as the Château de Dinan, which are linked to the mainland by a stone archway.

### Coastal Hike

WALKING

The coastline between Morgat and Cap de la Chèvre is striking. Beyond the marina at the southern end of Morgat's beach, the coastal path offers an excellent 13km hike (part of the GR34) along the sea cliffs to Cap de la Chèvre, taking in some of the most scenic spots in the area. It takes roughly five hours to complete (one way), but you can also walk smaller sections.

## Sleeping

**Camping Les Pieds dans l'Eau** CAMPGROUND €  
(☎ 04 77 64 90 32; www.campingcrozon.com; Prat-  
meur; per person/tent/car €5.50/7/4; ☀ Apr–Sep;  
🏠) ‘The Feet in the Water’ – almost literally,  
at high tide – site is one of some 16 camp-  
grounds along the peninsula; it also has mo-  
bile homes, chalets and bungalows for rent  
(from €80, two nights minimum stay).

★ **Kastell Dinn** CABIN €  
(☎ 06 62 52 96 61, 02 98 27 26 40; www.sejour-in  
solitebretagne.com; Hameau de Kerlouantec; d  
€70-95, tr/q €100/120) Looking for something  
really different? This incredibly atmospheric  
little hideaway in the tiny hamlet of Ker-  
louantec, 2km southwest of Crozon, offers  
three free-standing ‘shipshape’ units set  
in decommissioned fishing boats and one  
*roulotte* (caravan), as well as four rooms in  
a traditional 18th-century Breton *longère*  
(long house).

**Hôtel de la Baie** HOTEL €  
(☎ 02 98 27 07 51; www.hoteldelabaiecrozonmor  
gat.com; 46 bd de la Plage, Morgat; d €68-91, stu-  
dio €97-150; 🏠) One of the *very* few places to  
remain open year-round and one of the best  
deals about, this friendly, family-run spot  
on Morgat’s promenade has 19 clean and  
pleasant rooms; pricier rooms have views  
over the sea, while studio apartments with  
kitchenette are also available.

## Eating

★ **Le Mutin Gourmand** FRENCH €€  
(☎ 02 98 27 06 51; www.lemutingourmand.fr; 1 rue  
Graveran, Crozon; menus €32-94, mains €25-30,  
kids’ menu €10-15; ☀ noon-1.30pm Wed-Sun, 7-9pm  
Tue-Sat) There’s no sea view at the ‘Greedy  
Mutineer’ – it’s in Crozon’s town centre – but  
this is the premier gourmet choice, with its  
delicious cuisine, intimate dining room and  
charming welcome. The chef works with  
local, carefully chosen ingredients, so what-  
ever season it is, you’ll be in for a treat.

**Saveurs et Marées** SEAFOOD €€  
(☎ 02 98 26 23 18; www.saveurs-maree-crozon.  
fr; 52 bd de la Plage, Morgat; lunch menu €19.50,  
dinner menu €24-55; ☀ noon-2pm & 8-10pm Apr-  
Sep, Wed-Sun Oct-Mar) Our pick of Morgat’s  
restaurants has sweeping windows with full  
views of the sea from its contemporary din-  
ing room and lovely sunny terrace. Tuck into  
consistently good, locally caught seafood (in-  
cluding succulent lobster).

## Information

**Crozon Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de  
Presqu’île de Crozon-Aulne Maritime; ☎ 02  
98 27 07 92; www.crozon-tourisme.bzh; bd  
de Pralognan-la Vanoise; ☀ 9.30am-1pm &  
2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug,  
9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun)

**Morgat Tourist Office** (Bureau d’Informations  
Touristiques de Morgat; ☎ 02 98 27 29 49;  
www.morgat.fr; place d’Ys; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm  
& 3-7pm Mon-Wed, 2.30-7.30pm Thu-Sun Jul-  
Aug, 9.30am-noon Mon Jun & Sep)

## Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

Rent a bike in summer at the **open-air stall**  
(☀ 9am-7pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep) in front of Mor-  
gat’s tourist office for €13 per day, or year-round  
from **Point Bleu** (☎ 02 98 27 22 11; www.point-  
bleu.fr; 10 bd Pierre Mendes France, Crozon;  
per day €12; ☀ 9.30am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Sat,  
10am-noon Sun).

### BUS

**BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh)  
bus 34 connects Crozon with Camaret-sur-Mer  
(€2.50, 20 minutes, three daily) and Le Faou  
(€2.50, 40 minutes, three daily), and bus 37 goes  
to Quimper (€2.50, 1¼ hours, five daily). The bus  
stop is in Crozon near the tourist office.

## Camaret-sur-Mer

POP 2600

At the western edge of the Presqu’île de  
Crozon, Camaret (Kameled in Breton) is a  
classic fishing village – or at least it was ear-  
ly in the 20th century, when it was France’s  
largest crayfish port. Nowadays, abandoned  
fishing boats dot the attractive harbour,  
which is populated by yachts and lined with  
cafes and art galleries.

## Sights

★ **Pointe de Pen-Dir** NATURAL FEATURE  
Three kilometres southwest of Camaret, this  
spectacular headland is bounded by steep  
sea cliffs. The offshore rock stacks are known  
as **Tas de Pois**. There are also two WWII  
memorials, and just inland 80 neolithic men-  
hirs comprise the **Alignements de Lagatjar**.  
There are plenty of short walks in the area,  
as well as a handful of small cove beaches.

## Chapelle Notre-Dame-de- Rocamadour

CHURCH

(Pointe de Rocamadour; ☀ 10am-7pm) With a  
timber roof resembling an inverted ship’s  
hull, this 17th-century church at the **Pointe**

**de Rocamadour** is dedicated to the sailors of Camaret, who have adorned it with ex-votos of oars, lifebuoys and model ships.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Camaret-sur-Mer; ☎ 02 98 27 93 60; www.crozon-tourisme.bzh; 1A rue des Quatre Vents; ☀ 9.30am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) Located on the waterfront.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### BOAT

Le Brestoâ (p298) connects Brest's Port de Commerce with Le Fret on the Presqu'île de Crozon (adult/child one way €9.50/7.50, return €17/13, 30 minutes, twice daily at 9.30am and 5.30pm Tuesday to Sunday, April to September). It's a handy way to avoid the huge overland journey round the coast. Check the timetable as there's sometimes only an evening boat on Sunday. Penn ar Bed (p300) sails between Camaret and Île d'Ouessant (return adult €30 to 35, child €20 to 25, one hour) two to six times per week in July and August, and once weekly in May, June and early September. It also has high-season boats to Île de Sein.

### BUS

Five **BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) buses daily run from Quimper to Crozon (€2.50, 1¼ hours), continuing to Camaret (€2.50, 20 minutes) and stopping at the port; up to four daily go from Camaret and Crozon to Brest (€2.50, 1½ hours).

## Locronan

POP 822

Picture-postcard Locronan (Lokorn in Breton) has barely changed in appearance since the mid-18th century. With its splendid cobble streets and traditional architecture, it's perhaps the prettiest village in this region of France, so it's little wonder that its old-world ambience and photogenic granite houses have made it hugely popular with both tourists and film crews. Locronan is also famous for hosting one of Brittany's oldest *pardons* (religious processions), the Petite Troménie, and for its more ambitious sibling, the Grande Troménie, which takes place every six years.

## **👁** Sights

★ **Église St-Ronan** CHURCH  
(place de l'Église; ☀ 9am-7pm) This beautiful and very sacred 15th-century church con-

## SURFING IN BRITTANY

Feel like hitting the waves slamming onto the wild shores of Brittany, but not sure how? Head to **École de Surf de Bretagne** (www.ecole-surf-bretagne.fr), a surf school at one of nine branches around Brittany (see the website for details), including Crozon. Courses range from a two-hour (€45) to a full-week (28-hour) program (€280).

tains the tomb of St Ronan as well as a green wooden pulpit carved and painted with scenes from the saint's life in Brittany; note the blond *keben* (shrew) who attempts to stop Ronan from preaching. Ronan was an ascetic pilgrim from Ireland who established a hermitage in the woods here, around which the village eventually formed.

### Musée d'Art Municipal Charles Daniélou

MUSEUM

(☎ 02 98 51 80 80; www.locronan-tourisme.bzh/musee-art-et-histoire-locronan; place de la Mairie; adult/child €5/free; ☀ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-1pm & 3-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep) This museum just off the main square is largely dedicated to the history of the linen industry, which brought prosperity to the village but then died out due to mechanisation. There's also a collection of Breton impressionist paintings upstairs.

## 🌟 Festivals & Events

### Petite Troménie

RELIGIOUS

(www.locronan-tourisme.bzh; ☀ 2nd Sun in Jul) Barefooted pilgrims bearing saintly banners and singing traditional songs follow a 4km route from the church to a sacred grove, following the path taken by St Ronan. This highly colourful event attracts huge crowds of onlookers, so try to catch it.

Every six years sees the **Grande Troménie** (the next one is in 2025), which follows a 12km route, past 12 stations.

## **🏠** Sleeping & Eating

### Camping Locronan

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 02 98 91 87 76; www.camping-locronan.fr; rue de la Troménie; site for 2 adults from €21; ☀ Apr-Sep; 🏠 🚻) This campground is situated in a lovely wooded setting, with more than 70 pitches as well as mobile homes and cabins for rent, and activities for children. There's also an indoor swimming pool.

## Hôtel Le Prieuré

**HOTEL** € (☎ 02 98 91 70 89; [www.hotel-le-prieure.com](http://www.hotel-le-prieure.com); 11 rue du Prieuré; s/d/tr/q from €75/85/98/110; 🏠) The only hotel in Locronan, the two-star Le Prieuré is a pleasant choice with 15 comfy and cosy rooms. It can be oversubscribed in summer, so book ahead. The hotel has a decent restaurant too, serving seafood and local cuisine. The breakfast buffet is €10.

## Getting There & Away

**BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; [www.breizhgo.bzh](http://www.breizhgo.bzh)) bus 37 connects Locronan to Quimper (€2.50, 20 minutes, three daily) and Camaret-sur-Mer (€2.50, one hour, three daily). The bus stops in Locronan on rue du Prieuré.

## Quimper

POP 65,480

Small enough to feel like a village, with its slanted half-timbered houses and narrow cobbled streets, but large enough to act as the troubadour of Breton culture and arts, Quimper (kem-PAIR; Kemper in Breton) is Finistère's thriving capital. With some excellent museums, standout crêperies, a history of faïence (pottery) production, one of Brittany's loveliest old quarters and a delightful setting along the Odet River, Quimper deserves serious exploration.

## Sights & Activities

### Cathédrale St-Corentin

CHURCH

(☎ 02 98 92 00 50; [www.diocese-quimper.fr/fr/diocese/paroisses/quimper-saint-corentin](http://www.diocese-quimper.fr/fr/diocese/paroisses/quimper-saint-corentin); place St-Corentin; ☉ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-

Sat, 8.30am-noon & 2-6.30pm Sun) In the centre of the city rises Quimper's dramatic Gothic cathedral, with its distinctive dip in the middle. This deviation came about to conform to the land, but locals say it symbolises Christ's inclined head as he was dying on the cross. Construction began in 1239, but the cathedral's imposing twin spires weren't added until 1856. High on the west façade, look out for an equestrian statue of King Gradlon, the city's mythical 5th-century founder.

### ★ Musée Départemental Breton

MUSEUM

(☎ 02 98 95 21 60; <http://musee-breton.finistere.fr>; 1 rue du Roi Gradlon; adult/child €5/free; ☉ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 2-5.30pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun) Beside the Cathédrale St-Corentin, recessed behind a magnificent stone courtyard, this superb museum spreading over several floors of a former bishop's palace showcases Breton history, furniture, crafts and archaeology. Don't miss the fascinating displays of traditional costumes – some quite elaborate – and the splendid ceramics and painting. The **Tour de Rohan** is up a spiral staircase.

### Musée des Beaux-Arts

GALLERY

(☎ 02 98 95 45 20; [www.mbaq.fr](http://www.mbaq.fr); 40 place St-Corentin; adult/child €5/3; ☉ 10am-6pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 2-5.30pm Sun Nov-Mar) The ground-floor rooms of the town's main art museum are home to 16th- to 20th-century European paintings, and upper levels include a room dedicated to Quimper-born poet Max Jacob with sketches by Picasso and a

## DON'T MISS

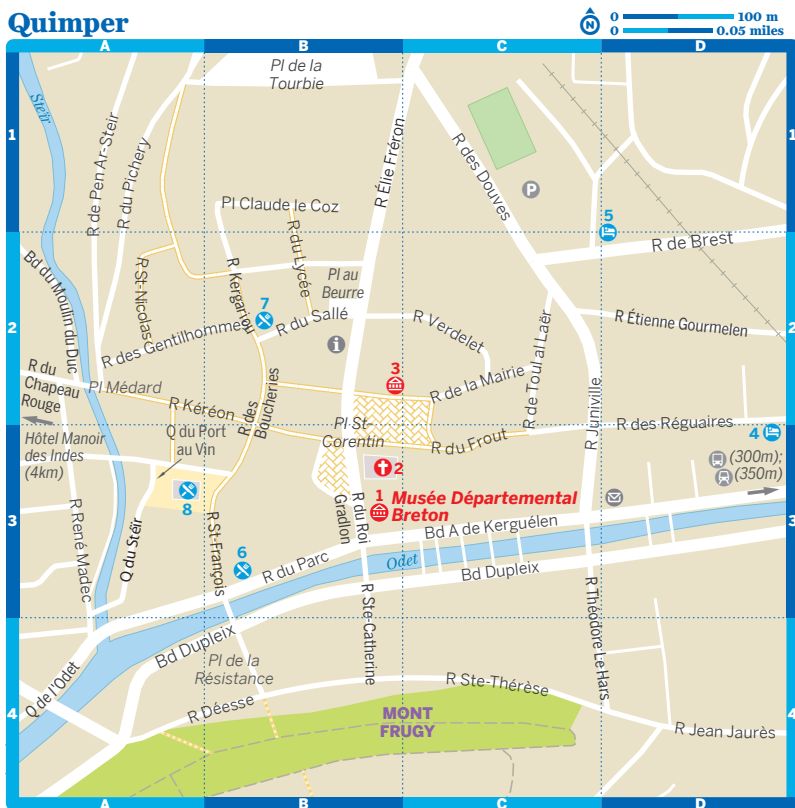
### BRITTANY'S MOST UNFORGETTABLE SUNSET

Few places in France can match **Pointe du Raz** (Beg ar Raz in Breton) for its coastal splendour: on every side, gorse-cloaked cliffs plummet to the waves 70m below, gulls trace lazy arcs overhead, and a statue gazes out to sea towards the Île de Sein and the winking light of the Ar Men lighthouse. On a stormy day, with giant waves hurling themselves at the cliff faces, it feels like the end of the world. On a clear day, the sunsets are just unbelievable.

The area is a nationally protected reserve and trails criss-cross the land, but be careful on trails that have severe, unprotected drop-offs. A car park, cafes and a seasonal **visitor centre** (Maison de la Pointe du Raz et du Cap-Sizun; ☎ 02 98 70 67 18; [www.pointeduraz.com](http://www.pointeduraz.com); ☉ 10.30am-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, to 7pm Jul-Aug, to 5.30pm Oct) are behind the point proper; shuttle buses ferry visitors the last 800m, or you can just walk the scenic coastal path.

In high season only, **BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; [www.breizhgo.bzh](http://www.breizhgo.bzh)) bus 53 from Quimper continues past Audierne on to the car park at Pointe du Raz (€2.50, three daily Monday to Saturday, 1¼ hours), but it's easier and more sensible to visit with your own wheels. There is a car-park fee of €6.50 (€4 for motorbikes).

## Quimper



goose painted by Gauguin. There's also a section devoted to the Pont-Aven school of painting.

### Vedettes de l'Odét

BOATING

(☎02 98 57 00 58; [www.vedettes-odet.com](http://www.vedettes-odet.com); av du Corniguel; ☺ Apr-Sep) Vedettes de l'Odét runs boat trips, including one around the Îles de Glénan (adult/child 13–17 / child 4–12 €36/33/18) and a promenade cruise from Quimper's Port de Corniguel along the serene Odét estuary to Bénodet (€28/23/17). The company also offers a shorter one-hour cruise (€16/13/9) along the Odét River. Check the website for departure times.

### Sleeping

#### Hôtel Gradlon

HOTEL €€

(☎02 98 95 04 39; [www.hotel-gradlon.com](http://www.hotel-gradlon.com); 30 rue de Brest; d €70-125, ste from €135; 📶) The bland, sterile façade belies a charming country-manor interior, where excellent service

## Quimper

### Top Sights

- 1 Musée Départemental Breton..... B3

### Sights

- 2 Cathédrale St-Corentin..... B3  
3 Musée des Beaux-Arts ..... B2

### Sleeping

- 4 Best Western Hôtel Kregenn..... D3  
5 Hôtel Gradlon..... D2

### Eating

- 6 Café de l'Épée ..... B3  
7 Crêperie du Quartier ..... B2  
8 Halles St-François ..... A3

prevails. Its 20 rooms are not large, but are well-furnished and quite varied, with plenty of character and individual touches. Bathrooms tend towards the large and modern. Breakfast costs €8 to €12. No lift.



**Best Western Hôtel Kregenn** HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 98 95 08 70; www.hotel-kregenn.fr; 13 rue des Réguaire; d €109-180, ste €199-214; 🍷🍴) A timber-decked courtyard and a guest lounge with oversized mirrors and white leather sofas shows off Quimper's coolest hotel. Some of the 32 contemporary plush rooms – decked out in warm colours – come with ancient stone walls. Buffet breakfast is €13; parking €7.

**Hôtel Manoir des Indes** HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 98 55 48 40; www.manoir-hoteldesindes.com; 1 allée de Prad ar C'hras; s €89-171, d €155-190; 🍷🍴) Fabulously located in an old manor house 5km west of Quimper, this excellent place with 13 rooms has been lovingly restored with its globe-trotting original owner in mind. Decor is minimalist and modern, with Asian *objets d'art*, lots of exposed wood and oodles of character. There's also an indoor swimming pool.

**Eating**

As a bastion of Breton culture, Quimper has a bewildering choice of exceptional crêperies, all centred on, fittingly enough, place au Beurre, as well as rue du Sallé. The covered market **Halles St-François** (www.halles-cor nouaille.com; 16 quai du Stéir; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon, to 8pm Tue-Sat, to 1pm Sun) in the old town has a slew of salad and sandwich options. **Open-air markets** are on Wednesday and Saturday and surround the covered market.

**Crêperie du Quartier** CRÊPES €

(☎ 02 98 64 29 30; 16 rue du Sallé; mains €7-9; ☎ noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat) In a town where the humble crêpe is king, and in a street stuffed with crêperies, this cosy stone-lined place is one of the best. Its wide-ranging and lip-smackingly good menu includes a *galette* of the week and a crêpe stuffed with apple, caramel, ice cream, almonds and Chantilly. The lunchtime menu is a snip at €11.

**Café de l'Épée** CAFE €€

(☎ 02 98 95 28 97; www.cafedelepee.fr; 14 rue du Parc; mains €15-32, menus €16-39; ☎ brasserie noon-2pm & 7-10pm, cafe 10.30am-midnight) This attractive Quimper institution is one of Brittany's oldest brasseries and hits the mark with its buzzy, contemporary dining areas, efficient service and good vibe. Despite the hip interior, the food is never an afterthought. Superbly executed dishes include duck breast, lamb chops, *ris de veau* (sweetbreads), shellfish and salads. There's a €10 kids' menu.

**Information**

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Quimper Cornouaille; ☎ 02 98 53 04 05; www.quimper-tourisme.bzh; 8 rue Élie Fréron; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year; 📞)

**Getting There & Around****AIR**

Quimper's **airport** (UIP; ☎ 02 98 94 30 30; www.quimper.aeroport.fr; rue de l'Aéroport), 10km southwest of town in Pluguffan, has direct flights to Paris, Porto-Vecchio in Corsica, and London. It is served by the **QUB** (☎ 02 98 95 97 92; www.qub.fr; single/day ticket €1.50/4) airport shuttle, with departures from the train station Monday to Friday at 5.15am, 1pm and 5pm, leaving the airport at 10.45am and 6.25pm. Book by phone or email by 5pm the day before.

**BUS**

**BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) has regular buses to Brest (€7.50, 1¼ hours), Concarneau (€2.50, 40 minutes) and Camaret-sur-Mer (€2.50, 1½ hours). The bus station is next to the train station.

**TRAIN**

Quimper is on major lines to Vannes, Rennes and Paris, and a minor line north to Landerneau and Brest:

DESTINATION	COST (€)	TIME (HR)	FREQUENCY (DAILY)
Brest	9	1½	(SNCF bus or train) 11
Nantes	33	2½	3 direct
Paris Montparnasse	30-75	4	9 direct
Rennes	28	2	11 direct
Vannes	18	1	15

**Concarneau**

POP 19,875

The sheltered harbour of Concarneau (Konk-Kerne in Breton), 24km southeast of Quimper, radiates out from its trawler port, which brings in close to 200,000 tonnes of tuna a year from the Indian Ocean and off the African coast. (The Atlantic is too cold.) Jutting out into the port, and encircled by medieval walls, the old town called the Ville Close is supremely picturesque, and one of Brittany's most popular spots in summer. Concarneau is also a jumping-off point for the Îles de Glénan.

## BRETON LANGUAGE 101

While travelling through Brittany you'll spot street and transport signs in both French and in Breton (Brezhoneg). Even though all speakers of Breton also speak French, this is seen as an important gesture to normalising the use of a language that was stigmatised – even banned – till as late as the 1960s.

Linguistically speaking, Breton is a Celtic language related to Cornish and Welsh, and more distantly to Irish and Scottish Gaelic. After the French Revolution, the government banned the teaching of Breton and other 'patois' in schools, punishing children who spoke their mother tongue. Between 1950 and 1990 there was an 80% reduction in Breton usage. Today there are about 210,000 native speakers, most of whom are over 60.

Although there were attempts to raise the status of Breton in the first half of the 20th century with the foundation of such periodicals as *Gwalarn* (Northwesterly) and *Al Liamm* (The Link), real impetus at revival only came in 1977 when Breton-language schools called *Diwan* – from the word for 'seed' or 'sprout' – were founded. Bringing about the rebirth of a language no longer passed on generationally and classified as 'endangered' wasn't straightforward. As Breton is more often spoken than written (with great regional differences in both), settling on a standardised language for teaching in schools remains a complex issue.

Breton now extends beyond its former boundaries. Originally, residents of Basse Bretagne (Lower Brittany, in the west) spoke one of four Breton dialects, while those in Haute Bretagne (Upper Brittany, in the east, including areas such as St-Malo) spoke Gallo, a Romance language close to standard French. But today you'll even find Breton signage in Rennes' metro stations and many other parts of the east as well.

Key expressions include the following:

**Hello/Good day** *Demat*

**Yes/No** *Ya/Nann*

**Please** *Mar plij*

**Thank you** *Trugarez*

**Goodbye** *Kenavo*

## Sights

### Ville Close

HISTORIC SITE

This spectacular walled town, fortified in the 14th century and modified by the architect Vauban three centuries later, sits on a small island linked to place Jean Jaurès by a stone footbridge. Just past the citadel's clock tower and main gate, look out for the 18th-century **Tour du Gouverneur**, which is one of the access points for strolling the ramparts. As you continue, rue Vauban leads to place St-Guénolé and the former church – and later hospice – of the same name.

### Musée de la Pêche

MUSEUM

(Fisheries Museum; ☎ 02 98 97 10 20; www.musee-peche.fr; 3 rue Vauban, Ville Close; adult/child €5/free; ☀ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun Feb, Mar, Nov & Dec, closed most of Jan) This excellent museum, just inside the main western gate of the Ville Close, delves into Concarneau's seafaring traditions using everything from archive film to scale models and vintage boats. You

can even clamber aboard the museum's very own fishing vessel, the retired *L'Hémérica*, docked just outside the city walls.



## Beaches

Concarneau's best beach is **Plage des Sables Blancs** (📍3), northwest of the town centre. **Plage du Cabellou** (📍2), about 7km south of town, is a decent spot for sunbathing and swimming, with views back to Concarneau; take bus 2, southbound, which continues all the way to scenic **Pointe du Cabellou** and its old fort.



## Sleeping

### Auberge de Jeunesse de Concarneau

HOSTEL €

(☎ 02 98 97 03 47; www.aj-concarneau.org; quai de la Croix; dm incl breakfast €20; 🛏) Fall asleep listening to the waves at this functional and central waterfront hostel with 56 beds at the southern tip of Concarneau. Digs are in four- to six-bed dorms. Extras include

## DON'T MISS

## ÎLES DE GLÉNAN

Sapphire waters, idyllic white-sand beaches and no crowds – Bora Bora? No: Îles de Glénan (Inizi Glenan in Breton). This archipelago of around a dozen mini-islands lies just 20km south of Concarneau and never fails to impress in fine weather. Visitors are only allowed on Île de St-Nicolas. **Vedettes de l'Odet** (☎ 02 98 57 00 58; www.vedettes-odet.com; Port de Plaisance, Concarneau) runs scenic cruises around the islands from Concarneau and other coastal towns. Optional activities include sea kayaking and glass-bottom-boat tours as well as diving.

a wrap-around barbecue terrace, a self-catering kitchen and pastries for breakfast. Lunch and dinner is €12 or just a packed lunch is €9.50.

**Brit Hôtel des Halles** HOTEL € (☎ 02 98 97 11 41; www.hoteldeshalles.com; place de l'Hôtel de Ville, rue Charles Linement; s €60, d €71-86, tr €95, f €101; 📶) The location is superb – just a few steps from Ville Close – and though this hotel tends towards the mainstream and ordinary, its 25 rooms are cheered by their use of colour and suitably nautical décor. The organic breakfast (€12) includes homemade jams.

**Hôtel de France et d'Europe** HOTEL €€ (☎ 02 98 97 00 64; www.hotel-france-europe.com; 9 av de la Gare; s/d/tr/q from €62/80/101/108; 📶) This faintly stylish, comfortable and serviceable place with 22 rooms is just two blocks north of the harbour. There's no 'wow' factor – just plain, good-value lodging in a handy location. Precious perks include private parking (€8 per day), a shady terrace and a small fitness room. The lavish breakfast buffet costs €12.

**Les Sables Blancs** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€ (☎ 02 98 50 10 12; www.hotel-les-sables-blancs.com; 45 rue des Sables Blancs; d €99-154, tr/q/ste €174/199/254; 📶) If you want to get out of town, this contemporary west-facing hotel, right on the 'white sands' of the beach (p307) of the same name, has 21 tastefully decorated rooms with fabulous sea views and a good restaurant. The catch? The 'standard' rooms are a bit boxy and prices can inflate rather unappealingly in summer.

## Eating

There's a **covered market** on place Jean Jaurès and a busy **open-air market** in the same square on Monday (smaller) and Friday (larger) from 8am to 1pm.

**Le Petit Chaperon Rouge** CRÊPES € (☎ 02 98 60 53 32; 7 place Duguesclin; mains €4-12; ☺ noon-1.30pm Tue-Sun, 7.15-9.15pm Tue-Sat) This cute and inviting crêperie enjoys a cosy setting and a bumper selection of savoury *galettes* and sweet crêpes.

**Le Flaveur** MODERN FRENCH €€ (☎ 02 98 60 43 47; 4 rue Duquesne; lunch menu €20, dinner menu €32-73; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.15-9pm Tue-Wed & Fri-Sat, noon-1.30pm Thu & Sun) Le Flaveur is tucked temptingly away from the hustle and bustle down a quiet street near the harbour. Meals range from strictly local dishes through to broader French cuisine. If it's available, order the *pigeonneau royal* (royal pigeon), delectable and affordable.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Concarneau; ☎ 02 98 97 01 44; www.tourismeconcarneau.fr; quai d'Aiguillon; ☺ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jun & Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Oct -Mar; 📶) Has information on the myriad walking and cycling circuits in the area.

## Getting There &amp; Away

**BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) bus 37 links Concarneau with Quimper (€2.50, 40 minutes) as well as Quimperlé (€2.50, 1¼ hours). Services run up to 10 buses daily, and stop at the port.

## Pont-Aven

POP 2859

Breton villages don't come much prettier than Pont-Aven, a former port and mill town cradled at the end of a wooded creek 17km southeast of Concarneau. In the 19th century, its charms were discovered by artists; American painters were among the first to uncover it, but things really took off when France's Paul Gauguin and Émile Bernard set up a colony here in the 1850s and captured the beauty of the little village and the surrounding countryside. Today the town counts over 60 galleries. At the village's **Musée de Pont-Aven** (☎ 02 98 06 14 43; www.museepontaven.fr; place Julia; adult/child €5/free, with special exhibit €8/free; ☺ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug,

to 6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun Mar, Nov & Dec, closed most of Jan) interactive exhibits delve into the life and art of Gauguin and other resident painters. Some excellent temporary exhibitions bring masterpieces to town; there is also a garden and a shop.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Les Ajoncs d'Or

HOTEL €

(☎02 98 06 02 06; [www.ajoncsdor-pontaven.com](http://www.ajoncsdor-pontaven.com); 1 place Julia; d/tw/tr/f/ste from €78/85/90/105/120; 🍷) A good deal for Pont-Aven, this venerable two-star hotel is a decent and well-priced choice, with cosy beds, tiled bathrooms and nice furnishings in 22 guest rooms, all kept clean and presentable. There's an attached restaurant and the breakfast buffet is an extra €9.50.

### Sur Le Pont

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎02 98 06 16 16; [www.surlepont-pontaven.fr](http://www.surlepont-pontaven.fr); 11 place Paul Gauguin; lunch/dinner menu €27/34, mains €17-25; ☺12.30-2pm & 7.30-9pm Wed-Sun) You couldn't wish for a more perfect setting, lodged in a stylishly renovated building by the Pont-Aven bridge. A just-so palette of cool greys, beiges, blacks and whites creates the feel of an elegant bistro. Dishes are refined takes on Breton cooking, with an emphasis on seafood.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Concarneau à Pont-Aven; ☎02 98 06 87 90; [www.pontaven.com](http://www.pontaven.com); 3 rue des Meunières; ☺9.30am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun; 🗺) Pick up a free walking-trail map to see the spots where the masters set up their easels. Can also help with accommodation.

## Getting There & Away

Pont-Aven is 16km east of Concarneau. **Breizh-Go** (☎08 10 35 10 35; [www.breizhgo.bzh](http://www.breizhgo.bzh)) buses (€2.50, five daily Monday to Saturday, two on Sunday) connect Pont-Aven with Quimperlé in the east (30 minutes), Concarneau (25 minutes) and Quimper (one hour). Buses depart Pont-Aven from place Julia (formerly place de l'Hôtel de Ville) in the centre of town.

## GOLFE DU MORBIHAN

In the crook of Brittany's southern coastline, the Golfe du Morbihan (Gulf of Morbihan; [www.morbihan.com](http://www.morbihan.com)) shelters some 40 islands, as well as beaches, oyster beds and

birdlife. Its shallow waters form a breathtakingly beautiful inland sea that's easily accessible from Vannes. Some islands are barely sandy specks of land, while others harbour communities of fishers, farmers and artistic types seduced by the island lifestyle. In Breton it's Ar Mor Bihan, the 'Little Sea'.

The area is perhaps best known for its profusion of magnificent and mystifying Celtic megaliths – a must for a visit to Brittany. They rise majestically throughout most of the *département*, charging the area with a sense of myth and mystery.

## Carnac

POP 4374

Carnac is firmly on the map for its astonishing and almost other-worldly collection of megalithic sites. Predating Stonehenge, Carnac (Karnag in Breton) tops it with the sheer number of ancient sites found in the vicinity, making this the world's greatest concentration of megalithic sites. There are no fewer than 3000 of these upright stones erected between 5000 and 3500 BCE. Off the trail, you can hike through the woods and soak up some of the area's primordial energy. Go in search of a giant menhir (standing stone), duck down through a passage to a tumulus vault or climb up an abandoned mill for panoramic views of the ancient stones. This is one of the most important ancient sites in Europe.

Carnac, some 32km west of Vannes, comprises the old stone village Carnac-Ville and, 2km south, the seaside resort of Carnac-Plage, bordered by a long sandy beach.



## Beaches

Not only is Carnac a fantastic open-air museum that appeals to history lovers, it's also a superb playground for beachy types. **Grande Plage** is Carnac's longest and most popular beach and is excellent for sunbathing – it's a 2km-long stretch of white sand 2km south of Carnac-Ville. To the west, **Plage de Ty Bihan** and **Plage de St-Colomban**, popular with windsurfers, are smaller and quieter.



## Sleeping

### Camping des Menhirs

CAMPGROUND €

(☎02 97 52 94 67; [www.lesmenhirs.com](http://www.lesmenhirs.com); 7 allée St-Michel, Carnac-Plage; adult/site from €9/33; ☺May-late Sep; 🗺) Carnac and its surroundings have more than 15 campgrounds, including this luxury complex of 100-sq-metre sites, with 332 pitches as well as some





fantastic mobile homes. Just 300m north of the beach, this is very much the glamorous end of camping and more of a resort, with amenities such as a giant swimming pool, a sauna and sports facilities.

### Le Ratelier

INN €

(☎02 97 52 05 04; [www.le-ratelier.com](http://www.le-ratelier.com); 4 chemin du Douet; s & d from €63, f from €89; 🍷) This vine-clad stone farmhouse has just eight rooms – with low ceilings, fabric-covered walls and traditional timber furnishings – and is in a quiet street south of the church. The cheapest rooms have showers only and shared toilets. Those with private bathrooms feel a tad compact due to the cubicle shower and toilets plonked in the corner. Breakfast is €8.50.

### ★ Dihan

B&amp;B €€

(☎02 97 56 88 27; [www.dihan-evasion.org](http://www.dihan-evasion.org); Kerganiet, Plœmel; tent/tree house for 2 from €95/135) 🍷 For the ultimate eco-escape, don't miss fantastic Dihan, secluded in a leafy dell outside Plœmel (follow the signs from the village), 8km north of Carnac. Run by fun-loving Myriam and Arno Le Masle, a farmhouse and barn contain the 22 guest rooms, while the grounds shelter yurts, bubble tents, a gypsy-style caravan wagon and tree houses.

### ★ Plume au Vent

B&amp;B €€

(☎06 16 98 34 79; [www.plume-au-vent.com](http://www.plume-au-vent.com); 4 venelle Notre-Dame, Carnac-Ville; s & d €85-100, q €145-160; 🍷) This B&B with two suites on a *venelle* (little street) in the town centre is like something from an interior-design magazine. It's all mellow shades of blues and greys, with hundreds of neatly bound books, objects washed up on the high-tide line and polished concrete showers and sinks.

### 🍴 Eating

#### Chez Marie

CRÊPES €

(☎02 97 52 07 93; [www.creperie-chez-marie.com](http://www.creperie-chez-marie.com); 3 place de l'Église, Carnac-Ville; mains €6-15, menus €10-15, kids' menu €7.50; ☀️ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sun Apr-Oct) Established in 1959, this Carnac institution churns out savoury *galettes* and sweet crêpes in a charmingly traditional stone house opposite the church. Connoisseurs recommend its flambeed specialities, especially the Arzal *galette*, with scallops, apples and cider.

### ★ La Côte

GASTRONOMY €€

(☎02 97 52 02 80; [www.restaurant-la-cote.com](http://www.restaurant-la-cote.com); impasse Parc Er Forn, Carnac-Ville; lunch menu €26,

## CELTIC FESTIVAL FUN

Celtic communities from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Isle of Man and Galicia in northwest Spain congregate with Bretons for the week-long **Festival Interceltique de Lorient** (☎02 97 21 24 29; [www.festival-interceltique.bzh](http://www.festival-interceltique.bzh); rue Pierre Guergadic, Lorient; ☀️ early Aug). Upwards of 70,000 people descend on the city of Lorient, about 30km northwest of Carnac, so book accommodation well ahead. The highlight is the Sunday parade with 3500 musicians, singers, pipe bands and dancers from all over the Celtic world.

dinner menu €39-83; ☀️ 12.15-2.15pm Wed-Sun, 7.15-9.15pm Tue-Sun) Top recommendation on the Morbihan coast goes to this Carnac restaurant run by Carnacois *maitre-cuisinier* Pierre Michaud, who has won plaudits for his inventive cuisine combining the very best of Breton ingredients. The setting is another draw, with an elegant dining room and a soothing terrace overlooking a small fish pond. It's close to the Alignements de Kermario (p312).

### 📍 Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Carnac; ☎02 97 52 13 52; [www.ot-carnac.fr](http://www.ot-carnac.fr); 74 av des Druides, Carnac-Plage; ☀️ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 3-7pm Sun Jul-Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 3-6pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, shorter hours rest of year; 🍷) This office in Carnac-Plage, next to the church, has an excellent map of nearby neolithic sites and an app.

### 📍 Getting There & Around

#### BICYCLE

Hire bikes and cycle buggies from **A Bicyclette** (☎02 97 52 75 08; [www.velocarnac.com](http://www.velocarnac.com); 93bis av des Druides, Carnac-Plage; city/electric bicycle per day €11/24; ☀️ 10am-7pm) down near the beach.

#### BUS

The main bus stop in Carnac-Ville is outside the police station on rue St-Cornély, and in Carnac-Plage beside the tourist office. **BreizhGo** (☎08 10 35 10 35; [www.breizhgo.bzh](http://www.breizhgo.bzh)) bus No 1 (€2.50) links Carnac with Auray (35 minutes), Vannes (80 minutes) and Quiberon (30 minutes).

#### TRAIN

The nearest useful train station is in Auray, 14km to the northeast. You can buy train tickets at the tourist office.

## CARNAC'S MYSTERIOUS MEGALITHS

Two perplexing questions arise from Brittany's neolithic menhirs, dolmens, cromlechs, tumuli and cairns. Just how did the original constructors hew, then haul, these dressed blocks (the heaviest weighs 300 tonnes), millennia before the wheel reached Brittany? And why were they brought here? Theories and hypotheses abound, but common consensus is that they served some kind of sacred purpose – a spiritual impulse that has motivated so much monument-building by our early ancestors.

The main information point for the Carnac alignments is the **Maison des Mégalithes** (☎02 97 52 29 81; www.menhirs-carnac.fr; rte des Alignements/D196; tour adult/child €9/5; ☀9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Sep, Apr & Jun, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Oct-Mar), which explores the history of the site and has a rooftop viewpoint overlooking the alignments. Due to severe erosion, the sites are fenced off to allow the vegetation to regenerate, and certain areas are accessible only by guided tour. The Maison can organise a one-hour guided visit, several times daily in French and weekly in English during the summer.

The best way to appreciate the sheer number of stones is to walk or cycle between the Ménez and Kerlescan groups, with menhirs almost continuously in view. Between June and September, seven buses a day run between the two sites, as well as between Carnac-Ville and Carnac-Plage.

On the other side of the road from the Maison des Mégalithes, the largest menhir field – with 1170 stones in 11 rows – is the **Alignements du Ménez**, 1km north of Carnac-Ville. From here, the D196 heads northeast for about 1.5km to the equally impressive **Alignements de Kermario**, parts of which are open year-round. Climb the stone **Moulin de Kermaux** midway along the site to view the alignment from above.

The massive burial mound of a neolithic chieftain dating from 3800 BCE, the astonishing **Tumulus de Kercado** lies just southeast of Kermario and 500m to the south of the D196; look for the signs. Deposit your fee (€1) in the honour box at the entry hut that you walk through to reach the site. About 300m east of the Kercado turnoff along the D196 lies the parking area for the **Géant du Manio**.

The easternmost of the major groups is the **Alignements de Kerlescan**, a smaller grouping also accessible in winter.

**Tumulus St-Michel**, 400m northeast of the Carnac-Ville tourist office, and accessed off the D781 at the end of chemin du Tumulus, is a gigantic burial mound with a church on top. It dates back to at least 5000 BCE and offers sweeping views (exterior access only as the mound is unstable).

Be sure to visit the **Musée de Préhistoire** (☎02 97 52 22 04; www.museedecarnac.fr; 10 place de la Chapelle, Carnac-Ville; adult/child €7/3; ☀10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Jun & Sep, shorter hours Oct-Mar) to see the incredible neolithic artefacts found throughout the region.

## Quiberon

POP 4834

Quiberon (Kiberen in Breton) sits right at the southern tip of 14km-long **Presqu'île de Quiberon** (Quiberon Peninsula), flanked on the western side by the rocky, sublime and wave-lashed **Côte Sauvage** (Wild Coast). A thin ribbon of isthmus – **Isthme de Pen-thièvre** – links the peninsula to the mainland. The setting is superb, with a heady mix of lovely rock-strewn beaches including **Grande Plage** (☼) and dramatic, rugged inlets. The town of Quiberon is wildly popular in summer and the springboard for ferries

to Belle Île (p313). There are plenty of water sports for outdoorsy types, from diving and snorkelling to sea kayaking, surfing and *char à voile* (sand/land yachting).

## Sights & Activities

**Conserverie La Belle-Isoise** CANNERY TOUR (☎02 97 50 08 77; www.labelleiloise.fr; 10 rue de Kervozès, zone d'Activités Plein Ouest, bd Plein Ouest; ☀high-season tours 10.30am, 11.30am, 2.30pm, 3.30pm, 4.30pm & 5pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am, 11.30am, 2.30pm, 3.30pm & 4.30pm Sat, fewer tours in low season) **FREE** Take a 45-minute guided tour of this former sardine cannery before replenishing your supplies of tinned

tuna, mackerel, sardines and fish spread in the adjacent shop. It's north of the train station.

### Sillages

KAYAKING

(☎ 06 81 26 75 08; www.kayak-sillages.com; 9 av de Groix, St-Pierre-Quiberon; adult/child from €18/16; ☺ daily by reservation) This reputable outfit based in St-Pierre-Quiberon (look for the 'Base Nautique') runs guided kayaking tours for all levels; beginners are welcome.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Camping du Conguel

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 02 97 50 19 11; www.campingduconguel.com; bd de la Teignouse, Plage du Conguel; sites from €25; ☺ Apr-Oct; 🚻) This splashy option with an aqua park that has water slides is one of the peninsula's 15 campgrounds. Just 2km east of the town centre, it's beside Plage du Conguel. There are also caravans to rent (from €55).

### ★ Le Petit Hôtel du Grand Large

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 97 30 91 61; www.lepetithoteldugrandlarge.fr; 11 quai St-Ivy, Portivy; d €98-138; 🍷) This intimate hotel is a soothing escape, offering six spiffy, well-lit rooms facing the sea. Top choices are room 4, with its bathroom in a turret, and room 5, for its balcony. It's in Portivy, an adorable, quiet seaside town a few kilometres north of Quiberon. Breakfast costs €15.

### ★ Le Vivier

SEAFOOD €

(☎ 02 97 50 12 60; 12 rue du Vivier, Côte Sauvage; mains €12-25; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sun Feb-Nov, daily Jul & Aug) The seafood is superb, but almost secondary at this convivial but busy eatery dramatically perched on a small cliff on the blustery Côte Sauvage; bookings are essential for the top tables, squeezed onto a sunny terrace hovering above the rocky coastline.

The menu is plain and unpretentious – think fish soup, salads, mussels, smoked fish and oysters.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Quiberon; ☎ 02 44 84 56 56; www.quiberon.com; 14 rue de Verdun; ☺ 10am-1pm & 2.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Aug, shorter hours rest of year; 🗺)

## Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

**Cycles Loisirs** (☎ 02 97 50 31 73; www.cyclesloisirs.free.fr; 32 rue Victor Golvan; touring/mountain/junior bikes per day €9.50/13/7), 200m north of the tourist office, rents out touring and mountain bikes. **Cyclo-mar** (☎ 02 97 50 26 00; www.cyclomar.fr; 47 place Hoche; touring/mountain bikes per day from €12/13.50, scooters incl helmet per day €39.50), around 200m south of the tourist office, rents out bikes at similar prices, as well as scooters.

### BOAT

Compagnie Océane (p315) runs ferries between Quiberon and Belle Île, and Houat and Hoëdic islands. Park at **Sémaphore car park** (☎ 02 97 30 59 45; 66 av du Général de Gaulle; parking 4/24/36hr €4.80/13.50/17; ☺ Apr-Sep) 1.5km north of the harbourfront, and take the free shuttle to the port.

### BUS

**BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) bus No 1 (€2.50) links Quiberon with Carnac (45 minutes) Auray (35 minutes) and Vannes (1¾ hours). Buses stop at the train station and at place Hoche, near the tourist office and the beach.

### TRAIN

In July and August only, a train runs several times a day between Auray and Quiberon (€6.40, 45 minutes). At other times an SNCF bus service links Quiberon and Auray train stations (€3.65, 45 minutes) at least seven times a day.

## Belle Île

POP 5300

Belle-Île-en-Mer (Beautiful Island in the Sea) to give it its full name is just that: rugged cliffs and rock stacks line the island's west coast while picturesque pastel ports nestle along the eastern side. For sunbathers and outdoorsy types, there is no shortage of lovely beaches and activities.

Accessed by ferries from Quiberon, the island sees its modest population swell tenfold in summer. But as it's Brittany's largest offshore island (at 20km by 9km), there's usually room to escape the crowds.

Belle Île (Ar Gerveur in Breton) has two main settlements: the main port of Le Palais is on the east side of the island, while smaller (and even more charming) Sauzon is in the northeast.

## Sight & Activities

### Citadelle Vauban

FORT

( 02 97 31 85 54; [www.citadellevauban.com](http://www.citadellevauban.com); Porte du Donjon, Le Palais; adult/child €8.50/5.50; ☀ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Mar) This dramatic citadel, strengthened by the architect Vauban between 1683 and 1689, dominates the little port of Le Palais. Inside, the informative **Musée d'Art et d'Histoire** displays concentrate on the history of the island's defensive system, and there are sections on the local fishing trade and island life. There's also a very smart 55-room hotel here and a restaurant (menus €19 to €35).

### ★ Aiguilles de Port Coton

NATURAL FEATURE

Just off the western side of the island, these magnificent rock stacks – depicted in a series of celebrated canvases by Claude Monet in 1886 – resemble *aiguilles* (needles) and are a must-see for panorama lovers and photographers. The name Port Coton comes from the way the sea breaks against the rocks, creating foam like cotton wool.

### Pointe des Poulains

NATURAL FEATURE

The island's northernmost point juts out dramatically at Pointe des Poulains. Flanked by craggy cliffs and affording sublime views, this windswept headland is Belle Île's loftiest lookout, and was once the summer home of French actress (and sculptor) Sarah Bernhardt. Her former fortress home is open to the public as a museum from April to October.

## Beaches & Caves

Belle Île is blessed with some lovely beaches, including the lengthy **Plage des Grands Sables**, **Plage de Donnant**, and sheltered **Plage d'Herlin**, on the south side, which is better for children.

Belle Île's fretted western coast has spectacular rock formations and caves, including **Grotte de l'Apothicaire** (off the D30).

## Sleeping & Eating

### Camping Bordénéo

CAMPGROUND 

( 02 97 31 88 96; [www.bordeneo.com](http://www.bordeneo.com); Bordénéo, Le Palais; per adult/child/car/site €7/4.35/2.60/10.75; ☀ Apr-Sep; 🏠 🚻) This modern, well-equipped campground is delightfully located in Bordénéo, about 2km northwest of Le Palais off the road to Sauzon. The heated pool is a big plus, and there are mobile homes for hire as well.

### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL 

( 02 97 31 81 33; [www.fuaj.org/belle-ile-en-mer](http://www.fuaj.org/belle-ile-en-mer); Haute Boulogne, Le Palais; dm from €17.50, d €35; ☀ Apr-Sep; 🏠) This modern, well-equipped and functional 96-bed, HI-affiliated hostel, with a self-catering kitchen, is a few hundred metres north of the citadel. Its rooms are all twins with bunk beds and shared toilets. Meals are available; you'll need to reserve ahead as it's popular.

### Hôtel Vauban

HOTEL 

( 02 97 31 45 42; [www.hotel-vauban-belleile.com](http://www.hotel-vauban-belleile.com); 1 rue des Remparts, Le Palais; d €73-97; 🏠) This comfy two-star place has 16 multicoloured rooms splashed with driftwood, perched high on Le Palais' ramparts. It has jaw-dropping views of the harbour below, though cheaper rooms face the garden. Much more affordable in low season (doubles €42 to €59). Breakfast is an additional €13.

### ★ La Villa de Jade

B&B 

( 02 97 31 53 00; [www.villadejade.com](http://www.villadejade.com); Taillefer, Le Palais; d €180-220, apt per week €1600; 🏠) Manuel and Valérie are the widely travelled, bilingual couple behind La Villa de Jade. They have created a one-of-a-kind, gorgeous B&B in a stunningly renovated villa, perfectly placed on a cliff-top with plunging views of the sea some 2km north of Le Palais. The three rooms ooze charm with mix-and-match furniture, family photos, colourful touches and wood floors. The garden apartment sleeps three.

### Les Embruns

CRÊPES 

( 02 97 31 64 78; [www.creperielesembruns-sauzon.fr](http://www.creperielesembruns-sauzon.fr); quai Joseph Naudin, Sauzon; mains €6-12; ☀ noon-10.30pm Apr-Oct) 🍴 In business for over 30 years, this tempting crêperie is one of the best on the Sauzon harbourfront. It prepares perfectly buttered Breton crêpes and *galettes*, as well as scrumptious fillings such as *oranges confites de maison* (home-made candied orange), and finger-licking ice creams. In summer, tables spill onto a pavement terrace.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Belle Île en Mer;  02 97 31 81 93; [www.belle-ile.com/belle-ile/votre-office-de-tourisme](http://www.belle-ile.com/belle-ile/votre-office-de-tourisme); quai Bonnelle, Le Palais; ☀ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year; 🏠) On the left as you leave the ferry in Le Palais.

## NEOLITHIC DISCOVERIES IN THE GULF

The land and islands around the Golfe du Morbihan are dotted with an astonishing array of neolithic sites, which are of interest not only to archaeologists but also to anyone with an eye for the sublime and mysterious.

Within the bay itself, the largest island is the 6km-long **Île aux Moines**. Nearby **Île d'Arz** is smaller – just 3km long and 1km wide – but it's the most scenic of the lot and features secluded sands and coastal walks. Tempted to stay? Both islands have a slew of B&Bs and eateries.

The most unusual of neolithic sites, the **Locmariaquer megaliths** (☎ 02 97 57 37 59; [www.site-megalithique-locmariaquer.fr](http://www.site-megalithique-locmariaquer.fr); rte de Kerlognan; adult/child €6/free; ☀ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm May & Jun, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.15pm Sep-Apr) on the eastern edge of the village of Locmariaquer, 13km south of Auray, sit in an area rich in dolmens. This one features three distinct forms. The **Grand Menhir Brisé** (Great Broken Standing Stone), at 20m the tallest in Western Europe, was made from a type of granite that indicates it was transported from several kilometres away. The **Table des Marchand** dolmen boasts an incredible geometric carving in its interior, while an enormous **tumulus** covers multiple graves.

One of the most special neolithic ruins along the Morbihan coast is the **Cairn de Gavrinis** (☎ 02 97 57 19 38; [www.cairndegavrinis.com](http://www.cairndegavrinis.com); rue de Pen Lammic, Île de Gavrinis; boat trip & tour adult/child €18/8; ☀ 9.30am-8pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) is a broad neolithic tomb built between 4500 and 2500 BCE. Scale the mound for sweeping views of the entire Golfe du Morbihan and its offshore islands.

On the southern shore of the Presqu'île de Rhuys, on the southern edge of the Golfe du Morbihan, the **Cairn de Petit Mont** (☎ 06 03 95 90 78; [www.morbihan.fr/petit-mont](http://www.morbihan.fr/petit-mont); rue du Petit Mont, Arzon; adult/child €6/5; ☀ 10am-8pm Jul & Aug, 2.30-6.30pm Thu-Tue Apr-Jun & Sep, 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) is a broad neolithic tomb built between 4500 and 2500 BCE. Scale the mound for sweeping views of the entire Golfe du Morbihan and its offshore islands.

Lots of companies offer scenic cruises and ferry services to Île aux Moines and Île d'Arz and beyond. In high season, check with **Navix** (☎ 02 97 46 60 00; [www.navix.fr](http://www.navix.fr); 9 allée Loïc Caradec, Gare Maritime, Vannes; ☀ Apr-Sep) and **Compagnie du Golfe** (☎ 02 97 67 10 00; [www.compagnie-du-golfe.fr](http://www.compagnie-du-golfe.fr); 7 allée Loïc Caradec, Gare Maritime, Vannes; cruise adult/child from €17.50/12; ☀ Apr-Sep). Year-round **Bateaux-Bus du Golfe** (☎ 02 97 44 44 40; [www.ile-arz.fr](http://www.ile-arz.fr); 7 allée Loïc Caradec, Gare Maritime, Vannes; adult/child return €10.70/6.40; ☀ 6.30am-8pm) runs 10 to 14 boats per day between Vannes port or Conleau and Île d'Arz. **Izenah Croisières** (☎ 02 97 57 15 27; [www.izenah-croisieres.com](http://www.izenah-croisieres.com); Quai de Pen Lannic, Larmor-Baden; adult/child return from €10/5) runs boats from the port at Larmor-Baden to Île aux Moines year-round.

### **i** Getting There & Away

Travelling to Belle Île can involve a bit of planning, as taking a car on the ferry is prohibitively expensive for a short trip (a small car starts at €180/160 high/low season return *plus* passenger fares) and needs to be booked well ahead, even outside peak season.

The shortest crossing to Belle Île is from Quiberon. **Compagnie Océane** (☎ 02 97 35 02 00, 08 20 05 61 56; [www.compagnie-oceane.fr](http://www.compagnie-oceane.fr); adult/child single high season €17.50/8.50, low

season €15.50/8.50) operates car/passenger ferries (45 minutes) year-round, and fast passenger ferries to Le Palais and Sauzon in July and August. There are up to 10 crossings a day in July and August. Fares and frequencies are reduced off-season.

It is also possible to make the trip from Vannes (and Locmariaquer and Port-Navalo) on Navix, which operates ferries to Le Palais three to five times per week between April and September (adult/child return €31.30/22.20 from Vannes, 2½ hours).



## Vannes

POP 55,422

Overlooking the Golfe du Morbihan, unmissable Vannes (Gwened in Breton) preserves much of its medieval atmosphere. Spectacular fortifications encircle the city's meandering alleyways and cobbled squares, leading down to a sparkling marina lined with cafes and townhouses. Vannes is also an excellent base for exploring the glittering island-studded Golfe du Morbihan and the neolithic sites in the vicinity.

### Sights

#### ★ Ramparts

HISTORIC SITE

Vannes' old town is surrounded by imposing ramparts and gates, which are in turn lined by a moat and, on the eastern edge, simply spectacular flower-filled **gardens** (rue Francis Decker; ☺ 24hr). Tucked away behind rue des Vierges, stairs lead to the accessible section of the ramparts from which you can see the black-roofed **Vieux Lavoirs** (Old Laundry Houses) along the water.

#### Cathédrale St-Pierre

CATHEDRAL

(☎ 02 97 47 10 88; www.cathedrale-vannes.fr; place St-Pierre; ☺ 8.30am-7pm) On the eastern side of place St-Pierre looms the recently restored 13th-century Flamboyant Gothic Cathédrale St-Pierre. Inside, check out the stained glass and look for paintings of St Vincent Ferrier, a Spanish preacher and saint who died in Vannes in 1419.

#### Musée des Beaux-Arts (La Cohue)

GALLERY

(☎ 02 97 01 63 00; place St-Pierre; adult/child €4.60/2.90, free Sun Oct-May; ☺ 1.30-6pm daily Jun-Sep, Tue-Sun Oct-May) Opposite the cathedral, the building called La Cohue has variously been a produce market, a law court and the seat of the Breton parliament. Today it's a well-curated museum of fine arts, displaying 19th-century paintings, sculptures and engravings, and rotating exhibitions of cutting-edge contemporary art.

#### Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie

MUSEUM

(☎ 02 97 01 63 00; 2 rue Noë; adult/child €6.30/4.50; ☺ 1.30-6pm daily Jun-Sep) Housed inside the 16th-century Château Gaillard, this small but intriguing museum contains precious neolithic artefacts unearthed throughout the region, which will help visitors better understand the early history of this area.

## Sleeping

### Le Bretagne

HOTEL €

(☎ 02 97 47 20 21; www.hotel-lebretagne-vannes.com; 36 rue du Mené; s & d €68-88; ☺) This small (and thin) hotel is easy to miss, but the dozen rooms inside are a steal. They may be small, but they're bright and colourful, with excellent bedding and clean bathrooms. Top picks are rooms at the back, with stupendous views of the ramparts. Service is friendly and breakfast costs €9.

### La Villa Garenne

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 06 76 01 80 83; www.chambresdhotels-vannes.fr; 3 rue Monseigneur Tréhiou; d €80-125, 3/4-person apt from €120/160; ☺) A stone's throw from the imposing ramparts, this very attractive option has five charmingly and uniquely decorated rooms in a handsome stone building as well as two apartments. They're light, airy and furnished with great taste, and breakfasts come in for warm praise.

### ★ Hôtel Villa Kerasy

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 97 68 36 83; www.villakerasy.com; 20 av Favrel et Lincy; s & d €99-179, f/ste from €209/298; ☺ closed mid-Nov-mid-Dec; ☺) From the outside this may seem little more than a large Breton house, but beyond the entrance is an exotic world of spices and far-away tropical seaports. Rooms are individually decorated in Indian and Far Eastern styles, and the garden has Buddha statues and ponds filled with koi. It's 100m west of the train station.

## Eating

Rue des Halles and its offshoots are lined with tempting eateries while classic and contemporary brasseries give onto the port.

**Market days** are Wednesday and Saturday mornings when streets toward the cathedral fill up.

### Crêperie Dan Ewen

CRÊPES €

(☎ 02 97 42 44 34; www.creperie-danewen.fr; 3 place Général de Gaulle; mains €6-12, menus €12-18, kids' menu €7; ☺ 11.30am-1.30pm & 6.30-9pm) A near-life-size statue of a smiling Breton lady bearing a tray greets you at the entrance of this popular stone and dark-wood crêperie. Generous fillings include frangipane, or flambéed options topped with *crème Chantilly*. You can wash it all down with a *boule* (goblet) of local cider.

### Brasserie des Halles

BRASSERIE €

(☎ 02 97 54 08 34; www.brasseriendeshallesvannes.com; 9 rue des Halles; mains €16-28.50, menus

## VANNES DAY TRIPPER: ROCHEFORT-EN-TERRE

For an architectural trip into the Middle Ages, make a beeline for delightful Rochefort-en-Terre. It's a photogenic town of narrow, cobbled streets and lovely squares lined with grand, granite mansions, slate-roofed houses and flower-filled window boxes – not to mention a smattering of art galleries and the mandatory crêperies.

Its picture-book perch on a rocky outcrop above the River Gueuzon is equally enchanting, though it can be packed in summer. As befits any medieval Breton town, it also boasts a lovely ruined castle, which unfortunately is not open to the public, but is home to the eccentric sci-fi/fantasy **Naia Museum** (☎ 02 97 40 12 35; www.naiamuseum.com; rue des Scourtets; adult/child €6/4; ☀ 10.30am-6.30pm July & Aug, 10.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, shorter hours rest of year) in one of its outbuildings. The town's superb **church** (place de l'Église; ☀ 10am-6pm) was originally built in the 10th century. For more information visit the **tourist office** (Office de Tourisme de Rochefort-en-Terre; ☎ 02 97 26 56 00; www.rochefortenterre-tourisme.com; 3 place des Halles; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Jul-Aug, shorter hours rest of year; 📍).

Rochefort-en-Terre is around 40km east of Vannes along the N166, the D775, then the D777. **BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) bus 9 serves Vannes (€2.50, 1¼ hours, four daily) and stops on rue St-Roch.

€16-21, kids' menu €9; ☀ noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Sun-Thu, noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm Fri & Sat) Atmospherically set in a 16th-century building in the heart of the old town, this buzzing brasserie has a varied menu of fish and meat dishes, as well as tartares, pastas, salads, oysters and other shellfish. It's a nice spot for a drink as there's a good choice of beers.

★ **Restaurant de Roscanvec** GASTRONOMY **ccc** (☎ 02 97 47 15 96; www.roscanvec.com; 17 rue des Halles; lunch menu €34, dinner menu €57-98; ☀ 12.15-2pm & 7.15-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Hidden among the timber-frame houses of the old city, this stellar restaurant is overseen by one of Brittany's most talented names, Thierry Seychelles, whose cooking has been championed by most of the major culinary critics. Rightly so: his trademark six-course 'Hedonist Menu' (€72) combines seasonal French classics with global flavours, and the lunch *menu* is a gourmet's steal. Book ahead.

### **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme Golfe de Morbihan Vannes; ☎ 02 97 47 24 34; www.golfedumorbihan.bzh; quai Tabarly; ☀ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun; 📍) In a modern building on the marina.

### **i** Getting There & Away

#### BUS

The small bus station is opposite the train station. **BreizhGo** (☎ 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.

bzh) has services throughout the region, including line 1 to Carnac (€2.50, 80 minutes) and on to Quiberon (€2.50, 1¼ hours, eight daily).

#### TRAIN

Vannes is on the train line running east to Quimper and west to Rennes, Nantes or Paris. The TGV line between Le Mans and Rennes cuts 40 minutes off train travel times to Paris.

DESTINATION (€)	COST (€)	TIME (HR)	FREQUENCY (DAILY)
Nantes	23.40	1½	5 direct
Quimper	18	1½	15
Paris Montparnasse	36-52	2½	10 direct
Rennes	18	1-1½	15

## EASTERN & CENTRAL BRITTANY

The one-time frontier between Brittany and France, fertile and bucolic eastern Brittany fans out around the region's lively and engaging capital, Rennes. The *département* of Ille-et-Vilaine indeed gets its name from the two rivers (L'Ille and La Vilaine) that flow together in the city of Rennes itself. Central Brittany conceals within its bosom the enchanting and mysterious Forêt de Paimpont, sprinkled with villages and wreathed in ancient Breton myth and legend.

## Josselin

POP 2590

The storybook village of Josselin (Josilin in Breton) lies on the banks of the River Oust, 45km northeast of Vannes, in the shadow of an enormous, cone-turreted 14th-century castle that was the long-time seat of the counts of Rohan. Today, visitors in their thousands continue to fall under its spell. The little town's heart is place Notre-Dame, a beautiful square of 16th-century half-timbered houses.

### Sight


#### ★ Château de Josselin

CASTLE

( 02 97 22 36 45; [www.chateaudejosselin.com](http://www.chateaudejosselin.com); place de la Congrégation; adult/child €10.50/5.50; ☀ 1.30-6pm mid-Jul-Aug, 2-6pm Apr-mid-Jul & Sep, 2-5.30pm Sat & Sun only Oct) Guarded by three round towers and overlooking a canal, Josselin's extraordinary castle is a formidable sight and remains the home of the Rohan family to this day. Beyond the entrance gate, the castle fans out into tree-filled grounds and a central courtyard, which affords a great view of the castle's Flamboyant Gothic façade. The château's treasures include a medieval-style dining room, a 3000-tome library and a grand salon filled with Sèvres porcelain, Gobelins carpets and an astronomical clock.

#### Basilique Notre-Dame du Roncier

CHURCH

( 06 37 23 30 51; place Notre-Dame; ☀ 8am-6pm) Ringed by some highly impressive gargoyles, parts of the Basilique Notre-Dame du Roncier date from the 12th century, including its Romanesque pillars. The 60m-high tower, however, was built in 1949; you can climb it for free when the door is open off the place de la Mairie. Superb 15th- and 16th-century stained glass illuminates the south aisle. If you're lucky you'll be there while the organist is playing the 17th-century organ.

### Sleeping & Eating

#### Domaine de Kerelly Camping

CAMPGROUND €

( 02 97 22 22 20; [www.camping-josselin.com](http://www.camping-josselin.com); Le Bas de la Lande, Guégon; site for 1/2 people €11/14, mobile home for 2 from €65; ☀ Jun-Sep; 🏠 🚰) This peaceful spot is 2km west of Josselin, on the south bank of the River Oust, and offers plenty of shady spots to pitch your tent. You can also rent mobile homes. There's a pool, mini-golf and a bar.

#### Le Clos des Devins

B&amp;B €

( 06 88 84 77 05, 02 97 75 67 48; [www.leclosdesdevins.fr](http://www.leclosdesdevins.fr); 11 rue des Devins; d €60-70; 🏠 🚰) A beautiful 18th-century private mansion complete with fabulous walled garden underpins this gem of a *chambre d'hôte*, 250m north of the church. Conscientious owner, Annick Astruc, has artfully decorated the three charming rooms with both modern touches and lovely antiques. Our favourite room is the Abricotine, with its art deco detail and drop-dead-gorgeous roof terrace overlooking the garden.

#### ★ Le 14 Saint-Michel

B&amp;B €€

( 02 97 22 24 24, 06 89 37 26 07; [www.le14stmichel.com](http://www.le14stmichel.com); 14 rue St-Michel; d €75-95, tw €75-109, f €125-170; 🏠 🚰) This outstanding *chambre d'hôte* fills a grand town house in the historic centre. Five spacious, stylish rooms (including a two-room family suite) ooze romance, and there's a superb garden at the back. Breakfast is sumptuous, and the welcoming hostess, Viviane Le Goff, also does *tables d'hôte* (€32) with local, seasonal products. Some rooms have views of the countryside.

#### La Table d'O

MODERN FRENCH €€


( 02 97 70 61 39; [www.latabledo.eatbu.com](http://www.latabledo.eatbu.com); 9 rue Glatinier; 2/3-course lunch menu €15.90/18.90, dinner menu €24-34, mains €12.50-23; ☀ noon-1.15pm & 7.30-8.45pm Tue-Fri, noon-1.15pm & 7.30-9pm Sat) This pleasant family-run place offers an interesting and varied menu of local cooking with a sprinkle of fusion on top, making it a local favourite. The sweeping views of the town and valley from the terrace are fantastic for a summer lunch. It's 250m west of the château.

### Information

#### Tourist Office

(Office de Tourisme de Josselin;  02 97 22 36 43; [www.josselin-tourisme.com](http://www.josselin-tourisme.com); 1 rue Georges Le Berd; ☀ 10am-6pm Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Mon, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jun; 🗺) Offers a useful map of local sights and list of *chambres d'hôte*.

### Getting There & Away

**Keolis Armor** ( 02 99 26 16 00; [www.keolis-armor.fr](http://www.keolis-armor.fr)) runs several daily buses to Rennes (€7.50, 1½ hours) as does SNCF (€7 to €11). The nearest train station is in Pontivy, also served by Keolis buses (€5, 30 minutes). Buses stop on place du 18 Juin 1940 in Josselin.

## Forêt de Paimpont

Thought to be the site of Brocéliande – the place where King Arthur received his magic sword, Excalibur, from the Lady of the Lake – the bewitching Paimpont Forest (Koad Pempont in Breton) is about 50km southwest of Rennes. This is the same magical forest where the Lady entombed the mythical wizard Merlin – and his tomb can still be seen to this day. Although some dispute the Arthurian link, Paimpont is an enchanting setting all the same and, with its local stories and themes focusing on those medieval tales, the place hums with magic and mystery.

The best base for exploring the forest is the lakeside village of Paimpont. Having a car is the best way to go.

### Sights & Activities

Some 95% of the Paimpont Forest is private land, but the tourist office, beside the 13th-century **Abbaye de Paimpont** (3 esplanade de Brocéliande; ☎ 9am-6pm, not accessible to visitors during church services), has a free map outlining a 62km-long driving circuit with numerous short walks along the way that are accessible to the public. It also sells more-detailed walking and cycling guides and has guided tours (adult/child from €13.50/9.50) in the warmer months. Some areas of the forest are closed for hunting in winter; the tourist office has a map showing what is (and isn't) open.

### Tombeau de Merlin

TOMB

(Tomb of Merlin; La Marette, Paimpont; ☎ 24hr)

**FREE** Secluded and lying quietly amid a grove of trees, 'Merlin's Tomb' is worth hunting out. According to legend, the Lady of the Lake circled Merlin nine times, casting a spell that entrapped the wizard at this spot. All that remains of the tomb are three large, ancient and mossy rocks; offerings to the sorcerer are often left here, on the ground or arrayed on the stones themselves.

### Sleeping & Eating

#### Camping Municipal de Paimpont

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 02 99 07 89 16; www.camping-paimpont-broceliande.com; rue du Chevalier Lancelot du Lac, Paimpont; site €3.80-4.50, adult €3.70-4.40, car €2-2.40; ☎ Apr-Sep) Campers can set up their tents at this rural campground, 800m north of Paimpont and the lake, where 90 pitches are available. There are also chalets from €160

for two nights at the weekend, from €190 for three nights mid-week or from €380 for seven nights. Prices vary by season.

#### La Corne de Cerf

B&amp;B €

(☎ 02 99 07 84 19; www.corneducerf.bclcd.net; Le Cannée; s/d/tr €60/70/90; ☎ Apr-Nov; 📶) For garden lovers – flowers all around – and history vultures, friendly artists Annie and Robert Morvan's three-room house is tranquil, elegantly homey and secluded. Each room has its own clear personality, comfortable beds, soft colours and privacy; the room at the top has a big window with long views over the garden. It's in Le Cannée, 3km south of Paimpont.

#### ★ Le Relais de Brocéliande

HOTEL €€

(☎ 02 99 07 84 94; www.le-relais-de-broceliande.fr; 5 rue des Forges, Paimpont; d €99-169, ste €149-189; 📶) In a historic but thoroughly modernised building right at the heart of Paimpont, this hotel has two-dozen comfy guest rooms – clean and bright with good bedding and clean bathrooms, a top-notch spa and efficient staff. Perks also include a renowned restaurant (lunch *menus* from €16, dinner *menus* €24 to €37, kids' menu €9.50) serving fresh, seasonal cuisine.

#### Crêperie du Porche

CRÊPES €

(☎ 02 99 07 81 88; 26 rue du Général de Gaulle; mains €8-12; ☎ 11.30am-2pm Thu-Tue, 6.30-9pm Fri & Sat) This handy crêperie in the heart of Paimpont is a good choice. To get you in the Arthurian mood, the tasty *galettes* and crêpes are named topically: La Lancelot, La Kamelott, La Roi Arthur, La Guenièvre. In summer, you can sit out the front or take a table on the grass in the pleasant garden around the back.

#### Les Forges de Paimpont

FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 99 06 81 07; www.restaurant.forges-de-paimpont.com; Les Forges, Plélan-le-Grand; lunch menu €18-28, dinner €23-33, mains €13-28; ☎ noon-1.45pm Wed-Sun, 7-8.45pm Wed-Sat) This rustic country inn has a cosy interior and a menu rooted in the traditions of the *terroir*. The excellent-value €23 set menu may include quail, deer, duck, pigeon or grilled ribsteak. Located in the hamlet of Les Forges, near Plélan-le-Grand, 4.5km southeast of Paimpont.

### Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Brocéliande; ☎ 02 99 07 84 23; www.tourisme-broceliande.com; 1 place du roi St-Judicaël, Paimpont; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 1-7pm

Jul-Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Apr, May, Jun & Sep-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-4pm Wed-Sun Nov-Mar; 📞) Beside the Abbaye de Paimpont.

## Getting There & Away

**BreizhGo** (📞 08 10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) bus 11 connects the centre of Paimpont and the bus station by the train station in Rennes (€5, 1¼ hours, eight daily Monday to Saturday).

## Rennes

POP 220,925

A crossroads since Roman times, Brittany's vibrant capital, Rennes (Roazhon in Breton) sits at the junction of highways linking northwestern France's major cities. It's a beautifully set-out city, with an elaborate and stately centre and a superb medieval quarter that's a joy to get lost in. At night, this student city has no end of lively places to pop in for a pint or glass of wine and the restaurant selection is superb.

## Sights

### Cathédrale St-Pierre

CATHEDRAL

(📞 02 99 78 48 80; rue de la Monnaie; ☀ 9.30am-noon & 3-6pm; 🇫🇷 République, Ste-Anne) Crowning Rennes' old town is this 17th-century cathedral, which has an impressive, if dark, neoclassical interior adorned with a fabulous ceiling.

### Palais du Parlement de Bretagne

HISTORIC BUILDING

(📞 reservations 02 99 67 11 66; place du Parlement de Bretagne; adult/child €7.20/free; 🇫🇷 République) This 17th-century former seat of the rebellious Breton parliament has, in more recent times, been home to the Palais de Justice. In 1994 the building was destroyed by a fire started during a demonstration by Breton fishermen. It was reopened in 2004 after a major restoration and now houses the Court of Appeal. Daily guided tours (book though the tourist office and request in advance for a tour in English) take you through the ostentatiously gilded rooms.

### ★ Musée des Beaux-Arts

MUSEUM

(📞 02 23 62 17 45; www.mba.rennes.fr; 20 quai Émile Zola; ☀ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun; 🇫🇷 République) **FREE** Extensive collections span the 15th century to the present at the Museum of Fine Arts, plus there is a section devoted to antiquities. The Pont-Aven school

of painting is featured, as is a 'curiosity gallery' of antiques and illustrations amassed in the 18th century. It also hosts ever-changing temporary exhibitions.

### Les Champs Libres

CULTURAL CENTRE

(📞 02 23 40 66 00; www.leschampslibres.fr; 10 cours des Alliés; all-sight pass adult/child €14/10; ☀ noon-7pm Tue-Fri, 2-7pm Sat & Sun; 🇫🇷 Charles de Gaulle) Rennes' futuristic cultural centre is home to the **Musée de Bretagne** (📞 02 23 40 66 00; www.musee-bretagne.fr; adult/child €6/4), with displays on Breton history and culture. Under the same roof is **Espace des Sciences** (📞 02 23 40 66 40; www.espace-sciences.org; adult €4-6, child €2-4; ☀ noon-7pm Tue-Fri, 2-7pm Sat & Sun; 🇫🇷), an interactive science museum, along with a planetarium, a temporary exhibition space and a library.

## Sleeping

### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(📞 02 99 33 22 33; www.hifrance.org; 10-12 canal St-Martin; dm incl breakfast €24, r €36; ☀ 7am-1am, closed late-Dec-mid-Jan; 📞; 🇫🇷 12, 🇫🇷 Ste-Anne) Rennes' well-equipped youth hostel has a self-catering kitchen and a pleasant canalside setting 3km north of the centre. One- to five-bed rooms; breakfast is continental. Take bus 12 from place de la Mairie.

### ★ Hôtel de Nemours

HOSTEL €€

(📞 02 99 78 26 26; www.hotelnemours.com; 5 rue de Nemours; d €102-115, apt €115-142; 📞; 🇫🇷 République) This excellent three-star abode, ideally located near place de la République, ranks among the best options in town. Stylish and tidy rooms, a cosy-chic lobby and friendly staff round out a great bet.

## Eating

Rue St-Malo and rue St-Georges are the city's two main 'eating streets'; the latter in particular specialises in crêperies.

Rennes' daily covered market **La Criée Marché Central** (www.lacriee-marchecentral.com) is at place Honoré Commeurec, and the large **Saturday morning market** fills the place des Lices.

### Cafe Albertine

CAFE €

(📞 02 99 51 03 04; 10 Rue Comté de Lanjuinais; brunch menu €18.90; ☀ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; 📞) A lovely spot for breakfast, Cafe Albertine is bright as a new pin and a relaxing environment for a pick-me-up coffee or a snack. There are friendly smiles from the



## Rennes



## Rennes

## Top Sights

- 1 Musée des Beaux-Arts ..... D3

## Sights

- 2 Cathédrale St-Pierre ..... A2  
3 Palais du Parlement de Bretagne ..... C2

## Sleeping

- 4 Hôtel de Nemours ..... B4

## Eating

- 5 Cafe Albertine ..... B4  
6 Le Café du Port ..... A3

## Drinking &amp; Nightlife

- 7 Le Bar'Hic ..... A2  
8 Oan's Pub ..... A3

## Le Café du Port

BISTRO €

(☎ 02 99 30 01 43; 3 rue le Bouteiller; mains €9-14, lunch/dinner menu €13.50/20; ☺ noon-2pm & 6pm-12.30am Mon-Sat; 🚏 République) Market-fresh produce and great value are the name of the game at this laid-back, modern bistro that also doubles as a popular spot for an early-evening drink. Garrulous locals fill the outdoor seating area, which is tented in winter.



## Drinking &amp; Nightlife

Rue St-Michel – nicknamed ‘rue de la Soif’ (Thirsty St) for its bars, pubs and cafes – is the best-known drinking strip, but it can get rowdy late at night.

## Le Bar'Hic

BAR

(☎ 09 80 76 52 75; 24 place des Lices; ☺ 6.30pm-1am Tue-Thu, from 5.30pm Fri, from 5pm Sat; 🚏 Ste-Anne) This inviting bar is a good place for getting a bit of local vibe. It fills up at night,

waiting staff, while kids' books lie scattered on shelves in the corner and there are high chairs if you've a tot in tow.

when students and young hipsters stream in for the music events – usually live bands. Earlier in the evening it's much quieter. In warm weather, bag a seat on the terrace and watch the world go by.

### Oan's Pub

**PUB**  
(☎ 02 99 31 07 51; 1 rue Georges Dottin; ☎ 5pm-1am Sun-Fri, from noon Sat; 🚶 République) Locals habitually turn up with instruments for impromptu Celtic jam sessions at this cosy cave-like, stone-walled pub with Brittany-brewed Coreff beer on tap. It can get pretty full, but there's a terrace out the front to help mop up the crowds in summer.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (Office de Tourisme de Rennes Métropole; ☎ 02 99 67 11 11, 08 91 67 35 35; www.tourisme-rennes.com; 1 rue St-Malo1; ☎ 1-6pm Mon, from 10am Tue-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun; 📶; 🚶 République) A font of information on the city and its architecture. It offers an audio guide to the city, apps and a walking map. There's also a video presentation of the fire at the Parliament building in 1994 and its aftermath and restoration.

## i Getting There & Around

### AIR

Rennes' **airport** (RNS; ☎ 02 99 29 60 00; www.rennes.aeroport.fr; av de l'Aéroport Joseph le Brix) is 8km southwest of the city centre, with flights to many domestic and European destinations. Bus C6 (€1.50) connects place de la République and the airport, every 20 minutes daily. A taxi costs about €20.

### BUS

The **bus station** (place de la République) is adjacent to the train station. **BreizhGo** (☎ 08

10 35 10 35; www.breizhgo.bzh) offers many daily services in eastern Brittany, including both Dinan and Dinard (€7.50, 1¼ to 1½ hours, 14 daily Monday to Friday, six Saturday, five Sunday) and Paimpont (€5, 1¼ hours, eight daily Monday to Saturday).

### METRO

Rennes has a single-line metro system, run by **STAR** (☎ 09 70 82 18 00; www.star.fr; 12 rue du Pré Botté; single journey €1.50, 24hr pass €4.20). The metro A line runs northwest to southeast, with a second line (B line) running northeast to southwest, scheduled for 2021. Tickets are interchangeable with the bus.

Main stations include République (place de la République) in the centre, Ste-Anne (old town) and Gares (the train and regional bus stations).

### TRAIN

Rennes is a major transport hub for northeast France. The TGV track to Le Mans has cut travel times to the east by about 40 minutes.

DESTINATION	COST (€)	TIME (HR)	FREQUENCY (DAILY)
Brest	28-45	2¼	10
Dinan	14-16	1½	9
Nantes	18	1½	9
Paris Montpar-nasse	35-68	1½	24
Quimper	28	2	11 direct
St-Malo	15	1	roughly hourly
Vannes	18	1-1½	14



1



STÉPHANE BIDOUZE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



1. Île d'Ouessant (p299) 2. Côte de Granit Rose (p296)  
3. Quiberon (p312) 4. Le Palais, Belle Île (p313)

3



ANNA KOCHETKOV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



2

## Breton Coast

Brittany's rugged coastline is one of France's best-kept secrets, with strong similarities to the west coast of Ireland. With brilliant sandy beaches framing traditional fishing villages, rocky cliffs towering above the churning swell of the North Atlantic, and loads of outdoor activities to keep you busy, there's plenty to discover.

### Superb Stretches of Sand

Don't associate Brittany with beaches? Think again... Yes, the water may be cold, but the sand is spectacular and the backdrop sublime at St-Malo (p283) and the wild Côte Sauvage of Quiberon (p312). Alternatively, find your own patch of sand on the beaches of Belle Île (p313).

### Hiking the Coasts

Get out into nature on the coastal hiking trail from Morgat (p301) to Cap de la Chèvre (p301). For a challenge, walk the 45km coastal path on Île d'Ouessant (p299). Much easier but equally exhilarating is the 7km walk on the Pointe du Grouin (p291).

### Coastal Villages

Find bliss in the village life of charming Camaret-sur-Mer (p302), the fishing port of Roscoff (p294) and the oyster-rich hideaway Cancale (p290).

### Island Life

Take the ferry to Île d'Ouessant (p299), with its rugged coastal path and energising activities, or head out of season to Belle Île (p313), the star of the southern coast. To get off the beaten track, head to Île de Batz (p295).

### Get Active!

You can dive, windsurf and hire catamarans in Dinard (p288); canoe or kayak in Paimpol (p293), St-Malo (p283), Îles de Glénan (p308) and Quiberon (p312); and hire bikes pretty much anywhere, though we recommend Presqu'île de Crozon (p301) and any of Brittany's islands. You can also learn to surf at schools (p303) around Brittany including Crozon (p301).



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4



TRAVELIGHT/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

1.3 million

### LARGEST CITY

Reims

### BEST VINEYARD VIEW

Phare de Verzenay  
(p337)

### BEST DATE NIGHT

L'Assiette  
Champenoise (p334)

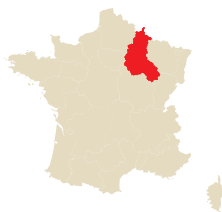


### WHEN TO GO

**May** Reims pays homage to heroine Joan of Arc with medieval re-enactments at the Fêtes Johanniques.

**Jul** Cellars open for free tastings during the Côte des Bar's Route du Champagne en Fête (last weekend).

**Sep** Golden autumn days and cork-popping harvest celebrations.



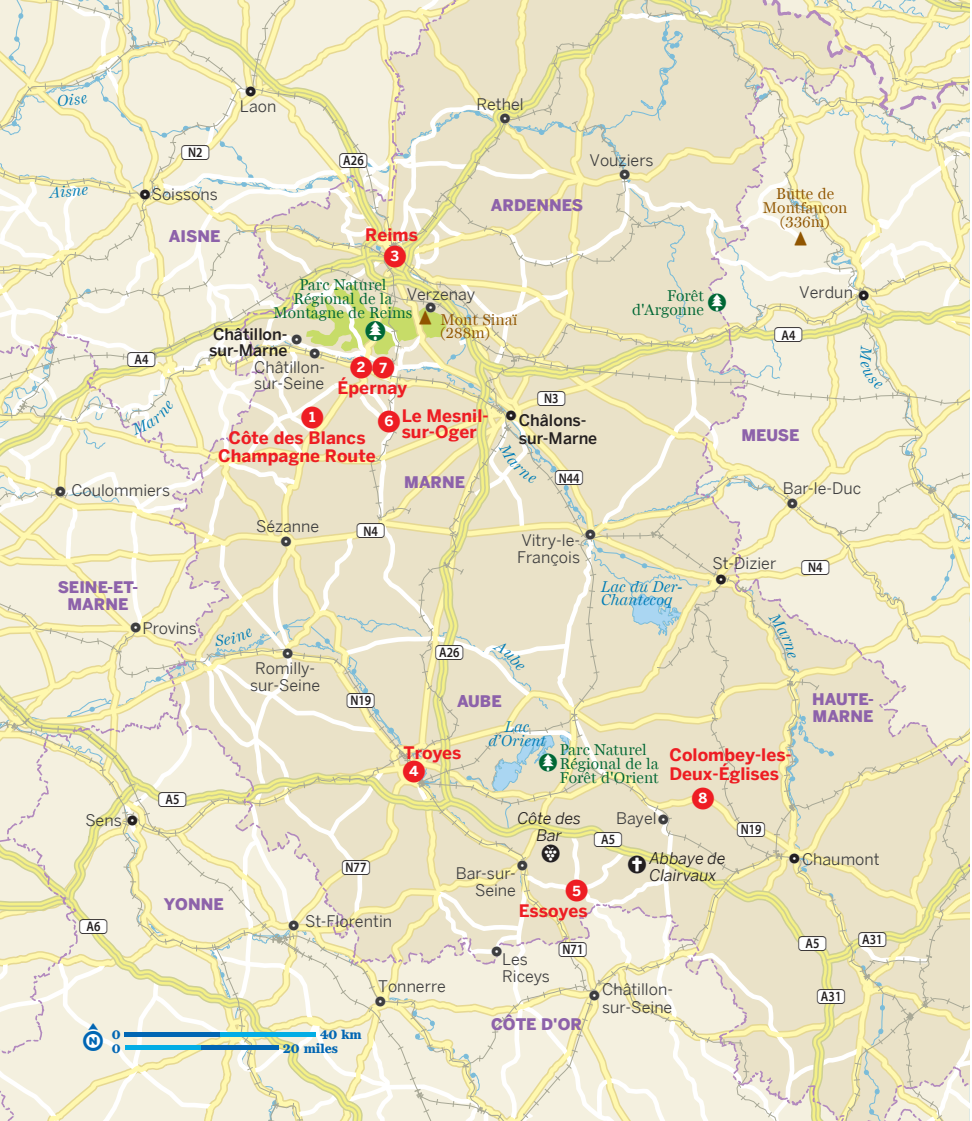
# Champagne

**C**hampagne arouses the senses: the eyes feast on vines parading up hillsides and vertical processions of tiny, sparkling bubbles; the nose breathes in damp soil and the heavenly bouquet of fermentation; the ears rejoice at the barely audible fizz; and the palate tingles with every sip. Cellar visits reveal the magical processes – governed by the strictest of rules – that transform the world’s most pampered pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay grapes into this Unesco World Heritage-listed region’s most fabled wines. Despite the prestige of their vines, the people of Champagne offer a warm welcome, both in the stylish cities and along the Champagne Routes, which wend their way through villages to family-run vineyards.

## INCLUDES

Reims . . . . .	329	Épernay . . . . .	341
Marne . . . . .	336	Troyes . . . . .	343
Montagne de Reims Champagne Route . .	336	Côte des Bar Champagne Route . .	347
Vallée de la Marne Champagne Route . .	337	Colombey-les- Deux-Églises . . . . .	348
Côte des Blancs Champagne Route . .	339	Essoyes . . . . .	348
		Les Riceys . . . . .	349





## Champagne Highlights

- 1 Côte des Blancs Champagne Route** (p340)  
Rambling through hillside vineyards, comely villages and family-run wineries.
- 2 Épernay** (p341)  
Toasting the end of a cellar tour with a glass of fizz.
- 3 Cathédrale Notre Dame** (p329)  
Climbing the tower

of Reims' Gothic wonder for 360-degree views across France's flattest region.

- 4 16th-Century Troyes** (p343)  
Slipping back to the Middle Ages wandering the half-timbered backstreets.
- 5 Atelier Renoir** (p348)  
Treading in Renoir's impressionistic footsteps in pretty-as-a-painting Essoyes.
- 6 Musée de la Vigne et du Vin** (p340)  
Marvelling at

traditional Champagne-making techniques and technology in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger.

- 7 Avenue de Champagne** (p341)  
Revelling in the lordly mansions and Champagne houses on Épernay's grandest avenue.
- 8 Mémorial Charles de Gaulle** (p348)  
Immersing yourself in mid-20th-century France in Colombey-les-Deux-Églises.

## History

Champagne's most famous convert to Christianity was the Merovingian warrior-king Clovis I, who founded the Frankish kingdom in the late 5th century and began the tradition of holding royal coronations in Reims. In the Middle Ages, the region – especially Troyes – grew rich from commercial fairs at which merchants from around Europe bought and sold products from as far afield as the Mediterranean.

In more recent history, the region was host to the end of WWII in Europe, when Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allied Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower, in Reims on 7 May 1945.

More than a few corks were popped when the Champagne Hillsides, Houses and Cellars finally achieved Unesco World Heritage listing in 2015, giving the region's precious vineyards protected status.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Champagne, just north of Burgundy's Châtillon-nais and Chablis wine regions, makes a refreshing stopover if you're driving from the Channel ports, Lille or Paris eastward to Lorraine or Alsace, or southeastward towards Dijon, Lyon or Provence.

France's rail lines radiate out from Paris like the spokes of a wheel and Reims, Épernay and Troyes are each on a different spoke (more or less). Thanks to the TGV Est Européen line, Reims can be visited on a day trip from Paris.

## REIMS

POP 185,576

No matter what you have read, nothing can prepare you for that first skyward glimpse of Reims' gargantuan Gothic cathedral. Rising golden and imperious above the city, the cathedral is where, over the course of a millennium (816 to 1825), some 34 sovereigns – among them two dozen kings – began their reigns.

Meticulously restored after WWI and again following WWII, Reims is endowed with handsome pedestrian boulevards, Roman remains, art deco cafes and a flourishing fine-dining scene that counts among its four Michelin-starred restaurants. Along with Épernay, it is the most important centre of Champagne production, and a fine base for exploring the Montagne de Reims Champagne Route (p337).

## **o** Sights

**★ Cathédrale Notre Dame** CATHEDRAL  
 (📍 03 26 47 81 79; www.cathedrale-reims.fr; 2 place du Cardinal Luçon; adult/child tower €8/free, incl Palais du Tau €11/free; 🕒 7.30am-7.30pm, tower tours 10am, 11am & 2-5pm Tue-Sat, 2-5pm Sun May-Aug, 10am, 11am & 2-4pm Sat, 2-4pm Sun Sep, Oct & mid-Mar-Apr) Imagine the extravagance of a French royal coronation. The focal point of such pomposity was Reims' resplendent Gothic cathedral, begun in 1211 on a site occupied by churches since the 5th century. The interior is a rainbow of stained-glass windows; the finest are the western façade's great rose window, the north transept's rose window and the vivid Marc Chagall creations (1974) in the central axial chapel. The tourist office (p335) rents out audio guides for self-paced tours.

Among the other highlights of the interior are a flamboyant **Gothic organ case** (15th and 18th centuries) topped with a figure of Christ, a 15th-century wooden **astromonomical clock**, and a statue of **Joan of Arc in full body armour** (1901); there's a second **statue** (place du Parvis) of her outside on the square, to the right as you exit the cathedral.

The most famous event to take place here was the coronation of Charles VII, with Joan of Arc at his side, on 17 July 1429. This is one of 25 coronations that took place between 1223 and 1825.

The cathedral was seriously damaged by artillery and fire during WWI, and was repaired during the interwar years, thanks, in part, to significant donations from the American Rockefeller family.

A Unesco World Heritage Site since 1991, the cathedral celebrated its 800th anniversary in 2011. To get the most impressive first view, approach the cathedral from the west, along rue Libergier. Here your gaze will be drawn to the heavily restored

### **i** REIMS CITY PASS

The great-value Reims City Pass, costing €22/32/42 for one/two/three days, is available at the tourist office or online at [www.reimscitypass.com](http://www.reimscitypass.com). It gives you entry to all the major museums and attractions, guided tours of the city and unlimited use of public transport, plus discounts on activities such as Champagne house visits.

## Reims

CHAMPAGNE REIMS



architectural features of the façade, lavishly encrusted with sculptures. Among them is the 13th-century *L'Ange au Sourire* (Smiling Angel), presiding beneficently above the central portal.

Feeling as strong as Goliath? (Look for his worn figure up on the west façade, held in place with metal straps.) Then consider climbing 250 steps up the cathedral tower on a one-hour tour. Book at the Palais du Tau.

### ★ Palais du Tau

MUSEUM  
(www.palais-du-tau.fr; 2 place du Cardinal Luçon; adult/child €8/free, incl cathedral tower €11/free;

☉ 9.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun May-mid-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun mid-Sep-Apr) A Unesco World Heritage Site, this lavish former archbishop's residence, redesigned in neoclassical style between 1671 and 1710, was where French princes stayed before their coronations – and where they threw sumptuous banquets afterwards. Now a museum, it displays truly exceptional statuary, liturgical objects and tapestries from the cathedral, some in the impressive, Gothic-style **Salle de Tau** (Great Hall). Treasures worth seeking out include the 9th-century talisman of Charlemagne and St Rémi's golden,



## Reims

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale Notre Dame .....C4  
2 Palais du Tau.....C4

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Bibliothèque.....D4  
4 Cryptoportique.....C3  
5 Halles du Boulingrin.....C2  
6 Joan of Arc Statue.....C4  
7 Musée de la Reddition.....A1  
8 Musée des Beaux-Arts.....C4  
9 Musée Hôtel Le Vergeur.....C3  
10 Porte de Mars.....B2

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 11 Montagne de Reims  
Champagne Route.....A3  
12 Mumm.....D1

### 📍 Sleeping

- 13 Chambre d'Hôte  
Cathédrale.....C4  
14 Hôtel Azur.....B2

- 15 La Demeure des Sacres.....B5  
16 Le Clos des Roys.....C5  
17 Les Telliers.....B3

### 📍 Eating

- 18 Anna-S – La Table  
Amoureuse.....D5  
19 Brasserie Le Boulingrin.....C2  
20 Chez Jérôme.....C3  
21 La Cave aux Fromages.....C3  
22 l'Alambic.....A4  
23 Le Bocal.....C2  
24 Marché du Boulingrin.....C2  
25 Racine.....C3

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 26 Café du Palais.....C4  
27 Le Wine Bar by Le Vintage.....C3  
28 Waïda.....B4

### 📍 Shopping

- 29 Maison Fossier.....C3  
30 Trésors de Champagne.....C2

gem-encrusted chalice, which dates from the 12th century.

### Basilique St-Rémi

BASILICA

(place du Chanoine Ladame; ☎9am-7pm) This 121m-long former Benedictine abbey church, a Unesco World Heritage Site, mixes Romanesque elements from the mid-11th century (the worn but stunning nave and transept) with early Gothic features from the latter half of the 12th century (the choir, with a large triforium gallery and, way up top, tiny clerestory windows).

The abbey church is named in honour of Bishop Remigius, who baptised Clovis and 3000 Frankish warriors in 498. The 12th-century-style chandelier has 96 candles, one for each year of the life of St Rémi, whose tomb (in the choir) is marked by a mausoleum from the mid-1600s.

Next door are the historical collections of the Musée St-Rémi, closed for renovation at the time of research.

### Musée des Beaux-Arts

GALLERY

(☎03 26 35 36 00; www.musees-reims.fr; 8 rue Chanzy; adult/child €5/free; 🗺A or B) Lodged in an 18th-century abbey, this museum's rich collection stars one of four versions of Jacques-Louis David's world-famous *The Death of Marat* (yes, the bloody corpse in the bathtub), 27 works by Camille Corot (only the Louvre has more), 13 portraits by German Renaissance painters Cranach

the Elder and the Younger, lots of Barbizon School landscapes, some art-nouveau creations by Émile Gallé, and two works each by Monet, Gauguin and Pissarro.

At the time of research, the museum was being renovated; it's due to reopen in 2023.

### Musée Hôtel Le Vergeur

MUSEUM

(☎03 26 35 61 95; www.museelevator.com; 36 place du Forum; adult/child €5/free; ☎2-6pm Tue-Sun) Highlights in this 15th-century townhouse include a series of furnished period rooms (kitchen, smoking room, Napoléon III's bedroom), some 50 wood engravings by Albrecht Dürer and a stunning Renaissance façade facing the interior garden.

### Musée de la Reddition

MUSEUM

(www.musees-reims.fr; 12 rue Franklin Roosevelt; adult/child €5/free; ☎10am-6pm Wed-Mon) The original Allied battle maps are still affixed to the walls of US General Dwight D Eisenhower's headquarters, where Nazi Germany, represented by General Alfred Jodl, surrendered unconditionally at 2.41am on 7 May 1945, thus ending WWII. Displays include military uniforms and photographs. A 12-minute film is screened in French, English and German.

### Porte de Mars

HISTORIC SITE

(Mars Gate; place de la République) For a quick trip back to Roman Gaul, check out the massive Porte de Mars, a three-arched triumphal gate built in the 2nd century CE.

## DON'T MISS

## ART DECO REIMS

The vaulted **Halles du Boulingrin** (rue de Mars) were a symbol of Reims' emergence from the destruction of WWI when they began service as the city's main food market in 1929. Following a major restoration project, the Halles were reopened in all their art deco glory in September 2012. Besides sheltering a **food market** (☺ 7am-1pm Wed, 7am-1pm & 4-8pm Fri, 6am-2pm Sat), they provide a unique backdrop for exhibitions and cultural events.

Thanks to a donation from the US-based Carnegie Foundation, the lobby of the **Bibliothèque** (www.bm-reims.fr; 2 place Carnegie; ☺ 10am-1pm & 2-7pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 2-7pm Thu, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sat) boasts gorgeous 1920s mosaics, stained glass, frescoes and an extraordinary chandelier – duck inside for a look.

The tourist office (p335) also has a brochure on art deco sites around Reims.

## Cryptoportique

HISTORIC SITE

(place du Forum; ☺ 2-6pm May-Sep) **FREE** One of Reims' Roman standouts, the below-street-level Cryptoportique is thought to have been used for grain storage in the 3rd century CE.

## 👉 Tours

## Mumm

WINE

(☎ 03 26 49 59 70; www.mumm.com; 34 rue du Champ de Mars; tours incl tasting €23-42) Mumm (pronounced 'moom'), the only *maison* (house) in central Reims, was founded in 1827 and is the world's third- or fourth-largest Champagne producer, depending on the year. Engaging and edifying guided tours take you through cellars filled with 25 million bottles of fine bubbly and conclude with a tasting. Wheelchair accessible. Phone or book online ahead if possible.

## ★ Taittinger

WINE

(☎ 03 26 85 45 35; https://cellars-booking.taittinger.fr; 9 place St-Niçaise; tours €25-77; ☺ tours 9.30am-5.30pm) The headquarters of Taittinger are a highly atmospheric place to come for a clear presentation on how Champagne is actually made – there's no claptrap about 'the Champagne mystique' here. A spiral staircase twists down to the cellars occupying 4th-century *crayères* (Gallo-Roman

chalk quarries); other bits were excavated by 13th-century Benedictine monks and became the cellars of St-Niçaise Abbey.

Buy tickets in advance online. The standard *L'instant premier* includes a tasting of Brut Réserve; more expensive tours include tastings of the Comtes de Champagne white and rosé. It's situated 1.5km southeast of Reims centre; take the Citadine 1 or 2 bus to the St-Niçaise or Salines stops.

## ★ Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin

WINE

(☎ 03 26 89 53 90; www.veuveclicquot.com; 1 Rue Albert Thomas; public tours & tastings €30-55, master class €200; ☺ tours 9.30am, 10.30am, 12.30pm, 1.30pm, 2pm, 3.30pm & 4.30pm Tue-Sat Mar-Dec, master classes Jul & Oct) One of the most impressive cellar tours in the region is offered by Veuve Clicquot, a venerable *maison* founded in 1772. Veuve Clicquot has the largest network of *crayères* in Reims, a 24km maze of tunnels and vaults deep below the ground. Guides lead you deep into the cavernous, pyramid-shaped *crayères*, used for chalk excavation in Gallo-Roman times and now harbouring millions of bottles of Champagne, one of which (the yellow-label brut) you get to taste on the one-hour public tours.

The *maison* rose to fame under Madame Clicquot (1777-1866), nicknamed the 'Grande Dame of Champagne'. One of the first business people to tap into the wine industry, the widowed 27-year-old evolved the Champagne-making process using the first riddling table, frequently turning the bottles so the yeast would gather near the cork and removing this frozen plug (disgorgement). This resulted in a clearer Champagne with finer bubbles.

Tickets can be purchased in advance online.

## 🌟 Festivals &amp; Events

## Fêtes Johanniques

CULTURAL

(☺ May) Reims pays homage to heroine Joan of Arc with medieval re-enactments on a weekend in mid-May. The line-up is packed with activities from jousting and street markets to falconry and craft displays.

## 🏠 Sleeping

## Chambre d'Hôte Cathédrale

B&amp;B €

(☎ 03 26 91 06 22; 21 place du Chapitre; s/d/tr without bathroom €50/65/80) The cathedral bells are your wake-up call at this sweet and simple B&B. Rooms are immaculate and

old-fashioned, with stripy wallpaper, heavy wood furnishings and shared bathrooms.

### Hôtel Azur

B&amp;B €

(☎03 26 47 33 39; [www.hotel-azur-reims.com](http://www.hotel-azur-reims.com); 9 rue des Ecrevées; s €55-85, d €79-109, tr €109, q €119; 📍🚶) Slip down a side street in the heart of Reims to reach this petite B&B, which extends a heartfelt welcome. Rooms are cheerfully painted and immaculately kept, and breakfast is served on the garden patio when the sun's out. There's no lift, so be prepared to lug your bags.

### ★ Les Telliers

B&amp;B €€

(☎09 53 79 80 74; [www.telliers.fr](http://www.telliers.fr); 18 rue des Telliers; s €68-85, d €80-121, tr €117-142, q €133-163; 📍🚶) Enticingly positioned down a quiet alley near the cathedral, this bijou B&B extends one of Reims' warmest *bienvenues*. The high-ceilinged rooms are big on art-deco character, and handsomely decorated with ornamental fireplaces, polished oak floors and the odd antique. Breakfast costs an extra €9 and is a generous spread of pastries, fruit, fresh-pressed juice and coffee.

### Le Clos des Roys

B&amp;B €€

(☎06 75 28 34 85; [www.leclosdesroys.fr](http://www.leclosdesroys.fr); 3 rue d'Anjou; d €110-130; 📍🚶) A stone's throw from the cathedral, this historic home turned B&B is made all the homelier by hosts Marie Anne and Gérard. The quiet, countrified rooms are done out in soft greys and taupe. Top billing goes to the Charles VII room with its free-standing tub. Fresh pastries, fruit and waffles are served at breakfast.

### ★ Château Les Crayères

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(☎03 26 24 90 00; [www.lescraieres.com](http://www.lescraieres.com); 64 bd Henry-Vasnier; d €490-1200; 📍🚶🍷🍷🍷) If you've ever wanted to stay in a palace, this romantic chateau on the fringes of Reims is the real McCoy. Manicured lawns sweep to the graceful turn-of-the-century estate, where you can play golf or tennis, dine in two-Michelin-starred finery, and stay in the lap of luxury in exuberantly furnished, chandelier-lit interiors – all at a price, naturally.

### La Demeure des Sacres

B&amp;B €€€

(☎06 79 06 80 68; [www.la-demeure-des-sacres.com](http://www.la-demeure-des-sacres.com); 29 rue Libergier; d €210, ste €300-320; 📍🚶) Nuzzled in an art deco townhouse close to the cathedral, this B&B harbours four wood-floored rooms and suites, with pleasing original features like marble fireplaces and free-standing bathtubs. The Royal Suite has cracking cathedral views. Homemade treats (preserves, crêpes and the like) appear at breakfast, which is included in the room rate. There's a secluded garden for post-sightseeing moments.



### Eating

A tempting array of delis, patisseries and chocolatiers lines rue de Mars, near Halles du Boulingrin (p332). Place du Forum is a great place to watch the world drift languidly by at bistros, cafes and bars with pavement seating.

### La Cave aux Fromages

CHEESE €

(12 place du Forum; ☎8.30am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Tue-Sat) Run by the knowledgeable Charlet family, this fabulous shop is *fromage* heaven,

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### MAKING CHAMPAGNE

Champagne is made from the red pinot noir (38%), the black pinot meunier (35%) or the white chardonnay (27%) grape. Each vine is vigorously pruned and trained to produce a small quantity of high-quality grapes. Indeed, to maintain exclusivity (and price), the designated areas where grapes used for Champagne can be grown and the amount of wine produced each year are limited.

Making Champagne according to the traditional method (*méthode champenoise*) is a complex procedure. There are two fermentation processes, the first in casks and the second after the wine has been bottled and had sugar and yeast added. Bottles are then aged in cellars for two to five years, depending on the *cuvée* (vintage).

During the two months in early spring that the bottles are aged in cellars kept at 12°C, the wine turns effervescent. The sediment that forms in the bottle is removed by *remuage*, a painstakingly slow process in which each bottle, stored horizontally, is rotated slightly every day for weeks until the sludge works its way to the cork. Next comes *dégorgement*: the neck of the bottle is frozen, creating a blob of solidified Champagne and sediment, which is then removed.

with cheeses carefully sourced from all four corners of France. Among them is the regional speciality Cendré de Champagne, a creamy, smoky cheese matured in beech ash.

### Le Bocal

SEAFOOD €

(☎03 26 47 02 51; [www.restaurantlebocal.fr](http://www.restaurantlebocal.fr); 27 rue de Mars; mains €13-20; ☉12.30-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Winningly fresh seafood is the big deal at this tiny eatery set above a fishmonger: try sardines tossed in chilli butter, home-smoked salmon or hot oysters with parmesan.

### Chez Jérôme

BISTRO €€

(☎03 26 24 36 73; [www.facebook.com/chezjerome](http://www.facebook.com/chezjerome); 23 rue de Tambour; menus €15-28; ☉11am-6pm Tue-Fri, to 10.30pm Sat) So cosy it's like stepping into a friend's eccentric dining room, this bistro is run with passion by the inimitable one-man-band that is Jérôme – cook, waiter and chief bottle-washer. Made according to the chef's whim and what's available, the tasty, unfussy *menus* are prepared with seasonal, market-fresh ingredients. Everything, from the vintage lights to ceramics and furnishings, is for sale.

### Anna-S – La Table Amoureuse

FRENCH €€

(☎03 26 89 12 12; [www.annas-latableamoureuse.com](http://www.annas-latableamoureuse.com); 6 rue Gambetta; 3-course lunch €23, dinner menus €36-50; ☉noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Tue & Thu-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) So what if the decor is chintzy – there is a reason why this bistro is as busy as a beehive. Friendly service and a menu packed with well-done classics – Arctic char with Champagne jus, fillet of veal in rich, earthy morel sauce – hit the mark every time.

### l'Alambic

FRENCH €€

(☎03 26 35 64 93; [www.restaurant-lalambic.fr](http://www.restaurant-lalambic.fr); 63bis rue de Chativesle; dinner menus €33-43, mains €14-22; ☉noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Fri, 7-9.30pm Sat & Mon-Tue; 🍷) 🍷 Ideal for an intimate dinner, this vaulted cellar dishes up well-prepared French classics – along the lines of home-smoked trout with horseradish, cod fillet with Champagne-laced *choucroute* (sauerkraut), and pigeon served two ways with Reims mustard sauce. Save room for terrific desserts such as crème brûlée with chicory ice cream. The two-course lunch menu is a snip at €16.

### Brasserie Le Boulingrin

BRASSERIE €€

(☎03 26 40 96 22; [www.boulingrin.fr](http://www.boulingrin.fr); 29-31 rue de Mars; menus €25-45; ☉noon-2.30pm daily & 7-11pm Mon-Sat) A genuine, old-time brasserie –

the decor and zinc bar date back to 1925 – whose ambience and cuisine make it an enduring favourite. From September to June, the culinary focus is on *fruits de mer* (seafood) such as Breton oysters.

### ★ L'Assiette Champenoise

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎03 26 84 64 64; [www.assiettechampenoise.com](http://www.assiettechampenoise.com); 40 av Paul-Vaillant-Couturier, Tinquieux; menus €125-325; ☉noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Thu-Mon) Heralded far and wide as one of Champagne's finest tables and crowned with the holy grail of three Michelin stars, L'Assiette Champenoise is headed up by chef Arnaud Lalleman. Listed by ingredients, his intricate, creative dishes rely on outstanding produce and play up integral flavours – be they Breton scallops or milk-fed lamb with preserved vegetables. One for special occasions.

### ★ Racine

JAPANESE €€€

(☎03 26 35 16 95; [www.racine.re](http://www.racine.re); 8 rue Colbert; lunch/dinner menus €100/150; ☉12.15-1.30pm & 7.15-9pm Fri-Mon, 7.15-9pm Thu) With strong Japanese roots and a generous pinch of love for his adopted home, chef Kazuyuki Tanaka creates menus that sing with bright flavours and are delivered with finesse at slick, monochrome, two-Michelin-starred Racine. They're listed in the modern, ingredient-driven way, so turbot with squash and pistachio, pineapple with lemon and Champagne ice cream, and the like.



## Drinking & Nightlife

### Le Wine Bar by Le Vintage

WINE BAR

(☎03 26 05 89 94; [www.winebar-reims.com](http://www.winebar-reims.com); 16 place du Forum; ☉6pm-12.30am Tue-Thu, to 1.30am Fri & Sat) This bijou wine bar is a convivial spot to chill over a glass of wine or Champagne (some 500 are offered) with a tasting plate of charcuterie and cheese. The friendly brothers who own the place are happy to give recommendations.

### Café du Palais

CAFE

([www.cafedupalais.fr](http://www.cafedupalais.fr); 14 place Myron-Herrick; ☉8.30am-8.30pm Tue-Fri, from 9am Sat) Run by the same family since 1930, this art deco cafe is *the* place to sip a glass of Champagne. Lit by a skylight is an extraordinary collection of bric-a-brac ranging from the inspired to the kitsch.

### Waïda

TEAHOUSE

(5 place Drouet d'Erlon; ☉7.30am-7.30pm Tue-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat, 8am-2pm & 3.30-7.30pm Sun) A tearoom and confectioner with old-

fashioned mirrors, mosaics and marble. This is a good place to pick up a box of Reims' famous *biscuits roses* (pink ladyfinger sponge biscuits), traditionally nibbled with Champagne, rainbow-bright macarons and divine *religieuses* (cream-filled puff pastries).



## Shopping

### Trésors de Champagne

WINE

(☎03 26 48 28 42; [www.boutique-tresors-champagne.com](http://www.boutique-tresors-champagne.com); 2 rue Olivier Métra; ☎2-7pm Tue & Wed, 10.30am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Thu, 10.30am-12.30pm & 2-8pm Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-8pm Sat) Strikingly illuminated by Champagne bottles, this swish wine boutique cum bar plays host to 27 vintners and more than 200 Champagnes. There is a different selection available to taste each week. Keep an eye out, too, for tasting workshops posted on the website.

### Maison Fossier

FOOD

(☎03 26 47 59 84; [www.fossier.fr](http://www.fossier.fr); 25 cours Jean-Baptiste Langlet; ☎2-7pm Mon, from 10am Tue-Sat) You either love or hate *biscuits roses de Reims*, which have been doing the rounds since Maison Fossier perfected them in 1756 and swiftly became supplier to the king. Buy them here (a 100g box costs €2.80).

In the 19th century, it was the done thing to dunk them in Champagne, which was sweeter back then, and some still do today, though sommeliers might tut.



## Information

**Tourist office** (☎03 26 77 45 00; [www.reims-tourisme.com](http://www.reims-tourisme.com); 6 rue Rockefeller; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Sun, closed Mon Oct-Apr; 📞) Has stacks of information on the Champagne region and Reims (plus free city maps), as well as some incredibly cool giant cork stools where you can perch while using the free wi-fi.



## Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

**Manu Loca Vélo** (☎06 51 27 24 10; [www.locavelo-reims-51.e-monsite.com](http://www.locavelo-reims-51.e-monsite.com); place Colbert; bike hire per half-/full day €10/15; ☎9am-7pm) hires bikes by the half-day and day.

### BUS

Regional buses to nearby towns and villages are operated by **Marne Mobilité** ([www.marnemobilite.fr](http://www.marnemobilite.fr)). The website has details of timetables and fares. The bus stop is outside the train station's northern (back) entrance. The best way to get to Troyes is by taking **Courriers de l'Aube** ([www.courriersdelaubefr](http://www.courriersdelaubefr)); €15, 2½ hours, up to 13 daily) bus line 140. The main bus stop for long-haul buses is out by the Champagne-Ardenne TGV station, about 8km southwest near the A4, at Rond-Point de l'Europe. Reims centre is connected to it by Tram B.

Two circular bus lines, the clockwise 1 and the anticlockwise 2 (single ticket €1.70, all-day ticket *ournée* €4.30), serve most of the major sights of Reims. Most **Citura** ([www.citura.fr](http://www.citura.fr)) lines begin their last runs at about 9.50pm; five night lines operate until 12.15am.

### TRAIN

Reims is on the Lille–Dijon–Mediterranean line and the Paris–Charleville–Sedan line. Reims central train station, 1km northwest of the cathedral, has bullet marks on its façade dating from both world wars. The other station, Champagne-Ardenne TGV station, is about 8km southwest of the centre, near the A4. Reims centre is connected to it by Tram B.

Frequent services run to Paris Gare de l'Est (€25 to €61, 46 minutes to one hour, 12 to 17 daily). Direct services also go to Épernay (€3, 30 minutes, 16 daily) and Laon (€10.40, 35 to 47 minutes, three to nine direct daily). The journey to Troyes (€41 to €92, 2½ to 3½ hours, 10 daily) involves at least one change.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### FIZZ OF THE FUTURE

Thanks to Champagne's protected (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) status, only the stuff that's made in the region, which is subjected to rigorous laws and controls, can actually call itself Champagne – anything else is just sparkling wine by a different name.

But that hasn't stopped some of the major Champagne houses from latching on to the global thirst for fizz and casting their gazes further afield. In 2011, Moët & Chandon began establishing a winery in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region in northwestern China, thereby kick-starting something of a new trend.

More recently Taittinger planted its first vines on English soil in Kent in spring 2017. Quick to recognise the rise of British sparkling wine, the Champagne house aims to have its first ready by 2023 under the name *Domaine Evremond*.



## MARNE

The bucolic Marne *département* is famed for its Champagne routes, which wend their way among neat rows of hillside vines, through hilltop forests and across lowland crop fields. Along the way, they call on wine-making villages and hamlets, some with notable churches or museums, others quite ordinary, most without a centre or even a café. At almost every turn, beautiful panoramas unfold and small-scale, family-run Champagne wineries welcome travellers in search of bubbly.

Many producers prefer that visitors phone ahead but, if you haven't, don't be shy about knocking on the door. More and more young vigneron (winegrowers) speak English. Almost all producers are closed around the *vendange* (grape harvest, from late August to October), when bringing in the crop eclipses all other activities.

## **i** Getting There & Around

Car is by far the best means to explore and Champagne lends itself perfectly to a road trip. Getting around the villages can range from slow and laborious to nigh impossible without your own wheels.

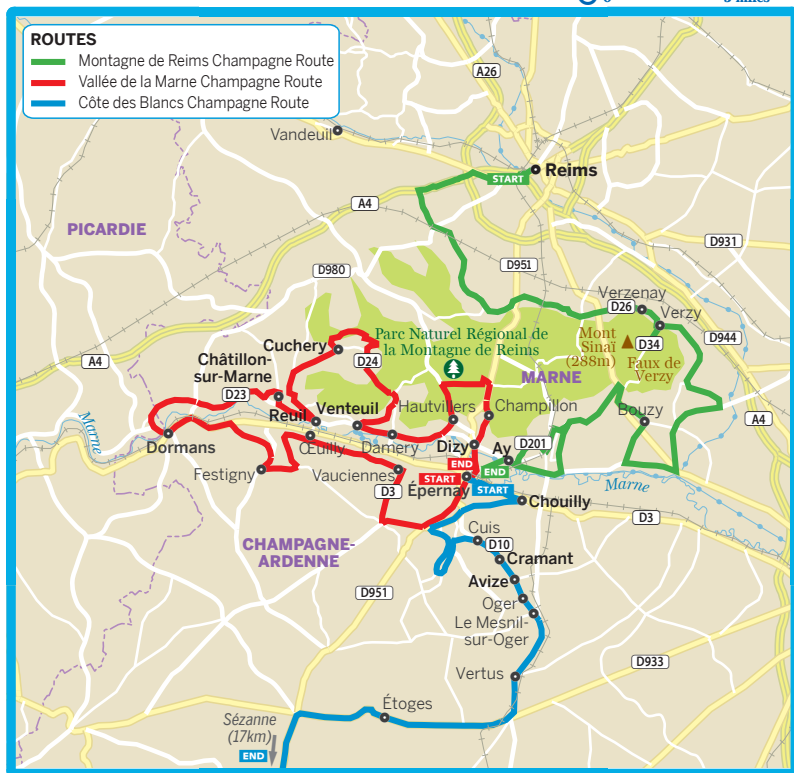
The Champagne Routes, which follow secondary and tertiary rural roads, are signposted but there are so many twists and turn-offs that setting off without a map would be unwise. Bookshops and tourist offices sell Michelin's yellow-jacketed, 1:150,000-scale *Aisne, Ardennes, Marne* map (No 306).

## Montagne de Reims Champagne Route

Linking Reims with Épernay by skirting the Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims, a regional park covering the forested Reims Mountain plateau, the meandering, 70km Montagne de Reims Champagne

## Routes of the Marne

0 10 km  
0 5 miles



Route ([www.tourisme-en-champagne.co.uk](http://www.tourisme-en-champagne.co.uk)) passes through vineyards planted mainly with pinot noir vines. Villages en route include Verzenay, **Bouzy** and **Ay**.

## Verzenay

POP 1060

With vines spreading like a ribbed blanket over the hillsides and top-of-the-beanstalk views from its lighthouse, Verzenay makes an attractive stop on the Montagne de Reims Champagne Route. Its vines are planted mostly with pinot noir grapes – 100% *grand cru* (wine of exceptional quality).

## Sights & Activities

### Phare & Musée de Verzenay VIEWPOINT

(Verzenay Lighthouse; [www.lepharedeverzenay.com](http://www.lepharedeverzenay.com); D26; adult/child lighthouse €3/2, museum €8/4, combined ticket €9/5; ☀ 10.30am–5pm Tue–Sun, closed Jan) For the region's best introduction to the art of growing grapes and the cycles of the seasons, head to the Phare de Verzenay, on a hilltop at the eastern edge of the village. Exactly 101 spiral stairs lead to the top of the lighthouse, constructed as a publicity stunt in 1909, which rewards visitors with unsurpassed 360-degree views of vine, field and forest – and, if you're lucky, a tiny TGV zipping by in the distance.

### Moulin de Verzenay HISTORIC SITE

(Verzenay Windmill; D26) The Moulin de Verzenay, on the western edge of town, was used as an observation post during WWI and by the US Army during WWII. The interior is closed – it's owned by the Champagne house Mumm – but the nearby hill offers fine valley views.

### Étienne & Anne-Laure Lefèvre WINE

(☎ 03 26 97 96 99; [www.champagne-etienne-lefevre.com](http://www.champagne-etienne-lefevre.com); 30 rue de Villers; ☀ 10am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Fri, to 5pm Sat) Étienne and Anne-Laure Lefèvre run group tours of their family-owned vineyards and cellars – if you're on your own, ring ahead to see if you can join a prearranged tour. There are no flashy videos or multimedia shows – the emphasis is firmly on the nitty-gritty of Champagne production.

## Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims

Spreading across bijou winegrowing villages, lushly wooded hills and Champagne vines, the 500-sq-km Montagne de Reims

Regional Park is best known for a botanical curiosity: 800 spectacularly contorted dwarf beech trees known as **faux de Verzy**. The best way to appreciate the park is by striking out on foot or by bicycle.

To get a good look at the park's trees, which have tortuously twisted trunks and branches that hang down like an umbrella, take the Balade des Faux forest walk from 'Les Faux' parking lot, 2km up the D34 from Verzy (situated on the D26).

Across the D34, a 500m gravel path leads through the forest to a *point de vue* (panoramic viewpoint) – next to a concrete WWI bunker – atop 288m-high Mont Sinai.

Reims and Épernay – both with train stations and car rentals – are the major gateways to the park. You'll need your own car to get around and explore its off-the-beaten-track corners.

## Vallée de la Marne Champagne Route

A stronghold of pinot meunier vines, this 90km itinerary winds from Épernay to Dormans, heading more or less west along the hillsides north of the River Marne via Euilly, then circles back to the east along the river's south bank via Châtillon-sur-Marne and Hautvillers. The GR14 long-distance walking trail and its variants (eg GR141) pass through the area.

## Hautvillers

POP 713

Perched above a sea of emerald vines and ablaze with forsythia and tulips in spring, Hautvillers is where Dom Pierre Pérignon

### DON'T MISS

#### BUBBLES IN A TREEHOUSE

**Perching Bar** ([www.facebook.com/perchingbar](http://www.facebook.com/perchingbar); Forêt de Brise-Charrette, Verzy; ☀ noon–8pm Wed–Sun mid-Apr–mid-Dec) Squirrelled away deep in the forest of the Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims, this slick, Nordic-cool tree house commands broad views over valley and vine – and we just love those swings! It's accessed via wooden walkways raised above the trees. The bar champions both the *grandes maisons* and small producers.

(1638–1715) is popularly believed to have created Champagne. The village is one of Champagne's prettiest, with ubiquitous medieval-style wrought-iron signs providing pictorial clues to the activities taking place on the other side of the wall.

Astonishing vineyard views await a few hundred metres north of the centre along rte de Fismes (D386); south along rte de Cumières (a road leading to the D1); and along the GR14 long-distance walking trail (red-and-white markings) and local vineyard footpaths (yellow markings).

## Sights & Activities

Guided tours including a Champagne tasting (€10) and half-day electric bike tours of the surrounding vineyards (€38 to €58) can be arranged by the tourist office.

### Volière des Cigognes Altavilloises

BIRD SANCTUARY

(rue des Côtes de l'Héry; ☺ 24hr; 📍) **FREE** Hautvillers is twinned with the Alsatian town of Eguisheim, which explains why several storks (including one rare black one) live here, an easy 500m walk towards Épernay from place de la République. It's a great opportunity to get a close-up view of these majestic birds. In most years, storklings hatch here in late April and May.

### Église Abbatiale

CHURCH

(rue de l'Abbaye; ☺ 9am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun) Part of a former Benedictine abbey, the Abbaye St-Pierre d'Hautvillers, founded in 650 CE by St Nivard, bishop of Reims, this church is liberally decorated with 17th-century woodwork. This is where the good monk Dom Pérignon is buried. Note the tomb in front of the altar.



## Drinking & Nightlife

### ★ Au 36

WINE BAR

(www.au36.net; 36 rue Dom Pérignon; ☺ 10.30am–6pm Apr–Oct, to 4pm Fri–Tue Nov–Dec & Mar) This sleek wine boutique has a 'wall' of Champagne, innovatively arranged by aroma, and a laid-back upstairs tasting room. A two-/three-glass tasting costs €14/18, while a six-glass tasting for two people costs €38. A tasting platter of Champagne specialties costs €20.



## Information

The attractive main square is place de la République. Here you'll find the helpful **tourist office**

(☎ 03 26 57 06 35; www.tourisme-hautvillers.com; place de la République; ☺ 9.30am–1pm & 1.30–5.30pm Mon–Sat, 10am–4pm Sun, shorter hours Nov–mid-Apr), where you can pick up excellent free maps for several vineyard walks. One-hour guided tours cost €5 (with a Champagne tasting €7).

## Châtillon-sur-Marne

POP 758

Sloping picturesquely down a hillside and braided with vines, Châtillon-sur-Marne reclines sleepily in the Vallée de la Marne. Woven with narrow streets, it's a pretty base for striking out on vineyard walks and its cellars also produce Champagnes worth lingering for.

## Sights

### Albert Levasseur

WINERY

(☎ 03 26 58 11 38; www.champagne-levasseur.fr; 6 rue Sorbier, Cuchery; ☺ by appointment only) **FREE** You're assured a warm – and English-speaking – welcome and a fascinating cellar tour at Albert Levasseur, run by a friendly Franco-Irish couple, which turns grapes grown on 4.2 hectares into 35,000 to 40,000 bottles of Champagne each year. Try to phone or email ahead if possible. Situated in the hamlet of Cuchery (population 415), 7.5km northeast of Châtillon-sur-Marne on the D24.

### Pope Urban II Statue

STATUE

The highest point in Châtillon-sur-Marne is crowned by a 25m-high statue of Pope Urban II (1042–99), dedicated in 1887, a particularly successful local boy best known to history for having launched the bloody First Crusade. The orientation table near the base offers excellent views of the Marne Valley and is a super spot for a picnic.

## Sleeping & Eating

Grab a quick bite to eat on central place Urbain II. For more restaurant choice, you might want to venture into Épernay or Reims.

### Domaine du Moulin de l'Étang

B&B €€

(☎ 03 26 58 72 95; Moulin de l'Étang; d €120–130; 📍 📞) Ah, such peace! This squat 18th-century farmhouse B&B reclines in the prettiest setting of vineyards and pond-speckled gardens. Rooms are furnished in nouveau-rustic style, with stone walls, earthy hues and natural fabrics. The lovely owner prepares great breakfasts and can advise on local Champagne *dégustations* (tastings).

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (📍 03 26 58 32 86; [www.tourisme-chatillon-marne.fr](http://www.tourisme-chatillon-marne.fr); 4 rue de l'Église; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun, 2.30-6.30pm Mon, shorter hours Oct-Mar)

## Éuilly

POP 658

Blink and you'll miss dinky Éuilly, on the Vallée de la Marne Champagne Route, but that would be a shame. This cute grey-stone village, flower-draped in summer, is topped by a 13th-century church and home to a museum spotlighting winegrowing life of yore.

## Côte des Blancs Champagne Route

This 100km route, planted almost exclusively with white chardonnay grapes (the name means 'hillside of the whites'), begins along Épernay's majestic av de Champagne and then heads south to Sézanne and beyond. Stops en route include Cramant (of giant Champagne bottle fame), Avize and Le Mesnil-sur-Oger. The gently rolling landscape is at its most attractive in late summer and autumn.

## Avize

POP 1900

Right in the heart of Blanc des Blancs country and surrounded by rows of immaculately tended vines, which yield the chardonnay grapes that go into producing some of the world's finest fizz, Avize is lauded far and wide for its outstanding Champagnes. It's home to a highly regarded school of wine and some excellent cellars.

## **👁** Sights

### Sanger Cellars

WINE

(📍 03 26 57 79 79; [www.sanger.fr](http://www.sanger.fr); 33 rue du Rempart du Midi; tour incl 2-/4-/9-flute tasting €10/17.50/30, full-day masterclass €60; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) At the Sanger Cellars, tours of the Avize Viti Campus' impressive production facilities take in traditional equipment and the latest high-tech machinery, such as a gadget that removes sediment from the necks of bottles after *remuage* (riddling) by an automated *gyropalette*. Tours include a tasting.

Champagnes are sold at discounted *prix départ cave* (cellar-door prices) and profits

## A REASON TO CELEBRATE

The Champagne region really had a reason to crack open the fizz and pop corks when it finally achieved Unesco World Heritage status in 2015. The accolade refers to three specific areas: the historic vineyards of Hautvillers, Ay and Mareuil-sur-Ay; St-Nicaise Hill in Reims; and the av de Champagne and Fort Chabrol in Épernay.

are reinvested in the school. The entrance is on the D19; if the door is locked, push the intercom button.

### Avize Viti Campus

WINERY

(Champagne High School of Winemaking; [www.avizeviticampus.fr](http://www.avizeviticampus.fr); rue d'Oger) Many past, present and future Champagne makers learn, or are learning, their art and science at the Avize Viti Campus run by the Ministry of Agriculture. As part of their studies, students produce quite excellent bubbly, made with grapes from some of Champagne's most prestigious parcels and sold under the label Champagne Sanger ([www.sanger.fr](http://www.sanger.fr)). Sanger was established shortly after WWI, and the name is from '*sans guerre*' ('without war'), pronounced *sahn-gher*.

### Église St-Nicolas

CHURCH

(rue de l'Église, D10) Once the abbey church of a Benedictine convent, Église St-Nicolas mixes Romanesque, Flamboyant Gothic and Renaissance styles. There are no specific opening times - turn up and hopefully you'll be able to go inside.

From here, aptly named rue de la Montagne leads up the hill (towards Grauves), past an oversized Champagne bottle, to Parc Vix (D19), which affords panoramic vineyard views; a map sign details a 6.5km, two-hour walk through forest and field.

## **🍴** Sleeping & Eating

### Les Avisés

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(📍 03 26 57 70 06; [www.selosse-lesavises.com](http://www.selosse-lesavises.com); 59 rue de Cramant; d €250-290, ste €390, menus €42-65) Housed in a splendid neoclassical manor, Les Avisés is a touch of class in the heart of Champagne. Overlooking the park or vineyards, rooms manage the delicate act of combining historic and contemporary, with muted colours and clean lines. Regional cuisine is prepared with flair and served

## **i** WHICH CHAMPAGNE?

**Blanc de Blancs** Champagne made using only chardonnay grapes. Fresh and elegant, with very small bubbles and a bouquet reminiscent of 'yellow fruits' such as pear and plum.

**Blanc de Noirs** A full-bodied, deep golden Champagne made solely with black grapes (despite the colour). Often rich and refined, with great complexity and a long finish.

**Rosé** Pink Champagne (mostly served as an aperitif), with a fresh character and summer fruit flavours. Made by adding a small percentage of red pinot noir to white Champagne.

**Prestige Cuvée** The *crème de la crème* of Champagne. Usually made with grapes from *grand cru* vineyards and priced and bottled accordingly.

**Millésimé** Vintage Champagne produced from a single crop during an exceptional year. Most Champagne is nonvintage.

with top-quality wines (some produced on the estate) in the intimate restaurant.

### Oger

The tiny hamlet of Oger is known for its *grand cru* fields, prize-winning flower gardens and the **Musée du Mariage** ([www.champagne-henry-devaugency.fr](http://www.champagne-henry-devaugency.fr); 1 rue d'Avize, D10; adult/child €9/free; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) featuring colourful and often gaudy objects associated with 19th-century marriage traditions. The collection was assembled by the parents of the owner of Champagne Henry de Vaugency (founded 1732), an eighth-generation Champagne grower. An explanatory sheet in English is available. The price of entry includes a Champagne tasting.

### Le Mesnil-sur-Oger

POP 1124

This comely winegrowing village on the Côte des Blancs Champagne Route is among the most famous, with 100% of its chardonnay vines producing the superlative *grand cru* Champagnes. It's worth the pilgrimage alone for an insight into Champagne-making and its history at the Musée de la Vigne et du Vin.

### Sights

★ **Musée de la Vigne et du Vin** MUSEUM  
(☎ 03 26 57 50 15; [www.champagne-launois.fr](http://www.champagne-launois.fr); 2 av Eugène Guillaume, cnr D10; adult incl 3 flutes €15; ☎ tours 10am & 2.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am Sat & Sun) This museum is so outstanding

that it's worth planning your day around a two-hour tour. Assembled by a family that has been making Champagne since 1872, this extraordinary collection of century-old Champagne-making equipment includes objects so aesthetically ravishing that you'll want to reach out and touch them. Among the highlights is a massive 16-tonne oak-beam grape press from 1630. The museum can only be visited by tour; these are available in French and English. Call ahead or book online.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Champagne Baradon Michaudet** B&B €€  
(☎ 03 26 57 19 70; [www.champagne-baradon-michaudet.com](http://www.champagne-baradon-michaudet.com); 58 Grand'Rue; s €81-84, d €90-94, tr €108, q €136; 📍) Stay with the Champagne makers at this attractive little B&B, with four rooms and one *gîte* (self-catering apartment, two nights €325) big enough to accommodate a family. The decor is delightfully old school, with florals, flounces and wood beams, and it's not every day you find *grand cru* Champagne in your minibar! The friendly hosts put on a generous spread at breakfast.

### La Gare

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 26 51 59 55; [www.lagarelemesnil.com](http://www.lagarelemesnil.com); 3 place de la Gare; menus €18-26; ☎ noon-1.30pm Mon-Wed, noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Thu-Sat; 📍) Decked out like a station, La Gare prides itself on serving bistro-style grub prepared with seasonal produce, simple as pork tenderloin with cider and potatoes, grilled salmon with hollandaise and beef cooked in red wine. There's a €9 menu for *les petits*.



## ÉPERNAY

POP 23,120

Prosperous Épernay, the self-proclaimed *capitale du Champagne* and home to many of the world's most celebrated Champagne houses, is the best place for touring cellars and sampling bubbly. The town also makes an excellent base for exploring the Champagne Routes.

Beneath the streets in 110km of subterranean cellars, more than 200 million bottles of Champagne, just waiting to be popped open on some sparkling occasion, are being aged. In 1950 one such cellar – owned by the irrepressible Mercier family – hosted a car rally without the loss of a single bottle!

### Sights

#### ★ Avenue de Champagne

STREET

Épernay's handsome av de Champagne fizzes with *maisons de Champagne* (Champagne houses). The boulevard is lined with mansions and neoclassical villas, rebuilt after WWI. Peek through wrought-iron gates at Moët's private **Hôtel Chandon**, an early 19th-century pavilion-style residence set in landscaped gardens, which counts Wagner among its famous past guests. The haunted-looking **Château Perrier**, a red-brick mansion built in 1854 in neo-Louis XIII style, is aptly placed at No 13! It's set to open as a new Champagne museum soon.

### Tours

#### ★ Atelier 1834: Champagne Boizel

WINE

(☎03 26 55 91 49; www.boizel.com; 46 av de Champagne; tours incl 2 Champagne tastings €28-50; ☉10am-1pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat) This wonderfully intimate Champagne house is still run with passion and prowess by the Boizel family, with a winemaking tradition dating to 1834. Unlike many of the *maisons* that open their doors to the public, these are still very much working cellars. Hidden away here are the real treasures – several bottles (still drinkable, apparently) hailing from 1834.

#### ★ Moët & Chandon

WINE

(☎03 26 51 20 20; www.moet.com; 20 av de Champagne; 1½hr tour with tasting €25-47, 10-17yr €10; ☉tours 9.30-11.30am & 2-4.30pm) Flying the Moët, French, European and Russian flags, this prestigious *maison* is the world's biggest producer of Champagne. It has frequent

90-minute tours that are among the region's most impressive, offering a peek at part of its 28km labyrinth of *caves* (cellars).

#### Mercier

WINE

(☎03 26 51 22 22; www.champagnemercier.fr; 68-70 av de Champagne; adult incl 1/2/3 glasses €18/25/28, 10-17yr €8; ☉tours 9.30-11.30am & 2-4.30pm, closed mid-Dec–mid-Feb) France's most popular brand was founded in 1847 by Eugène Mercier, a trailblazer in the field of publicity stunts and the virtual creator of cellar tours. Everything at this Champagne house is flashy, including the 160,000L barrel that took two decades to build (for the 1889 Universal Exposition), the lift that transports you 30m underground and the laser-guided touring train.

#### Champagne Georges Cartier

WINE

(☎03 26 32 06 22; www.georgescartier.com; 9 rue Jean Chandon-Moët; adult incl 6-glass tasting €15, cellar tour & 1-glass tasting €12.50, cellar tour & 6-glass tasting €23.50; ☉10am-7pm Tue-Thu & Sun, to 8pm Fri & Sat) Hewn out of chalk in the 18th century, the warren of cellars and passageways at Champagne Georges Cartier is incredibly atmospheric. Look out for the fascinating graffiti (both in French and German) dating to when the cellars were used as bunkers during WWII. Tours are followed by a Champagne tasting of one to six glasses.

#### Champagne Domi Moreau

BUS

(☎06 30 35 51 07, after 7pm 03 26 59 45 85; www.champagne-domimoreau.com; 11 rue du Bas, Nancy; tours €35; ☉by appointment) Nathalie and Max run scenic and insightful three-hour minibus tours, in French and English, of nearby vineyards. Pick-up is across the street from the tourist office (p342). Call ahead for reservations.

### DON'T MISS

#### DOM PÉRIGNON

Everyone who visits Moët & Chandon on av de Champagne invariably stops to strike a pose next to the statue of Dom Pérignon (c 1638–1715), after whom the prestige *cuvée* is named. The Benedictine monk played a pivotal role in making Champagne what it is – perfecting the process of using a second, in-the-bottle fermentation to make ho-hum wine sparkle.

## TASTE LIKE A PRO

You can taste Champagne anywhere, but you might get more out of the two-hour workshop at **Villa Bissinger** (☎ 03 26 55 78 78; www.villabissinger.com; 15 rue Jeanson), home to the International Institute for the Wines of Champagne. Besides covering the basics like names, producers, grape varieties and characteristics, the workshop includes a tasting of four different Champagnes. The institute is in Ay, 3.5km northeast of Épernay. Call ahead to secure your place.

## Sleeping

### La Villa St-Pierre

HOTEL €

(☎ 03 26 54 40 80; 1 rue Jeanne d'Arc; d €65-120, tr €102-113, q €119-132; 📞) Expect a warm, family-style *bienvenue* at this early 20th-century townhouse turned B&B. A recent makeover has spruced up the 11 rooms, the pick of which have separate sitting areas and fine views over Épernay to the vine-cloaked hills beyond. The downside to top-floor rooms is having to lug your bags. Breakfast costs an additional €14.

### Magna Quies

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 06 73 25 66 60; www.magnaquies-epernay.jimdo.com; 49 av de Champagne; d/tr/q €180/220/260; 📞) Nestled in a shuttered manor house on the Avenue de Champagne (p341), this family-run B&B extends the warmest of welcomes. The trio of sunny, wood-floored rooms, in shades of grey, pink and brown, command fine views of the vineyards. Rates include a generous breakfast spread of pastries, fresh fruit and cold cuts.

### Hôtel Jean Moët

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 26 32 19 22; www.hoteljeanmoet.com; 7 rue Jean Moët; d €130-175, ste from €230; 📞 📺 📺) Housed in a beautifully converted 18th-century mansion, this old-town hotel is big on atmosphere, with its skylit tearoom and revamped antique-meets-boutique-chic rooms. Exposed beams add a dash of romance and there are modern comforts like Nespresso makers.

### ★ La Villa Eugène

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎ 03 26 32 44 76; www.villa-eugene.com; 84 av de Champagne; d €175-315, ste from €354; 📞 📺 📺) Sitting handsomely astride the Avenue de Champagne (p341), with an out-

door pool, La Villa Eugène is a class act. It's in a beautiful 19th-century town mansion that once belonged to the Mercier family. The roomy doubles exude understated elegance, with soft, muted hues and the odd antique. Splash out more for a private terrace or four-poster bed.

## Eating & Drinking

Épernay's main eat street is rue Gambetta and adjacent place de la République. For picnic fixings, head to rue St-Thibault.

### Covered Market

MARKET €

(Halle St-Thibault; rue Gallice; ☀ 7am-12.30pm Wed & Sat) Picnic treats galore.

### Pâtisserie Vincent Dallet

PASTRIES €

(☎ 03 26 55 31 08; www.chocolat-vincentdallet.fr; 26 rue Général Leclerc; pastries €2-5, light meals €8-18; ☀ 7.20am-7.45pm Tue-Sat, 7am-7pm Sun) A sweet dream of a chocolaterie, pâtisserie and tearoom, with delectable pralines, macarons and pastries. A *champenoise* speciality is the 'Baba', vanilla cream topped by a cork-shaped pastry flavoured with Champagne. Or go straight for a *café gourmand*, coffee with a selection of mini desserts.

### ★ La Grillade Gourmande

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 26 55 44 22; www.lagrilladegourmande.com; 16 rue de Reims; lunch menus €22, dinner menus €33-59; ☀ noon-1.45pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) This chic, red-walled, art-slung bistro is an inviting spot to try chargrilled meats and dishes rich in texture and flavour, such as crayfish pan-fried in Champagne and lamb cooked in rosemary and honey until meltingly tender. Diners spill out onto the covered terrace in the warm months. Both the presentation and service are flawless.

### La Cave à Champagne

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 26 55 50 70; www.cave-champagne.fr; 16 rue Gambetta; menus €25-40; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Thu-Mon; 📞) 'The Champagne Cellar' is well regarded by locals for its humble *champenoise* cuisine (snail-and-pig's-trotter casse-roule, fillet of beef in pinot noir), served in a warm, traditional, bourgeois atmosphere. Pair these dishes with inexpensive regional Champagnes and wines.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 26 53 33 00; www.ot-epernay.fr; 7 av de Champagne; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1pm & 2-4.30pm Sun mid-Apr-mid-Oct, shorter hours mid-Oct-mid-Apr; 📞) The team here hands out English

brochures and maps with walking, cycling and driving tour options. Staff can also make cellar visit reservations. Free wi-fi.

## **i** Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

The tourist office (p342) sells cycling maps and map-cards (€0.50).

### TRAIN

The **train station** (place Mendès-France) has direct services to Reims (€3, 30 minutes, 16 daily) and Paris Gare de l'Est (€10 to €69, 1¼ to 2¾ hours, seven daily).

## TROYES

POP 62,828

In polls of France's most romantic towns, Troyes invariably makes the grade – and with good reason. Its astonishingly intact, ludicrously pretty historic centre wings you back to the Middle Ages, with its warren of cobbled streets, fine ensemble of half-timbered houses in pastel hues, once home to wealthy textile merchants, and uplifting Gothic churches. Often overlooked, it's one of the best places to get a sense of what Europe looked like back when Molière was penning his finest plays and the Three Musketeers were swashbuckling.

Troyes punches well above its weight culturally, too, with a raft of galleries and museums that are both fascinating and unique, homing in on everything from apothecaries to tools, hosiery and modern art.

## **i** Sights

### ★ 16th-Century Troyes

AREA

Half-timbered houses – some with lurching walls and floors that aren't quite level – line many streets in the old city, rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1524. The best place for aimless ambling is the area bounded by (clockwise from the north) rue du Général de Gaulle, the Hôtel de Ville, rue Général Sausier and rue de la Pierre. Of special interest are (from southwest to northeast) **rue de Vauluisant**, **rue de la Trinité**, **rue Champeaux** and **rue Paillot de Montabert**.

### ★ Cathédrale

#### St-Pierre et St-Paul

CATHEDRAL

(place St-Pierre; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) All at once imposing and delicate with its filigree stonework, Troyes' cathedral is a stellar

example of *champenoise* Gothic architecture. The flamboyant **west façade** dates from the mid-1500s, while the 114m-long interior is illuminated by a spectacular series of 180 **stained-glass windows** (13th to 17th centuries) that shine like jewels when it's sunny. Also notable is the fantastical **Baroque organ** (1730s) sporting musical *putti* (cherubs), and a tiny **treasury** with enamels from the Meuse Valley.

### ★ Maison de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière

MUSEUM

(MOPo; ☎ 03 25 73 28 26; www.mopo3.com; 7 rue de la Trinité; adult/child €7/3.50; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm, closed Tue Oct-Mar) Worn to a sensuous lustre by generations of skilled hands, the 11,000 hand tools on display here – each designed to perform a single, specialised task with exquisite efficiency – bring to life a world of manual skills made obsolete by the Industrial Revolution. The collection is housed in the magnificent Renaissance-style Hôtel de Mauroy, built in 1556. Videos show how the tools were used and what they were used for. A catalogue in English is available at the reception.

### Hôtel de Vauluisant

MUSEUM

(4 rue de Vauluisant; adult/child €3/free; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) This haunted-looking, Renaissance-style mansion shelters a twinset of unique museums. The **Musée de l'Art Champenois** is a repository for the evocative paintings, stained glass and statuary (stone and wood) of the Troyes School, which flourished here during the economic prosperity and artistic ferment of the early 16th century. The **Musée de la Bonneterie** (Hosiery Museum) showcases the sock-strewn story of Troyes' 19th-century knitting industry, with exhibits from knitting machines and looms to bonnets and embroidered silk stockings.

### Ruelle des Chats

STREET

Off rue Champeaux (between Nos 30 and 32), a stroll along tiny ruelle des Chats (Alley of the Cats), as dark and narrow as it was

## **i** TROYES CITY PASS

**The Pass' Troyes** (1/2/3-day pass €15/20/25), sold at tourist offices, gets you free entry to five of the big museums, chocolate tasting, an old-city tour (with a guide or audioguide) and discounts at various factory outlet shops.



## Troyes

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 16th-Century Troyes.....D3
- 2 Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul.....G1
- 3 Maison de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière.....D4

### 📍 Sights

- 4 Apothicairerie de l'Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte.....F1
- 5 Église Ste-Madeleine.....C2
- 6 Église St-Pantaléon.....C4
- 7 Hôtel de Vauluisant.....C4
- 8 La Cité du Vitrail.....F2
- 9 Ruelle des Chats.....D3

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 10 La Maison de Rhodes.....G1
- 11 Le Jardin de la Cathédrale.....G1
- 12 Le Relais St-Jean.....D3
- 13 Maison M.....F2

### 🍴 Eating

- 14 Claire et Hugo.....D2
- 15 Covered Market.....D1
- 16 Le Valentino.....D2
- 17 Ô des Lys.....D4
- 18 Tout Simplement.....D3

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 19 Chez Gus.....D3
- 20 Chez Philippe.....D3
- 21 Les Cabaretiers.....D3

four centuries ago – the upper floors almost touch – is like stepping back into the Middle Ages. The stones along the base of the walls were designed to give pedestrians a place to stand when horses clattered by. See if you can spot the namesake cat in the stonework.

### Église Ste-Madeleine

CHURCH

(📍03 25 73 82 90; 5 rue de la Madeleine; 🕒9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) Troyes' oldest and most interesting neighbourhood church has an early Gothic nave and transept and a Renaissance-style choir and tower. The highlights here are the splendid Flamboyant Gothic **rood screen** (early 1500s), dividing the transept from the choir; and the 16th-century **stained glass** in the presbytery portraying scenes from Genesis. In the nave, the statue of a deadly serious **Ste Marthe** (St Martha), around the pillar from the wooden pulpit, is considered a masterpiece of the 15th-century Troyes School.

### Église St-Pantaléon

CHURCH

(rue de Vauluisant; 🕒9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) Faded with age and all the more enigmatic for it, this Renaissance-style, cruciform church, with its barrel-vaulted wood ceiling, is a great place to see the work of the 16th-century Troyes School – check out the sculptures attached to the columns of the nave. The west façade was added in the 18th century. History sheets are available.

### Apothicairerie de l'Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte

MUSEUM

(www.musees-troyes.com; quai des Comtes de Champagne; adult/child €3/free; 🕒10am-1pm &

2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) If you come down with an old-fashioned malady – scurvy, perhaps, or unbalanced humours – the place to go is this fully outfitted, wood-panelled pharmacy from 1721. Rare majolica and earthenware pharmaceutical jars share shelf space with decorative pill boxes and bronze mortars.

### La Cité du Vitrail

MUSEUM

(📍03 25 42 52 87; www.cite-vitrail.fr; 1 rue Roger Salengro; 🕒9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun; 🆓) **FREE** Housed in the barn of the 18th-century Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte, this free museum dazzles with 25 works of stained glass reaching from the 12th to the 21st century – all visible at eye level. A highlight (quite literally) is the 16th-century **Tree** by Jessé de Laines-aux-Bois. There are regular workshops for children; see the website for details.

### 🛏 Sleeping

#### ★ Maison M

B&B €€

(📍03 25 46 30 97; www.maisonmtroyes.com; 3 quai la Fontaine; d €120-160; 📞📧) Michelle and Bruno are your kindly hosts at this boutique-flavoured guesthouse, a tasteful melange of 19th-century features and furnishings and chic modern design. Most of the spacious, sunny, wood-floored rooms face gardens, and breakfast is a small feast of local produce. Whether you want to rent a bike or arrange a Champagne tasting, just say the word.

#### Le Jardin de la Cathédrale

B&B €€

(📍06 63 10 32 32; www.jardindelacathedrale.com; 12 place St-Pierre; d €180-230; 📞📧) Tucked



behind the cathedral, this delightful little B&B lodges in a stone-walled 18th-century house, with oodles of history, style and soul-stirring views. Laetitia is your charming host, tending to the beautiful courtyard garden, revealing her flair for design in four suites furnished with bold colours, beams and antiques, and serving delicious breakfasts with fresh pastries, organic jams and homemade yoghurt.

### Le Relais St-Jean

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 25 73 89 90; [www.relais-st-jean.com](http://www.relais-st-jean.com); 51 rue Paillot de Montabert; d €119-179, ste from €225; 📞📺📺) On a narrow medieval street in the heart of the old city, this hotel combines half-timbered charm with 24 contemporary rooms, a mini tropical hothouse, a jacuzzi in the 16th-century cellar, a small fitness centre and facilities for people with disabilities. There's direct access from the underground car park (€11).

### La Maison de Rhodes

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(☎03 25 43 11 11; [www.maisonderhodes.com](http://www.maisonderhodes.com); 18 rue Linard Gonthier; d €232-272, ste €432; 📞📺📺) Once home to the Knights Templar, this half-timbered pile sits proudly on its 12th-century foundations. Creaking staircases lead to 11 spacious rooms, with beams and stone floors, which positively ooze medieval character; iPod docks and wi-fi suddenly wing you back into the 21st century. The gardens, courtyard and gourmet restaurant invite lingering. Breakfast will set you back an extra €26.

## Eating

Locals are enormously proud of the city's specialities: *andouillettes de Troyes* (sausages made with strips of pigs' intestines) and *tête de veau* (calf's head served without the brain). As far as most nonlocals are concerned, they're an acquired taste.

### Covered Market

MARKET €

([www.marchedeshalles.fr](http://www.marchedeshalles.fr); place de la Halle; ☺8am-12.45pm Mon, 8am-12.45pm & 3.30-7pm Tue-Thu, 7am-7pm Fri & Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun) Fruit, veggies, bread, charcuterie, fish and cheese, glorious cheese.

### Tout Simplement

BISTRO €

(☎03 25 40 83 72; [www.resto-tout simplement.fr](http://www.resto-tout simplement.fr); 29 place Alexandre Israël; mains €12-19; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Chipper staff keep the good vibes and food coming at this contemporary wine bar-bistro in the half-timbered heart of Troyes, which spills out onto a terrace in

summer. Its famous *rillettes* (pâtés) – chicken, aubergine and grilled almonds, for instance – are a tasty prelude to mains such as creamy scallop risotto.

### Aux Oiseaux de Passage

FRENCH €

(☎06 87 11 57 75; <https://auxoiseauxdepassage.wixsite.com/auxoiseauxdepassage>; 24bis mail des Charmilles; menus €14.50-21; ☺11.45am-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat, 11.45am-1.30pm Sun; 📞📺📺) A 10-minute amble east of central Troyes, on the banks of the Seine, this artsy, family-friendly cafe brims with books, board games, art and mismatched furniture. Come for the relaxed boho vibe, great coffee and homemade cake, Sunday brunch (€20), great-value, season-driven *menus* (plenty of choice for vegetarians), and chilled music. Look out for the odd gig at weekends.

### ★ Claire et Hugo

BISTRO €€

(☎09 73 14 18 69; [www.facebook.com/Claire-et-Hugo](http://www.facebook.com/Claire-et-Hugo); 77 ave du Général-Gallieni; lunch/dinner menus from €24/39; ☺noon-1.30pm Tue-Sat, 7.30-9.30pm Fri & Sat) Meet Claire and Hugo, the dynamic duo behind this cheerful, modern bistro in a former dry cleaner's shop. They bake several fresh breads using organic heirloom flour and use the produce from their own orchards and fields in their meals. Menu change with the season.

### ★ Le Valentino

FRENCH €€

(☎03 25 73 14 14; [www.levaletino.com](http://www.levaletino.com); 35 rue Paillot de Montabert; lunch/dinner menus from €30/40; ☺noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) What could be more romantic than a *table à deux* in the cobbled courtyard of this rose-hued, 17th-century modern French restaurant? The chef juggles flavours skilfully in market-driven specialities such as roasted monkfish with pak choi, ginger and pink pepper, and quail with red-grape jelly and pear chutney.

### Ô des Lys

FRENCH €€

(☎03 25 41 11 09; [www.o-des-lys.metro.rest](http://www.o-des-lys.metro.rest); 14 rue de Turenne; 2-/3-course lunches €15/18, dinner menus €30-40; ☺noon-1.30pm Tue & Sun, noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Thu-Sat) A talented husband-wife team shakes the pans at this sweet, intimate bistro in the heart of historic Troyes. Classic French home cooking with a pinch of love is brought to tightly packed tables – with starters like escargots with parsnip cream preluding mains like pollack fillet in a herb crust with Champagne sauce and desserts like *tarte tatin* (upside-down caramelised apple pie).



## Drinking & Nightlife

The hum of chatter fills the open-air bars and cafes around rue Champeaux and half-timbered place Alexandre Israël on warm evenings.

### Chez Gus

CAFE

(29 rue Molé; ☺ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat) Riding the new wave of retro-style coffee shops, vintage-cool Chez Gus is one of the hippest hang-outs in town for an espresso, smoothie, speciality tea or snacks from sandwiches to pancakes, waffles and croque monsieur. It's a nicely chilled spot to while away an hour or so, with a book exchange and board games.

### Chez Philippe

WINE BAR

(☎ 06 61 02 71 69; 11 rue Champeaux; ☺ 5pm-1.30am Tue-Sat, 5-11pm Sun) This is one of the chicest Champagne bars in town, with its lilac walls, cosy living-room feel and quirky scattering of vintage furniture. Black-and-white photos of the 10 vigneron who supply Champagne from the Côte des Bar region adorn the walls, and the terrace is humming on warm evenings.

### Les Cabaretiers

BAR

(43 rue Molé; ☺ 5pm-1.30am Tue-Sat, 5-10pm Sun & Mon) Jazzy music and an upbeat crowd make this little wood-floored bar in the old centre a nicely chilled spot for a pre-dinner cocktail or beer. It occasionally hosts party nights.



## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 25 82 62 70; www.tourisme-troyes.com; 16 rue Aristide Briand; ☺ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun May-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Nov-Apr; 📶) Free wi-fi.



## Getting There & Away

### BUS

The best way to get to Reims (€15, 2¼ hours, up to 13 daily), without a change in Paris, is by taking bus line 140 with Courriers de l'Aube (www.courriersdelaubefr). Departures are from the very last bus berth to the right as you approach the train station; a schedule is posted. The **bus station office** (☎ 03 25 71 28 42; ☺ 8.30am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri) is in the side of the train station.

### TRAIN

Troyes is on the rather isolated train line that links Mulhouse (€50 to €115, three to six hours, 13 daily) in Alsace with Paris Gare de l'Est (€10 to €45, 1½ hours, 10 to 14 daily). To get to Dijon (€34 to €90, two to five hours), try to get a direct train, rather than change in Paris, Culmont or St-Florentin-Vergigny.

## CÔTE DES BAR CHAMPAGNE ROUTE

The 220km Côte des Bar Champagne Route does curlicues and loop-the-loops through austere fields, neat vineyards and forestland in an area 30km to 50km east and southeast of Troyes. Great for a deliciously leisurely drive, it passes through stone-built villages that are bedecked with flowers in the spring.

If you're in the Côte des Bar on the last weekend in July, you're in luck, as this is when the region hosts the **Route du Champagne en Fête** (www.routeduchampagne.com; ☺ late Jul or early Aug). A celebratory flute, costing €25 and sold at local tourist offices, is your ticket to free tastings at the *caves ouvertes* (open cellars) of more than 20 top Champagne houses.

### WORTH A TRIP

#### AN ABBEY DETOUR

**Abbaye de Clairvaux Monastery** (☎ 03 25 27 52 55; www.abbayedclairvaux.com; Clairvaux; adult/child €8.50/free; ☺ tours 10.30am, 2pm & 4.30pm Mon & Tue, 10.30am, 11.45am, 1.30pm, 2pm, 3.30pm & 5pm Wed-Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) Bernard de Clairvaux (1090-1153), nemesis of Abelard and preacher of the Second Crusade, founded this hugely influential Cistercian monastery in 1115. Since Napoléon's time, the complex has served as one of France's highest-security prisons. Several historic abbey buildings are open to the public by guided tour only. Tours take in 12th-century structures, built in the austere Cistercian tradition, but more interesting is the 18th-century **Grand Cloître**, where you can see collective 'chicken coop' cells (from the 1800s) and individual cells (used until 1971). The abbey is on D396, 8km south of Bayel and 6km north of A5 exit 23.

## Colombey-les-Deux-Églises

POP 714

Charles de Gaulle lived in this village from 1934 – except, obviously, during WWII – until his death in 1970. It is named after two historic *églises* (churches), one a parish church, the other a Cluniac priory.

The hill just north of town (on the D619) is crowned by a 43.5m-high **Croix de Lorraine** (Lorraine Cross), erected in 1972, the symbol of France's WWII Resistance.

### Sights

#### Mémorial Charles de Gaulle

MEMORIAL

(www.memorial-charlesdegaulle.fr; adult/child €13.50/8; ☎10am-6pm May-Sep, to 5.30pm Wed-Mon Feb-Apr & Oct-Dec) The impressive Mémorial Charles de Gaulle presents graphic, easily digestible exhibits, rich in photos, which form an admiring biography of France's greatest modern statesman. Displays help visitors untangle such complicated mid-20th-century events as the Algerian war and the creation of the Fifth Republic, and consider the ways in which De Gaulle's years in power (1958–69) affected French culture, style and economic growth. Audio-guides are available. The site affords breathtaking, sublime views of the Haute-Marne countryside.

#### La Boiserie

MUSEUM

(☎03 25 01 52 52; www.charles-de-gaulle.org; 1 rue du général de Gaulle/D23; adult/child €6/4; ☎10am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Wed-Mon Oct-Mar) People flock by the coach-load to visit Charles de Gaulle's vine-swathed home, La Boiserie, its elegant antique furnishings unchanged since he was laid to rest in the village-centre *cimetière* (graveyard). Tours (English brochure available; price included in admission) begin at the ticket office, situated across the D23 from the house, on Colombey's southern edge.

### Sleeping

#### Hostellerie La Montagne

BOUTIQUE HOTEL **cc**

(☎03 25 01 51 69; www.hostellerielamontagne.com; 10 rue de Pisseloup; d €130-145, ste €180) This boutique guesthouse exudes vintage-chic charm and offers quirky designer twists in its individually decorated rooms, some of which sport free-standing bath-tubs for a lingering soak. The big deal here, however, is its double act of excellent restaurants

(*menus* €28 to €100), playing up winningly fresh seasonal produce – among them a Michelin-starred number with Jean-Baptiste Natali at the helm.

### Information

**Tourist Information** (☎03 25 03 12 42; www.colombey-les-deux-eglises.com; 10 rue du général de Gaulle/D23; ☎9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Thu-Mon) On the edge of town.

## Essoyes

POP 724

It's easy to see why Renoir loved Essoyes, so much that he spent his last 25 summers here: it's one of the area's comeliest villages, with neat stone houses, a riverfront that glows golden in the late afternoon sun and landscapes of vineyards and flower-flecked meadows that unfold in a gentle, almost artistic way.

### Sights & Activities

#### Espace des Renoir

MUSEUM

(Renoir Centre; www.renoir-essoyes.fr; 9 place de la Mairie; adult/child incl Atelier Renoir €12/7; ☎10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Jul-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) The Renoir trail in Essoyes begins at the Espace des Renoir, which also houses the tourist office (p349) and Atelier Renoir. The centre screens a 15-minute film about the artist and displays temporary exhibitions of mostly contemporary art.

#### Atelier Renoir

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Renoir's Studio; www.renoir-essoyes.fr; 9 place de la Mairie; adult/child incl Espace des Renoir €12/7; ☎10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Jul-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) The Atelier Renoir has displays zooming in on the hallmarks of Renoir's work (the female form, the vibrant use of colour and light), alongside original pieces such as his antiquated wheelchair and the box he used to carry his paintings to Paris. Perhaps loveliest of all is the studio garden, particularly in spring to early summer when it bursts forth with tulips, anemones and roses.

#### Circuit Découverte

WALKING




You can slip into the shoes of great impressionist Renoir on Essoyes' standout *circuit découverte*, a marked trail that loops around the village, taking in viewpoints that inspired the artist, the family home and the cemetery where he lies buried, his grave

marked by a contemplative bronze bust. The trail begins at the Espace des Renoir (p348).

## Sleeping & Eating

### Les Demoiselles

HOTEL €

(☎) 03 25 29 08 59; [www.es-demoiselles-essoies.com](http://www.es-demoiselles-essoies.com); 1 rue Pierre-Renoir; d €82-97, f €115-125;   The pick of the places to stay in Essoyes is this low-key hotel, whose sleekly modern rooms in muted colours have tea- and coffee-making facilities. In summer there's a pleasant terrace and an outdoor pool. Its **restaurant** (2-/3-course menus from €24/30, mains €18; ☺ 12.15-1.30pm & 7-9pm; ) also happens to be the best in town.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎) 03 25 29 21 27; [www.ot-essoies.fr](http://www.ot-essoies.fr); Espace des Renoir, 9 place de la Mairie; ☺ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year)

## Les Riceys

POP 1243

Running along both banks of the picturesque River Laigne, the commune of Les Riceys consists of three adjacent villages (Ricey-Bas, Ricey-Haute-Rive and Ricey-Haut). The commune is famous for its three churches, and for growing grapes belonging to three different Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée wines. Its best-known product is Rosé des Riceys, an exclusive pinot noir rosé that can be made only in particularly sunny years and was a special favourite of Louis XIV. Annual production of this – when there is any – hovers around 65,000 bottles. Lots of Champagne wineries are nestled along and near the D70.

For more information, including details on walking circuits through vine and vale, contact the **tourist office** (☎) 03 25 29 15 38; [www.tourisme-cotedesbar.com](http://www.tourisme-cotedesbar.com); 14 place des Héros de la Résistance, Ricey-Haut; ☺ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat).

## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

4.2 million

### HIGHEST PEAK

Grand Ballon  
(1424m)

### BEST BISTRO

Chez Auguste  
(p375)

### BEST BOUTIQUE STAY

Villa Camoufle  
(p385)

### MOST MOVING HISTORICAL SITE

Natzweiler-Struthof  
(p363)



### WHEN TO GO

**Jul** Strasbourg leaps into summer with fireworks, street parties and cathedral illuminations at place à l'Été.

**Sep** Toast the grape harvest with new wine and autumn colour on the Route des Vins d'Alsace.

**Dec** Mulled wine, gingerbread and carols galore at Christmas markets throughout Alsace.







## Alsace & Lorraine

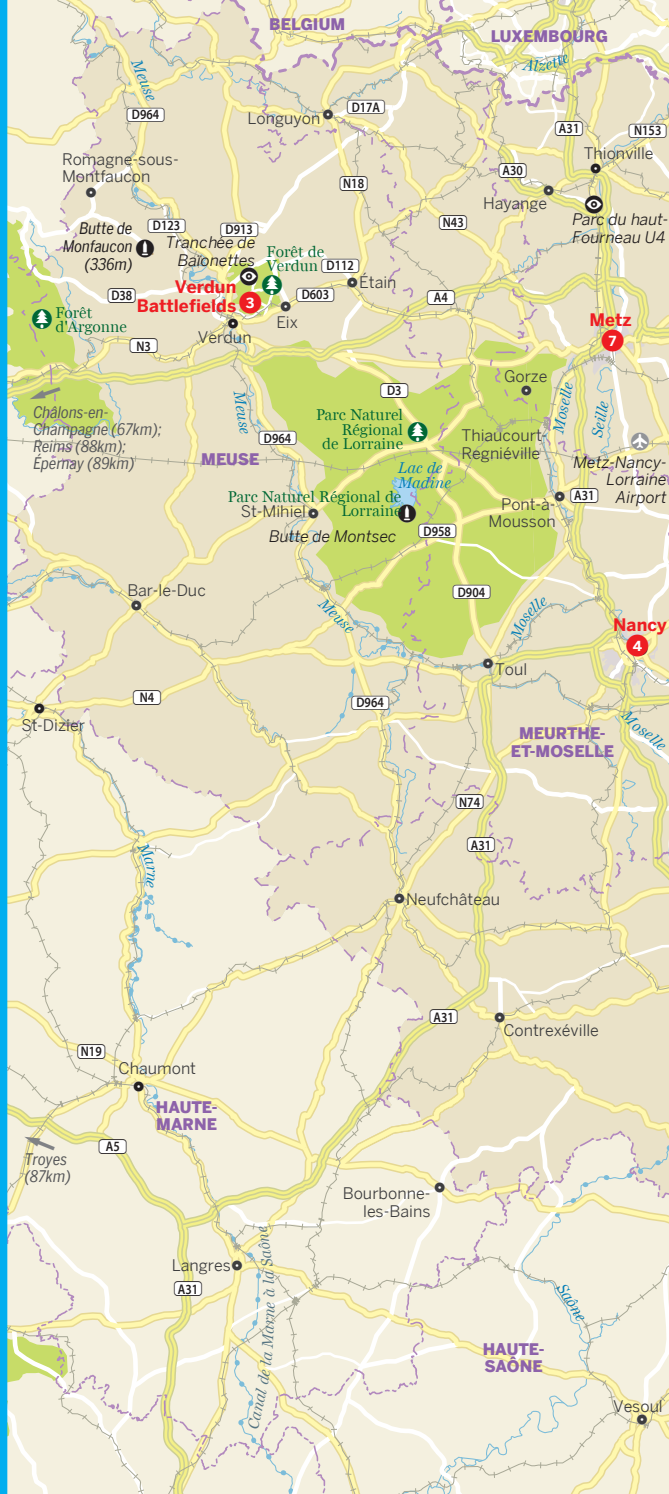
**A**lsace is a cultural one-off. With its Germanic dialect and French sense of fashion, love of *choucroute* (sauerkraut), fine wine and beer, this region often leaves you wondering quite where you are. Where are you? Why, in the land of living fairy tales, of course, where vineyards fade into watercolour distance, hilltop castles send spirits soaring higher than the region's emblematic storks and half-timbered villages garlanded with geraniums look fresh-minted for a Disney film set. Lorraine has high culture and effortless grace thanks to its historic roll call of dukes and art nouveau pioneers, who had an eye for grand designs and good living. The art and architecture in blessedly underrated cities like Nancy and Metz leave visitors spellbound, while the region's WWI battlefields render visitors speechless with their painful beauty.

### INCLUDES

Alsace.....	354	Lorraine.....	376
Strasbourg.....	354	Nancy.....	376
Route des Vins d'Alsace.....	362	Metz.....	382
Colmar.....	369	Verdun.....	387
Mulhouse.....	374	Romagne-sous- Montfaucon.....	390

## Alsace & Lorraine Highlights

- 1 Colmar** (p369)  
Wandering the canal-laced neighbourhood of Petite Venise as it starts to twinkle.
- 2 Strasbourg** (p354)  
Getting a gargoyles-eye view from the colossal Gothic cathedral.
- 3 Verdun**  
**Battlefields** (p387)  
Surveying the cross-studded landscape in the early morning silence.
- 4 Nancy** (p377)  
Being floored by art nouveau grace at the Musée de l'École de Nancy.
- 5 Château du Haut Königsbourg** (p365)  
Peering across the vines from the hilltop perch of this medieval castle.
- 6 Hunawihr** (p367)  
Wishing for luck (or bountiful babies) spotting storks at this sanctuary.
- 7 Metz** (p382)  
Contemplating avant-garde art at the architecturally innovative Centre Pompidou-Metz.
- 8 Massif des Vosges** (p374)  
Diverging from the beaten track to forgotten villages and misty, forested hills.
- 9 Vallée de Munster** (p374)  
Dairy-hopping this green, cheese-mad valley.
- 10 Riquewihr** (p367)  
Going for a lantern-lit dusk stroll in lanes ripe for a bedtime story.





## ALSACE

Ask the French what they think of Alsace and watch them grow misty-eyed with nostalgia and affection for this most idiosyncratic of regions, which borders Switzerland to the south and Germany to the east. So hard to nail in terms of its character, it proudly guards its own distinct identity, language, cuisine, history and architecture – part French, part German, 100% Alsatian. Here the candy-coloured towns and villages look as though they've popped up from a children's bedtime story, the gently rolling countryside, striped with vines, is nothing short of idyllic, and everywhere locals swear by centuries-old traditions.

### Strasbourg

POP 285,000

Strasbourg is the perfect overture to all that is idiosyncratic about Alsace – walking a fine tightrope between France and Germany and between a medieval past and a progressive future, it pulls off its act in inimitable Alsatian style.

Tear your gaze away from that mesmerising Gothic cathedral for just a minute and you'll be roaming the old town's twisting alleys lined with crooked half-timbered houses à la Grimm; feasting in the cosiest of *winstubs* (Alsatian taverns) by the canals in Petite France; and marvelling at how a city that does Christmas markets and gingerbread so well can also be home to the glittering EU Quarter and France's second-largest

student population. But that's Strasbourg for you: all the sweeter for its contradictions and cross-cultural quirks.

### Sights

Take a DIY spin of Strasbourg's cathedral and the old city with a 1½-hour audioguide (adult/child €5.50/2.75), available in five languages from the tourist office (p361).

#### ★ Cathédrale Notre-Dame CATHEDRAL

(www.cathedrale-strasbourg.fr; place de la Cathédrale; adult/child astronomical clock €3/2, platform €8/5; ☺ 9.30-11.15am & 2-5.45pm, astronomical clock noon-12.45pm, platform 9am-7.15pm; 📍 Langstross/Grand Rue) Nothing prepares you for your first glimpse of Strasbourg's Cathédrale Notre-Dame, completed in all its Gothic grandeur in 1439. The lace-fine façade lifts the gaze little by little to flying buttresses, leering gargoyles and a 142m spire. The interior is exquisitely lit by 12th- to 14th-century **stained-glass windows**, including the western portal's jewel-like rose window. The Gothic-meets-Renaissance **astronomical clock** strikes solar noon at 12.30pm with a parade of figures portraying the different stages of life and Jesus with his apostles.

#### ★ Grande Île HISTORIC SITE

(📍 Langstross/Grand Rue) History seeps through the twisting lanes and cafe-rimmed plazas of Grande Île, Strasbourg's Unesco World Heritage-listed island bordered by the River Ill. These streets – with their photogenic line-up of wonky, timber-framed

### DON'T MISS

#### EU ENCOUNTERS

Should the inner workings of the EU intrigue you, you can sit in on debates ranging from lively to yawn-a-minute at the **Parlement Européen** (European Parliament; www.europarl.europa.eu; rue Lucien Fèbvre; 📍 Parlement Européen); dates are available from the tourist office (p361) or on the website. For individuals it's first come, first served (bring ID).

A futuristic glass crescent, the Council of Europe's **Palais de l'Europe** (Palace of Europe; ☎ 03 88 41 20 29; www.coe.int; av de l'Europe; 📍 Droits de l'Homme), across the River Ill from the Parlement Européen, can be visited on free one-hour weekday tours; phone ahead for times and reservations.

From here, it's just a hop across the Canal de la Marne to the swirly silver **Palais des Droits de l'Homme** (European Court of Human Rights; www.echr.coe.int; allée des Droits de l'Homme; 📍 Droits de l'Homme), the most eye-catching of all the EU institutions.

The EU buildings sit 2km northeast of Grande Île (central Strasbourg), close to **Parc de l'Orangerie** (📍 Droits de l'Homme), a flowery park designed in the 17th century by Le Nôtre of Versailles fame. A family magnet with its playgrounds and swan-dotted lake, it's also the spot to rent rowboats on Lac de l'Orangerie in summer. Take tram line E to the Droits de l'Homme stop.



houses in sherbet colours – are made for aimless ambling. They cover beneath the soaring magnificence of the cathedral (p354) and its sidekick, the gingerbreadly 15th-century **Maison Kammerzell** (rue des Hallebardes; 📍 Grand Rue), with its ornate carvings and leaded windows. The alleys are at their most atmospheric when lantern-lit at night.

### ★ Palais Rohan

HISTORIC BUILDING

(www.musees.strasbourg.eu; 2 place du Château; adult/child per museum €6.50/free, all 3 museums €12/free; ☀️ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 📍 Langstross/Grand Rue) Hailed as a ‘Versailles in miniature’, this opulent 18th-century residence is loaded with treasures. The basement **Musée Archéologique** takes you from the Palaeolithic period to 800 CE. On the ground floor is the **Musée des Arts Décoratifs**, where rooms adorned with Hannong ceramics and gleaming silverware evoke the lavish lifestyle of the nobility in the 18th century. On the 1st floor, the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** collection of 14th- to 19th-century art includes El Greco, Botticelli and Flemish Primitive works.

### Petite France

AREA

(📍 Langstross/Grand Rue) Criss-crossed by narrow lanes, canals and locks, Petite France is where artisans plied their trades in the Middle Ages. The half-timbered houses, sprouting veritable thickets of scarlet geraniums in summer, and the riverside parks attract the masses, but the area still manages to retain its Alsatian charm, especially in the early morning and late evening. Drink in views of the River Ill and the **Barrage Vauban** (Vauban Dam; ☀️ viewing terrace 7.15am-9pm, shorter hours winter; 📍 Faubourg National) **FREE** from the much-photographed **Ponts Couverts** (Covered Bridges; 📍 Musée d’Art Moderne) and their trio of 13th-century towers.

### Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain

GALLERY

(MAMCS; www.musees.strasbourg.eu; 1 place Hans Jean Arp; adult/child €7/free; ☀️ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Musée d’Art Moderne) This striking glass-and-steel cube showcases an outstanding fine-art, graphic-art and photography collection. Besides modern and contemporary works of the Kandinsky, Picasso, Magritte, Monet and Rodin ilk, you’ll encounter pieces by Strasbourg-born artists, including the curvaceous creations of Hans Jean Arp and the evocative 19th-century works

of Gustave Doré. The 1st-floor **Art Café** is graced by bold frescoes by Japanese artist Aki Kuroda and has a terrace overlooking the River Ill and Petite France.

### Musée de l’Œuvre Notre-Dame

MUSEUM

(www.musees.strasbourg.eu; 3 place du Château; adult/child €6.50/free; ☀️ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Langstross/Grand Rue) Occupying a cluster of sublime 14th- and 16th-century buildings, this museum harbours one of Europe’s premier collections of Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance sculpture (including many originals from the cathedral), plus 15th-century paintings and stained glass. *Christ de Wissembourg* (c 1060) is the oldest work of stained glass in France.

### Musée Alsacien

MUSEUM

(www.musees.strasbourg.eu; 23 quai St-Nicolas; adult/child €6.50/free; ☀️ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 📍 Porte de l’Hôpital) Spread across three typical houses from the 1500s and 1600s, with creaky floors and beautifully restored wood-panelled interiors, this museum dips into rural Alsatian life over the centuries. Costumes, toys, ceramics, folk art, furniture and even a tiny 18th-century synagogue are on display in the museum’s two dozen rooms.

### Musée Historique

MUSEUM

(www.musees.strasbourg.eu; 2 rue du Vieux Marché aux Poissons; adult/child €6.50/free; ☀️ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Langstross/Grand Rue) Trace Strasbourg’s history from its beginnings as a Roman military camp called Argentoratum at this engaging museum, housed in a 16th-century slaughterhouse. Highlights include a painting of the first-ever performance of ‘La Marseillaise’, France’s national anthem (which, despite its name, was written in Strasbourg in 1792), and a 1:600-scale model, created in the 1720s to help Louis XV visualise the city’s fortifications.

### Cave des Hospices de Strasbourg

WINERY

(www.vins-des-hospices-de-strasbourg.fr; 1 place de l’Hôpital; ☀️ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat; 📍 Porte de l’Hôpital) **FREE** Founded in 1395, this brick-vaulted wine cellar nestles deep in the bowels of Strasbourg’s hospital. A hospice back in the days when wine was considered a cure for all ills, today the cellar bottles first-rate Alsatian wines from rieslings to sweet muscats. Take tram A or D to Porte de l’Hôpital. From here it is a three-minute walk south on rue d’Or.





## Strasbourg

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale Notre-Dame..... F2  
 2 Grande Île..... E3  
 3 Palais Rohan..... F3

### 📍 Sights

- 4 Barrage Vauban..... B4  
 5 Maison Kammerzell..... F2  
 6 Musée Alsacien..... F4  
 7 Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain..... A4  
 8 Musée de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame..... F3  
 9 Musée Historique..... F3  
 10 Musée Tomi Ungerer..... G1  
 11 Petite France..... C3  
 12 Ponts Couverts..... B3

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 13 Batorama..... F3

### 📍 Sleeping

- 14 Cour du Corbeau..... F4  
 15 Hôtel du Dragon..... D4  
 16 Hôtel Patricia..... E4  
 17 Hôtel Régent Petite France..... C3

- 18 Le Bouclier d'Or..... D3

### 📍 Eating

- 19 1741..... G3  
 20 Binstub..... G2  
 21 Chez Victor..... G2  
 22 La Cuiller à Pot..... C4  
 23 Le Gavroche..... G4  
 24 L'Éveil des Sens..... D3  
 25 Perles de Saveurs..... D3  
 26 Winstub S'Kaechele..... C2

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 27 Au Brasseur..... G2  
 28 Café Bretelles..... C3  
 29 Code Bar..... F3  
 30 Jeannette et les Cycleux..... E3  
 31 Les Frères Berthom..... F3

### 📍 Shopping

- 32 Christian..... E2  
 33 Maison Alsacienne de Biscuiterie..... F2  
 34 Mireille Oster..... D3

### Jardin des Deux Rives

GARDENS

(Two-Shores Garden; ☀️ 9am-7pm; 🗺️ Aristide Briand) An expression of flourishing Franco-German friendship, Strasbourg and its German neighbour Kehl have turned former customs posts and military installations into this 60-hectare garden, whose play areas, promenades and parkland straddle the Rhine. The centrepiece is Marc Mimram's sleek (and hugely expensive) **suspension bridge**, which has proved a big hit with pedestrians and cyclists. From the tram stop, walk east or take bus 21 for three stops. It is 3km southeast of central Strasbourg (Grande Île).

### 📍 Neustadt

#### Place de la République

SQUARE

(🗺️ République) Many of Strasbourg's grandest public buildings, constructed when the city was ruled by the German Reich, huddle northeast of the Grande Île area in the so-called imperial quarter of Neustadt, part of the city's Unesco World Heritage status since 2017. The neighbourhood centres on this stately square, bounded by the **Théâtre National de Strasbourg** (TNS; ☎️ 03 88 24 88 24; www.musees.strasbourg.eu; 1 av de la Marseillaise; 🕒 box office 1-7pm Mon-Sat). It stretches east-

wards to Parc de l'Orangerie (p354) and is dominated by sturdy neo-Renaissance buildings inspired by late 19th-century Prussian tastes.

### Musée Tomi Ungerer

MUSEUM

(www.musees.strasbourg.eu; 2 av de la Marseillaise; adult/child €6.50/free; ☀️ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 🗺️ République) A tribute to one of Strasbourg's most famous sons – award-winning illustrator and cartoonist Tomi Ungerer – this museum, just northeast of Grande Île, is housed in the fetching Villa Greiner. The collection discloses the artist's love of dabbling in many genres, from children's-book illustrations to satirical drawings and erotica.

### 👉 Tours

#### Batorama

BOATING

(www.batorama.fr; rue de Rohan; adult/child €13.50/7.80; ☀️ tours half-hourly 9.45am-9.15pm, shorter hours winter; 🗺️ Langstross/Grand Rue) This outfit runs scenic 70-minute boat trips, which glide along the storybook canals of Petite France, taking in the Barrage Vauban (p355) and the glinting EU institutions. Tours depart from rue de Rohan, the quay behind Palais Rohan (p355).

It also offers tours of the port – a great opportunity to see the docks up close.

## Festivals & Events

### Marché de Noël

CHRISTMAS

(Christmas Market; [www.noel.strasbourg.eu](http://www.noel.strasbourg.eu); ☺ last Sat Nov-31 Dec) Mulled wine, spicy *bredele* (biscuits) and a Santa-loaded children's village are all part and parcel of Strasbourg's sparkly Marché de Noël, which spreads out around the cathedral and the nearby streets.

### Sleeping

It can be tricky to find last-minute accommodation from Monday to Thursday when the European Parliament is in plenary session (see [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu) for dates). Book ahead for December, when beds are at a premium because of the Christmas market. The tourist office (p361) can advise about same-night room availability; if you drop by, staff are happy to help reserve a room.

### Hôtel Patricia

HOTEL €

(☎03 88 32 14 60; [www.hotelpatricia.fr](http://www.hotelpatricia.fr); 1 rue du Puits; s €40-45, d €51-68; 📞; 🚽; 🚪 Langstross/Grand Rue) The high-ceilinged, wood-floored rooms here are nothing fancy and the cheaper rooms have shared bathrooms, but you can't beat Hôtel Patricia for value. And given how central it is, this big, rambling townhouse bang in the heart of Grande Île (p354) is surprisingly quiet.

### ★ Cour du Corbeau

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎03 90 00 26 26; [www.cour-corbeau.com](http://www.cour-corbeau.com); 6-8 rue des Couples; r €160-260; 📞; 🚽; 🚪 Porte de l'Hôpital) A 16th-century inn lovingly converted into a boutique hotel, Cour du Corbeau wins you over with its half-timbered charm and its location, just steps from the river. Gathered around a courtyard, rooms blend original touches such as oak parquet and Louis XV furnishings with mod cons including flat-screen TVs.

### Hotel des XV

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 79 76 10; [www.hoteldesxv.com](http://www.hoteldesxv.com); 46 rue du Conseil des Quinze; d €85-200; 📞; 🚽; 🚪 Conseil des Quinze) Housed in a beautifully revamped villa near Parc de l'Orangerie (p354), boutique Hotel des XV is a chic number. Monochrome interiors, geometric prints and art-deco-style furnishings are enlivened with bursts of teal or mustard, and swish yet understated rooms come with little luxuries like Nespresso makers and robes. Breakfast (€19) is great, with fresh pastries and fruit, and eggs to order.

### Hôtel du Dragon

HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 35 79 80; [www.dragon.fr](http://www.dragon.fr); 12 rue du Dragon; r €80-154; 📞; 🚽; 🚪 Porte de l'Hôpital) Step through a tree-shaded courtyard and into the, ahhh...blissful calm of this bijou hotel. The Dragon receives glowing reviews for its crisp interiors, attentive service and prime location near Petite France (p355).

### Du Coté de Chez Anne

B&amp;B €€

(☎03 88 41 80 77; [www.maison-hote-strasbourg.com](http://www.maison-hote-strasbourg.com); 4 rue de la Carpe Haute; d €165-230; 📞; 🚽; 🚪 Robertsau Boecklin) A dash of boutique style on Strasbourg's leafy northeastern fringes, this half-timbered farmhouse sits in flower-strewn gardens and conceals five gorgeous rooms designed with the utmost grace and beautiful fabrics – from summery florals to gilded glamour. Some rooms have romantic touches like free-standing bathtubs. Take tram E from place de la République to Robertsau Boecklin, a seven-minute walk away.

### Hotel D

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 15 13 67; [www.hoteld.fr](http://www.hoteld.fr); 15 rue du Fossé des Treize; d €80-200; 📞; 🚽; 🚪 République) Splashes of bold colour and daring design have transformed this townhouse into a nouveau-chic boutique hotel. The slick, spacious rooms are dressed in soothing tones and no comfort stone has been left unturned – you'll find robes, Nespresso machines and iPod docks even in the standard ones. A fitness room and sauna invite relaxation.

### Le Bouclier d'Or

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎03 88 13 73 55; [www.lebouclierdor.com](http://www.lebouclierdor.com); 1 rue du Bouclier; d €160-350; 📞; 🚽; 🚪 Langstross/Grand Rue) This bijou family-run hotel nestles in a gorgeously restored 16th-century building in Petite France (p355). It has been decorated with lots of loving care – whether you opt for an ever-so-snug 'Alsatian' room with beams and warm colours, or a grand, chandelier-lit 'bourgeoise' room furnished with antiques. After a day pounding the cobbles, your feet will be grateful for the spa.

### Hôtel Régent Petite France

DESIGN HOTEL €€€

(☎03 88 76 43 43; [www.regent-hotels.com](http://www.regent-hotels.com); 5 rue des Moulins; r €180-315; 📞; 🚽; 🚪 Alt Winmàrik) Once an ice factory and now Strasbourg's hottest design hotel, this waterfront pile is quaint on the outside and ubercool on the inside. The sleek rooms, dressed in muted colours and plush fabrics, sport shiny marble bathrooms. Work your relaxed look in the sauna, chic restaurant and Champagne bar with dreamy river views.

## Eating

Restaurants abound on Grande Île: try canal-side Petite France for Alsatian fare and half-timbered romance; Grand'Rue for kerbside kebabs and *tarte flambée* (thin Alsatian-style pizza topped with crème fraîche, onions and lardons); and rue des Veaux or rue des Pucelles for hole-in-the-wall eateries serving the world on a plate. Stepping across the river, pedestrianised rue d'Austerlitz is lined with patisseries and bistros.

**Chez Victor** FAST FOOD €  
(☎09 82 48 56 88; www.chezvictor-cathedrale.fr; 19 rue des Frères; dishes from €6.50; ☺11am-3pm Mon, 11am-3pm & 6-9pm Tue-Fri, 11.30am-4pm Sat; ☑Broglie) Victor is almost single-handedly reinventing fast food in this corner of Strasbourg, with his wholesome *tartines* (open sandwiches), salads and soups, which he prepares fresh with your fillings of choice right before your eyes in his open-plan kitchen. And all for pocket-money prices.

**Winstub S'Kaechele** FRENCH €  
(☎03 88 22 62 36; www.skaechele.fr; 8 rue de l'Argile; mains €17-19; ☺11.45am-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat; ☑Langstross/Grand Rue) Traditional French and Alsatian grub doesn't come more authentic than at this snug, amiable *winstub* (wine tavern), run with love by couple Karine and Daniel. Cue wonderfully cosy evenings spent in stone-walled, lamp-lit, wood-beamed surrounds, huddled over dishes such as escargots oozing Roquefort, fat pork knuckles braised in pinot noir, and

*choucroute garnie* (sauerkraut garnished with meats).

**Binchstub** ALSATIAN €  
(☎03 88 13 47 73; www.binchstub.fr; 6 rue du Tonnel Rouge; tarte flambée €10-15; ☺6.30pm-lam; ☑Broglie) Cooked to thin, crisp perfection, the *Flammekueche* (*tarte flambée*) at Binchstub is in a league of its own. Locally sourced farm ingredients go into toppings such as goat's cheese, thyme and honey, and Bleu d'Auvergne cheese with pear and rocket.

**Perles de Saveurs** FRENCH €€  
(☎03 88 22 19 81; www.perlesdesaveurs.fr; 9 rue des Dentelles; mains €19-24, menus €28-38; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat; ☑Langstross/Grand Rue) Tucked away in a Petite France courtyard, this cheerful restaurant is vibrantly graced with the comical paintings of local artists Elisa and Marie-Hélène. Clean, snappy flavours dominate the modern French menu, and desserts are divine.

**La Cuiller à Pot** FRENCH €€  
(☎03 88 35 56 30; www.lacuilleraipot.fr; 18b rue Finkwiller; menus €22-28; ☺noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Fri, 7-9.30pm Sat; ☑Musée d'Art Moderne) Run by a talented husband-and-wife team, this little Alsatian dream of a restaurant rustles up fresh regional cuisine. Its well-edited menu goes with the seasons but might include such dishes as tuna tartare with fresh herbs, and a divine tiramisu with apples and quinces. Quality is second to none.

## ALSACE CHOCOLATE & SWEETS

Strasbourg is one of the main stops on **La Route du Chocolat et des Douceurs d'Alsace** (Alsace Chocolate and Sweets Road; www.routeduchocolat.fr), stretching 80km north to Bad Bergzabern and 125km south to Heimsbrunn near Mulhouse. Pick up a map at the tourist office (p361) to pinpoint Alsace's finest patisseries, chocolateries, macaron shops and confectioners. The following are three sweet Strasbourg favourites to get you started:

**Mireille Oster** (www.mireilleoster.com; 14 rue des Dentelles; ☺9am-7pm; ☑Grand'Rue) Cherubs adorn this heavenly shop where Strasbourg's *pain d'épices* (gingerbread) fairy Mireille Oster tempts with handmade varieties featuring figs, amaretto, cinnamon and chocolate. Have a nibble before you buy.

**Christian** (www.christian.fr; 12 rue de l'Outre; ☺8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; ☑Broglie) Sumptuous truffles and pralines, weightless macarons and edible Strasbourg landmarks – renowned chocolatier Christian's creations are mini works of art.

**Maison Alsacienne de Biscuiterie** (www.maison-alsacienne-biscuiterie.com; 16 rue du Dôme; ☺10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-7pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun; ☑Broglie) Bakes scrumptious Alsatian gingerbread, macarons, raisin-stuffed *kougelhöp* and *sablés* (butter cookies) flavoured with nuts and spices.

**L'Eveil des Sens**

BISTRO €€

(☎03 88 32 81 01; [www.veil-des-sens.com](http://www.veil-des-sens.com); 2 rue Escarpée; menus €33-42, mains €22; ☉noon-1.30pm & 7.15-9.30pm, closed Tue; 📍Langstross/Grand Rue) With a name pledging to awaken your senses, this Petite France bistro promises great things – and it delivers. Tables draped in white linen and flowers create an intimate, romantic mood for dishes big on integral flavours as well as a small selection of supremely tempting desserts.

## ★1741

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎03 88 35 50 50; [www.1741.fr](http://www.1741.fr); 22 quai des Bateliers; menus €42-135; ☉noon-2pm & 7-10pm Thu-Mon; 📍Porte de l'Hôpital) A team of profoundly passionate chefs runs the show at this Michelin-starred number facing the River Ill. Murals, playful fabrics and splashes of colour add warmth to the dining room, where waiters bring well-executed, unfussy dishes, such as sea bass with Jerusalem artichoke and Alsatian venison with root vegetables, to the table. Service is excellent, as is the wine list.

**Le Gavroche**

MEDITERRANEAN €€€

(☎03 88 36 82 89; [www.restaurantgavroche.com](http://www.restaurantgavroche.com); 4 rue Klein; menus €65-85; ☉noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Mon-Fri; 📍Porte de l'Hôpital) Lucile and Alexy Fuchs give food a pinch of creativity and southern sunshine at intimate, softly lit Le Gavroche, awarded a Michelin star. Mains like veal in a mint crust with crispy

polenta, and duckling with sauerkraut are followed by zingy desserts such as a meringue cake with vanilla.

 **Drinking & Nightlife**

Strasbourg's beer-thirsty students keep the scene lively and the bars and clubs pumping at weekends. Among the city's legion of pubs and bars is a glut of student-oriented places on the small streets east of the cathedral such as rue des Juifs, rue des Frères and rue des Sœurs.

**Café Bretelles**

CAFE

([www.cafe-bretelles.fr](http://www.cafe-bretelles.fr); 36 rue du Bain aux Plantes; ☉9am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun; 📍Alt Winmärik) Huddled away in Petite France, this chilled-out haunt has Italian coffee worth raving about – served with an artistic flourish – relaxed vibes and good music. The baristas know their stuff when it comes to speciality coffees, which are best enjoyed with a slice of cake or breakfast (€6.50 to €8).

**Code Bar**

COCKTAIL BAR

([www.facebook.com/CodeBarStrasbourg](http://www.facebook.com/CodeBarStrasbourg); 39 rue du Vieil Hôpital; ☉7pm-4am; 📍Langstross/Grand Rue) At the top of the cocktail bar pile, the intimate, backlit Code Bar knows its mixology, with creative, attractively presented concoctions that reach from 'Voodoo', a spicy, rum-and-coconut number, to the refreshing 'Gin Snatch' – gin, fresh basil, pink grapefruit and elderflower soda.

**Au Brasseur**

MICROBREWERY

([www.aubrasseur.fr](http://www.aubrasseur.fr); 22 rue des Veaux; ☉11am-1am; 📍Gallia) Copper vats shine at this easygoing microbrewery, which is perfect for a pint. It has been a boozier in some shape or form since 1746. Today, there's a good buzz and a fine selection of brews – from malty dark beers to hoppy IPAs. These pair well with snacks like *Flammekueche*.

**Jeannette et les Cycleux**

BAR

([www.facebook.com/Jeanette.et.les.Cycleux](http://www.facebook.com/Jeanette.et.les.Cycleux); 30 rue des Tonneliers; ☉11.30am-1.30am Mon-Thu, to 2.30am Fri & Sat, to midnight Sun; 📍Langstross/Grand Rue) Elvis lives on, baby, at this swinging 1950s-themed haunt, where classic motorbikes dangle from the chilli-red walls. We dig the good vibes, retro decor and music from rockabilly to Motown.

**Les Frères Berthom**

PUB

([www.lesberthom.com](http://www.lesberthom.com); 18 rue des Tonneliers; ☉5pm-1am Mon, to 1.30am Tue-Thu, to 2.30am Fri & Sat; 📍Porte de l'Hôpital) For a swift beer right

**WORTH A TRIP****ODE TO ART NOUVEAU**

**Musée Lalique** (☎03 88 89 08 14; [www.musee-lalique.com](http://www.musee-lalique.com); rue du Hochberg, Wingen-sur-Moder; adult/child €6/3; ☉10am-7pm, closed Mon Oct-Mar) A stunning, romantic tribute to French art-nouveau designer René Lalique, the Musée Lalique harbours a collection assembling exquisite gem-encrusted and enamelled jewellery, perfume bottles, stoppers and sculpture. Complementing it are flower and wooded gardens, making the connection, as Lalique did, between art and the natural world. Located in the northern Vosges, 60km northwest of Strasbourg, the museum can easily be visited on a half-day trip by taking the train to Wingen-sur-Moder (€11.40, 40 minutes). Alternatively, it's an hour's drive.



in the centre of Strasbourg, no-nonsense Les Frères Berthom fits the bill nicely. There are loads of beers to choose from, from IPAs to Trappist brews.

## ★ Entertainment

Cultural event listings appear in the free monthly *Spectacles* ([www.spectacles-publications.com](http://www.spectacles-publications.com)), available at the tourist office.

### La Laiterie

LIVE MUSIC

([www.artefact.org](http://www.artefact.org); 13 rue du Hohwald; ☎ Laiterie) Reggae, metal, punk, *chanson*, blues – Strasbourg's premier concert venue covers the entire musical spectrum and stages some 200 gigs a year. Tickets are available at the door and online. La Laiterie is just a five-minute walk (500m) south of Petite France along rue de Molsheim.

## 📍 Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 88 52 28 28; [www.visitstrasbourg.fr](http://www.visitstrasbourg.fr); 17 place de la Cathédrale; ☎ 9am-7pm; 📍 Grand'Rue)

## 📍 Getting There & Around

### AIR

Strasbourg's international **airport** (SXB; ☎ 03 88 64 67 67; [www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr](http://www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr)) is 17km southwest of the city centre (towards Molsheim), near the village of Entzheim. The airport is served by major carriers such as Air France, KLM, Iberia and budget airlines Ryanair (London Stansted) and Volotea. Flights link Strasbourg to cities elsewhere in Europe, including Amsterdam, Madrid, Munich and Vienna, and domestic destinations including Paris, Marseille, Montpellier, Toulouse, Nantes, Nice, Lille and Lyon.

A speedy shuttle train links the airport to the train station (€4.50, nine minutes, four to five hourly); the ticket also covers your onward tram journey into the city centre.

### BICYCLE

A world leader in bicycle-friendly planning, Strasbourg has an extensive and ever-expanding *réseau cyclable* (cycling network). The tourist office stocks free maps.

The city's 24-hour, self-rental **Vélohop** ([www.velohop.strasbourg.eu](http://www.velohop.strasbourg.eu); per hour/day €1/10) system can supply you with a bike. Pay by card and receive a code to unlock your bike. There's a refundable deposit of €150 per bike. Helmets are not available. There are 20 automatic rental points, plus outlets including the following:

**City Centre** (3 rue d'Or; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Sat; 📍 Porte de l'Hôpital)

## 📍 CENT SAVER

The **Strasbourg Pass** (adult/child €22/15), a coupon book valid for three consecutive days, includes a visit to one museum, access to the cathedral platform and astronomical clock, half a day's bicycle rental and a boat tour, plus hefty discounts on other tours and attractions. You can purchase this pass from the tourist office.

Admission to all of Strasbourg's museums ([www.musees-strasbourg.eu](http://www.musees-strasbourg.eu)) and the cathedral's platform is free on the first Sunday of the month.

**Rotonde** (rue de la Rotonde; ☎ 24hr;

📍 Rotonde)

**Train Station** (☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1-6.30pm

Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Sat;

📍 Gare Centrale) Situated on Level -1. Adjacent is an 820-place bicycle parking lot (€1 for 24 hours).

### BUS

The **Eurolines office** (☎ 08 92 89 90 91; [www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com); place de l'Étoile; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4.30pm Sat; 📍 Étoile Bourse) is situated south of Grande Île on place de l'Étoile. Take tram line A or D to the Étoile Bourse stop. Eurolines buses arrive and depart from the same square.

Strasbourg city bus 21 links the Jean Jaurès tram terminus with Kehl (€2, 13 minutes), the German town just across the Rhine.

### TRAIN

Built in 1883, the Gare Centrale was given a 120m-long, 23m-high glass façade and underground galleries in order to welcome the TGV Est Européen in grand style.

If you take the Eurostar via Paris or Lille, London is just 5¼ hours away. Direct services include the following:

**Basel SNCF** €26, 1¼ hours, 25 daily

**Karlsruhe** €23 to €26, 45 minutes, 16 daily

**Stuttgart** from €47, 1¼ to 2¼ hours, 11 daily

Destinations within France:

**Lille** from €90, three hours, 17 daily

**Lyon** from €70, 4½ hours, 14 daily

**Marseille** from €70, six hours, 16 daily

**Metz** from €23, 1½ hours, 16 daily

**Nancy** from €27, 1½ hours, 12 daily

**Paris** from €77, two hours, 19 daily

From Strasbourg, there are trains to Route des Vins destinations including the following:

**Colmar** from €5, 30 minutes, 30 daily

## ALSATIAN LANGUAGE

The roots of Alsatian (Elsässisch) go back to the 4th century, when Germanic Alemanni tribes assimilated the local Celts (Gauls) and Romans. Similar to the dialects spoken in nearby Germany and Switzerland, it has no official written form (spelling is something of a free-for-all) and pronunciation varies considerably. Yet despite heavy-handed attempts by the French and Germans to impose their language on the region by restricting (or even banning) Alsatian, you'll still hear it used in everyday life by people of all ages, especially in rural areas.

**Dambach-la-Ville** €11, one hour, 12 daily

**Obernai** from €3, 30 minutes, 20 daily

**Sélestat** from €5, 18 minutes to one hour, 46 daily

## Route des Vins d'Alsace

Green and soothingly beautiful, this is one of France's most evocative **drives** (Alsace Wine Route; [www.route-des-vins-alsace.com](http://www.route-des-vins-alsace.com)). Vines march up hillsides to castle-topped crags and the mist-enshrouded Vosges, and every mile or so there's a roadside *cave* (wine cellar) or half-timbered village to enjoy. Cork-screwing through glorious countryside, the route stretches 170km from Marlenheim, 21km west of Strasbourg, southwards to Thann, 46km southwest of Colmar.

Local tourist offices can supply you with the excellent English-language map/brochure *The Alsace Wine Route*, and *Alsace Grand Cru Wines*, detailing Alsace's 50 most prestigious Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP) winegrowing microregions. The signposted Route des Vins comprises several minor, lightly trafficked roads (D422, D35, D18 and so on).

## Obernai

POP 10,822

A vision of half-timbered, vine-draped, ring-walled loveliness, the wine-producing town of Obernai sits 31km south of Strasbourg. Give the summertime crowds the slip by ducking down cool, flower-bedecked alleyways, such as *ruelle des Juifs*, next to the tourist office.

## Sights & Activities

A number of winegrowers have cellars a short walk from town; the tourist office has a map.

### Place du Marché

SQUARE

Life spirals around this market square, put to use each Thursday morning, where you'll find the 16th-century **hôtel de ville** (town hall building) embellished with Baroque *troupe l'œil*; the Renaissance **Puits à Six Seaux** (Six Bucket Well), just across rue du Général Gouraud; and the bell-topped, 16th-century **Halle aux Blés** (Corn Exchange).

## Sleeping & Eating

### Le Gouverneur

HISTORIC HOTEL €

(☎ 03 88 95 63 72; [www.hotellegouverneur.com](http://www.hotellegouverneur.com); 13 rue de Sélestat; d €65-125; 📞) Overlooking a courtyard, this old-town hotel strikes a perfect balance between half-timbered rusticity and contemporary comfort. Its petite rooms have a boutiquey feel, with bursts of vivid colour and art-slung walls.

### La Villa Haute Corniche

B&B €€

(☎ 07 87 75 44 37, 06 70 92 11 96; [www.villahaute.corniche.com](http://www.villahaute.corniche.com); 25 rue de la Haute Corniche; d €115-135; 📞) On a tremendously scenic perch above Obernai, with views of the Vosges and Alsace plains, this B&B has a boutiquey feel thanks to owner Anthony's attention to detail. The four rooms are impeccably tasteful – dark-wood parquet, textured fabrics, fur throws and eye-catching art – and open onto terraces. Breakfast is a fine spread of farm-fresh eggs and cheeses, pastries and fruits.

It's a 1.5km (20-minute) walk northwest of central Obernai, or a quick taxi ride.

### Winstub Le Freiberg

ALSATIAN €€

(☎ 03 88 95 53 77; [www.le-freiberg.com](http://www.le-freiberg.com); 46 rue du Général Gouraud; mains €20-30, menus €36-46; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Thu-Tue) Brimming with warmth and bonhomie, this *winstub* (traditional Alsatian tavern) is a rustic ensemble of timber beams, red-checked tablecloths, heart-carved wooden chairs and stone walls. It's popular, too, thanks to its solid menu of dishes prepared with regional ingredients, from pork cheeks braised in pinot noir to cottage cheese with garlic and potatoes.

## La Fourchette des Ducs GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 03 88 48 33 38; www.lafourchettedesducs.com; 6 rue de la Gare; menus €140-175; ☎ 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) A great believer in fastidious sourcing, chef Nicolas Stamm serves regional cuisine with gourmet panache and a signature use of herbs to a food-literate crowd at this two-Michelin-starred restaurant. The tasting *menus* go with the seasons, featuring specialties such as Alsatian pigeon with *baerewecke* (spiced fruit cake) and sweetbreads of veal with onions and caramelised potatoes – simple but sublime.

### **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 88 95 64 13; www.tourisme-obernai.fr; place du Beffroi; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sat & Sun, shorter hours in low season) Provides info on the town and its surrounds. You can also rent an electric bike here for €17/28 per half/full day.

### **i** Getting There & Away

The train station is about 300m east of the old town. There are numerous TER train connections from Obernai to Strasbourg (from €3, about 30 minutes). For Colmar (€18), change train in Sélestat.

#### WORTH A TRIP

### NATZWEILER-STRUTHOF

**Natzweiler-Struthof** (www.struthof.fr; Natzwiller; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 9am-6.30pm, closed Christmas-Feb) About 25km west of Obernai, off the D130, stands Natzweiler-Struthof, the only Nazi concentration camp on French territory. Today the sombre remains of the camp are still surrounded by guard towers and concentric, once-electrified, barbed-wire fences. The four *crématoire* (crematorium ovens), the *salle d'autopsie* (autopsy room) and the *chambre à gaz* (gas chamber), 1.7km from the camp gate, bear grim witness to the atrocities committed here.

In all, some 22,000 of the prisoners (40% of the total) interned here and at nearby annexe camps died; many were shot or hanged. In early September 1944, as US Army forces approached, the 5517 surviving inmates were sent to Dachau.

## Mittelbergheim

POP 657

Serene, untouristy and set on a hillside, Mittelbergheim sits amid a sea of sylvan grapevines and seasonal wild tulips, its tiny streets lined with sand-hued, red-roofed houses.

Each of Mittelbergheim's *caves* (cellars) has an old-fashioned wrought-iron sign hanging out the front.

### Domaine Gilg WINE

(www.domaine-gilg.com; 2 rue Rotland; ☎ 8am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 9.30-11.30am Sun) Nip into this friendly, family-run winery to taste award-winning wines, including *grand cru* sylvaners, pinots and rieslings.

### Sentier Viticole WALKING

From the car park on the D362 at the upper edge of the village next to the cemetery, a vineyard trail wriggles across the slopes towards the perky twin-towered **Château du Haut Andlau** and the lushly forested Vosges.

### Hôtel Le Sarment HISTORIC HOTEL €

(☎ 03 88 08 91 37; www.le-sarment.fr; 1 rte du Vin; r €73-88; ☎) For a dose of old-fashioned romance, check into this 17th-century half-timbered pile, run by brothers Nicolas and Laurent. A spiral staircase leads up to spacious, homey rooms in warm tones, some with wooden beams.

The elegantly rustic restaurant (*menus* €42 to €74) serves classic French and Alsatian cuisine.

### 5 Terres Hotel & Spa SPA HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 88 08 28 44; www.5terres-hotel.fr; 1 place de l'Hôtel de Ville, Barr; d from €165; ☎ ☎ ☎) A 16th-century half-timbered house has undergone a dramatic transformation to become this slick boutique spa hotel. The rooms are a clever fusion of old (beams, stone walls) and new (contemporary lighting, minimalist decor). Suites have arresting views over the vines. Besides a bar serving local biodynamic wines, there's a romantically lit spa in the hotel's vaults and a well-regarded restaurant.

The hotel is 1.7km north of Mittelbergheim in Barr; it's a five-minute drive on the D362.

### Am Lindeplatzel FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 88 08 10 69; www.am-lindeplatzel.fr; 71 rue Principale; mains €17-26, menus €31-52;

☉ noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Fri-Tue; 🍷 Creative riffs on Alsatian cuisine go down a treat at this nouveau-chic restaurant, run by a talented couple who take pride in local sourcing. Homemade dishes are expertly paired with regional wines, and there are some vegetarian options.

## **i** Getting There & Away

The closest train station is in Barr, 1.5km north of town (approximately a 20-minute walk). From here, frequent trains run to Obernai (€2.80, eight minutes), Sélestat (€3, 22 minutes) and Strasbourg (€3, 45 minutes).

## Dambach-la-Ville

POP 2061

Ringed by vines and sturdy ramparts, this flowery village has some 60 *caves* but manages to avoid touristic overload. The renowned Frankstein *grand cru* vineyards cover the southern slopes of four granitic hills west and southwest of Dambach.

Some of the eye-catching half-timbered houses, painted in ice-cream colours like pistachio, caramel and raspberry, date from before 1500.

### Ramparts

HISTORIC SITE

A gentle stroll takes in the 14th-century, pink-granite ramparts, originally pierced by four gates, three still holding aloft watch-towers and bearing quintessentially Alsatian names: Ebersheim, Blienschwiller and Dieffenthal.

### Sentier Viticole du Frankstein

WALKING

It's a pleasant 1½-hour walk through the vineyards on this trail, which begins 70m up the hill from the tourist office, on rue du Général de Gaulle. The path meanders among the hallowed vines, passing by hill-side **Chapelle St-Sébastien** (Steinhausen; ☉ 9am-7pm), known for its Romanesque tower and Gothic choir.

### Le Pressoir de Bacchus

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 88 92 43 01; 50 rte des Vins, Blienschwiller; menus €16-54; ☉ noon-1.45pm Mon, 7-8.45pm Wed, noon-1.45pm & 7-8.45pm Thu-Sun) Good, honest Alsatian grub, cooked with passion and served with a smile, is the deal at this snug, wood-beamed bistro. Local wines marry well with classics like garlicky escargots and *choucroute garnie* (sauerkraut garnished with meats). It's 2.5km north of Dambach-la-Ville on the D35.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 88 92 61 00; www.paysdebar.fr; place du Maré; ☉ 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat) In the Renaissance-style *hôtel de ville*. Hands out walking-tour maps and has details on cycling to nearby villages.

## **i** Getting There & Away

The train station is about 1km east of the old town. Dambach-la-Ville has hourly services to Sélestat (€2.80, 10 minutes), Colmar (€7.10, 35 minutes) and Strasbourg (€10.90, about 45 minutes).

## Sélestat

POP 19,546

Wedge between Strasbourg, 50km to the north, and Colmar, 23km to the south, Sélestat is an enticing jumble of colourful half-timbered houses and church spires, including that of Gothic **Église St-Georges** (place St-Georges; ☉ 8am-7pm). The town's claim to cultural fame is its incomparable **Bibliothèque Humaniste** (Humanist Library; ☎ 03 88 58 07 20; www.bibliotheque-humaniste.fr; 1 rue de la Bibliothèque; ☉ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep & Dec, 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun Feb-Apr & Oct & Nov), a library founded in 1452, whose stellar collection features a 7th-century book of Merovingian liturgy, a copy of *Cosmographiae Introductio* (printed in 1507), in which the New World is referred to as 'America' for the first time, and the first written mention of the Christmas tree (1521).

### Le Domaine des Remparts

B&B €

(☎ 03 88 92 94 43; www.gite-alsace-selestat.fr; 9 bd Vauban; d from €55; 📞 📺) You'll receive a heartfelt *bienvenue* at this pink-hued B&B on the southern fringes of town, which centres on an inner courtyard. Homely touches, warm colours and wooden beams afford the rooms an air of cosiness, and there's also a fully-equipped apartment for families.

### L'Ilwald

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 90 56 11 40; www.illwald.fr; Le Schnellenbuhl; s €105, d €125-165; 📞 📺) Serenely set against the wooded backdrop of the Illwald (p365) nature reserve, this charmingly rustic, half-timbered farmhouse harbours warm-hued rooms furnished with antiques and lots of attention to detail. The wood-panelled restaurant (mains €15 to €24) plays up organic ingredients in classic dishes, and there's an outdoor pool for summer swims. Organic jams, local cheeses and

## AROUND SÉLESTAT: NATURE WATCH

**Illwald** (rte de Marckolsheim; 🏠) On the southeastern fringes of Sélestat, this nature reserve is a mix of deciduous forest and wetlands. It attracts plenty of wildlife, including kingfishers, beavers and France's largest population of wild deer (some 400 pairs at last count). Interwoven with footpaths, it's a quiet place for a stroll. It's a five-minute drive from town via the D159 and D424.

**Cigoland** (www.cigoland.fr; rte de Sélestat, Kintzheim; adult/child €18/16; ☀️ 10am-6pm Apr-early Nov; 🏠) One place you're guaranteed to glimpse Alsace's emblematic bringers of good fortune (and their babies) is at this theme park, home to 120 bill-clattering storks along with farm animals and free-roaming deer. Besides floating in ducks and riding toy trains and carousels, you can rise high in a giant stork's nest. It's a 10-minute drive or 30-minute walk west of central Sélestat.

**Montagne des Singes** (www.montagnedessinges.com; Kintzheim; adult/child €9.50/5.50; ☀️ 10am-6pm, shorter hours autumn/spring, closed mid-Nov-late Mar; 🏠) Kids love to feed popcorn (special monkey popcorn, of course) to the free-roaming Barbary macaques and their cheeky infants at this 2.4-hectare woodland park. Take the D35 to Kintzheim, 7km west of Sélestat.

fresh pastries appear at breakfast. The hotel is a 6km drive south of Sélestat on the D424.

### Le Schatzky

INTERNATIONAL ☹️

(☎️ 03 88 82 48 76; www.facebook.com/le.schatzky; 8 rue des Chevaliers; menus €20-40; ☀️ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat; 🏠) Contemporary backlighting and furnishings put a modern spin on a beamed bistro at Le Schatzky. The vibe is laid-back and the menu foregrounds fresh seasonal produce in well-prepared dishes, including vegetarian options. Save an inch for the delectable desserts.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎️ 03 88 58 87 20; www.selestat-haut-koenigsbourg.com; 2 place du Dr Maurice Kubler; ☀️ 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat)

## i Getting There & Around

The tourist office rents out bicycles (two hours/half-day/day €8/10/15; deposit €150) from June to September.

The train station is 1km west of the Bibliothèque Humaniste (p364). Train is the fastest way to reach destinations including Strasbourg (from €5, 18 minutes to one hour, twice hourly), Colmar (from €3, 11 minutes, hourly) and Obernai (from €3, 30 minutes, hourly).

## Bergheim

POP 2038

Enclosed by a sturdy 14th-century ring wall, overflowing with geraniums and enlivened

by half-timbered houses in vivid pastels, Bergheim is a joy to behold. But things have not always been so cheerful: overlords, stampeding invaders, women burnt at the stake for witchcraft – this tiny village has seen the lot.

Stroll the cobbled streets of the well-preserved medieval centre or follow the 2km path that circumnavigates the town's ramparts. Bergheim's *grand cru* wine labels are Kanzlerberg and Altenberg de Bergheim.

### Château du Haut Koenigsbourg

CHATEAU

(www.haut-koenigsbourg.fr; Orschwiller; adult/child €9/5; ☀️ 9.15am-6pm, shorter hours winter) On its fairy-tale perch above vineyards and hills, the turreted red-sandstone Château du Haut Koenigsbourg is worth a detour for the wrap-around panorama from its ramparts, taking in the Vosges, the Black Forest and, on cloud-free days, the Alps. Audioguides delve into the turbulent 900-year history of the castle, which makes a very medieval impression despite having been reconstructed, with German imperial pomposity, by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1908. It's 11km north of Bergheim.

### Medieval Centre

AREA

A stroll through the cobbled streets of the well-preserved medieval centre takes in the early Gothic **church**; the wall-mounted **sundial** (44 Grand'Rue), dating from 1711; and the imposing, turreted **Porte Haute**, Bergheim's last remaining town gate.



**La Cour du Bailli**

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 89 73 73 46; [www.cour-bailli.com](http://www.cour-bailli.com); 57 Grand'Rue; d €80-100; ☎) Draped around a 16th-century courtyard, La Cour du Bailli has countrified studios and apartments, all with kitchenettes. Factor in downtime in the pool and stone-built spa, which pampers with luscious vinotherapy treatments. The atmospheric cellar restaurant (*menus* €14 to €43) serves regional grub like *choucroute garnie* and Munster cheese gratin. There's no lift, so be prepared to lug your bags.

**Wistub du Sommelier**

FRENCH €€

(☎03 89 73 69 99; [www.wistub-du-sommelier.com](http://www.wistub-du-sommelier.com); 51 Grand'Rue; menus €19-46; ☎ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Mon, Tue, Fri & Sat, noon-2pm Sun) Behind an ornate 18th-century façade lies this traditionally elegant bistro, where parquet floors, wooden beams and a *Kachelofen* (tiled oven) create a delightfully cosy ambience. The menu pairs fine regional wines with dishes such as *choucroute garnie* or lighter flavours like salmon with mussels in saffron sauce. The two-course €18 lunch including coffee is good value.

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎03 89 73 31 98; 1 place du Dr Walter; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon, 4-6pm Wed-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-7pm Sat, 10am-1pm & 5-7pm Sun, shorter hours low season)

**i Getting There & Away**

Bus 109 runs between Colmar's main train station and Bergheim (€4.25, 40 minutes) several times daily. Visit [www.fluo.eu](http://www.fluo.eu) for timetables and itineraries.

**Ribeauvillé**

POP 4940

Nestled snugly in a valley, presided over by a castle and with winding alleys brimming with half-timbered houses, medieval Ribeauvillé is a Route des Vins must. The local *grand cru* wines are Kirchberg de Ribeauvillé, Osterberg and Geisberg.

**👁 Sights & Activities****★ Cave de Ribeauvillé**

WINERY

(☎03 89 73 20 35; [www.vins-ribeauville.com](http://www.vins-ribeauville.com); 2 rte de Colmar; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Sat & Sun) **FREE** France's oldest winemakers' cooperative, which brings together 40 vintners, was founded in 1895. The huge, contemporary building contains a viticulture museum,

informative brochures and free tastings of its excellent wines, made with all seven of the grape varieties grown in Alsace. You can also stock up on wine (from €6 per bottle) here. On weekends it's staffed by local winemakers.

It's just across two roundabouts east of the tourist office.

**Vieille Ville**

AREA

(Grand'Rue) Along the main street that threads through the old town, keep an eye out for the 17th-century **Pffferhüs** (Fifers' House; 14 Grand'Rue), which once housed the town's fife-playing minstrels; the **Hôtel de Ville** and its Renaissance fountain; and the nearby, clock-equipped **Tour des Bouchers** (Butchers' Bell Tower).

**Castle Ruins**

WALKING

West and northwest of Ribeauvillé, the ruins of three 12th- and 13th-century hilltop castles – **St-Ulrich** (530m), **Giersberg** (530m) and **Haut Ribeauvillé** (642m) – can be reached on a hike (three hours return) beginning at place de la République (at the northern tip of Grand'Rue).

**🏠 Sleeping****Au Lion**

HOTEL €

(☎03 89 73 67 69; [www.au-lion.com](http://www.au-lion.com); 6 place de la Sinne; d €65-115) Looking as pretty as can be, this pink-fronted, half-timbered hotel is a cut above most of the other budget places in town. The surprisingly modern rooms (including quads, family rooms and apartments) are spacious and warm hued, some with sloping ceilings and beams lending character. The restaurant speciality is *tarte flambée* (€9 to €13).

**Hôtel de la Tour**

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 89 73 72 73; [www.hotel-la-tour.com](http://www.hotel-la-tour.com); 1 rue de la Mairie; s €83-112, d €89-120; ☎) Ensnared in a stylishly converted winery, this half-timbered hotel has quaint, comfy rooms, some with views of the Tour des Bouchers.

Breakfast will set you back an extra €11 per person.

**Le Clos Saint Vincent**

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎03 89 73 67 65; [www.leclosaintvincent.com](http://www.leclosaintvincent.com); Osterbergweg; s/d from €175/195; ☎ ☎ ☎) Gasp you might as you crest the hill and gaze out across the vines and the wooded peaks of the Vosges near this elegant guesthouse. The sound is silence and the smart, light-drenched rooms capitalise on those incredible views, as does the restaurant, serving

French cuisine inspired by the seasons. An indoor pool and a little spa area invite relaxation.

It's 1km north of Ribeauvillé.

## Eating

**Auberge du Parc Carola** INTERNATIONAL €€  
(☎03 89 86 05 75; <https://auberge-parc-carola.com>; 48 rte de Bergheim; mains €28-33, menus €37-69; ☀noon-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm Thu-Mon) Quaint on the outside, slick on the inside, this *auberge* (country inn) is all about surprises. Much-lauded chef Michaela Peters is behind the stove, and flavours ring true in seasonal showstoppers like veal and mushrooms in truffle sauce, and tenderloin of pork with pumpkin. Fish dishes also grace the menu.

Tables are set up under the trees in summer.

**Winstub Zum Pfifferhüs** FRENCH €€  
(☎03 89 73 62 28; 14 Grand'Rue; menus €26-52; ☀noon-1.30pm & 6.30-8.30pm Fri-Tue) If it's good old-fashioned Alsatian grub you're after, look no further than this snug wine tavern, which positively radiates rustic warmth with its beams, dark wood and checked tablecloths. Snag a table for copious dishes including *choucroute garnie*, pork knuckles and *coq au riesling* (chicken braised in riesling and herbs).

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 89 73 23 23; [www.ribeauvill-riquewihir.com](http://www.ribeauvill-riquewihir.com); 1 Grand'Rue; ☀9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun, shorter hours winter; 📶) Free wi-fi.

## Getting There & Away

A fairly frequent service runs from Ribeauvillé's central bus station to Route des Vins destinations including Colmar (€4.25, 37 minutes) and Riquewihir (€2.80, 21 minutes). Timetables are available online at [www.fluo.eu](http://www.fluo.eu).

## Hunawihir

POP 611

You're absolutely guaranteed to see storks in the quiet walled hamlet of Hunawihir, 1km south of Ribeauvillé. On a hillside just outside the centre, the 16th-century fortified church has been a simultaneum – serving both the Catholic and Protestant communities – since 1687.

## NaturOparc

WILDLIFE RESERVE

([www.centredereintroduction.fr](http://www.centredereintroduction.fr); rte de Ribeauvillé; adult/child €11/9.50; ☀10am-6.30pm, closed early Nov-late Mar; 📶) 🍷 Set amid the vines, this delightful centre is home base for 200 free-flying storks; visit in spring and you're guaranteed to see hatchlings. Cormorants, otters and sea lions show off their fishing prowess several times each afternoon. The park's other resident critters include beaver-like coypus and increasingly rare great hamsters of Alsace. Visit the website for up-to-date feeding times.

## Jardins des Papillons

GARDENS

([www.jardinsdespapillons.fr](http://www.jardinsdespapillons.fr); adult/child €8/5.50; ☀10am-6pm, closed Nov-Easter; 📶) Stroll among exotic free-flying butterflies at these pretty gardens, situated around 500m east of Hunawihir. A walk among the wildflowers here reveals not only rare species of butterfly but also birds, bees, tropical frogs, chameleons and stick insects aplenty.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 106 provides a fairly frequent service between Hunawihir and Colmar (€4.55, 33 minutes).

## Riquewihir

POP 1136

The competition is stiff, but Riquewihir is, just maybe, the most enchanting town on the Route des Vins. Medieval ramparts enclose its walkable centre, a photogenic maze of twisting lanes, hidden courtyards and half-timbered houses – each brighter and lovelier than the last. Of course, its chocolate-box looks also make it popular, so arrive in the early morning or the evening to appreciate the town at its peaceful best.

## Sights & Activities

### Dolder

HISTORIC SITE

([www.musee-riquewihir.fr](http://www.musee-riquewihir.fr); €3, incl Tour des Voleurs €7; ☀2-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Nov, daily Jul-mid-Aug) This late 13th-century stone and half-timbered gate, topped by a 25m bell tower, is worth a look for its panoramic views and small local-history museum.

### Tour des Voleurs

HISTORIC SITE

(Thieves' Tower; [www.musee-riquewihir.fr](http://www.musee-riquewihir.fr); €5, incl Dolder €7; ☀10.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Easter-Oct) Rue des Juifs (site of the former Jewish quarter) leads down the hill to this medieval stone tower. Inside is a gruesome torture

chamber with English commentary and an old-style winegrower's kitchen.

### Sentier Viticole des Grands Crus WALKING

A yellow-marked 2km trail takes you out to acclaimed local vineyards Schœnenbourg (north of town) and Sporen (southeast of town), while a 15km trail with red markers takes you to five nearby villages. Both trails can be picked up next to Auberge du Schœnenbourg, 100m to the right of the *hôtel de ville*.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel de la Couronne

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 89 49 03 03; www.hoteldelacouronne.com; 5 rue de la Couronne; s €61-76, d €69-143; 📶) With its 16th-century tower and flowing wisteria, this central choice is big on old-world character. Rooms are country style with crisp floral fabrics, low oak beams and period furnishings; many have views over the rooftops to the hills beyond. There's no lift.

### Bastion de Riquewihr

B&B €€

(☎ 06 42 02 81 21; www.bastionriquewihr.com; 21 rue des Remparts; apt €100-108; 📶) Harking back to 1807, this B&B is housed in an enticingly cosy half-timbered building, which once belonged to a vintner and cooper. The place creaks with history and is full of low-beamed, lovingly furnished nooks and crannies. Martine, your kindly host, keeps the spacious, characterful apartments spick and span.

### Au Trotthus

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 03 89 47 96 47; www.trotthus.com; 9 rue des Juifs; dinner menus €65-110; 🕒 7-10pm Mon, noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue & Thu-Sat, noon-2pm Sun) Lodged in a 16th-century winemaker's house, this snug wood-beamed restaurant is overseen by a chef with exacting standards. The market-driven modern French menu with Japanese influences might include such delicacies as chicken yakitori, wagyu beef and roast salmon.

### ★ Table du Gourmet

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 03 89 49 09 09; www.jlbrendel.com; 5 rue de la Première Armée; menus €88-125; 🕒 noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Thu-Mon) Jean-Luc Brendel is the culinary force behind this Michelin-starred venture. A 16th-century house given a slinky, scarlet-walled makeover is the backdrop for specialities made with herbs and little-known vegetables from the restaurant's medieval garden. The menu swings with

the seasons from asparagus to truffles, and dishes sing with intense, natural flavours – prepared with care, served creatively.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 89 73 23 23; www.ribeauville-riquewihr.com; 2 rue de la lère Armée; 🕒 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1.30pm Sun, shorter hours winter; 📶) Free wi-fi.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 106 runs several times daily from Riquewihr to Ribeauvillé (€2.75, 18 minutes) and Colmar (€3.95, 25 minutes).

## Kaysersberg

POP 2701

Kaysersberg, 10km northwest of Colmar, is an instant heart-stealer with its backdrop of gently sloping vines, hilltop castle and 16th-century fortified bridge spanning the gushing River Weiss.

### Hôtel Kle

HOTEL €

(☎ 03 67 30 05 22; www.hotelkle.com; 10 rue du Père Kohlmann; d from €70; 📶) Originally a winegrower's house in the heart of the old town, this hotel has been modernised and features about 20 rooms with all mod cons.

### Le Chambard

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 89 47 10 17; www.lechambard.fr; 9-13 rue du Général de Gaulle; d from €170; 📶) A splash of five-star luxury in the heart of this little wine-growing village, Le Chambard offers elegantly contemporary quarters with balcony or terrace, a terrific spa and indoor pool for relaxing after exploring the Route des Vins, a cosy *winstub* (wine tavern) and a two-Michelin-starred restaurant, **La Table d'Olivier Nasti** (menus €90-220; 🕒 7-9pm Tue & Wed, noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Thu-Sun). Breakfast will set you back an extra €30.

### L'Alchémille

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 03 89 27 66 41; www.lalchemille.fr; 53 rte de Lapoutroie; menus €63-98; 🕒 noon-2pm & 7.15-9pm Wed-Sat, noon-2pm Sun) As the name suggests, you can expect culinary alchemy at this strikingly minimalist Michelin-starred restaurant, with its bare wood tables, slate floor and monochrome colour scheme. Each of chef Jérôme Jaegle's dishes is an edible work of art (and is presented as such). Season-inspired menus reveal a profound love of nature and a playful use of herbs and flowers.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (📍 03 89 78 22 78; [www.kaysersberg.com](http://www.kaysersberg.com); 39 rue du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat; 📍)

## **i** Getting There & Away

Bus 145 runs several times daily between Kaysersberg and Colmar (€3.85, 38 minutes).

## Katzenthal

POP 535

Close-to-nature Katzenthal, 5km south of Kaysersberg, is great for tiptoeing off the tourist trail for a while. *Grand cru* vines ensnare the hillside, topped by the medieval ruins of **Château du Wineck**, where walks through forest and vineyard begin.

### Vignoble Klur

APARTMENT €

(📍 03 89 80 94 29; [www.klur.net](http://www.klur.net); 105 rue des Trois Épis; apt from €110) 🍃 Specialising in organic, biodynamic wines, family-run Vignoble Klur is a relaxed choice for tastings, Alsatian cookery classes and vineyard walks. The light-drenched, well-equipped apartments are great for back-to-nature holidays, and you can unwind in the sauna after a long day's walking and wine tasting.

### À l'Agneau

FRENCH €€

(📍 03 89 80 90 25; [www.agneau-katzenthal.com](http://www.agneau-katzenthal.com); 16 Grand'Rue; mains €19-29; 🕒 noon-2pm & 7-10pm Thu-Mon) Market-driven *menus* and a cocoon-like setting of dark-wood panelling and lamp lighting draw locals to À l'Agneau. This family-run affair serves beautifully cooked food, whether you opt for Alsatian classics such as escargots and braised pork knuckles, or seasonal dishes like roe deer stew. Wine pairing is reasonably priced.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Bus 145 operates several times a day between Colmar and Katzenthal. See [www.fluo.eu](http://www.fluo.eu) for timetables and itineraries. The village is 8km west of Colmar on the D415.

## Colmar

POP 67,956

The capital of the Alsace wine region, Colmar looks for all the world as though it has been plucked from the pages of a medieval folk tale. At times the Route des Vins d'Alsace (p393) fools you into thinking it's 1454, and here, in the alley-woven heart of the old town,

the illusion is complete. Half-timbered houses in chalk-box colours crowd dark cobblestone lanes and bridge-laced canals, which have most day-trippers wandering around in a daze of neck-craning, photo-snapping, gasp-eliciting wonder. Quaintness aside, Colmar's illustrious past is clearly etched in its magnificent churches and museums, which celebrate local legends from Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi (of Statue of Liberty fame) to the revered Issenheim Altarpiece.

## **i** Sights

### Petite Venise

AREA

(Little Venice; rowboats per 30min €6) If you see just one thing in Colmar, make it the Little Venice quarter. Canal connection aside, it doesn't resemble Venice in the slightest, but it's truly lovely in its own right, whether explored on foot or by rowboat. The backstreets are punctuated by impeccably restored half-timbered houses in sugared-almond shades, many ablaze with geraniums in summer. Take a mosey around rue des Tanneurs, with its rooftop verandas for drying hides, and quai de la Poissonnerie, the former fishers' quarter.

### ★ Musée d'Unterlinden

GALLERY

([www.musee-unterlinden.com](http://www.musee-unterlinden.com); 1 rue d'Unterlinden; adult/child €13/8; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed & Fri-Mon, to 8pm Thu) Gathered around a Gothic-style Dominican cloister, this revamped museum hides a prized medieval stone statue collection, late 15th-century prints by Martin Schongauer plus an ensemble of Upper Rhine Primitives. Its stellar modern-art collection contains works by Monet, Picasso and Renoir. The star attraction, however, is the late-Gothic **Rétable d'Issenheim** (Issenheim Altarpiece), by painter Mathias Grünewald and sculptor Nicolas de Hagenau. Hailed as one of the most profound works of faith ever created, the altarpiece realistically depicts New Testament scenes.

### DON'T MISS

#### BOATING PETITE VENISE

Rowboats depart next to **Pont Rue de Turenne** (rue de Turenne) and are a relaxed way to see Petite Venise from the water. The bridge is also the best spot to see the canals light up after dark.

## Colmar

ALSACE &amp; LORRAINE COLMAR

**Église des Dominicains**

CHURCH

(place des Dominicains; adult/child €1.50/0.50; ☉ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sun-Thu, 10am-6pm Fri & Sat mid-Mar-Dec) Lit by late-medieval stained glass, this desanctified Gothic church shelters the celebrated triptych *La Vierge au Buisson de Roses* (The Virgin in the Rose Bush), painted by Martin Schongauer in 1473.

**Musée Bartholdi**

MUSEUM

(☎ 03 89 41 90 60; www.musee-bartholdi.fr; 30 rue des Marchands; adult/child €6.70/free; ☉ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Dec) In the house where Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi was born

in 1834, this museum pays homage to the sculptor who captured the spirit of a nation with his Statue of Liberty. Look out for the full-size plaster model of Lady Liberty's left ear (the lobe is watermelon-sized!) and the Bartholdi family's sparklingly bourgeois apartment. A ground-floor room shows 18th- and 19th-century Jewish ritual objects.

**Maison des Têtes**

HISTORIC BUILDING

(House of the Heads; 19 rue des Têtes) True to its name, this step-gabled house, built in 1609 for a wealthy wine merchant, is festooned with 106 grinning faces and heads of animals, devils and cherubs.



## Colmar

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Musée d'Unterlinden ..... B2

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Ancienne Douane ..... C4  
 3 Collégiale St-Martin ..... C3  
 4 Église des Dominicains ..... B3  
 5 Maison des Têtes ..... B2  
 6 Musée Bartholdi ..... C3  
 7 Petite Venise ..... C5  
 8 Pont Rue de Turenne ..... C5

### 🏠 Sleeping

- Hôtel les Têtes ..... (see 5)  
 9 Hotel Quatorze ..... B4  
 10 Hôtel St-Martin ..... C4  
 11 Maison Martin Jund ..... D2

### 🍴 Eating

- 12 Fleur de Sel ..... C5  
 13 JY'S ..... C5  
 14 La Soi ..... C4  
 L'Arpège ..... (see 6)  
 15 Le Caveau Saint Pierre ..... C5  
 16 Le Petit Bidon ..... D2  
 17 Le Quai 21 ..... D5

### 🛍 Shopping

- 18 Fromagerie St-Nicolas ..... C3  
 Maison Martin Jund ..... (see 11)  
 19 Marché Couvert ..... C5

### Ancienne Douane

HISTORIC SITE

(place de l'Ancienne Douane) At the southern tip of rue des Marchands is this late-medieval customs house, with loggia and variegated tile roof, which now hosts temporary exhibitions and concerts.

### Collégiale St-Martin

CHURCH

(place de la Cathédrale; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm) Delicate stonework guides the eye to the polychrome mosaic roof and Mongol-style copper spire of this Gothic church. Its jewel-like stained-glass windows cast kaleidoscopic patterns.



### Festivals & Events

#### Marché de Noël

CHRISTMAS

(Christmas Market; www.noel-colmar.com; ☎ late Nov-Dec) Colmar's snow globe of a Marché de Noël glitters from late November to 31 December. The entire city goes to town with festive sparkle, and five markets brim with gifts, hand-crafted decorations and gingerbread hearts. An open-air ice rink takes over place Rapp.

#### Festival International de Colmar

CULTURAL

(www.festival-colmar.com; ☎ Jul) Orchestras strike up at 22 concerts in historic venues across Colmar, including Musée d'Unterlinden (p369), during the 10-day Festival International de Colmar.



### Sleeping

#### Maison Martin Jund

GUESTHOUSE €

(☎ 03 89 41 58 72; www.location.alsace; 12 rue de l'Ange; d incl breakfast €49-83, apt €100-110; 📶) Surrounding a courtyard in the backstreets of the old town, this rosy half-timbered

house shelters an organic winery and bright, well-kept studios, some with living rooms and kitchenettes. Breakfast includes croissants, organic apple juice, homemade jams and Vosges cheese.

#### ★ Villa Élyane

B&B €€

(☎ 06 99 04 55 23; www.villa-elyane.com; 26a rue Camille Schlumberger; d €95-160, ste €165-285; 📶 📺 📶) This graceful late 19th-century villa manages the careful balancing act of combining original art nouveau features with modern comforts such as in-room iPod docks and espresso makers. Regional organic produce and fresh-squeezed juice make breakfast a delight. A garden, sauna, ping-pong table and bike rental boost the guest-house's family appeal.

#### James Boutique Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 89 21 93 70; www.james-hotel.com; 15 rue St-Éloi; d from €130; 📶 📺 📶) A sassy newcomer to Colmar's sleeping scene, this boutique hotel is a two-minute stroll north of the historic centre. The decor is nouveau-chic, with little details from geometric patterned rugs and tiles to richly coloured fabrics. The spacious rooms and suites come with Nespresso makers and kettles. Breakfast (€17) is a very decent spread, with regional produce and homemade cakes.

#### Hôtel St-Martin

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 89 24 11 51; www.hotel-saint-martin.com; 38 Grand'Rue; d/ste from €79/129; 📶 📺 📶) What a location! Right on place de l'Ancienne Douane, this 14th-century patrician house captures the elegance of yesteryear in rooms dressed with handcrafted furniture. Choose a top-floor room for rooftop views.

**Hotel Quatorze**

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 89 20 45 20; [www.hotelquatorze.com](http://www.hotelquatorze.com); 14 rue des Augustins; d from €95; 📶) Bringing new-wave design to the heart of the old town, Hotel Quatorze occupies a lovingly transformed pharmacy dating from 1830. The 15 rooms and suites are streamlined and open plan, with wooden floors, and white walls enlivened by Spanish artist Alfonso Vallès' works.

**Hôtel les Têtes**

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(☎ 03 89 24 43 43; [www.maisondestetes.com](http://www.maisondestetes.com); 19 rue des Têtes; d from €225; 📶) Luxurious but never precious, this hotel occupies the magnificent Maison des Têtes. Each of its 21 rooms has rich wooden panelling, an elegant sitting area, a marble bathroom and romantic views. With its wrought ironwork and stained glass, the brasserie provides a sumptuously historic backdrop for French-Alsatian specialities (mains €26 to €42).

**Eating**

The old town is liberally sprinkled with bistros and *winstubs*, especially place de l'Ancienne Douane, rue des Marchands and Petite Venise. And for a town of its moderate size, it packs a mighty gastronomic punch, with no fewer than three Michelin-starred restaurants.

**CYCLING THE VINES**

Colmar is a great base for slipping onto a bicycle saddle to pedal along the Route des Vins and the well-marked Franco-German trails of the nearby Rhine ([www.2rives3ponts.eu](http://www.2rives3ponts.eu)). Get your two-wheel adventure started by clicking onto [www.alsace-destination-tourisme.com](http://www.alsace-destination-tourisme.com), with detailed information on everything from bicycle hire to luggage-free cycling holidays, itinerary ideas and downloadable route maps.

If you'd rather join a group, **Bicyclette Go** (☎ 06 87 47 44 31; [www.bicyclettego.com](http://www.bicyclettego.com); 2 impasse du Tokay, Voegtlinshoffen), 12km south of Colmar, arranges all-inclusive half-day to 10-day cycling tours in the region, many of which are customised. Half-day tours complete with wine tasting start at €45 per person.

**La Soi**

ALSATIAN €

([www.lasoicolmar.fr](http://www.lasoicolmar.fr); 17 rue des Marchands; tarte flambée €9-12; ☉ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Thu-Tue) A *winstub* in the best of Alsatian traditions, La Soi whips up mighty fine *Flammekueche* (*tarte flambée*) with just the right amount of crunch in cosy, wood-lined surrounds. You might, say, opt for a 'Piment', with cream, onions, Tomme cheese, diced bacon and spices.

**Fleur de Sel**

ALSATIAN €

(☎ 03 89 41 09 32; [www.lafleurdeselcolmar.fr](http://www.lafleurdeselcolmar.fr); 9 quai de la Poissonnerie; tarte flambée €9-13, mains €12-20; ☉ 11am-3.30pm & 5.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun) With its terrace perched above the canals of Petite Venise (p369) outside and cheek-by-jowl seating inside, this staunchly Alsatian bistro is known for its perfectly thin and crisp *tartes flambées* and belly-filling numbers like *choucroute garnie* and *Fleischnaks* (an Alsatian version of meat dumplings). Save space for a scoop of cherry plum sorbet.

**L'Arpège**

FRENCH €

(☎ 03 89 24 29 64; [www.larpegebio.com](http://www.larpegebio.com); 24 rue des Marchands; menus €17-23, mains €18-25; ☉ noon-2pm Tue-Sat, 7-10pm Thu-Sat; 🍷) Discreetly tucked away at the back of a courtyard in a 15th-century house, and with pretty garden seating when the weather is fine, L'Arpège places the accent on well-balanced, organic food. It's a convivial spot for dishes ranging from salads through to roast lamb and fish dishes. There's also a separate vegetarian menu.

**Le Quai 21**

MEDITERRANEAN €€

(☎ 03 89 58 58 58; [www.restaurant-quai21.fr](http://www.restaurant-quai21.fr); 21 quai de la Poissonnerie; mains €29-32; ☉ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) This canalside restaurant on the edge of Petite Venise is a winner, with its trad-meets-contemporary decor of exposed stone, clean-lined bistro furnishings and pops of electric blue. The succinct menu has a Mediterranean slant – a nod to the chef's native Italy – and is underscored by simplicity in dishes like roasted scallops with ricotta cheese, spinach and truffle.

**Le Petit Bidon**

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 89 24 97 93; [www.petitbidon.com](http://www.petitbidon.com); 14 rue Étroite; mains €22-25; ☉ 7-9pm Mon, noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Tue-Fri) What a delight this nouveau-rustic bistro is, with its friendly welcome and bright interior sporting bare wood tables and milk-pail-lined shelves.

## COLMAR EPICURE TOUR

Colmar is an exceptional city for all-out indulgence. So go, assemble your gourmet picnic:

**Marché Couvert** (rue des Écoles; ☺ 8am-6pm Tue-Thu, to 7pm Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) Bag Munster cheese, pretzels, pastries, wild-boar *saucisson* (dry-cured sausage or salami) and more at this 19th-century market hall.

**Fromagerie St-Nicolas** (www.fromagerie-st-nicolas.fr; 18 rue St-Nicolas; ☺ 2-7pm Mon, 10am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Tue-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri, 9am-6.30pm Sat) Follow your nose to pungent Munster, Tomme and ripe Camembert. BYOB (bring your own baguette) and the staff here will make you a sandwich.

**Maison Martin Jund** (www.vin-bio-jund.com; 12 rue de l'Ange; ☺ tastings 9am-noon & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sat) Need something to wash it all down? Head to this organic winery to taste home-grown pinots, rieslings and sylvaners.

The menu puts a refined spin on seasonal flavours in dishes such as smoked trout with lentils, white cheese and truffle, and veal meatballs in tomato sauce.

**Le Caveau Saint Pierre** FRENCH €€  
(☎ 03 89 41 99 33; www.caveausaintpierre-colmar.fr; 24 rue de la Herse; mains €10-20, menus €25-32; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Thu-Mon) Squirrelled away in the canal-laced heart of Petite Venise, this half-timbered restaurant is enticingly rustic, with low beams, stone walls and checked tablecloths. *Choucroutes* (such as with fresh fish or cider apples and blood sausage) and *tartes flambées* are bang on the money, as are specialities like pork cheeks in beer sauce.

★ **JY'S** GASTRONOMY €€€  
(☎ 03 89 21 53 60; www.jean-yves-schillinger.com; 17 quai de la Poissonnerie; menus €65-185; ☺ noon-1.45pm & 7-9.45pm Tue-Sat) Jean-Yves Schillinger runs the stove at this two-Michelin-starred restaurant in Petite Venise. Behind a trompe-l'œil façade lies an urban-cool, lounge-style restaurant, with flattering lighting and chesterfield sofas. Every flavour shines in seasonal dishes cooked with imagination and delivered with panache, be it fish or meat.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 89 20 68 92; www.tourisme-colmar.com; place Unterlinden; ☺ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun; 📞) Can supply information on hiking, cycling and bus travel (including schedules) along the Route des Vins and in the Massif des Vosges.

## i Getting There & Around

### AIR

Trinational **EuroAirport** (☎ 03 89 90 31 11; www.euroairport.com) is 60km south of Colmar.

An airport shuttle bus service operates between St-Louis and the airport (€2.50, 10 minutes, every 20 or 30 minutes) and frequent trains run between Colmar and St-Louis (€14.10, 36 minutes).

### BUS

Public buses are not the quickest way to explore Alsace's Route des Vins, but they are a viable option; destinations served include Riquewihir, Hunawihir, Ribeauvillé, Kaysersberg and Eguisheim.

The open-air bus terminal is to the right as you exit the train station. Timetables are posted and are also available at the tourist office or online (www.l-k.fr).

Line 1076 goes to Neuf-Brisach (€4.15, 30 minutes), continuing on to the German city of Freiburg (€9, 1¼ hours, seven daily Monday to Friday, four daily weekends).

### TRAIN

Colmar train connections:

**Basel** €15.30, 46 minutes, about 20 daily

**Mulhouse** from €9.50, 21 to 38 minutes, about 35 daily

**Paris Gare de l'Est** from €71, 2¼ to three hours, three direct services daily

**Strasbourg** from €5, 30 minutes, 30 daily

For Route des Vins destinations, you'll have to change train at Sélestat (€5.70, 10 minutes, 30 daily).

About 20 daily TER trains (10 daily on weekends) link Colmar with the Vallée de Munster towns of Munster (€4.50, 22 to 37 minutes) and Metzeral (€5.60, 35 to 50 minutes).

## THE STAR OF CITADELS: NEUF-BRISACH

Shaped like an eight-pointed star, the fortified town of Neuf-Brisach was commissioned by Louis XIV in 1697 to strengthen French defences and prevent the area from falling to the Habsburgs. It was conceived by Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633–1707).

A Unesco World Heritage Site since 2008, the citadel of Neuf-Brisach has remarkably well-preserved fortifications. The **Musée Vauban** (☎ 03 89 72 03 93; 7 place de la Porte de Belfort; adult/child €2.50/1.65; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Mon May-Oct), below the Porte de Belfort gate, tells the history of the citadel through models, documents and building plans.

Neuf-Brisach is just 4km from its German twin Breisach am Rhein on the banks of the Rhine. To reach Neuf-Brisach, 16km southeast of Colmar, follow the signs on the D415. Buses 1076 and 301 also run between the town and Colmar's main station (€4.15, 30 minutes).

## Massif des Vosges

*La vie en Vosges* is in many ways the good life and the region is a fine place to tiptoe away from the well-trodden trail. This little-known swathe of softly rounded, lushly forest-cloaked heights, pastures, lakes and dairy farms has its own special allure.

The remote 3000-sq-km **Parc Naturel Régional des Ballons des Vosges** (www.parc-ballons-vosges.fr) is surmounted by 1424m **Grand Ballon**, the highest peak in the range. Situated 20km southwest of Grand Ballon as the crow flies (by road, take the D465 from St-Maurice), the 1247m-high **Ballon d'Alsace** (www.ballondalsace.fr) marks the meeting point of the Alsace, Franche-Comté and Lorraine *régions*.

The **Vallée de Munster**, northeast of the park, is one of the region's loveliest valleys.

## Munster

POP 4645

Spread around gently rolling hills and famous for its notoriously smelly and eponymous cheese, streamside Munster, meaning 'monastery', is a relaxed base for exploring the Vallée de Munster (the long-distance hiking trail GR531 passes by here).

### Cycle Hop Evasion

CYCLING

(☎ 06 07 16 56 35; 5 rue de la République; half/full day city bike €10/14, mountain bike €14/19, e-bike €25/35; ☀ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Cycle Hop Evasion rents out bikes, arranges guides and provides details on cycling routes.

### Hôtel Deybach

HOTEL €

(☎ 03 89 77 32 71; www.hotel-deybach.com; 4 chemin du Badischhof; s €52-60, d €63-80; 📞)

You are made to feel instantly welcome at family-run **Hôtel Deybach**, which has fresh, simple rooms with town or country views and a flowery garden for relaxing moments. Breakfast costs an additional €11.

### Pâtisserie Gilg

CAFE €

(www.patisserie-gilg.com; 11 Grand'Rue; cakes & pastries €2-5; ☀ 7.30am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 7am-6pm Sat, 7.30am-12.30pm Sun) Skip dinner and go straight for dessert at this tearoom famous for its delectable *kougelhopf* (a ring-shaped marble cake), petits fours and pastries.

## i Information

**Maison du Parc Naturel Régional des Ballons des Vosges** (☎ 03 89 77 90 20; www.parc-ballons-vosges.fr; 1 rue du Couvent; ☀ 10am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) The regional park's visitors centre has ample information in English.

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 89 77 31 80; www.vallee-munster.eu; 1 rue du Couvent; ☀ 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-4pm Sat) Has information on the Munster valley, including visits to cheesemakers, and sells hiking maps and topo-guides in French.

## i Getting There & Away

Trains run approximately twice hourly from Munster to Colmar (from €4.50, 24 to 31 minutes) and Strasbourg (via Colmar; €16.50, one to 1½ hours).

## Mulhouse

POP 111,167

The dynamic industrial city of Mulhouse (moo-looze), 57km south of Colmar, was allied with nearby Switzerland before voting

to join Revolutionary France in 1798. Largely rebuilt after the ravages of WWII, it has little of the quaint Alsatian charm that you find further north, but the city's world-class industrial museums are well worth a stop.

## Sights

### Ecomusée d'Alsace

MUSEUM

( 03 89 74 44 74; [www.ecomusee-alsace.fr](http://www.ecomusee-alsace.fr); Ungersheim; adult/child €15/10;  10am-6pm, closed Jan-mid-Mar) Ecomusée d'Alsace is a fascinating excursion into Alsatian country life and time-honoured crafts. Smiths, cartwrights, potters and coopers do their thing in and among 70 historic Alsatian farmhouses – a veritable village – brought here and painstakingly reconstructed for preservation (and so storks can build nests on them). Ungersheim is 17km northwest of Mulhouse. Take tram 1 to Rattachement, then bus 54 to the Ecomusée stop. The closest train station is in Bollwiller, 3km north.


### Musée de l'Impression sur Étoffes

MUSEUM

(Museum of Textile Printing;  03 89 46 83 00; [www.musee-impression.com](http://www.musee-impression.com); 14 rue Jean-Jacques Henner; adult/child €11/5.50;  1-6pm Tue-Sun) Once known as the 'French Manchester', Mulhouse is fittingly home to this peerless collection of six million textile samples – from brilliant cashmeres to intricate silk screens – which makes it very popular with fabric designers. It's one long block north-east of the train station.



### Cité de l'Automobile

MUSEUM

( 03 89 33 23 23; [www.citedelautomobile.com](http://www.citedelautomobile.com); 192 av de Colmar; adult/child €14/10;  10am-6pm) An ode to the automobile, this striking glass-and-steel museum showcases 400 rare and classic motors, from old-timers such as the Bugatti Royale to Formula 1 dream machines. There is a kids' corner for would-be mechanics. By car, hop off the A36 at the Mulhouse Centre exit. By public transport, take bus 10 or tram 1 from Mulhouse to the Musée de l'Automobile stop.

### Cité du Train

MUSEUM

( 03 89 42 83 33; [www.citedutrain.com](http://www.citedutrain.com); 2 rue Alfred de Glehn; adult/child €13/9.50;  10am-6pm) Trainspotters are in their element at Europe's largest railway museum, displaying SNCF's prized collection of locomotives and carriages. Take tramway 3 in the direction of Luttenbach (until the Musées stop) or, if driving, the Mulhouse-Dornach exit off the A35.

## Sleeping

### Hôtel de Bâle

HOTEL €

( 03 89 46 19 87; [www.hoteldebale.com](http://www.hoteldebale.com); 19 passage Central; s €45-60, d €55-70) This well-priced establishment has been elegantly refurbished and the colourful rooms don't disappoint. There is a cosy dining room on the 1st floor. The super central location is ace if you want to explore the city on foot or stay close to the train station.





### Hotel Bristol

HOTEL €€

( 03 89 42 12 31; [www.hotelbristol.com](http://www.hotelbristol.com); 18 av de Colmar; d €55-150, ste €150-200;  ) This central hotel is a decent midrange base for exploring Mulhouse. The modern, revamped 'comfort' rooms are worth the upgrade from the old-style 'standard' rooms, which could do with a little TLC. A buffet breakfast with cold cuts, cheeses and pastries costs €10.50.

### Villa Eden


VILLA €€€

( 03 89 44 50 72, 06 74 37 19 38; [www.villa-eden.fr](http://www.villa-eden.fr); 99 av de la 1ère Division Blindée; s/d incl breakfast €17/195;   ) A far cry from the anonymity of many of Mulhouse's hotels, this shuttered villa sits above the city's zoo and botanical gardens. It's a secluded spot to escape the bustle of the centre, with gardens, an outdoor pool and individually designed rooms (from 'Zen' to 'sweet chocolate') with plenty of light, space and comfort.

## Eating



### ★ Chez Auguste

BISTRO €€

( 03 89 46 62 71; [www.chez-auguste.com](http://www.chez-auguste.com); 11 rue Poincaré; menus €20-27, mains €16-22;  noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Overflowing with regulars, this casually sophisticated bistro always has a good buzz. The concise menu excels in classics including scallops with seasonal cabbage, confit pork cheeks slow-cooked for six hours, and chocolate fondant. Service is faultless.

### Zum Sauwadala

FRENCH €€

( 03 89 45 18 19; 13 rue de l'Arsenal; menus €29-32, mains €14-28;  noon-2pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat, 7-11pm Mon) Two little pigs guide the way to this snug bistro – the very essence of Alsace quaintness with its dark timber, checked tablecloths and roll-me-out-the-door hearty grub. The menu is packed with classics – *Spätzle* (egg pasta), pork trotters and *choucroute* (sauerkraut) – all of which marry nicely with a glass of local pinot noir.



## La Table de Michèle

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 89 45 37 82; [www.tabledemichele.fr](http://www.tabledemichele.fr); 16 rue de Metz; mains €26-28, menus €21-27; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Fri, 7-9.30pm Sat) Right in the centre, this cool culinary outpost casts a modern spin on French staples. Fish and meat dishes are elegantly presented and filled with subtle flavours, and the menus are excellent value. The decor is another plus, with wood-panelled walls and comfy furnishings.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 89 35 48 48; [www.tourisme-mulhouse.com](http://www.tourisme-mulhouse.com); 1 av Robert Schuman; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun; 📶) The helpful tourist office is just north of the old town. Free wi-fi.

## i Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

Mulhouse has an automatic bike-rental system, **Velocité** ([www.compte-mobilite.fr](http://www.compte-mobilite.fr)), with 40 stands across the city – the online map shows where. The first half-hour is free and it costs €0.50 for each extra 30 minutes, with a maximum of €5 for 24 hours (deposit €150).

### TRAIN

France's second train line, linking Mulhouse with Thann, opened in 1839. The **train station** (10 av du Général Leclerc) is just south of the centre. Trains run at least hourly to Basel (€8.10, 22 to 31 minutes), Colmar (€9.30, 18 to 37 minutes), St-Louis (€6.30, 14 to 20 minutes) and Strasbourg (€20.20, 53 minutes).

## LORRAINE

Wedged between the plains and vines of Champagne and the hilly, thickly wooded Massif des Vosges, Lorraine is fed by the Meurthe, Moselle and Meuse Rivers – hence the names of three of its four *départements* (the fourth is Vosges).

Cities like Metz, with its outstanding galleries and jewel-like Gothic cathedral, and Nancy with its art nouveau sophistication and uplifting Unesco World Heritage square, are a terrific starting point. From here, you can strike out into more uncharted territory. A hard-hitting journey heads west to the cross-stippled battlefields of Verdun, where the longest battle of WWI unravelled.

## Nancy

POP 104,321

Delightful Nancy has an air of refinement found nowhere else in Lorraine. With a resplendent central square, fine museums, formal gardens and shop windows sparkling with Daum and Baccarat crystal, the former capital of the dukes of Lorraine catapults you back to the riches of the 18th century, when much of the city centre was built.

Nancy has long thrived on a combination of innovation and sophistication. The art nouveau movement flourished here (as the École de Nancy) thanks to the rebellious spirit of local artists, who set out to prove that everyday objects could be drop-dead gorgeous.

## i Sights

The tourist office offers multilingual audio-guide tours (€8) of the historic centre (two hours) and the art nouveau quarters (up to three or four hours). A €30 deposit is required. Alternatively download a free MP3 tour online ([www.nancy-tourisme.fr](http://www.nancy-tourisme.fr)).

### ★ Place Stanislas

SQUARE

Nancy's crowning glory is this grand neo-classical square and Unesco World Heritage Site. Designed by Emmanuel Héré in the 1750s, it was named after the enlightened, Polish-born duke of Lorraine, whose statue stands in the middle. The square is home to an opulent ensemble of pale-stone buildings, including the **Hôtel de Ville** and **Opéra National de Lorraine** (☎ 03 83 85 33 11; [www.opera-national-lorraine.fr](http://www.opera-national-lorraine.fr); 1 rue Ste-Catherine), as well as gilded wrought-iron gateways by Jean Lamour and rococo fountains by Guibal – look out for the one of a trident-bearing Neptune.

### ★ Musée des Beaux-Arts

GALLERY

(☎ 03 83 85 30 01; <https://musee-des-beaux-arts.nancy.fr>; 3 place Stanislas; adult/child €7/4.50; ☀ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) Lodged in a regal 18th-century edifice, Nancy's standout gallery occupies art lovers for hours. A wrought-iron staircase curls gracefully up to the 2nd floor, where a chronological spin begins with 14th- to 17th-century paintings by the likes of Perugino, Tintoretto and Jan van Hemessen. The 1st floor spotlights 17th- to 19th-century masterpieces of the Rubens, Monet, Picasso and Caravaggio ilk. A collection of Jean Prouvé furnishings, impressionist and modern art and a

dazzling Daum crystal collection hide in the basement.

Highlights in the 1st- and 2nd-floor picture galleries include Mello da Gubbio's 14th-century altarpiece, Perugino's Renaissance *Madonna and Child with two Angels* (1505), Rubens' lucid, large-scale *Transfiguration* (1603), showing Jesus radiant on a mountain, and Caravaggio's dramatic chiaroscuro *Annunciation* (1607).

The basement **Jean Prouvé Collection** homes in on the pared-down aesthetic of Nancy-born architect and designer Jean Prouvé (1901–84), and displays a selection of Prouvé's furniture, architectural elements, ironwork and graphic works. Here you will also find the peerless **Daum Collection**, which is displayed in a dark, spotlit gallery that shows off the glassware to great effect and is cleverly set against the backdrop of Nancy's late-medieval city walls. Trace Daum through the ages – from the sinuous, naturalistic forms of art nouveau to the clean colours and restrained lines of contemporary crystal.

The downstairs picture gallery wings you into the 19th and 20th centuries with an excellent portfolio of works, among them Eugène Delacroix' *Battle of Nancy* (1831), Monet's dreamy *Étretat, Sunset* (1883) and Picasso's *Homme et femme* (1971), one of his final portraits.

### Place de la Carrière SQUARE

Adjoining place Stanislas – on the other side of Nancy's own **Arc de Triomphe**, built in the mid-1750s to honour Louis XV – is this quiet square. Once a riding and jousting arena, it is now graced by four rows of linden trees and stately rococo gates in gilded wrought iron.

### Musée de l'École de Nancy MUSEUM

(School of Nancy Museum; ☎03 83 85 30 01; <https://musee-ecole-de-nancy.nancy.fr>; 36-38 rue du Sergent Blandan; adult/child €6/4; ☀10am–6pm Wed–Sun) A highlight of a visit to Nancy, the Musée de l'École de Nancy brings together an exquisite collection of art nouveau interiors, curvaceous glass and landscaped gardens. It's housed in a 19th-century villa about 2km southwest of the centre.

### Musée Lorrain MUSEUM

([www.musee-lorrain.nancy.fr](http://www.musee-lorrain.nancy.fr); 64 & 66 Grande Rue; ☀10am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Tue–Sun) **FREE** Once home to the dukes of Lorraine, the regal Renaissance Palais Ducal now shelters the

## **i** NANCY CITY PASS

The good-value Nancy City Pass (€16/27/33 for one/two/three days) gets you an audioguide tour of the city, a 24-hour transport ticket and entry to eight of the city's major museums.

Musée Lorrain (closed for renovation until 2022). The rich fine arts and history collection spotlights medieval statuary, engravings and lustrous faience (glazed pottery). The regional art and folklore collection occupies a 15th-century former Franciscan monastery. Inside, the Gothic **Église des Cordeliers** and the 17th-century **Chapelle Ducale**, modelled on the Medici Chapel in Florence, served as the burial place of the dukes of Lorraine. They both remain open.

### Vieille Ville AREA

A saunter through the charming old town takes in the silver-turreted, 14th-century **Porte de la Craffe**, Nancy's oldest city gate, and **place St-Epvre**, dominated by ornate neo-Gothic **Basilique St-Epvre**.

### Parc de la Pépinière PARK

(☀6.30am–10.30pm, shorter hours winter) On a hot summer's day, escape the crowds in this formal garden, with ornamental fountains, a rose garden and a Rodin sculpture of Baroque landscape painter Claude Lorrain.

## Festivals & Events

### Jazz Pulsations MUSIC

([www.nancyjazzpulsations.com](http://www.nancyjazzpulsations.com); 10 rue Baron Louis; ☀mid-Oct) Get your groove on to live jazz, blues and Latin at the 10-day Jazz Pulsations. Events are held at numerous venues across town including Théâtre de la Manufacture.

### Fêtes de St-Nicolas CHRISTMAS MARKET

(place Charles III; ☀late Nov–late Dec) The Fêtes de St-Nicolas bring festive twinkle, carols, shows, carousels and handicrafts to the city centre, revolving mostly around place Charles III.

## Sleeping

### La Résidence HOTEL €

(☎03 83 40 33 56; [www.hotel-laresidence-nancy.com](http://www.hotel-laresidence-nancy.com); 30 bd Jean-Jaurès; d from €70;  ) This convivial hotel is one of Nancy's best deals, with an inviting salon and a leafy courtyard for alfresco breakfasts. The snappy rooms have ultramodern bathrooms and



## Nancy

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Musée des Beaux-Arts .....C3  
2 Place Stanislas .....C3

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Chambre de Commerce.....A4  
4 Hôtel de Ville.....C3  
5 Musée Lorrain.....B1  
6 Parc de la Pépinière.....D1  
7 Place de la Carrière.....C2  
8 Vieille Ville .....B2

### 📍 Sleeping

- 9 Hôtel de Guise .....B1  
10 Hôtel des Prélats.....D4  
11 Hôtel d'Haussonville.....B2  
12 Hôtel Stanley .....B5  
13 Maison de Myon .....D4

### 📍 Eating

- 14 Brasserie Excelsior .....A4

- 15 La Gentilhommeire.....C3  
16 La Maison dans le Parc.....D3  
17 La Petite Cuillère.....B1  
18 L'Artisan Épicier.....D5  
19 Le Bouche à Oreille.....C4  
20 Le Grand Blond .....D4  
21 Le V-Four .....B2  
22 Voyou .....C3

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 23 La Quincaillerie.....C5  
24 Le Ch'timi.....B2  
25 Rhumerie la Plantation .....A4

### 📍 Entertainment

- 26 Opéra National de Lorraine.....D3

### 📍 Shopping

- 27 Lefèvre-Lemoine.....A4  
28 Maison des Sœurs Macarons .....C3

### Hôtel des Prélats

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(📍) 03 83 30 20 20; www.hoteldesprelats.com; 56 place Monseigneur Ruch; d €97-169, ste €229-289; (📞) It's not every day you get to sleep in a 17th-century former bishop's palace right next to the cathedral. This elegant hotel plays up the romance in rooms with stained-glass windows, four-poster beds and shimmering drapes. Service is as polished as the surrounds.

### Hôtel de Guise

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(📍) 03 83 32 24 68; www.hoteldeguise.com; 18 rue de Guise; s €50-105, d €65-200; (📞) Boutique chic meets 17th-century elegance at this hotel, tucked down an old-town backstreet. A wrought-iron staircase sweeps up to grand-meets-modern rooms, with antique furnishings and heavy drapes. There's a walled garden for quiet moments.

### La Villa 1901

B&B €€

(📍) 06 30 03 21 62; www.lavilla1901.fr; 63 av du Général Leclerc; s €145-165, d €165-185; (📞) Taking a leaf out of the chic interiors book, this B&B combines art nouveau with contemporary design flourishes and boho flair to beautiful effect. The richly hued rooms and suites feature homestyle touches like fireplaces and iPod docks, and there's a garden for time out. Breakfast is a treat, with fresh pastries, juice and preserves.

### Maison de Myon

B&B €€

(📍) 03 83 46 56 56; www.maisondemyon.com; 7 rue Mably; s €115, d €140-150; (📞) Slip behind the cathedral to reach this stately 17th-century

house turned boutique B&B. A wrought-iron staircase leads to light-filled, wooden-floored rooms flaunting antique furnishings, one-of-a-kind art and ornamental fireplaces. Each room takes its name from its polished-concrete bathroom (sand, turquoise, mandarin and so on). The wisteria-draped courtyard is a calm breakfast spot.

### ★ Hôtel d'Haussonville

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(📍) 03 83 35 85 84; www.hotel-haussonville.fr; 9 rue Monseigneur Trouillet; d €124-264; (📞) Centred on an ornately carved courtyard, this sublime Renaissance mansion snuggles down a backstreet in the heart of Nancy's Vieille Ville (p377). The seven individually designed rooms are decorated with impeccable taste, done out with parquet floors, elegant drapes and ornamental fireplaces. It's worth shelling out the extra €17 for breakfast.

### 🍴 Eating

Restaurant-speckled rue des Maréchaux dishes up French, Italian, tapas, seafood, Indian and Japanese, while rue St-Nicolas is a great street for on-the-hoof snacking, with everything from pizza to Thai and kebabs. Grande Rue is peppered with intimate bistros.

### Voyou

BURGERS €

(📍) 03 72 14 87 25; www.voyou-burger.com; 20 rue Stanislas; burgers €17-21; ☺ noon-1.45pm & 7-10.15pm Tue-Sat; (📞) Hip, split-level, doodle-daubed Voyou is hands-down the best place in town for a gourmet burger you can

## ART NOUVEAU TRAIL

In 1900, glassmaker and ceramist Émile Gallé founded the École de Nancy, one of France's leading art nouveau movements, joining creative forces with masters of decorative arts and architecture such as Jacques Gruber, Louis Majorelle and the Daum brothers. Banks, villas, pharmacies, brasseries – wherever you wander in Nancy, you're bound to stumble across their handiwork, from sinuous grillwork to curvaceous stained-glass windows and doorways that are a profusion of naturalistic ornament.

Slip back to this genteel era by picking up the free *Art Nouveau Itineraries* brochure and map at the tourist office, covering four city strolls. Lucien Weissenburger's 1911 **Brasserie Excelsior** (☎ 03 83 35 24 57; [www.brasserie-excelsior-nancy.fr](http://www.brasserie-excelsior-nancy.fr); 50 rue Henri Poincaré; menus €29-50; ☀ 8am-12.30am Tue-Sat, to 11pm Sun & Mon) and the 1908 **Chambre de Commerce** (rue Henri Poincaré) with wrought iron by Majorelle are central stalwarts. Close to the Musée de l'École de Nancy (p377) lies the whimsical **Villa Majorelle** (☎ 03 83 17 86 77; <https://musee-ecole-de-nancy.nancy.fr>; 1 rue Louis-Majorelle; adult/child €6/4; ☀ 2-6pm Wed-Sun), built by Henri Sauvage in 1901 and bearing the hallmarks of Majorelle (furniture) and Gruber (stained glass). The centrepiece is the Les Blés dining room with its vine-like stone fireplace.

properly sink your teeth into. On the menu are burgers made from quality meat, served in organic buns, with toppings like *raclette*, rösti and caramelised onions, plus a veggie option. All come with proper *frites* and salad.

**Le Bouche à Oreille** BISTRO €  
(☎ 03 83 35 17 17; [www.restaurant-bouche-a-oreille.fr](http://www.restaurant-bouche-a-oreille.fr); 42 rue des Carmes; menus €13-18, mains €13-23; ☀ 7-10pm Mon, noon-1.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Thu, noon-1.30pm & 7-10.30pm Fri, 7-10.30pm Sat) Resembling an overgrown doll's house, this knick-knack-filled bistro specialises in cheese-based dishes such as *raclette*, *tartiflette* (creamy, cheesy potato bake with onions and lardons) and fondue.

**Le Grand Blond** BISTRO €  
(☎ 03 83 37 37 77; 16 rue de la Primatale; mains €13-18, menus €21-25; ☀ noon-1.45pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) With a moon-shaped zinc bar and traditional furnishings, Le Grand Blond is a quintessential old-school French bistro. The kitchen lives up to expectation with flavourful classics like beef fillet and roasted pollock. Desserts are also well worth a try. It's close to the cathedral, right in the centre.

**L'Artisan Épicier** INTERNATIONAL €  
([www.artisan-epicier.com](http://www.artisan-epicier.com); 26 rue St-Nicolas; menus €12.90; ☀ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat) Trading in spices, herbs and top-quality condiments, this friendly, modern, jar-lined bistro naturally uses these to flavour appetising day specials like chicken curry, chicken tandoori or pasta. The *menu*, including dessert and coffee, is a great deal.

**La Petite Cuillère** FRENCH €€  
(☎ 03 83 36 43 16; [www.lapetitecuillere.fr](http://www.lapetitecuillere.fr); 123 Grande Rue; mains €19-22, menus €11.50-25; ☀ noon-1.45pm & 7-9pm Mon-Thu, noon-1.45pm & 7-10pm Fri & Sat; ☎) On the main drag in Nancy's Vieille Ville, 'the little spoon' is an artful take on the bistro, with its muted colours, slick furnishings and quirky lighting. The menu keeps things classic, with starters like lentil salad and smoked salmon acting as the prelude to mains like pork knuckle with shallots. The menu also includes a few vegetarian options.

**Le V-Four** BISTRO €€  
(☎ 03 83 32 49 48; [www.levfour.fr](http://www.levfour.fr); 10 rue St-Michel; menus €21-73; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-11.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) With just a handful of tables, this petite bistro is all about intimacy and understated sophistication. Mulberry chairs and crisp white tablecloths set the scene for original creations such as grilled scallops with Jerusalem artichoke and truffle. The three-course lunch is a steal at €21.

**La Gentilhommiere** FRENCH €€  
(☎ 03 83 32 26 44; [www.lagentilhommiere.nancy.fr](http://www.lagentilhommiere.nancy.fr); 29 rue des Maréchaux; menus €26-40; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 7-9.30pm Sat) Warm-hued, subtly lit La Gentilhommiere stands head and shoulders above most of the restaurants on rue des Maréchaux. Expect stylishly presented French dishes, including beef fillet and veal stew.

**La Maison dans le Parc** FRENCH €€€  
(☎ 03 83 19 03 57; [www.lamaisondansleparc.com](http://www.lamaisondansleparc.com); 3 rue Ste-Catherine; menus €42-105; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) Shining



with one Michelin star, this restaurant is Nancy's bastion of fine dining. Service is faultless and the ambience one of urban sophistication, with clean lines, monochrome hues and floor-to-ceiling windows. A smartly dressed crowd pours in for chef Françoise Mutel's artistically presented, intensely flavoured creations, as simple as roe deer with blueberries, and tenderloin of pork in sage sauce.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Nancy's buoyant nightlife concentrates on bar-dotted Grande Rue; the spectacularly illuminated place Stanislas and laid-back place St-Epvre in the Vieille Ville (p377) are the best spots for sundowners.

### Le Ch'timi

BAR

(www.facebook.com/LeChtimiNancy; 17 place St-Epvre; ☺10am-2am Mon-Sat, to 9pm Sun) On three brick-and-stone levels, Le Ch'timi is *the* place to go for beer. It's a beloved haunt of students, who come for the 200 brews, 16 of them on tap.

### La Quincaillerie

BAR

(2 rue St-Nicolas; ☺4pm-2am Mon-Sat) 'The hardware store' is kid-in-a-candy-shop stuff for anyone into their flavoured rums, which reach from bergamot to mint and basil here. The windows brim with flagons filled with brightly coloured spirits that are expertly mixed into signature cocktails. It's cosily stylish, with slouchy sofas for lingering over a killer mojito plus a pavement terrace for summer imbibing.

### Rhumerie la Plantation

BAR

(8 rue Raymond Poincaré; ☺6pm-midnight Tue, to 2am Wed-Sat) The mixologists sure know their stuff at this upbeat, backlit bar, especially when they are shaking speciality rums into creative cocktails. The vibe is mellow and there are regular events – from jam sessions and folk gigs to exhibitions and tastings.



## Shopping

Nancy's grand thoroughfares are rue St-Dizier, rue St-Jean and rue St-Georges. Grande Rue is studded with idiosyncratic galleries and antique shops.

### Lefèvre-Lemoine

FOOD

(www.lefevre-lemoine.fr; 47 rue Henri Poincaré; ☺9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 12.30pm Sun) They don't make sweet shops like this 1840s treasure any more, where a bird chirps a welcome

as you enter. One of the old-fashioned sweet tins made a cameo appearance in the film *Amélie*. *Bergamotes de Nancy* (bergamot boiled sweets), caramels, nougat, gingerbread, glazed *mirabelles* (plums) – how ever will you choose?

### Maison des Sœurs Macarons

FOOD

(www.macaron-de-nancy.com; 21 rue Gambetta; ☺2-7pm Mon, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat) When Nancy's Benedictine nuns hit hard times during the French Revolution, they saw the light in heavenly macarons. They're still made to the original recipe (egg whites, sugar, Provençal almonds) at this old-world confectioner. A dozen box (€9) makes a great gift.



## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 83 35 22 41; www.nancy-tourisme.fr; place Stanislas; ☺9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Mar; ☎) Inside the Hôtel de Ville (p376). Has free brochures detailing walking tours of the city centre and art nouveau architecture. Free wi-fi.



## Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

Nancy is easy to navigate by bicycle. **Vélostan** (www.velostanlib.fr; per day/week €1.50/5; ☺24hr) has rental sites inside the train station and near the Musée de l'École de Nancy in **Espace Thermal** (rue du Sergent Blandan), as well as 29 rental points where you can hire bikes 24/7. An €80 deposit is required.

### TRAIN

The **train station** (place Thiers) is on the line linking Paris with Strasbourg. Destinations include the following:

**Baccarat** €12.20, 39 to 48 minutes, 15 daily  
**Metz** €12.10, 39 to 53 minutes, 48 daily  
**Paris** from €60, 1½ hours, 13 daily  
**Strasbourg** €28.10, 1½ hours, 12 daily

## Baccarat

POP 4460

Bisected by the Meurthe River, Baccarat, 60km southeast of Nancy, seems like any other quaint French town on the surface of things, with its historic centre of shuttered houses. But its glitzy Baccarat *cristerie* (crystal glassworks), founded in 1764, whose artisanship dazzles in the Musée Baccarat and Église St-Rémy, really puts it on the map.

## Musée Baccarat

MUSEUM

(www.baccarat.fr; cours des Cristalleries; adult/child €5/free; ☀10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) The Musée Baccarat displays 1100 exquisite pieces of handmade lead crystal. The boutique out front is almost as dazzling as the museum.

## Église St-Rémy

CHURCH

(1 av de Lachapelle; ☀8am-5pm) On the bank of the park-lined River Meurthe, the dark concrete sanctuary of Église St-Rémy, built in the mid-1950s, is austere on the outside and kaleidoscopic on the inside – dramatically lit by 20,000 Baccarat crystal panels.

## Information

**Tourist office** (☎03 83 75 13 37; www.tourisme-lunevillois.com; 13 rue du Port; ☀9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm) Has info on the surrounds and hiking maps.

## Getting There & Away

Trains run from Baccarat to Nancy (€12.20, 39 to 48 minutes, 15 daily). By car, Baccarat makes an easy stop on the way from Nancy to Colmar via the Vosges' Col du Bonhomme.

## Metz

POP 119,775

Sitting astride the confluence of the Moselle and Seille rivers, Lorraine's graceful capital, Metz (pronounced 'mess'), is ready to be feted. Though the city's Gothic marvel of a cathedral, superlative art collections and Michelin-star-studded dining scene long managed to sidestep the world spotlight, all that changed with the show-stopping arrival of Centre Pompidou-Metz. Yet the Pompidou is but the prelude to Metz' other charms: buzzy pavement cafes and shady riverside parks, a beautiful old town built from golden Jeumont stone and a regal Quartier Impérial well worth a stroll.

## Sights

### ★ Centre Pompidou-Metz

GALLERY

(☎03 87 15 39 39; www.centrepompidou-metz.fr; 1 parvis des Droits de l'Homme; adult €7-12, child free; ☀10am-6pm Mon, Wed & Thu, to 7pm Fri-Sun) Designed by Japanese architect Shigeru Ban and French architect Jean de Gastines, with a curved roof resembling a space-age Chinese hat, the architecturally innovative Centre Pompidou-Metz is the star of Metz' art scene. The satellite branch of Paris'

Centre Pompidou draws on Europe's largest modern-art collection to stage ambitious temporary exhibitions, including figurative cubist creations, bold avant-garde works and stunning sculptures. The dynamic space also hosts cultural events, talks and youth projects.

### ★ Cathédrale St-Étienne

CATHEDRAL

(www.cathedrale-metz.fr; place St-Étienne; combined ticket treasury & crypt adult/child €4/2, audioguide €7; ☀8am-6pm, treasury & crypt 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun) The lacy golden spires of this Gothic cathedral crown Metz' skyline. Exquisitely lit by kaleidoscopic curtains of 13th- to 20th-century stained glass, the cathedral is nicknamed 'God's lantern' and its sense of height is spiritually uplifting. Notice the flamboyant **Chagal windows** in startling jewel-coloured shades of ruby, gold, sapphire, topaz and amethyst in the ambulatory, which also harbours the **treasury**. A sculpture of the **Graouilly** ('grau-lee'), a dragon said to have terrified pre-Christian Metz, lurks in the 15th-century **crypt**.

### Musée La Cour d'Or

MUSEUM

(☎03 87 20 10 00; http://musee.metzmetropole.fr; 2 rue du Haut Poirier; ☀9am-12.30pm & 1.45-5pm Wed-Mon) **FREE** Delve into the past at this trove of Gallo-Roman antiquities, hiding remnants of the city's Roman baths

## DON'T MISS

### MARKET MUST

If only every market were like Metz' grand **Marché Couvert** (Covered Market; place de la Cathédrale; ☀7am-7pm Tue-Sat). Once a bishop's palace, now a temple to fresh local produce, this is the kind of place where you pop in for a baguette and struggle out an hour later with bags overflowing with charcuterie, ripe fruit, pastries and five different sorts of *fromage*.

Make a morning of it, stopping for an early, inexpensive lunch and a chat with the market's larger-than-life characters. **Chez Mauricette** (☎03 87 36 37 69; www.chezmauricette.com; sandwiches €4-5, light meals €8-15; ☀7am-6.30pm Tue-Sat) tempts with such Lorraine goodies as herby *saucisson* (dry-cured sausage or salami), local charcuterie and *mira-belle* (plum) pâté.

and a statue of the Egyptian goddess Isis unearthed right here in Metz. Your visit continues with art from the Middle Ages, paintings from the 15th century onwards, and artefacts revealing the history of Metz' ancient Jewish community. A room-by-room brochure in English is available.

### Quartier Impérial

AREA

The stately boulevards and bourgeois villas of the German Imperial Quarter, including rue Gambetta and av Foch, are the brainchild of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Philippe Starck lamp posts contrast with Teutonic sculptures, whose common theme is German imperial might, at the monumental Rhenish neo-Romanesque train station (p387), completed in 1908. Across the square, the massive former post office, built in 1911 of red Vosges sandstone, is as solid and heavy as the cathedral is light and lacy.

Built to trumpet the triumph of Metz' post-1871 status as part of the Second Reich, the architecture is a whimsical mix of art deco, neo-Romanesque and neo-Renaissance influences. The area's unique ensemble of Wilhelmian architecture is well worth a walking tour.

### Place de la Comédie

SQUARE

Bounded by one of the channels of the Moselle, this neoclassical square is home to the city's 18th-century **Théâtre**, France's oldest theatre still in use. During the Revolution, place de l'Égalité (as it was then known) was the site of a guillotine that lopped the heads off 63 'enemies of the people'. Only open during services, the neo-Romanesque **Temple Neuf** Protestant church was constructed under the Germans in 1904.

### Place St-Louis

SQUARE

On the eastern edge of the city centre, triangular place St-Louis is surrounded by medieval arcades and merchants' houses dating from the 13th to 17th centuries.

### Metz Plage

BEACH

(1 allée de Metz Plage; ☀ 11am-8pm late Jul-mid-Aug) **FREE** You might not have packed your bucket and spade for a trip to Metz, but you can head to this makeshift 'beach' on the banks of the Moselle in summer. Besides a pool with splashy fun for the kids, there's a programme of sports and activities.

### Riverside Park

PARK

(quai des Régates) In summer, pedal boats and rowboats can be rented on quai des Régates. The promenade leads through a leafy

## WORTH A TRIP

### METZ DAY TRIPPER

**Fort du Hackenberg** (📍 03 82 82 30 08; www.maginat-hackenberg.com; adult/child €12/6; ☀ tours 2.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am & 2-3.30pm Sat, 2-3.30pm Sun late Mar-mid-Nov, shorter hours rest of year) The largest single Maginot Line bastion in the Metz area was the 1000-man Fort du Hackenberg, whose 10km of galleries were designed to be self-sufficient for three months and, in battle, to fire 4 tonnes of shells a minute. An electric trolley takes visitors along 4km of tunnels – always at 12°C – past subterranean installations. Tours last two hours. The fort is around 35km northeast of Metz via the D2 or A35.

The fort is probably best seen as a day trip from Metz – there's a smattering of places to eat in nearby Thionville.

riverside park, with statues, ponds, swans and a fountain. It's the ideal picnic spot.

## Sleeping

### Péniche Alclair

HOUSEBOAT €

(📍 06 10 45 02 16; www.chambrespénichemetz.com; allée St-Symphorien; s/d incl breakfast €75/85; 📞) What a clever idea: this old barge has been revamped into a stylish blue houseboat, with two cheerful wood-floored rooms and watery views. Breakfast is served in your room or on the sundeck. It's a 15-minute stroll south of the centre along the river.

### Les Chambres de l'Île

B&amp;B €

(📍 06 13 23 28 33; www.bnmetz.com; 15 rue de l'Horticulture, Longeville-lès-Metz; s/d/tr/q €65/85/95/115; 📞) You'll feel immediately *chez vous* (at home) at this sweet, friendly B&B on an island in the Moselle River. The parquet-floored, warm-coloured rooms overlook gardens, and homemade preserves, fresh-pressed juice and pastries feature at breakfast.

### Hôtel de la Cathédrale

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(📍 03 87 75 00 02; www.hotelcathedrale-metz.fr; 25 place de Chambre; d €82-122; 📞) You can expect a friendly welcome at this classy little hotel, occupying a 17th-century townhouse in a prime spot right opposite the cathedral. Climb the wrought-iron staircase to your classically elegant room, with high ceilings, hardwood floors and antique trappings.

## Metz

0 200 m  
0 0.1 miles



## Metz

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale St-Étienne ..... C2  
2 Centre Pompidou-Metz ..... D7

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Metz Plage ..... A1  
4 Musée La Cour d'Or ..... D2  
5 Place de la Comédie ..... B2  
6 Place St-Louis ..... D4  
7 Quartier Impérial ..... C6  
8 Riverside Park ..... A4

### 🏠 Sleeping

- 9 Hôtel de la Cathédrale ..... C2  
10 La Citadelle Metz – MGallery ..... A5  
11 Villa Camoufle ..... B6

### 🍴 Eating

- Chez Mauricette –  
L'Assiette du Marché ..... (see 20)  
12 La Fleure de Ly ..... C2  
13 Le Bistronome ..... B2  
14 Le Petit Frontalier ..... C4  
15 Les Copains d'Abord ..... C4  
16 O Sœurs Saveurs ..... D3  
17 Pâtisserie Claude  
Bourguignon ..... C4

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 18 Café Rubis ..... D4  
19 La Jehanne ..... D2

### 🛍 Shopping

- 20 Marché Couvert ..... C2

Book well ahead for a cathedral view. Breakfast will set you back €11.

### La Citadelle Metz – MGallery LUXURY HOTEL €€

(📍) 03 87 17 17 17; [www.citadelle-metz.com](http://www.citadelle-metz.com); 5 av Ney; d €95-165; (P) (☎) A slick conversion of a 16th-century military arsenal and barracks, La Citadelle sits in a tranquil park in the heart of the city. The light, contemporary rooms flaunt arched windows, red walls and eye-catching fabrics. Best of all, for anyone seriously into their food, the on-site restaurant is a great choice.

### ★ Villa Camoufle B&B €€€

(📍) 06 81 27 26 27; [www.villacamoufle.fr](http://www.villacamoufle.fr); 13 rempart St-Thiébauld; d from €245; (P) (☎) To do Metz en luxe, nowhere tops this stately late 19th-century mansion that has been converted into a boutique B&B with three fabulously designed and immensely comfortable suites. It's romantic, chic and intimate. We fell for the Tourelle, which mixes wood, ironworks and tweed. A sauna is available, and the

friendly owner is a gym coach. A gem of a place.

## 🍴 Eating

Metz has scores of appetising restaurants, many along and near the river. Place St-Jacques becomes one giant open-air cafe when the sun's out. Cobbled rue Taison and the arcades of place St-Louis shelter moderately priced bistros, pizzerias and cafes.

### Pâtisserie Claude Bourguignon PASTRIES €

(📍) 03 87 75 23 52; [www.bourguignonmetz.fr](http://www.bourguignonmetz.fr); 31 rue de la Tête d'Or; snacks €3-8; ☺ 9.30am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-noon Sun) Oh, the temptation! The window display says it all at this smart tearoom/chocolatier/pâtisserie, with an irresistible array of tarts (try *mirabelle* – plum), éclairs, quiches, ganaches and pralines.

### O Sœurs Saveurs CAFE €

(📍) 03 87 78 43 55; [www.osoeursaveurs.fr](http://www.osoeursaveurs.fr); 19 rue Taison; mains €5-13; ☺ 11am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-6.30pm Sat, 11am-2.30pm Sun) This enchanting *salon de thé* (tea house), pâtisserie and restaurant is a lovely spot for light lunches like quiches, salads and soups. In the afternoon you can enjoy lots of varieties of tea, accompanied by exquisite cakes, delectable tarts and *viennoiseries* (pastries) – all homemade. Brunch on Sunday.

### ★ L'Imaginarium FRENCH €€

(📍) 03 87 30 14 40; <http://imaginarium-restaurant.com>; 2 rue de Paris; mains €22-24; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun & Tue) Decorated with one-of-a-kind artworks, this sleek, monochrome bistro by the river is one of Metz' top foodie addresses. The season-driven menu emphasises clean, bright flavours in dishes such as marinated red tuna with black rice and coriander, and duck breast in a peanut crust with roasted figs and honey.

### Le Petit Frontalier FRENCH €€

(📍) 03 87 37 31 49; [www.le-petit-frontalier.fr](http://www.le-petit-frontalier.fr); 3 rue des Parmentiers; menus €35-48; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Sat, noon-2pm Sun; (📍) Huddled away in an old-town backstreet, this bright, modern bistro draws on the best of seasonal, regional produce, including lamb, pork, beef and fish dishes, all nicely cooked and presented. There's at least one vegetarian option, too. Save room for enticing desserts such as *tarte tatin* with *mirabelle* plums and almond cream.



## DON'T MISS

## INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE SITES IN LORRAINE

Northern Lorraine once built its prosperity on coal and steel. These days, the mines are closed and the steel mills are quiet, but the region has progressively embraced industrial heritage tourism. Two hugely impressive sites have been rehabilitated over the last 15 years and welcome visitors, who will be richly rewarded on their detour.

A key industrial site, **Explor Wendel** (☎ 03 87 87 08 54; www.parc-explor.com; Petite-Rosselle; adult/child €8/4; ☀ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) sits just at the border with Saarland (Germany), about 50km east of Metz (follow the A4 in the direction of Saarbrücken). This former coal mine was a marvel of efficiency while in operation from 1856 to 1986. Since closing, the sprawling site has been revamped to welcome visitors. There are four shafts (of various designs) as well as several other industrial brick buildings, including a huge coal-wash plant (now a cultural centre). A major focus is the cutting-edge reproduction of a mine gallery complete with heavy extraction machines where you can experience the atmosphere of the mine when it was working at full tilt. Guided tours led by ex-miners can be organised. There are also several walking paths that proffer superb views of the complex and the surrounding miners' homes. A restaurant was scheduled to open in late 2021.

Just 20km north of Metz, in Uckange, the hulking former ironworks of **Parc du Haut-Fourneau U4** (U4 Blast Furnace; ☎ 03 82 57 37 37; www.hf-u4.com; 1 jardin des Traces; adult/child €3/2; ☀ 10am-6.30pm Tue & Fri, 2-6.30pm Wed, Thu, Sat & Sun Apr-Oct) are one of Europe's great heavy-industrial relics. Both Dickensian and futuristic, dystopian and a symbol of renewal, the massive scale of the U4 blast furnace and its annexes dwarfs humans, who nevertheless managed to master the forces of fire, wind and earth in order to smelt iron. Visitors have an audioguide and can follow a path amid the ageing concrete and rusted pipes, beams, conveyors and car-sized ladles – it feels like being in a movie set (*Blade Runner* comes to mind).

The plant opened in the second half of the 19th century, and had about 5000 people working here by 1965 – the height of France's post-WWII boom. It blasted its last pig iron in 1991 and was declared a national heritage site in 2001 (part of the plant was dismantled, though; originally it comprised three blast furnaces, of which only one was saved for conservation). Guided tours led by former steel workers can be arranged. Check out the website for details on exhibitions and events (like summertime concerts and live performances). At night, the compound is elegantly lit up like a vast science-fiction set.

Trains link Metz with Uckange station (20 minutes). By car, take the A31 (in the direction of Thionville and Luxembourg) and exit at Uckange.

## Les Copains d'Abord

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 87 76 21 46; www.restaurantescopainsdabordmetz.fr; 32 rue du Coëtlosquet; mains €17-26, lunch menu €18.50; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Winningly fresh ingredients shine in French cuisine, matched with an impressive array of wines, at Les Copains d'Abord. Opt for a tempting *planche* (platter) of top-quality *fromage* and charcuterie, or enjoy stewed veal, rump steak or a juicy burger.

## La Fleure de Ly

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 87 74 01 23; www.lafleuredely.fr; 5 Rue des Piques; mains €22-27, menus €23-57; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-2pm Sun) With its ambient lighting, warm hues and classy ambience, La Fleure de Ly can do no wrong. Run by a talented team, it's known across the city for its upmarket take on classic French

cuisine. The wine list is another hit – Moselle wines work well with specialities such as veal tenderloin or perch fillet.

## Le Bistrone

BISTRO €€

(☎ 03 87 50 95 52; www.facebook.com/lebistrone Metz; 45 place de Chambre; mains €15-25; ☀ noon-1.45pm Sun & Mon, noon-1.45pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) For those days when all you need is a beef burger or rib steak, there's Le Bistrone, a hop and a skip away from the cathedral. It's all about sourcing at this casual bistro with an industrial-chic decor, and the meat comes from local producers. Good wine list too.



## Drinking &amp; Nightlife

Some 23,000 resident students keep Metz' vibe young and upbeat after dark. For an

alfresco sundowner or two, try the bars and open-air cafes lining place de Chambre and place St-Jacques.

### Cafe Rubis

BAR

([www.facebook.com/caferubismetz](http://www.facebook.com/caferubismetz); 25 place St-Louis; ☺ 8am-midnight Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat) Cosy bar for a coffee or glass of wine, with a terrace under the arcades for summer drinks. It also doubles as a restaurant, with a good selection of bistro-style dishes.

### La Jehanne

BAR

(place Jeanne d'Arc; ☺ 11.30am-11pm Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, 3pm-1am Sun) This 13th-century watering hole oozes history from every Gothic window, fresco and beam. The soundtrack skips from Gainsbourg to classical, and there's often free live jazz. The terrace is a chilled spot for summertime imbibing. Prices are a tad on the high side.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 87 39 00 00; [www.tourisme-metz.com](http://www.tourisme-metz.com); 2 place d'Armes; ☺ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun, shorter hours winter; 📶) In a one-time guardroom built in the mid-1700s. Free walking-tour and cycling maps, and free wi-fi.

## i Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

Rent city bikes cheaply from nonprofit **Mob d'Emploi** ([www.mobemploi.com](http://www.mobemploi.com); 7 place du Général de Gaulle; per half day/full day/week €2/3/8, deposit per bike €200; ☺ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar, plus 10am-6pm Sat & 1-6pm Sun Apr-Oct). Helmets and locks are free; rental options include kids' bikes, electro bikes, child carriers and even a tandem.

### TRAIN

Metz' ornate early 20th-century **train station** (place du Général de Gaulle) has a super-sleek TGV linking Paris with Luxembourg. Direct services:

**Luxembourg** €9.50, 55 minutes, about 45 daily

**Nancy** €12.50, 38 to 53 minutes, about 45 daily

**Paris** from €44, 1½ hours, eight daily

**Strasbourg** €29.20, 1½ hours, 16 daily

**Verdun** €16.60, 1½ hours, three direct daily

## Verdun

POP 18,393

The unspeakable atrocities that took place in and around Verdun between 21 February and 18 December 1916, the longest battle

of WWI, have turned the town's name into a byword for wartime slaughter and futile sacrifice.

Such a dark past means that Verdun always has an air of melancholy, even when the sun bounces brightly off the River Meuse and the town's shuttered houses. Go to the moonscape hills of the Verdun battlefields, scarred with trenches and shells; walk through the stony silence of the cemeteries as the morning mist rises, and you will understand why. Time has healed and trees have grown, but the memory of *l'enfer de Verdun* (the hell of Verdun) has survived. And, some say, may it never be forgotten.

## History

After the annexation of Lorraine's Moselle *département* and Alsace by Germany in 1871, Verdun became a front-line outpost. Over the next four decades it was turned into the most important and heavily fortified element in France's eastern defence line.

During WWI, Verdun itself was never taken by the Germans, but the evacuated town was almost totally destroyed by artillery bombardments. In the hills to the north and east of Verdun, the brutal combat – carried out with artillery, flame-throwers and poison gas – completely wiped out nine villages. During the last two years of WWI, more than 800,000 soldiers (some 400,000 French and almost as many Germans, along with thousands of the Americans who arrived in 1918) lost their lives in this area.

## 👁️ Sights

The money-saving Pass Champ de Bataille (adult/child €28/15), available at the tourist office (p390), gives discounted entry to the Ossuaire de Douaumont (p388), Fort de Douaumont (p388), Fort de Vaux (p388), Mémorial de Verdun (p388) and the Citadelle Souterraine.

The tourist office provides a huge range of guided tours in and around Verdun, including four-hour tours of the battlefields (adult/child €29/20). See [www.tourisme-verdun.com](http://www.tourisme-verdun.com) for the lowdown on prices, times and bookings.

### Citadelle Souterraine

HISTORIC SITE

(☎ 03 29 84 84 42; [www.citadelle-souterraine-verdun.fr](http://www.citadelle-souterraine-verdun.fr); av du Soldat Inconnu; adult/child €9/5; ☺ 9am-6pm, closed Jan) Comprising 7km of underground galleries, this cavernous

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

LESSER-KNOWN  
BATTLEFIELDS

**St-Mihiel American Cemetery** ([www.abmc.gov](http://www.abmc.gov); Thiaucourt-Regniéville; ☎9am-5pm) In this WWI cemetery, the graves of 4153 American soldiers who died in the 1918 Battle of St-Mihiel radiate towards a central sundial topped by a white American eagle. The cemetery is 40km southeast of Verdun on the outskirts of Thiaucourt-Regniéville.

**Butte de Montsec** ([www.abmc.gov](http://www.abmc.gov); Montsec; ☎9am-5pm) This 375m-high mound, site of a US monument with a bronze relief map, is surrounded by a round neoclassical colonnade. The monument commemorates the achievements of the American soldiers who fought here in 1917 and 1918. It's a 50-minute drive south of Verdun via the D964.

subterranean citadel was designed by military engineer Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban in the 17th century and completed in 1838. In 1916 it was turned into an impenetrable command centre in which 10,000 *poilus* (French WWI soldiers) lived, waiting to be dispatched to the front. About 10% of the galleries have been converted into an audiovisual re-enactment of Verdun's WWI history. Half-hour, battery-powered-car tours, available in six languages, should be booked ahead.

**Centre Mondial de la Paix** MUSEUM  
(World Centre for Peace; ☎03 29 86 55 00; [www.cmpaix.eu](http://www.cmpaix.eu); place Monseigneur Ginisty; adult/child €5/2.50; ☎10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm) Set in Verdun's handsomely classical former bishop's palace, built in 1724, this museum's permanent exhibition touches upon wars, their causes and solutions; human rights; and the fragility of peace.

## 👁 Verdun Battlefields

Much of the Battle of Verdun was fought 5km to 8km (as the crow flies) northeast of Verdun. Today, the forested area – still a jumble of trenches and artillery crates – can be explored via signposted paths leading to dozens of war remnants.

**Mémorial de Verdun** MEMORIAL  
([www.memorial-verdun.fr](http://www.memorial-verdun.fr); 1 av du Corps Européen, Fleury; adult/child €12/7.50; ☎9.30am-7pm, shorter hours winter) The village of Fleury, wiped off the face of the earth in the course of being captured and recaptured 16 times, is now the site of this memorial. It tells the story of '300 days, 300,000 dead, 400,000 wounded'; with insightful displays of war artefacts and personal items. Downstairs you'll find a re-creation of the battlefield as it looked on the day the guns finally fell silent.

**Ossuaire de Douaumont** MEMORIAL  
(☎03 29 84 54 81; [www.verdun-douaumont.com](http://www.verdun-douaumont.com); adult/child €6.50/3; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun, shorter hours winter) Rising like a gigantic artillery shell above 15,000 crosses that bleed into the distance, this sombre, 137m-long ossuary, inaugurated in 1932, is one of France's most important WWI memorials. A ticket to the 20-minute **audiovisual presentation** on the battle also lets you climb the 46m-high **bell tower**. Out front, the French military **cemetery** is flanked by memorials to Muslim and Jewish soldiers (to the east and west, respectively) who died fighting for France in WWI. It's 10km north of Verdun.

The ossuary contains the bones of about 130,000 unidentified French and German soldiers collected from the Verdun battlefields and buried together in 52 mass graves according to where they fell. Each engraved stone denotes a missing soldier; while a touching display of photographs shows Verdun survivors – as they were in WWI and as they were later in life.

**Fort de Douaumont** FORT  
(☎03 55 25 01 16; [www.verdun-meuse.fr](http://www.verdun-meuse.fr); adult/child €4/2; ☎10am-6.30pm, shorter hours winter) Sitting high on a hill, this is the strongest of the 38 fortresses and bastions built along a 45km front to protect Verdun. When the Battle of Verdun began, 400m-long Douaumont – whose 3km network of cold, dripping galleries was built between 1885 and 1913 – had only a skeleton crew. By the fourth day it had been captured easily, a serious blow to French morale; four months later, it was retaken by colonial troops from Morocco. It's 11km north of Verdun.

**Fort de Vaux** FORT  
(☎03 55 25 01 18; [www.verdun-meuse.fr](http://www.verdun-meuse.fr); Vaux-devant-Damloup; adult/child €4/2; ☎10am-6.30pm,

shorter hours winter) Located in crater-scarred countryside 10km northeast of Verdun, this fort was constructed between 1881 and 1884. It was the second fort – Douaumont (p388) was the first – to fall in the Battle of Verdun, and became the site of the bloodiest battle for two months. Weak with thirst, Major Raynal and his troops surrendered to the enemy on 7 June 1916. You can gain an insight into past horrors by taking a tour of its dank interior and observation points.

### Tranchée des Baïonnettes

MEMORIAL

**FREE** On 12 June 1916, two companies of the 137th Infantry Regiment of the French army were sheltered in their *tranchées* (trenches), *baïonnettes* (bayonets) fixed, waiting for a ferocious artillery bombardment to end. According to legend, it never did – the incoming shells covered their positions with mud and debris, burying them alive. They were found three years later, when someone spotted several hundred bayonet tips sticking out of the ground. Today the site is marked by a simple memorial that is always open.

It's 10km north of Verdun. The tree-filled valley across the D913 is known as the **Ravin de la Mort** (Ravine of Death).

### Sleeping

#### Hôtel Montaubain

HOTEL €€

(☎06 13 56 47 08; www.hoteldemontaubain.fr; 4 rue de la Vieille Prison; d €89-100, f €149; 🍷) It requires very little detective work to pin down this central hotel, which is run with charm and an eye for detail. Overlooking an inner courtyard, the 11 revamped rooms are compact, spotless and understated yet chic in look and feel.

#### La Maison Mirabeau

B&amp;B €€

(☎06 19 54 51 94; www.maisonmirabeau.com; 15 av de Troyon; d €80-90; 🍷) This three-room B&B, housed inside a tastefully restored house, is a haven of peace and quiet. It's ideally situated, a five-minute stroll from the tourist office. You'll love the cosy lounge areas and the backyard garden oasis. Your hosts complete the charm offensive and serve a delicious breakfast and a superb dinner focusing on regional specialities (€30).

#### Château des Monthairons

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 29 87 78 55; www.chateaudesmonthairons.fr; 26 rte de Verdun; d €115-265, apt €300-390; 🍷) Reclining in its own beautifully tended grounds, this turreted vision of a 19th-century

château has grand rooms dressed in flouncy florals and antique furnishings. Some have sweeping views of the Meuse Valley, others crank up the romance with four-poster beds. There's a highly regarded restaurant (p390) and spa on-site. It's a 15-minute drive south of Verdun via the D34.

#### Les Jardins du Mess

HOTEL €€€

(☎03 29 80 14 18; www.lesjardinsdumess.fr; 22 quai de la République; d €153-193, tr €230-318; 🍷) What a clever idea: take the old military mess and give it an ultramodern makeover and new lease of life as Verdun's swankiest four-star hotel, sitting astride the banks of the Meuse. In a graceful 19th-century building topped off with a mansard roof, Les Jardins du Mess has spacious, tastefully minimalist rooms in earthy tones with pops of bright colour.

### Eating

Brasseries and fast-food joints line up along riverside quai de Londres (a plaque on the wall near rue Beaurepaire explains the origin of the name, which refers to the City of London choosing Verdun as the most poignant location to reunite the two countries in the aftermath of WWI).

#### Le Clapier

BISTRO €€

(☎03 29 86 20 14; 34 rue des Gros Degrés; menus €16-27; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat; 🍷) The chef's penchant for Provence's balmy climes shines through on the menu at this cosy lime-walled bistro, whose name translates as 'the rabbit hutch'. Daily specials (€13) are expertly paired with Meuse wines.

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

#### SUGARED ALMONDS

Verdun's sweet claim to fame is as the *dragée* (sugared almond) capital of the world. In 1220 a local pharmacist dabbling with almonds, sugar and honey created the tooth-rotting delights that later graced the tables of royalty and nobility – Napoléon and Charles de Gaulle included. **Braquier** (www.dragees-braquier.com; 50 rue du Fort de Vaux; ☺ 9-11am & 2-6pm) **FREE** has been making Verdun's celebrated *dragées* since 1783 and offers free guided tours of its factory. Or buy a box at the more central **shop** (3 rue Pasteur; ☺ 2-7pm Mon, 10am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat).

**Chez Mamie**

FRENCH €€

(☎03 29 86 45 50; 52 av de la 42ème Division; menus €12.50-25; ☀ noon-2pm Mon, noon-2pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sun; 📍) The clue's in the name: family-run Chez Mamie does indeed dish up the kind of wholesome, hearty grub your French gran might make. Pull up a chair at one of the checked-cloth tables for satisfying dishes such as scallops with bacon, or fat, stubby pork trotters. Vegetarian options are available.

**L'Étal**

FRENCH €€€

(☎03 29 86 76 87; www.letal-restaurant.com; 7 av Garibaldi; mains €15-25; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat) Paradise for meat lovers! This carnivore heaven in the centre focuses solely on high-quality meat. Succulent matured beef, tartares and carpaccio reign supreme, as well as caramelised pork ribs, all served with tasty roasted potatoes or *gratin dauphinois* (potatoes with melted cheese). In summer, the enticing terrace at the rear is a hit.

**Château des Monthairons**

FRENCH €€€

(☎03 29 87 78 55; www.chateaudesmonthairons.fr; 26 rte de Verdun; menus €30-65; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Wed-Sun, 7-9pm Tue) It's not every day you get to dine at a bona-fide castle, so it's worth the 15-minute drive south of Verdun to this whimsically turreted château overlooking parkland. Chef Benoit Thouvenin puts his own creative spin on French cuisine in dishes such as sweetbreads of calf with corn and truffle sauce and iced parfait with Verdun *dragées* (sugared almonds).

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎03 29 86 14 18; www.tourisme-verdun.com; place de la Nation; ☀ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun, shorter hours winter; 📍) Friendly office with guided tours, info on Verdun and the surrounding region, and free maps of the battlefields. Free wi-fi.

**i Getting There & Away**

Verdun's poorly served train station, designed by Gustave Eiffel and built in 1868, has direct services to Metz (€16.60, 1½ hours, three direct daily). Several buses a day go to the Gare Meuse TGV station (€4.50, 30 minutes), from where direct TGVs whisk you to Paris' Gare de l'Est (from €36, one hour).

**Romagne-sous-Montfaucou**

POP 194

This remote village in the countryside north-west of Verdun would be easy to overlook were it not for its huge and deeply saddening WWI cemetery, where a sea of crosses stretches to infinity. The surrounding landscape is pockmarked with the craters of artillery shells – examples of which are still churned up on a daily basis. The heart-tugging museum here, Romagne '14-'18, is one of the most fascinating of its kind.

More than one million American troops participated in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive of late 1918, the last Western Front battle of WWI. The bloody fighting north-west of Verdun, in which more than 26,000 Americans died, convinced the Kaiser's government to cable US President Woodrow Wilson with a request for an armistice. The film *Sergeant York* (1941) is based on events that took place here. The website of the Meuse *département* tourism board – www.tourisme-meuse.com – offers background on the region and its WWI sites.

Apart from Romagne '14-'18, all of the sites, along with St-Mihiel American Cemetery (p388) and Butte de Montsec (p388) to the southeast, are managed by the American Battle Monuments Commission (www.abmc.gov). The American Memorial trail takes in the countryside surrounding Romagne-sous-Montfaucou.

**★ Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery**

CEMETERY

(www.abmc.gov; ☀ 9am-5pm) The largest US military cemetery in Europe is this WWI ground, where 14,246 soldiers lie buried – a sobering sea of white crosses reaching as far as the eye can see.

**Romagne '14-'18**

MUSEUM

(☎03 29 85 10 14; www.romagne14-18.com; 2 rue de l'Andon; museum adult/child €8/free; ☀ noon-6pm Wed-Sun) This heart-rending museum focuses on the human stories of the soldiers, looking at their lives beyond their role in combat. Artefacts are shown in the state in which they were found – rust, dirt and all.



## Butte de Montfaucon

MEMORIAL

(www.abmc.gov; Montfaucon-en-Argonne; ☀ 9am-5pm) Commemorating the 1918 Meuse-Argonne Offensive, this 336m-high mound is topped by a 58m-high Doric column crowned by a statue symbolising liberty. Ascend 234 steps to reach the observation platform.

The memorial is a 40-minute drive northwest of Verdun via the D38 and D19.

### **i** Getting There & Away

You'll need your own wheels to reach Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, which is 38km northwest of Verdun via the D964.

1



LENIID ANDRONOV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

2



VALD PROKOPEVICH/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

1. Traditional Alsatian houses, Molsheim
2. White herons, NaturOparC (p367)

2  
DAYS

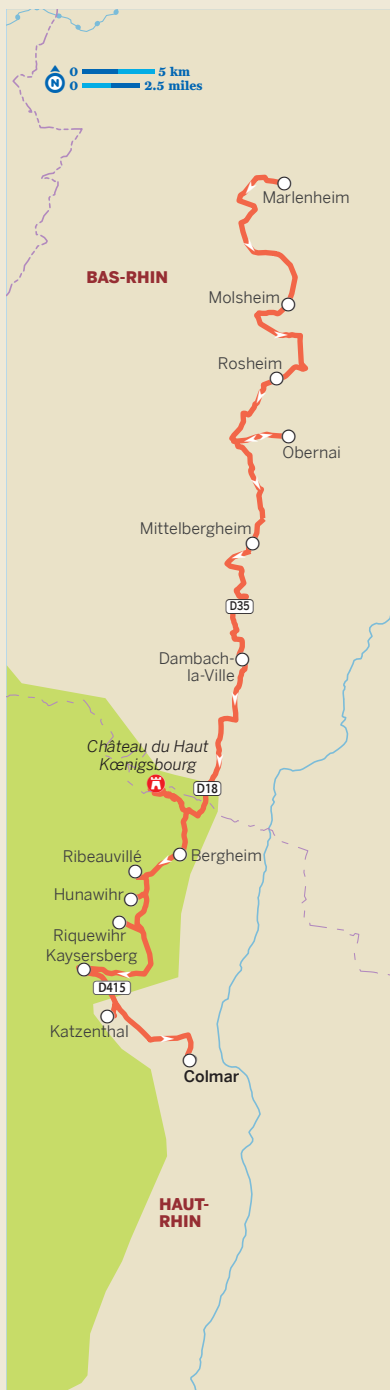
## Route des Vins d'Alsace

Weaving through lyrical landscapes, this road trip takes in the best of the vine-strewn Route des Vins d'Alsace.

From the gateway town of **Marlenheim**, a well-marked lane leads through bucolic countryside to medieval **Molsheim**, centred on a square dominated by the step-gabled Renaissance *metzigg* (butcher's shop). Continue south to **Rosheim**, where the striking Romanesque Église St-Pierre-St-Paul raises eyebrows with its, ahem, copulating gargoyles! Step inside for a moment of quiet contemplation before swinging south to pretty, half-timbered **Obernai** (p362) to explore the market square and château-topped vineyard trail.

Views of the forest-cloaked Vosges unfold as you meander south to the sleepy hamlet of **Mittelbergheim** (p363), pausing to taste the local *grand cru* wines at award-winning Domaine Gilg. Even higher peaks slide into view as you cruise south to cellar-studded **Dambach-la-Ville** (p364), embraced by 14th-century town walls, and catch your first tantalising glimpse of the turrets of 900-year-old **Château du Haut Koenigsbourg** (p365). After detouring for astounding views from the castle ramparts – which reach to the Black Forest and Alps on cloudless days – rewind time roaming the cobbled streets in half-timbered **Bergheim** (p365). Curving alleys hide cosy *winstubs* (traditional Alsatian wine taverns) in tower-speckled **Ribeauvillé** (p366) nearby.

You'll definitely see storks in **Hunawihr** (p367) at the NaturOparC; come in spring to coo over hatchlings. Allow time for serendipitous strolls in fairest-of-them-all **Riquewihr** (p367) – pure fairy-tale stuff with its procession of half-timbered houses painted pastel colours as bright as the macarons sold by its patisseries. Contemplate the Renaissance town hall and the house of Nobel Peace Prize-winner Albert Schweitzer in riverside **Kaysersberg** (p368), then wend your way south to little-known **Katzenthal** (p369) for organic wine tasting and vineyard walks at family-run Vignoble Klur. Wrap up your tour with culture and Michelin-starred dining in canal-woven **Colmar** (p369), the enchanting Alsatian wine capital and birthplace of Statue of Liberty creator Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi.



## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

2.4 million

### REGIONAL CAPITAL

Orléans

### BEST BLOODY HISTORY

Château Royal de Blois (p403)

### BEST DUNGEON

Cité Royale de Loches (p419)

### BEST HORSES

École Nationale d'Équitation (p422)



### WHEN TO GO

#### Late Apr–early May

The Fêtes de Jeanne d'Arc in Orléans culminate with a military parade on 8 May.

#### May & Jun

Cycle verdant back roads and bike paths from château to château before the summer crowds.

#### Sep & Oct

Go wine tasting during harvest season; the châteaux are less crowded now.







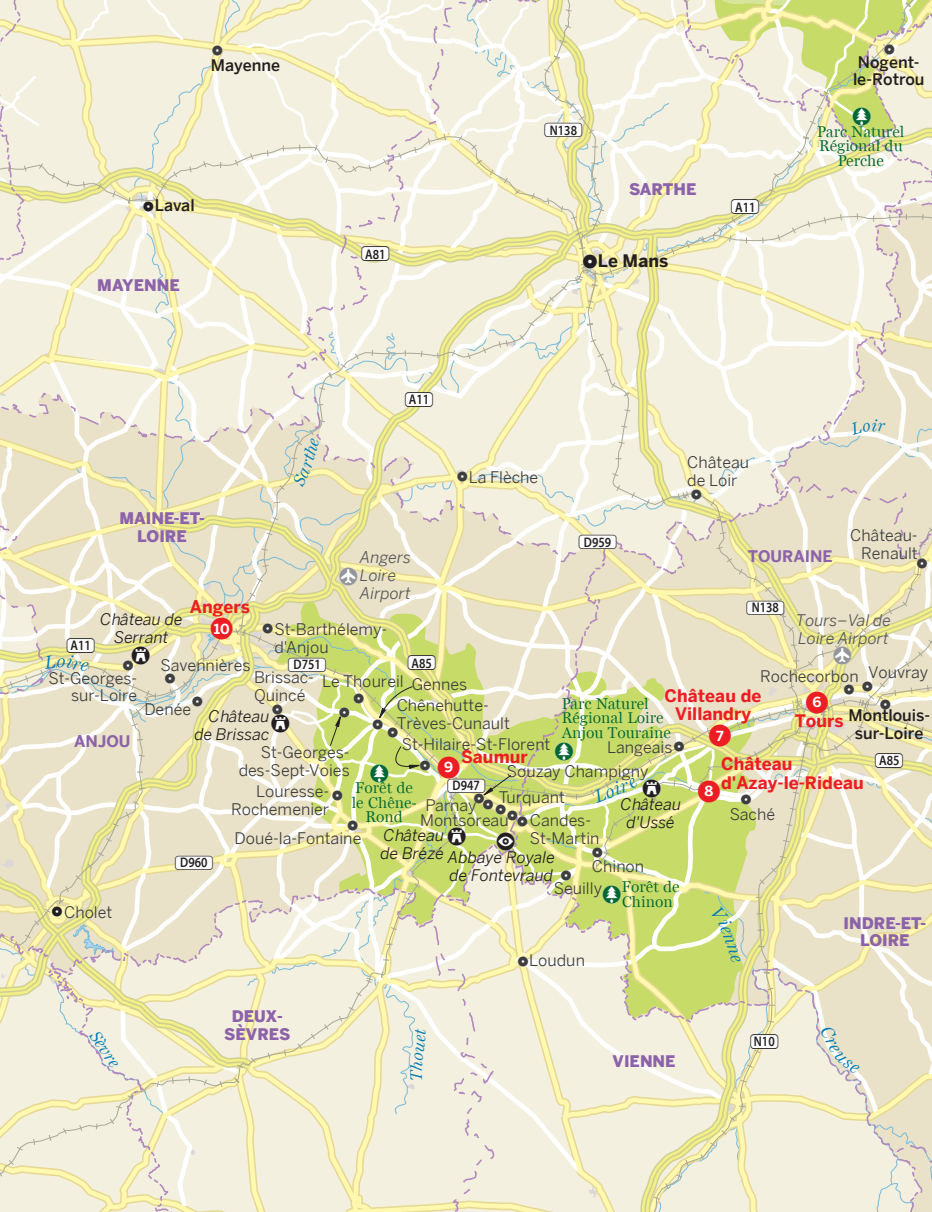
## The Loire Valley

**I**f it's French splendour, style and gastronomy you seek, the Loire Valley will exceed your expectations, no matter how great. Poised on the crucial frontier between northern and southern France – and just a short train or autoroute ride from Paris – the region was once of immense strategic importance. Kings, queens, dukes and nobles came here to build feudal castles and, later on, sumptuous pleasure palaces – that's why this fertile river valley is sprinkled with hundreds of France's most opulent aristocratic estates, many sporting crenellated towers, soaring cupolas and glittering banquet halls. The Loire Valley is also known for its outstanding wines (red, white, rosé and sparkling) and lively, sophisticated cities, including Orléans, Blois, Tours and Angers.

### INCLUDES

Orléanais . . . . .	399	Amboise . . . . .	415
Orléans . . . . .	399	Azay-le-Rideau . . . . .	418
Blésois . . . . .	402	Loches . . . . .	419
Blois . . . . .	403	Chinon . . . . .	420
Touraine . . . . .	410	Anjou . . . . .	422
Tours . . . . .	410	Saumur . . . . .	422
		Angers . . . . .	428





## The Loire Valley Highlights

- 1** **Château de Chambord** (p407) Climbing the stairway to the turreted rooftop of the Loire's most exuberant château.
- 2** **Blois** (p403) Seeing the architectural transition from Flamboyant Gothic to early

Renaissance at the Château Royal de Blois.

- 3** **Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire** (p409) Immersing yourself in striking contemporary art and avant-garde gardens.

- 4** **Amboise** (p415) Strolling through Italian Renaissance-style gardens.

- 5** **Château de Chenonceau** (p414) Admiring elegant arches, historic gardens and fabulous art.



**6 Tours** (p410) Exploring museums and nearby châteaux by day and partying by night.

**7 Château de Villandry** (p417) Wandering meticulously tended, strictly

geometrical flower and vegetable gardens.

**8 Château d'Azay-le-Rideau** (p418) Appreciating the gardens and fine furnishings of this serene island château.

**9 Saumur** (p422) Enjoying fantastic food, great local wines and equestrian virtuosity.

**10 Angers** (p428) Searching for dragons, angels and allegories in Château d'Angers' Apocalypse Tapestry.

## History

In Roman times the Loire was one of Gaul's most important transport arteries. The earliest châteaux were medieval fortresses established in the 9th century to fend off marauding Vikings. By the 11th century, massive walls, fortified keeps and moats were must-haves for the region's querulous potentates.

During the Hundred Years War (1337–1453) the Loire marked one of the boundaries between French and English forces, and the area was ravaged by fierce fighting. After Charles VII regained his crown with the help of Joan of Arc, the Loire emerged as the centre of French court life. The French nobility, and then the aristocracy, took to building extravagant châteaux as expressions of their wealth and influence.

François I (r 1515–47) made his mark by introducing ornate Renaissance palaces to the Loire. Henri II (r 1547–59), Catherine de Médicis (his wife) and Diane de Poitiers (his mistress) pursued their bitter personal rivalries from castle to castle, while Henri's son Henri III (r 1573–89) used Blois' castle to assassinate two of his greatest rivals before being assassinated himself less than a year later.

## Tours

### Bus

A variety of private companies offer well-organised minibus itineraries, taking in various combinations of Azay-le-Rideau, Villandry, Cheverny, Chambord, Chenonceau, Langeais, Ussé and vineyards offering wine tasting. Many are also happy to create custom-designed tours. Half-day trips cost between €26 and €40 per person, while full-day trips cost about €60, not including admission fees (on which you often get slight discounts). You can reserve at the tourist offices in Tours (p412) or Amboise (p417), from where most tours depart, or via their websites; last-minute spots are often available.

### Boat

The Loire's currents are often too unpredictable for safe navigation, but the river and its tributaries are not completely off limits. Check at tourist offices, in person or via their websites, for excursions on traditional shallow-draft boats and kayak rental; the Tours, Amboise and Saumur/Candes-St-Martin areas offer several options.

## Specialised Tours

Tourist offices (and websites), eg the one in Tours, can supply details on specialised tours with themes such as cycling and wine tasting. Saumur is particularly rich in equestrian options. Also ask at tourist offices about taking an exhilarating **hot-air-balloon** (*montgolfière*) ride, a gorgeously romantic way to see the Loire countryside; flights are generally possible from April to October, weather permitting, with departures early in the morning or in the evening.

## Getting There & Around

### AIR

**Tours–Val de Loire Airport** ([www.tours.aero.port.fr](http://www.tours.aero.port.fr)) has Ryanair flights to London Stansted and, seasonally, to Dublin.

### BICYCLE

The mostly flat Loire Valley is fabulous cycling country – there's nothing quite like pedalling through villages, vineyards and forests on your way from one château to the next. **La Loire à Vélo** (Loire by Bike; [www.loirebybike.co.uk](http://www.loirebybike.co.uk)) maintains 900km of signposted routes from Nevers all the way to the Atlantic, part of the Eurovelo 6 bike route that you can follow east all the way to the Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea. Pick up a free guide from tourist offices, or access information (including details on route options and bike hire) from the website. Individual *départements*, including Indre-et-Loire (Touraine), Loir-et-Cher (Blois), Loiret (Orléannais) and Maine-et-Loire (Anjou), also have their own cycling networks and brochures.

If you'd like some help with logistics, **Bagafrance** ([bagafrance.com](http://bagafrance.com)) ferries around cyclists, their bikes and their luggage. For some extra power, consider renting an electric bike. Or consider a tour, either guided or unaccompanied, with your itinerary, accommodation and luggage transfer set up in advance.

**Détours de Loire** ( Tours 02 47 61 22 23; <https://detoursdeloire.com>; classic bike per day/week €16/61, additional day €5, tandem €50/170, electric €38/158) Has rental agencies and partners up and down the Loire, with year-round offices in Tours and Blois. Bikes can be picked up and dropped off at your hotel for a small surcharge; emergency repairs en route are free. Kids' bikes and child seats are available. Can arrange luggage transfer and self-guided bike tours. Deposit required.

**Les Châteaux à Vélo** ([www.chateauxvelo.co.uk](http://www.chateauxvelo.co.uk)) Funded by 65 Blois-area municipalities, this project established over 400km of marked bike routes to and around Blois, Chambord, Cheverny and Chaumont-sur-Loire. Get route

maps, links for a useful smartphone app and the latest weather reports from the website, or pick up brochures at local tourist offices.

## BUS

Blablabus (Ouibus; [www.ouibus.com](http://www.ouibus.com)) links Paris (including Paris City Centre – Bercy Seine) with Orléans, Blois and Tours for much less than the train – as little as €15 on some dates.

## TRAIN

Tours is the Loire Valley's main rail hub. TGV trains connect Tours and/or St-Pierre-des-Corps (4km east of Tours) with Paris' Gare Montparnasse (one hour), Charles de Gaulle Airport (1½ hours) and Bordeaux (two hours). Orléans, Blois, Amboise and other Loire towns have direct TER rail links to Paris' Gare d'Austerlitz and Nantes (two hours). TGVs link Angers with Paris' Gare Montparnasse (1½ hours).

## ORLÉANAIS

Taking its name from the historic city of Orléans, famed for its close association with Joan of Arc, the Orléanais is the northeastern gateway to the Loire Valley. Upriver (southwest) from Orléans are the ecclesiastical treasures of St-Benoît-sur-Loire and Germigny-des-Prés, while to the south lies the marshy **Sologne**, once a favourite hunting ground for France's kings and princes.

## Orléans

POP 116,685

There's a big-city buzz on the broad boulevards and in the sparkling boutiques of Orléans, just 100km south of Paris. An important settlement by the time of the Roman conquest, the city sealed its place in history in 1429 when a young peasant girl by the name of Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc) rallied the armies of Charles VII and brought about a spectacular rout against the besieging English forces, a key turning point in the Hundred Years War. Six centuries later, the Maid of Orléans – whose canonisation centennial was celebrated in 2020 – still exerts a powerful hold on the French imagination, and all around town, you'll find statues (at least seven), stained-glass windows and museum exhibits dedicated to her exploits. Other attractions in the old city include an outstanding art museum and a breathtaking cathedral.

## Sights

Pay the admission fee at any of Orléans' five city-run museums – including the Musée des Beaux-Arts, the Maison de Jeanne d'Arc, the Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie and, from 2021, the completely renovated **Muséum d'Orléans pour la Biodiversité et l'Environnement** (MOBE; [www.orleans-metropole.fr](http://www.orleans-metropole.fr); 6 rue Marcel Proust) – and you can visit all the others for free on the same day.

### ★ Cathédrale Ste-Croix

CATHEDRAL

([www.orleans.catholique.fr](http://www.orleans.catholique.fr); place Ste-Croix; ☉9.15am-5pm or later, to 7pm Jun-Sep, to 11pm Thu-Sat Jul-Aug) In a country of jaw-dropping churches, soaring Cathedral of the Holy Cross still raises a gasp. Originally built in the 13th century, it underwent mostly Gothic tinkering by successive monarchs after being partly blown up by Protestant zealots in 1568. Joan of Arc famously prayed here on 8 May 1429 and was greeted with a procession of thanks for saving the town; in the vast nave, 10 extraordinarily vivid stained-glass windows (1893) lavishly illustrate her life and gruesome death.

### ★ Musée des Beaux-Arts

GALLERY

(☎02 38 79 21 83; [www.orleans-metropole.fr](http://www.orleans-metropole.fr); 1 rue Fernand Rabier; adult/child €6/free; ☉10am-6pm Tue-Sat, to 8pm Fri, 1-6pm Sun) Orléans' fine-arts museum is a treat, with an excellent collection of Italian, Flemish and Dutch paintings (including works by Correggio, Velázquez and Bruegel) as well as a huge collection of work by French artists such as Léon Cogniet (1794-1880), Orléans-born Alexandre Antigna (1817-78) and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), who spent some of his youth here. France's finest collection of pastels after the Louvre includes 18th-century works by Maurice Quentin de La Tour and a self-portrait by Jean-Baptiste Chardin.

### Hôtel Groslot

HISTORIC BUILDING

(☎02 38 79 22 30; [www.orleans-metropole.fr](http://www.orleans-metropole.fr); place de l'Étape; ☉10am-noon & 2-6pm daily, to 7pm Sat Oct-Jun, 9am-7pm Jul-Sep) **FREE** The Renaissance-style Hôtel Groslot was built between 1530 and 1550 as a private mansion for lawyer and bailiff Jacques Groslot; it became Orléans' city hall during the Revolution. The neo-Renaissance interior decor (1850s) is extravagant, especially the ornate bedroom – now used for weddings – in which 17-year-old François II died in 1560. The Salon d'Honneur (Salle Jeanne d'Arc) is

## Orléans

0 200 m  
0 0.1 miles

THE LOIRE VALLEY ORLÉANS



richly decorated with images of St Joan. The gardens out back are lovely.

### Maison de Jeanne d'Arc

MUSEUM

(02 38 68 32 63; [www.jeannedarc.com.fr](http://www.jeannedarc.com.fr); 3 place du Général de Gaulle; adult/child €6/free; 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 2-6pm Tue-Sun

Oct-Mar) A very worthwhile 15-minute film (in French or English) tracing Joan of Arc's origins, accomplishments and portrayal over the centuries is the main attraction at the Maison de Jeanne d'Arc, a 1960s reconstruction of the 15th-century house that hosted her in April and May of 1429 (the



## Orléans

### Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale Ste-Croix.....C4  
2 Musée des Beaux-Arts.....C4

### Sights

- 3 CERCIL – Musée-Mémorial des Enfants du Vel d'Hiv.....D4  
4 Hôtel Grosnot.....C4  
5 Maison de Jeanne d'Arc.....A5  
6 Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie.....B5

- 7 Muséum d'Orléans pour la Biodiversité et l'Environnement.....B1

### Sleeping

- 8 Hôtel de l'Abeille.....B2  
9 Hôtel Marguerite.....A6

### Eating

- 10 Halles Châtelet.....B6  
11 La Parenthèse.....B6  
12 Le Lièvre Gourmand.....C6  
13 Ver di Vin.....B5

original was destroyed by German bombing in 1940). The world's largest Joan of Arc research centre is upstairs.

**Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie** MUSEUM  
(☎02 38 79 25 60; www.orleans-metropole.fr; 21 rue Ste-Catherine; adult/child €6/free; ☺10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 1-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) An extraordinary collection of Celtic and Gallo-Roman bronzes, recovered in 1861 from the Loire's sandy bottom, are the highlight of this museum, in the Renaissance-style Hôtel Cabu (1500s). A favourite is the half-life-size horse and a wild boar. A 1st-floor room is dedicated to rare Orléans-made porcelain from the 18th and 19th centuries. Plasticised sheets in each room provide information in English.

**CERCIL – Musée-Mémorial des Enfants du Vel d'Hiv** MUSEUM  
(☎02 38 42 03 91; www.cercil.fr; 45 rue du Bourdon-Blanc; adult/child €4/free; ☺10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Tue, 2-6pm Sun) Between 1941 and 1943, more than 16,000 Jews were rounded up by the French police and interned in two French-run camps about 50km northeast of Orléans, Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers. After the 1942 Vel d'Hiv round-up, the adults were violently separated from their children and then deported; it was only a few weeks later, after authorisation had arrived from Berlin, that 4000 parentless, terrified children were loaded onto trains and sent to Drancy and then Auschwitz and Sobibor; only 41 survived.

Exhibits document the deportations step by step; photos serve as a moving memorial for the children. Ask at the ticket booth for a booklet in English.

## Festivals & Events

**Fêtes de Jeanne d'Arc** CULTURAL  
(www.orleans-metropole.fr; ☺29 Apr-8 May) The Orléanais have celebrated the liberation of their city by Joan of Arc since 1430. Festivities include a medieval market at Campo Santo (5 to 8 May), costume parades, concerts and, on 8 May (also a national holiday commemorating the surrender of Nazi Germany), a morning prayer service in the cathedral (at 10am) and a military parade (starts at about 2.50pm at the cathedral).

## Sleeping

★ **Hôtel de l'Abeille** HISTORIC HOTEL €€  
(☎02 38 53 54 87; www.hotel-abeille.com; 64 rue Alsace-Lorraine; d €93-125, q €205; ☎) Floorboards creak and vintage posters adorn the lobby walls at this classic, 23-room hotel, built in 1903 and run by the same family for five generations. The atmosphere is deliciously old-fashioned, with real oak parquet, wildly ornate wallpapers and burnished antique furniture; bathrooms are spacious and sparkling. No lift. Call or email for the best deals.

**Hôtel Marguerite** HOTEL €€  
(☎02 38 53 74 32; www.hotel-marguerite.fr; 14 place du Vieux Marché; d €70-115, q €145-165; @☎) This cheerful establishment wins points for its central location, friendly reception and modern, practical rooms, well lit by French windows. 'Supérieure' rooms are very spacious. A plaster Sologne deer, made by a local artist, presides over the bright breakfast room. Parking up the block in an underground lot (€3) is a breeze. Offers free locked bike parking.

## **i** THE ORLÉANS WITNESSES

As you wander around the old city, keep an eye out for the 50 Témoins d'Orléans ([www.lestemoins-orleans.fr](http://www.lestemoins-orleans.fr)), rust-patinaed columns delicately engraved with scenes from the history of the city. Embedded in each one is a QR code – use your smartphone's QR reader to access historical information in French and English. The tourist office can supply a map.

## **🍴** Eating

Orléans' main dining street, 1km-long rue de Bourgogne, has plenty of small restaurants and cafes, including a cluster of inexpensive Indian and other Asian restaurants (between Nos 150 and 161) and an informal Senegalese joint at No 144. For more cafes, head to parallel rue du Poirier.

### Halles Châtelet

MARKET €

([www.halleschatelet.fr](http://www.halleschatelet.fr); place du Châtelet; ☎ 8am-8pm Tue-Sat, to 1pm Sun) The two dozen food stalls include three specialising in fruits and veggies, three excellent *fromageries* and a *boulangerie*.

### La Parenthèse

FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 38 62 07 50; [www.restaurant-la-parenthese.com](http://www.restaurant-la-parenthese.com); 26 place du Châtelet; menus lunch €20, dinner €28-32; ☎ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Mon-Fri) Chef David Sterne turns fresh produce from nearby market stalls, including heritage vegetables, into traditional, family-style French cuisine, creating seasonal menus that change every two months. Book ahead if you can.

### Ver di Vin

FRENCH €€

(☎ 02 38 54 47 42; [www.verdivin.com](http://www.verdivin.com); 2 rue des Trois Maries; lunch/dinner menu €25/35; ☎ noon-1.30pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat, wine & snacks 7pm-midnight or 1am Tue-Sat; 📶) Hidden away in a vaulted medieval cellar, this *restaurant à vin* is known for the excellence of both its *cuisine de maison traditionnelle* (traditional French home cooking) and its wine list; 30 vintages are available by the glass. Specialties, some with subtle Japanese influences, include *feuilleté de caille* (quail wrapped in pastry) and dishes prepared with mushrooms. Reservations recommended on Friday and Saturday.

## ★ Le Lièvre Gourmand

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 02 38 53 66 14; <https://lelievregourmand.fr>; 28 quai du Châtelet; lunch menu €44, other menus €55-82; ☎ meals begin noon-12.30pm Thu-Sun & 8-8.30pm Wed-Mon) You'll get the perfect amuse-bouche with your aperitif upstairs in the *salon* while you decide on a set of French, Asian and fusion courses, each a creative duo of hot and cold. Delicate foams and infusions in unexpected combinations use seasonal ingredients, such as new asparagus in spring. It's a good idea to book ahead.

## **i** Orientation

Orléans' mostly pedestrianised *Vieille Ville* (old city) is bounded by the Loire (to the south), colonnaded rue Royale (to the west), rue Jeanne d'Arc (to the north) and rue du Bourdon Blanc (to the east). Fashionable rue de la République, the city's main shopping precinct, links place du Martroi with the train station.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 38 24 05 05; [www.tourisme-orleansmetropole.com](http://www.tourisme-orleansmetropole.com); 2 place de l'Étape; ☎ 9.30am or 10am-6pm or 7pm daily; 📶) Offers a new audioguide (€7), available in six languages, that takes you around the cathedral and the city centre in 2½ to three hours. Also recommended: the Destination Orléans *appli* (app), available from Google Play and the App Store in seven languages. Sells English books on Joan of Arc and tickets to cultural events.

## **i** Getting There & Around

### TRAIN

The city's two stations, **Orléans-Centre** and **Gare des Aubrais-Orléans** (the latter is 2.5km north), are linked to each other by tram and frequent shuttle trains; many trains stop at both stations.

**Blois-Chambord** €7 to €12, 26 to 57 minutes, 16 to 24 daily.

**Paris (Gare d'Austerlitz)** €10 to €21, 1¼ hours, 13 to 24 daily.

**Tours** €10 to €20.20, one to 1½ hours, 14 to 22 daily.

## BLÉSOIS

The peaceful, verdant countryside around the former royal seat of Blois is home to

some of France's finest châteaux, including graceful Cheverny, arty Chaumont-sur-Loire and the cupola-capped *château extraordinaire* to top them all, Chambord.

## Blois

POP 47,715


Towering above the northern bank of the Loire, Blois' royal château, one-time feudal seat of the powerful counts of Blois, offers a gripping introduction – the best in region – to key periods in French history and architecture. Parts of the city still have a medieval vibe and several outstanding châteaux are right nearby, making the Blois an excellent first stop in the Loire Valley.

### Sights

*Billets combinés* (combo tickets; €20 to €33), sold at the château, Maison de la Magie and Fondation du Douce, can save you some cash.

### ★ **Château Royal de Blois**

CHATEAU

( 02 54 90 33 33; [www.chateaublois.fr](http://www.chateaublois.fr); place du Château; adult/child €12/6.50, audioguide €3; ☀ 9am–6.30pm or 7pm Apr–early Nov, 10am–5pm early Nov–Mar) Seven French kings lived in Blois' royal château, whose four grand wings were built during four distinct periods in French architecture: Gothic (13th century), Flamboyant Gothic (1498–1501), early Renaissance (1515–20) and classical (1630s). You can easily spend a half-day immersing yourself in the château's dramatic and bloody history and its extraordinary architecture. In July and August, a 20-minute introduction may be offered in English – ask at the ticket desk.

The most famous part of the **Gothic wing** is the richly painted **State Room**, from the 13th century. Along one wall, interactive screens illustrate the development of the château over the centuries.

In the **Renaissance wing** you'll find the extraordinary spiral **loggia staircase**,

## WINE IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

Splendid scenery and densely packed vineyards make the Loire Valley an outstanding wine-touring destination, with a range of excellent reds, rosés, whites, dessert wines and *crémants* (sparkling wines) to savour and buy. Equipped with *Routes des Vins du Val de Loire* (On the Loire Valley Wine Route), a free map from the winegrowers association ([www.vinsvalde Loire.fr](http://www.vinsvalde Loire.fr)), or the *Loire Valley Vineyards* booklet, available at area tourist offices and *maisons des vins* (wine visitor centres), you can put together a web of wonderful wine-tasting itineraries, drawing on 350 wine cellars.

Anjou-Saumur, around Angers, has 19 Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée (AOCs) while the Touraine area, stretching from Chinon upriver to Orléans, has 17. The Vins du Val de Loire website ([www.vinsvalde Loire.fr/en/vineyard-map](http://www.vinsvalde Loire.fr/en/vineyard-map)) has a colourful, interactive map. The predominant red is cabernet franc, though you'll also find cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir and others. Appellations (AOCs) include Anjou, Saumur-Champigny, Bourgueil and Chinon.

For whites, Vouvray's chenin blancs are excellent, while Sancerre and the appellation across the Loire River, Pouilly-Fumé, produce great sauvignon blancs. Cour-Cheverny is made from the lesser-known romorantin grape. Savennières, near Angers, has both a dry and a sweet chenin blanc.

The bubbly appellation Crémant de Loire spans many communities, but you can easily find it around Montrichard (eg Château Monmousseau); other bubbly include Saumur Brut and Vouvray.

One of the most densely packed stretches for wine tasting along the Loire River itself is around Saumur. Towns with multiple tasting rooms (from west to east) include **St-Hilaire-St-Florent** (where you'll find Ackerman, Bouvet Ladubay, Langlois-Château and Veuve Amiot), **Souzay Champigny** (home to Château Villeneuve and Clos des Cordeliers) and **Parnay** (Château de Parnay and Château de Targé).

Just east of Tours, another hot spot includes **Rochecorbon** (home to Blanc Foussy), **Vouvray** (Domaine Huet, Château Moncontour and several others) and **Montlouis-sur-Loire**. You'll find a *cave des producteurs* representing multiple producers in each of the latter two towns.

## Blois



## Blois

## 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Château Royal de Blois.....B3  
 2 Maison de la Magie .....C3

## 🗺️ Sights

- 3 Cathédrale St-Louis.....D2  
 4 Centre de la Résistance, de la  
 Déportation et de la Mémoire.....B3  
 5 Fondation du Doule.....B1  
 6 Hôtel de Villebrême.....D2  
 7 Maison de la BD.....C3  
 8 Maison des Acrobates.....C2  
 9 Old City.....C2

## 🛏️ Sleeping

- 10 Côté Loire .....B4  
 11 Hôtel Anne de Bretagne.....B3  
 12 La Maison de Thomas.....C2

## 🍴 Eating

- 13 Food Market .....C3  
 14 Le Triboulet .....C3  
 15 L'Orangerie du Château.....B3

## 🎪 Entertainment

- 16 Son et Lumière.....B3

## 🛍️ Shopping

- 17 La Maison des Parapluies.....B3

decorated with fierce salamanders and curly Fs, heraldic symbols of François I. Other highlights include the **Queen's Chamber**, in which Catherine de Médicis (Henri II's Machiavellian wife) died in 1589, and the **King's Chamber**, the setting for one of the

bloodiest episodes in the château's history. In 1588 Henri III had his arch-rival, the ultra-Catholic Duke Henri I de Guise, murdered by royal bodyguards (the king is said to have hidden behind a tapestry while the dastardly deed was done). He had the duke's

brother, the Cardinal de Guise, killed the next day. The bloodletting of the Wars of Religion continued when Henri III himself was murdered just eight months later by a vengeful friar. Dramatic and very graphic oil paintings illustrate these gruesome events next door in the **Council Chamber**. The **Garden Belvédère** offers fine exterior views.

In the Flamboyant Gothic **Louis XII wing** (look for his heraldic emblem, the porcupine), the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Fine Art Museum) – up the spiral staircase from the State Room – displays 300 16th- to 19th-century paintings, sculptures and tapestries.

Admission includes use of a Histopad, which provides augmented-reality views of four rooms; it's available in 11 languages. Kids aged five to 12 can guide their parents through the château with an interactive app, **Parcours Enfants** (Path for Children), available in French and English (wi-fi for downloading is available just past the ticket counters). Signs are in French and English; brochures are available in 15 languages.

From early April to late September, a **Son et Lumière** (Sound & Light Show; ☎ 02 54 90 33 33; www.chateaublois.fr; Château Royal de Blois; adult/child €11/6.50; ☀ 10pm or 10.30pm early Apr-late Sep) brings the château's history and architecture to life with dramatic lighting and narration.

★ **Maison de la Magie** MUSEUM  
(☎ 02 54 90 33 33; www.maisondelamagie.fr; 1 place du Château; adult/child €11/6.50; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm daily early Apr-1 Nov, closed mornings Mon-Fri 1-20 Sep, also open 2-6.30pm 21-30 Dec; 🚶) This museum of magic occupies the one-time home of watchmaker, inventor and conjurer Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin (1805–71), after whom the American magician Harry Houdini named himself. Dragons emerge roaring from the windows every half hour, while inside the museum has exhibits on Robert-Houdin and the history of magic, displays of optical trickery, and several daily magic shows.

**Old City** HISTORIC SITE  
Stretching east along the hillside from rue Porte Chartraine, Blois' medieval and Renaissance old town is well worth a stroll. The façade of **Maison des Acrobates** (3bis place St-Louis) – one of Blois' few surviving 15th-century houses – is decorated with wooden sculptures of figures from medieval fables. Between there and the cathedral is the **Hôtel de Villebrême** (13 rue Pierre de

Blois), another half-timbered, 15th-century townhouse.

The Gothic-style **Cathédrale St-Louis** (place St-Louis; ☀ 9am or 10am-6pm or 7pm), rebuilt after a terrible storm in 1678, has a western façade mixing late-Gothic and neoclassical elements. Almost all the stained glass, bearing enigmatic Latin inscriptions, was created by Dutch artist Jan Dibbets in 2000.

Lovely panoramas unfold across town from the peaceful **Jardins de l'Évêché** (the gardens behind the cathedral) and from the top of the **Escalier Denis Papin**, a grand staircase linking rue du Palais with the commercial precinct around rue Denis Papin.

For spectacular views, you can climb the 60m-high campanile of the strikingly modern **Basilique Notre-Dame de la Trinité** (☎ 02 54 78 18 23; www.sanctuaire-trinite.com; 10 blvd Carnot; adult/child €2/1; ☀ 10am-12.15pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 10-11am & noon-1pm Sun), built 1949, 1km northeast of the cathedral. The shop sells monastery products.

**Fondation du Doute** GALLERY  
(☎ 02 54 55 37 40; www.fondationdoudoute.fr; 14 rue de la Paix; adult/child €7.50/3.50; ☀ 2-6.30pm Wed-Sun mid-Apr-early Nov, plus Tue Jul & Aug, 2-6.30pm Fri-Sun winter, closed 20 Dec-early Feb) Avant-garde from the floorboards to the roof, this museum showcases the art and 'state of mind' of the 1960s Fluxus movement, inspired in part by the American composer John Cage, which mocked the elitism of 'high art' and sought to bring art to the people, in part through humour. Works by 50 artists 'invite visitors to call preconceptions into question'. Situated 750m north of the château.

#### DON'T MISS

##### BESPOKE BROLLIES

One of just a handful of artisanal umbrella makers in France, Nathalie Fraudeau uses six specialised machines to craft each *parapluie* (umbrella) and *ambrelle* (parasol). Visitors are welcome to drop by and watch her work at **La Maison des Parapluies** (☎ 02 54 46 99 92; www.lamaisondesparapluies.com; 2 rue des Fossés du Château; full-size umbrella €75-100, collapsible €55-70; ☀ 2.30-7pm Mon, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-7pm Tue-Sat). Special orders (including umbrellas with a customised photo printed on the dome) take two or three days.



## Centre de la Résistance, de la Déportation et de la Mémoire

MUSEUM

(☎02 54 44 67 40; www.blois.fr/crdm; 6 place Victor Hugo; adult/child €5/free; ☀10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 2-6pm Sun) Opened in 2019, this small museum covers the history of Blois during WWII, including the demarcation line between German-occupied northern France and the Vichy-ruled south, which ran along the Cher River from June 1940 to November 1942. The ticket counter has an English translation of all the signs.

## Maison de la BD

MUSEUM

(☎02 54 42 49 22; www.bdboum.com; 3 rue des Jacobins; ☀9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat) **FREE** *Bandes dessinées* (BD; adult comic books) have achieved the status of an art form in France. This museum, unique in the country, provides a rare opportunity to see original drawings by some astonishingly talented artists. Visitors are welcome to consult the small library. Hosts a **BD festival** on the third weekend in November.

## Sleeping


### Hôtel Anne de Bretagne

HOTEL €

(☎02 54 78 05 38; www.hotelannedebretagne.com; 31 av du Dr Jean Laigret; d €54-89, q €79-119; ☀reception 7am-11pm;  ) This ivy-covered hotel, in a great location midway between the train station and the château, has friendly staff, a cosy piano-equipped *salon* and 29 rooms with snow-white quilts. A three-course packed picnic lunch costs €11.50. Rents out bicycles (€16) and has free enclosed bike parking.

### Côté Loire

HOTEL €

(☎02 54 78 07 86; www.coteloire.com; 2 place de la Grève; d €62-105; ) This aptly named hotel, facing the river, has eight spotless, brightly coloured rooms, some with 500-year-old beams and/or great Loire views. The restaurant (closed Sunday and Monday; lunch/dinner *menus* €23.50/34.50) serves French cuisine in a rustic dining room and, when it's warm, on a lovely terrace. No lift. For the best rates book via their website or by phone.

### ★ La Maison de Thomas

B&amp;B €€

(☎09 81 84 44 59; www.lamaisondethomas.fr; 12 rue Beauvoir; d €88; ) A friendly welcome and five spacious rooms with large windows, high ceilings and exposed beams await you at this beautiful B&B, midway between the château and the cathedral. There's bike

storage in the interior courtyard and a wine cellar where you can sample local vintages, most of them organic.

## Eating

In the city centre, just east of rue Denis Papin, you'll find a number of restaurants and cafes along tiny, pedestrianised rue du Chant des Oiseaux and at nearby place Ave Maria. For a selection of bistros and brasseries, head to place de la Résistance (on the river) and the adjacent section of rue du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny.

## Food Market

MARKET €

(place Louis XII; ☀8am-1pm Sat) The perfect place to assemble a picnic.

## Le Triboulet

GRILL €€

(☎02 54 74 11 23; www.letriboulet.com; 18 place du Château; menus €19-24, child's menu €11; ☀noon-2pm & 7-9pm daily Jul & Aug, Tue-Sat Sep-Jun) Succulent beef, mutton and *andouillette* (tripe) sausages, in winter grilled on a wood fire right in the dining room, keep connoisseurs coming back to this traditional French restaurant and its two spacious terraces. Also serves fish. Dishes are made with local products, such as mushrooms from the Sologne (seasonal).

## L'Orangerie du Château

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎02 54 78 05 36; www.orangerie-du-chateau.fr; 1 av du Dr Jean Laigret; menus €40-88; ☀noon-1.45pm & 7-9.15pm Tue-Sat; ) Serves *cuisine gastronomique inventive* inspired by French tradition and seasonal local products, including Sologne-raised caviar and black truffles. For dessert try the house speciality, soufflé, in versions that change with the seasons.

## Orientation

Blois' partly pedestrianised commercial centre – heavily damaged by German bombs in 1940 – is on and around rue Denis Papin and rue du Commerce. From there, the château is 400m to the southwest and the old city is up the slope to the northwest.

The area up near the train station and the old Poulain chocolate factory (now housing the Institut National des Sciences Appliquées, ie National Institute of Applied Sciences) is being redeveloped into a cutting-edge, mixed-use neighbourhood, the Quartier Gare.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 54 90 41 41; www.blois-chambord.co.uk; 5 rue de la Voûte du Château;

## CHAMBORD: EXPLORING THE ESTATE

The 55-sq-km hunting reserve around the Château de Chambord (p407) – the largest walled park in Europe – is reserved for the exclusive use of very high-ranking French government officials (no French president has hunted here since at least 2010). About 10 sq km of the *domaine* (estate), north and northwest of the château, is open to the public, with marked trails for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Hire bikes, *rosalies* (pedal carts), *golfettes* (electric golf carts) and electric boats at a **rental kiosk** (☎ 02 54 50 40 00; www.chambord.org; bicycle 1/4hr €7/18, golf cart 45min €28, electric boat 30min €16-22; ☀ 10am-6.30pm Apr-early Nov) near the *embarcadère* (dock), midway between the ticket counters and the château. April to early November, carriage rides (adult/child €11/8) begin at the château's *écuries* (stables).

The reserve is a great place for wildlife spotting, especially during the deer mating season between mid-September and mid-October. Five observatories let you discreetly view the park's residents; set out at dawn or dusk to maximise your chances of spotting stags, boars, red deer and wild sheep. To visit parts of the reserve normally closed to the public, take a 1½-hour **Land Rover safari tour** (☎ 02 54 50 50 40; www.chambord.org; adult/child €18/12; ☀ up to 6 daily summer, 1-3 daily winter) conducted by French-speaking guides; most speak at least a bit of English. Call ahead to book.

☀ 9am-7pm daily Apr-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar; 📱 Can supply town maps and sells walking-tour brochures (€2), château combo tickets and events tickets. A smartphone app in French and English, 'Blois-Chambord Tour', can be downloaded via the website (click on 'Mobile App'). Luggage storage costs €5 a day.

The **Centre d'Interprétation de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine**, a visitor centre focusing on local architecture and cultural heritage, is set to open in the same building in 2021.

## 📍 Getting There & Around

### BUS

The free **Navette de Centre-Ville** (www.azalys-blois.fr), an electric shuttle bus, serves points all around the city centre, including the train station. It runs four or five times an hour from 9am to 7.24pm daily except Sunday and holidays.

The tourist office can help you figure out transport options to nearby châteaux, including minibus tours such as the ones run by **Royal Connection** (www.royal-connection.fr).

A *navette* (shuttle bus; €3 per ride) run by **Rémi** (☎ 02 54 58 55 44; www.remi-centre-valde Loire.fr) makes it possible to do a Blois–Chambord–Cheverny–Beaugard–Blois circuit on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday (daily during school-holiday periods and on public holidays) from early April to early November. Has a trailer to carry bicycles. In Blois the stop is at the train station.

### TRAIN

**Blois-Chambord train station** (av Dr Jean Laigret) is 600m west (up the hill) from Blois' château.

**Amboise** €7.50 to €9, 20 minutes, 15 to 22 daily.

**Orléans** €7 to €12, 26 to 57 minutes, 16 to 24 daily.

**Paris Gare d'Austerlitz** €15 to €30, 1¼ hours, one or two direct daily.

**Tours** €7 to €12, 28 to 49 minutes, 17 to 24 daily.

## Around Blois

### ★ Château de Chambord

CHATEAU

(☎ info 02 54 50 40 00, tour & show reservations 02 54 50 50 40; www.chambord.org; adult/child €14.50/free, parking distant/near €4/6; ☀ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar; 🚫) One of the crowning achievements of French Renaissance architecture, the Château de Chambord – with 426 rooms, 282 fireplaces and 77 staircases – is the largest, grandest and most visited château in the Loire Valley. Begun in 1519 by François I (r 1515–47) as a weekend hunting retreat, it quickly grew into one of the most ambitious – and expensive – building projects ever undertaken by a French monarch.

Construction was repeatedly halted by financial problems, design setbacks and military commitments (not to mention the kidnapping of the king's two sons in Spain). Ironically, when Chambord was finally finished after three decades of work, François found his elaborate palace too draughty, preferring instead the royal apartments in Amboise and Blois. In the end he stayed here for a total of just 72 days.

Inside the main building, a film (subtitled in five languages) provides an excellent introduction to the château's history and architecture. On the ground floor you can visit 18th-century **kitchens**, while the 1st floor is where you'll find the most interesting rooms, including the **royal bedchambers**. Furnishings were added to some sections for the château's 500th anniversary, celebrated in 2019.

Rising through the centre of the structure, the world-famous **double-helix staircase** – very possibly designed by the king's chum Leonardo da Vinci – ascends to the great lantern tower and the rooftop, where you can gaze out across the vast grounds and marvel at a veritable skyline of cupolas, domes, turrets, chimneys and lightning rods.

To get a sense of what you're looking at and add virtual-reality furnishings to some of the rooms, pick up a Histopad tablet computer (€6.50, 1½ hours), available in 12 languages, which also has versions for kids (including a treasure hunt) and people in wheelchairs. From July to September, hour-long guided tours (adult/child €5/3) in English begin daily at 11.15am.

Outdoor spectacles held in the warm season include a 45-minute **equestrian show** (☎ 02 54 50 50 40; www.chambord.org; adult/child €15.50/12, adult incl château €26; ☺ 11.45am &/ or 4pm Tue-Sun late Apr-Sep, plus Mon early Jul-late Aug) featuring horses and riders in colourful, François I-themed dress and birds of prey.

You'll find places to eat, some open only from April to December, just past the entrance pavilion, plus a restaurant in the château's inner courtyard. The gardens are perfect for picnics. Dress warmly in winter – the castle is no easier to heat now than it was five centuries ago.

Chambord is 16km east of Blois, 45km southwest of Orléans and 18km northeast of Cheverny.

### Château de Cheverny

CHATEAU

(☎ 02 54 79 96 29; www.chateau-cheverny.fr; av du Château, Cheverny; château & gardens adult/child €12.50/9; ☺ 9.15am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Mar) Perhaps the Loire's most elegantly proportioned château, Cheverny represents the zenith of French classical architecture: a perfect blend of symmetry, geometry and aesthetic order. Inside are some of the most sumptuous and elegantly furnished rooms anywhere in the Loire Valley, virtually unchanged for generations because the same family has lived here, almost continuously,

ever since the château's construction in the early 1600s by Jacques Hurault, an attendant to Louis XII. It's open 365 days a year.

Highlights downstairs include the formal **dining room**, with 34 painted wooden panels depicting the story of Don Quixote. Upstairs are the **king's bedchamber**, with ceiling murals and tapestries illustrating stories from Greek mythology, and a **children's playroom** complete with toys from the time of Napoléon III. The **arms room** is full of pikestaves, claymores, crossbows and suits of armour – including a tiny gilded one made to measure for a four-year-old duke – and a mid-17th-century Gobelins tapestry that's so well preserved you can still see the reds.

The de Vibraye family's fabulous **art collection** includes a portrait of Jeanne of Aragon by Raphael's studio, an 18th-century De la Tour pastel, and works by a who's who of court painters. In the downstairs **Galerie**, keep your eyes open for a certificate signed by US president George Washington (hint: it's hanging on the wall).

Behind the main château, the 18th-century **orangerie** – where many priceless artworks, including (apparently) the *Mona Lisa*, were stashed during WWII – is now a **tearoom** (open April to mid-November), with thick, creamy hot chocolate (€5.50 with whipped cream) prepared according to Madame de Vibraye's special recipe. Nearby there's a **labyrinth** (maze).

In the gardens about 50m beyond the giant sequoia (planted around 1870), the **kennels** house about 100 hunting dogs, a cross between Poitevins and English foxhounds. Feeding time, known as the **Soupe des Chiens**, showcases the extraordinary relationship between the dogs and their *pi-queux* (handler); it begins at 11.30am daily from April to mid-September, and on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from mid-September to March (on other days the dogs are out hunting).

Inaugurated in 2019, the canal-side **Jardin de l'Amour** features six monumental bronze sculptures, representing maternal, fraternal and erotic love, by the Swedish sculptor Gudmar Olovson (1936-2017).

Fans of Tintin might find the Château de Cheverny's façade strangely familiar: Hergé used it as a model (minus the two end towers) for Moulinsart (Marlinspike) Hall, the ancestral home of Tintin's irascible sidekick, Captain Haddock. Devotees large and small

may enjoy **Les Secrets de Moulinsart** (Château de Cheverny; adult/child €4.50/4; 🏰), whose interactive exhibits explore the world of Tintin with recreated scenes, thunder and other special effects.

The château's self-guided-tour brochure is available in 12 languages. Kids aged seven to 14 may enjoy *Secrets of Cheverny*, a free booklet of puzzles and games.

Cheverny is 14km southeast of Blois and 18km southwest of Chambord.

### ★ Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire

CHATEAU

(📞02 54 20 99 22; www.domaine-chaumont.fr; adult/child late Apr-early Nov €19/12, early Nov-late Apr €14/8; 🕒9.30am or 10am-5.30pm or 6pm daily, to 8pm late Apr-Aug) Set on a strategic bluff with sweeping views along the Loire, Chaumont-sur-Loire has turned itself into one of most engaging and exciting of the Loire castles. The château itself has a medieval exterior (cylindrical towers, a sturdy drawbridge) and an interior courtyard that is very much of the Renaissance, but far more enthralling are the world-class exhibitions of striking, nature-themed **contemporary art** (including exceptional photography); and the **Festival International des Jardins** (🕒late Apr-early Nov), for which 30 magnificent gardens are created each year by jury-selected teams led by visual artists, architects, set designers and landscape gardeners.

A defensive château was first built on this spot in the late 900s, but most of the present castle was constructed between 1468 and 1566. Following the death of Henri II in 1559, Catherine de Médicis (his widow) forced Diane de Poitiers (his mistress and her second cousin) to accept Chaumont in exchange for the grander surroundings of Chenonceau. Savvy Diane earned considerable sums from Chaumont's vast landholdings but stayed here only occasionally.

In the second half of the 18th century, the château's owner, Jacques-Donatien Le Ray, a supporter of the American Revolution and an intimate of Benjamin Franklin's, removed the decrepit north wing. In 1875, at age 17, Princess de Broglie (pronounced 'broy'), heiress to the Say sugar fortune, bought the château and thoroughly renovated and furnished it.

Out in the 32ha park, don't miss the brick **Écuries** (stables), an outbuilding constructed in 1877 to house the Broglies' horses in equine luxury. In addition to a fine collection of 19th-century equestrian gear and

## i CHÂTEAUX DISCOUNTS

You can save money on visits to many Blois- and Amboise-area châteaux – and avoid waiting in line – by buying a **Pass Châteaux** multi-site discount ticket (€35 to €66). For information, contact the tourist offices in Blois and at Chambord, Chaumont and Cheverny.

horse-drawn carriages of surprisingly varied design, there are installations of striking contemporary art.

During the garden festival – when the **Prés du Gouloup** perennial gardens are also open – you can easily spend the whole day here; the five places to eat include a family-friendly buffet. It's a good idea to rent an informative **audiovideo guide** (a tablet computer; €4), available in 10 languages for adults and four languages for kids; the app can be downloaded onto smartphones from iTunes and Google Play.

The Château de Chaumont is 19km southwest of Blois. Trains link Onzain, a 2.5km walk across the Loire from the château, with Blois (€3, eight to 12 minutes, nine to 19 daily) and Tours (€90, 30 minutes, nine to 17 daily).

## 🍴 Sleeping & Eating

### Relais de Chambord

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(📞02 54 81 01 01; www.relaisdechambord.com; place St-Louis, Chambord; d from €170; 📶📺📞) The Château de Chambord's former kennels are now a 55-room luxury hotel with larger-than-life views of the château from some of the rooms and a sensational bar and restaurant terrace. Contemporary rooms are country-manoir-chic, dining is modern French and there's a spa.

The hotel has added a luxurious barge suite afloat the Château de Chambord's moat to its four-star repertoire.

### ★ La Madeleine de Proust

FRENCH €€

(📞02 54 20 94 80; http://lamadeleinedeproust.business.site; 31-33 rue du Maréchal Leclerc, Chaumont-sur-Loire; 2/3-course menus €23/30; 🕒noon-1.45pm Thu-Tue, 7-8.45pm Mon & Thu-Sat, plus 7-8.45pm Sun & Tue Jul-Sep) Outstanding *semi-gastronomique* French cuisine, reasonably priced, served impeccably and with a smile. Specialities include *soupière tête de lion* (a crust-topped stew, served in a tureen) and, for dessert, madeleines.

## TOURAINÉ

Often dubbed the 'Garden of France', the Touraine region is known for its rich food, tasty cheeses and famously pure French accent, as well as a first-rate line-up of glorious châteaux: some medieval (Langeais and Loches), others Renaissance (Azay-le-Rideau, Villandry and Chenonceau). The vibrant capital, Tours, offers plenty of good restaurants, château tours and public-transport options.

### Tours

POP 138,616

Bustling Tours is a smart and vivacious city, with an impressive medieval quarter, fine museums, well-tended parks and a university of some 30,000 students. Combining the sophisticated style of Paris with the conservative sturdiness of central France, Tours makes an ideal staging post for exploring the castles of Touraine.

#### Sights

Landmarks around central Tours, from Vieux Tours east to the cathedral, are beautifully illuminated from nightfall until midnight or 1am. For a walking tour, pick up the free *Parcours Lumière* brochure at the tourist office.

**★ Musée du Compagnonnage** MUSEUM  
(☎ 02 47 21 62 20; www.museecompaonnage.fr; 8 rue Nationale; adult/child €5.80/4; ☺ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm, closed Tue mid-Sep–mid-Jun) This extraordinary museum – an absolute gem! – spotlights France's renowned *compagnonnages*, guild organisations of skilled craftspeople who have created everything from medieval cathedrals to the Statue of Liberty. Dozens of professions – from carpentry to saddle-making to locksmithing – are celebrated here with masterpieces handcrafted from wood, wrought iron, bronze, stone, brick, clay, leather and sugar. Standouts include exquisite wooden architectural models of elaborate towers and a miniature wrought-iron gate that took 14 years to make.

A new entrance with wheelchair access should be completed in 2021.

**★ Musée des Beaux-Arts** GALLERY  
(☎ 02 47 05 68 73; www.mba.tours.fr; 18 place François Sicard; adult/child €6/3; ☺ 9am-12.45pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) This superb fine-arts

museum, in an 18th-century archbishop's palace, features paintings, sculpture, furniture and *objets d'art* from the 14th to 20th centuries. Highlights include paintings by Delacroix, Degas and Monet, a rare Rembrandt miniature and a Rubens *Madonna and Child*. Outside there's a magnificent cedar of Lebanon planted in 1804 and, behind it, a flowery garden. Tickets are valid all day.

From early July to early September, a dazzling, 20-minute sound-and-light show, **Les Nuits Renaissance**, is projected on the art museum's façade at 10.45pm in July and 10.15pm in August and September. Admission is free.

**Cathédrale St-Gatien** CHURCH  
(www.paroisse-cathedrale-tours.fr; place de la Cathédrale; ☺ 8.30am-8pm) With its flying buttresses, gargoyles and twin Renaissance-style towers (70m) – and, inside, Gothic vaulting, dazzling stained glass and a towering baroque organ (in the south transept arm) – this cathedral cuts a striking figure. Near the entrance, a rack has brochures in a dozen languages on its history and architecture. English signs in the choir explicate the luminous stained glass; some of it dates from the 13th century and some was created in the 21st (eg in the north transept arm).

**Jardin Botanique** GARDENS  
(☎ 02 47 21 62 67; www.tours.fr; 35 bd Tonnellé; ☺ 7.45am-7.30pm daily, to 9pm Jun-Aug, to 5.30pm Nov-Feb; 🆓) **FREE** Founded in 1843, Tours' delightful 5.8-hectare botanical gardens have a tropical greenhouse, a medicinal herb garden, a small zoo and children's playgrounds. Situated 2km west of place Jean Jaurès, the gardens are served by Fil Bleu bus 15 from place Jean Jaurès or bus 4 from the riverfront; get off at the Bretonneau or Tonnellé stops.

#### Sleeping

**★ People Hostel** HOSTEL €  
(☎ 02 36 43 50 74; https://thepeoplehostel.com; 84 av de Grammont; dm €19-30, d €40-80, q €70-110; 🚻) Opened in 2019, this establishment – with 138 beds in 46 rooms – is everything a 21st-century hostel should be, with spacious, cycling-themed public spaces that are great for meeting both locals and travellers. At the bar-restaurant (open noon to 2pm and 7pm to 10pm), a house-made three-course *menu* costs just €16.50, and on Sundays there's a hugely popular brunch buffet (€22.50).



Parking in the area is free except along av de Grammont.

★ **Hôtel L'Adresse** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €  
 (📍 02 47 20 85 76; www.hotel-ladresse.com; 12 rue de la Rôtisserie; s from €59, d €80-130; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Looking for Parisian chic in provincial Tours? L'Adresse is the address! On a pedestrianised street in the old quarter, this place has 17 rooms in calm creams and tans with bright bedspreads, designer sinks, sparkling bathrooms, ultra-soundproofed windows and, on the 3rd floor, 17th-century rafters. No lift.

★ **Hôtel Ronsard** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €  
 (📍 02 47 05 25 36; www.hotel-ronsard.com; 2 rue Pimbert; s €63-77, d €73-85; 🍷 🍷 🍷) A favourite of actors and ballet dancers performing at the nearby Grand Théâtre, this quiet, 20-room hotel, built in 1920, offers easy comfort and good value. The sleek rooms are decorated in muted tones of grey, brown and cream. No lift.

**Hôtel Val de Loire** HOTEL €  
 (📍 02 47 05 37 86; www.hotelvalde Loire.fr; 33 bd Heurteloup; d €68-108, q €95-148; 🍷 🍷) Bright-red banisters, friendly staff and upbeat rooms welcome you to 14 well-kept rooms, four with (non-working) marble fireplaces and one with direct garden access. The decor blends antique furnishings, striped bedspreads and large windows. Rooms on the 3rd floor have air-con. No lift.

**Hôtel Oceania L'Univers Tours** HOTEL €€€  
 (📍 02 47 05 37 12; www.oceaniahotels.com/hotel-lunivers-tours; 5 bd Heurteloup; d €120-230; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) Since it opened in 1846, everyone from Ernest Hemingway to Winston Churchill to Thomas Edison has bunked at the 91-room L'Univers – check out their portraits on the lobby's balcony mural, which is crowded with famous guests. Amenities include a pool, spa, hammam, fitness centre and excellent French restaurant. For the best rates, check the website or phone.

## 🍴 Eating

Tours has two main dining districts. Fine French restaurants can be found in **Vieux Tours**, especially on and around place du Grand Marché (place du Monstre) and perpendicular rue du Grand Marché, and around the perimeter of place Gaston Pailhou (the covered market). About 1km east, edgier, pedestrianised **rue Colbert** offers small, good-value French restaurants as well

as international cuisines ranging from Indian to Lebanese and Ethiopian to Argentine; there are also several food shops.

**Halles de Tours** MARKET €  
 (www.halles-de-tours.com; place Gaston Pailhou; ☀️ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm Sun & holidays; 📍) Market stalls – 32 of them – sell everything you could want for a picnic, including the finest cheeses, bread, wine and prepared dishes. Many stalls close from 1pm to 3pm.

★ **Le Zinc** FRENCH €€  
 (📍 02 47 20 29 00; lezinc37@gmail.com; 27 place du Grand Marché; menus €21-26; ☀️ noon-2pm Tue & Thu-Sat, 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sun; 🍷 🍷) With just a dozen tables, this intimate restaurant serves mouth-watering traditional French cuisine prepared *à l'ancienne* (in the old style, like grandma used to make). Each dish – sea and river fish (especially in summer), veal (especially in winter), Touraine-style *rillons* (sautéed pork belly), duck breast, steak, rice pudding with caramel sauce – is prepared with exemplary finesse using market-fresh ingredients. Excellent value.

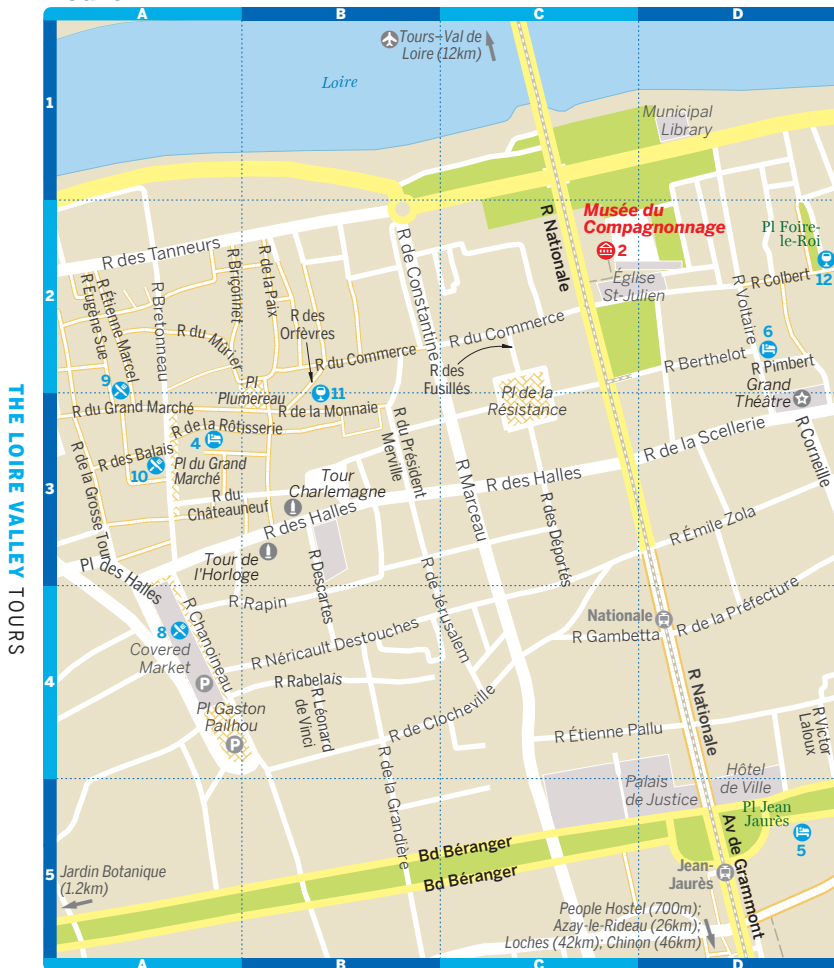
**L'Atelier Gourmand** FRENCH €€  
 (📍 02 47 38 59 87; www.lateliergourmand.fr; 37 rue Étienne Marcel; lunch/dinner menus €21/28; ☀️ noon-2pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-10.30pm Mon-Sat) Using Touraine-grown products – and spices that chef David Bironneau brings back from faraway lands – this restaurant serves French cuisine that's as contemporary as its violet-and-aubergine colour scheme. Specialities include *côte de veau* (veal chops) and *magret de canard* (duck breast); some dishes feature intriguing blends of sweet and savoury.

## 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

In Vieux Tours, place Plumereau and adjacent rue du Commerce and rue du Grande Marché are loaded with cafes that attract big crowds on warm summer nights.

**The Pale** PUB  
 (opposite 81 rue Colbert & 18 place Foire-le-Roi; ☀️ 1pm-2am; 🍷) This genuinely Irish pub – the owner hails from the Emerald Isle – is hugely popular with both locals and students from English-speaking lands. Has 18 beers on tap, 40 whiskies, a foosball table, darts and live music (mostly jazz or rock), often on Thursday; for details, see the Facebook page and Instagram.

## Tours



### Les Trois Orfèvres

CLUB  
 (☎02 47 64 02 73; [www.3orfèvres.com](http://www.3orfèvres.com); 6 rue des Orfèvres; Wed free, Thu-Sat after 1am €3; 🕒midnight-6am Wed-Sat) An underground (literally) *café-concert/discothèque* where DJs (every night) quake the cellar walls with pop and rock, and local and international students hang out in force. Dress is very casual. Things really get going around 2am. For concert details, see the Facebook page.

### i Orientation

Tours' focal point is grand, semicircular place Jean Jaurès, adorned with fountains, formal gardens and imposing public buildings (the town

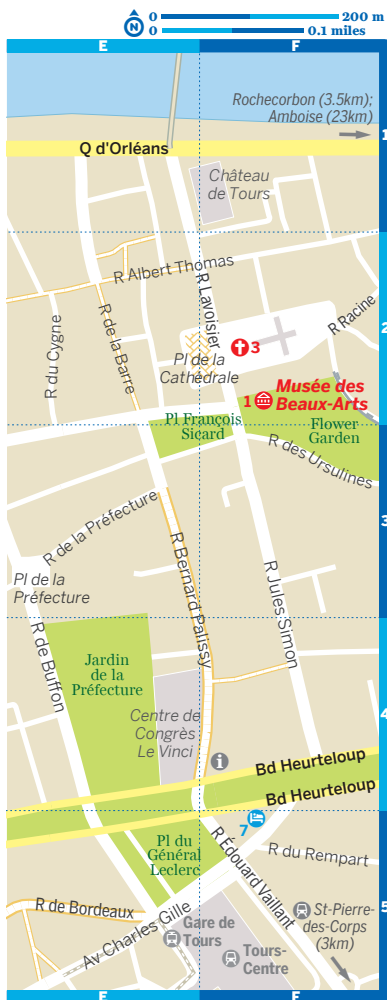
hall and the courthouse). Vieux Tours (the old city) occupies the narrow streets around place Plumereau (locally known as place Plum'), which is about 400m west of rue Nationale, the city's grandest, most elegant shopping precinct.

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 47 70 37 37; [www.tours-tourisme.fr](http://www.tours-tourisme.fr); 78-82 rue Bernard Palissy;

🕒8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun Oct-Mar;

📺) Abundant info in English about Tours, including cultural events, activities and accommodation, and on the region; sells slightly reduced-price château tickets.



## **i** Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Tours-Val de Loire Airport** (TUF; ☎ 02 47 49 37 00; www.tours.aeroport.fr; 40 rue de l'Aéroport), 6km northeast of the centre, is linked to Dublin and London Stansted by Ryanair.

### CAR

In Tours' city centre, perplexing one-way streets and scarce, metered parking make driving a headache. To park your car for more than two hours, use an underground garage – or head to unmetered spots out of the centre: along the riverfront; around the eastern end of bd Heurteloup; or around the western end of bd Béranger.

## Tours

### Top Sights

- 1 Musée des Beaux-Arts ..... F2
- 2 Musée du Compagnonnage ..... C2

### Sights

- 3 Cathédrale St-Gatien ..... F2

### Sleeping

- 4 Hôtel l'Adresse ..... A3
- 5 Hôtel Oceania L'Univers Tours ..... D5
- 6 Hôtel Ronsard ..... D2
- 7 Hôtel Val de Loire ..... F5

### Eating

- 8 Halles de Tours ..... A4
- 9 L'Atelier Gourmand ..... A2
- 10 Le Zinc ..... A3

### Drinking & Nightlife

- 11 Les Trois Orfèvres ..... B3
- 12 The Pale ..... D2

**Avis** (☎ 02 47 20 53 27; www.avis.com) has an office at Tours' train station; several car-rental companies have counters (staffed limited hours) at the St-Pierre-des-Corps TGV station and the airport.

### TRAIN

Tours is the Loire Valley's main rail hub – if you'll be touring by public transport, it's the best place to be based. Regular trains and a few TGVs use the city-centre train station, **Tours-Centre** (place du Général Leclerc; ☎); other TGV trains stop only at **St-Pierre-des-Corps**, 3km east and linked to Tours-Centre by frequent shuttle and TER trains. Some destinations, including Paris, Angers and Orléans, are served by trains from both stations.

Bicycles can be taken aboard almost all trains, so you can train it out and pedal back or vice versa.

Direct services from Tours-Centre include the following:

**Amboise** €6, 17 to 24 minutes, 13 to 21 daily.

**Angers St-Laud** €19.40, one to 1½ hours, five to eight direct daily.

**Azay-le-Rideau** €6, 18/50 minutes by train/bus, five to nine daily.

**Blois** €12, 35 minutes, 14 to 23 daily.

**Chenonceaux** €9, 25 to 34 minutes, nine to 12 daily.

**Chinon** €9, 48 minutes/1¼ hours by train/SNCF bus, four to nine daily.

**Langeais** €6, 17 minutes, seven to 10 daily.

**Loches** €3/9.60 by bus/train, one hour, six to 16 daily.

**Orléans** €21, 1¼ hours, 14 to 18 daily.

**Paris Gare d'Austerlitz** €36, 2¼ hours, two to four Intercités trains daily.

## CHÂTEAU DE CHENONCEAU

Spanning the languid Cher River atop a graceful arched bridge, the **Château de Chenonceau** (☎ 02 47 23 90 07; www.chenonceau.com; adult/child €15/12, with audioguide €19/15.50; 🕒 9am or 10am-5pm or 6.30pm) is one of France's most elegant castles. It's hard not to be moved and exhilarated by the glorious setting, the formal gardens, the magic of the architecture and the château's fascinating history. The interior is decorated with rare furnishings and an **art collection** that includes works by Tintoretto, Correggio, Rubens, Murillo, Van Dyck and Ribera (look for an extraordinary portrait of Louis XIV).

This spectacular complex is largely the work of several remarkable women (hence its nickname, the Château des Dames). The initial phase of construction started in 1515 for Thomas Bohier, a court minister of Charles VIII's, although much of the work and design was actually overseen by his wife, Katherine Briçonnet.

The distinctive arches and the eastern **formal garden** were added by Diane de Poitiers, mistress of Henri II. Following Henri's death, Catherine de Médicis, the king's scheming widow, forced Diane (her second cousin) to exchange Chenonceau for the rather less grand Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire (p409). Catherine completed the château's construction and added the **yew-tree maze** and the western **rose garden**. Louise of Lorraine's most singular contribution was her black-walled **mourning room** on the top floor, to which she retreated when her husband, Henri III, was assassinated in 1589.

Chenonceau had an 18th-century heyday under the aristocratic Madame Dupin, who made the château a centre of fashionable society; guests included Voltaire and Rousseau. During the Revolution, at the age of 83, she was able to save the château from destruction at the hands of angry mobs thanks to quick thinking and some strategic concessions.

The château's pièce de résistance is the 60m-long, chequerboard-floored **Grande Galerie** over the Cher, scene of many an elegant party hosted by Catherine de Médicis and Madame Dupin. Used as a military hospital during WWI, it served from 1940 to 1942 as an escape route for *résistants*, Jews and other refugees fleeing from the German-occupied zone (north of the Cher) to the Vichy-controlled zone (south of the river). The upper level of the gallery, the **Galerie Médicis**, has a well-presented exhibition (in French and English) on the château's colourful history and the women who moulded it. An out-building houses the **Apothicaire de la Reine** (Queen's apothecary), opened in 2019.

The excellent 1¼-hour audioguide (redone in 2019; not available on some holiday weekends), in 12 languages, has a nicely done version for kids aged seven to 12 (in French and English). There's a great deal to see, so plan on spending at least half a day here. From mid-March to mid-November, dining choices include a gastronomic French restaurant called **L'Orangerie** (menus €35 and €44) and a **salon de thé** (tearoom) that serves breakfast until 11.30am and afternoon tea from 3pm to 5pm. You can taste Touraine wines in the château's historic cellar, the **Cave des Dômes**.

The château is 33km east of Tours, 13km southeast of Amboise and 40km southwest of Blois. From the town of Chenonceaux (spelt with an x), just outside the château grounds, trains go to Tours (€9, 25 minutes, nine to 11 daily).

**Paris Gare Montparnasse** from €36, 1¼ hours, four to seven direct TGVs daily, more from St-Pierre-des-Corps.

**Saumur** €12, 40 minutes, eight to 12 daily.

### **i** Getting Around

#### BICYCLE

Options for bicycle hire include **Détours de Loire** (☎ 02 47 61 22 23; www.detoursdeloire.com; 35 rue Charles Gilles; per half-day/day/week from €12/16/61; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 5.30-7pm Sun &

holidays early Apr-Sep, shorter hours & closed Sun & Mon Oct-early Apr).

**At Accueil Vélo et Rando** (☎ 02 47 33 17 99; www.mobilite.tours-metropole.fr; 31 bd Heurteloup; 🕒 9am-7pm daily Apr-Sep, to 6pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar), an innovative, government-financed resource centre for cyclists and hikers, you can repair or tune up your bike (free), shower (€2), leave your stuff in a locker (€3 per day), and pick up cycling and walking brochures and guides, many of them in English; one details nine day-trip cycling circuits. Situated across the street from the tourist office.

## BUS

**FilBleu** ([www.filbleu.fr](http://www.filbleu.fr)) runs a tram line and local buses, including Citadine line C1, which does a circuit through the city centre.

## Amboise


POP 12,980

Elegant Amboise, childhood home of Charles VIII and final resting place of the incomparable Leonardo da Vinci, is gorgeously situated on the southern bank of the Loire, guarded by a soaring château. With some seriously posh hotels, outstanding dining and one of France's most vivacious weekly markets (on Sunday morning), Amboise is a convivial base for exploring the Loire countryside and nearby châteaux by car or bicycle.


### Sights

As you walk up to Le Clos Lucé, keep an eye out for the **habitats troglodytiques** (cave houses) carved into the rock face overlooking rue Victor Hugo. In the centre, pedestrian-only **rue Nationale** is packed with attractive boutiques.

### ★ **Château Royal d'Amboise** CHATEAU

( 02 47 57 00 98; [www.chateau-amboise.com](http://www.chateau-amboise.com); place Michel Debré; adult/child €13.10/9; ☀ 9am–12.30pm & 1.30pm–5.30pm mid-Nov–Feb, 9am–6.15pm or 7.45pm Mar–mid-Nov) Towering above town, Amboise's massively fortified castle was a favoured retreat for all of France's Valois and Bourbon kings. Only a few of the château's original structures survive, but you can still visit the furnished **Logis** (Lodge) – Gothic except for the top half of one wing, which is Renaissance – and the Flamboyant Gothic **Chapelle St-Hubert** (1493), where Leonardo da Vinci's presumed remains have been buried since 1863. The **ramparts** afford thrilling views of the town and Loire. Entry includes a virtual-reality Histopad.

### ★ **Le Clos Lucé** HISTORIC BUILDING

( 02 47 57 00 73; [www.vinci-closluce.com](http://www.vinci-closluce.com); 2 rue du Clos Lucé; adult/child €17/12, mid-Nov–Mar €14/11; ☀ 9am–7pm or 8pm Feb–Oct, 9am or 10am–6pm Nov–Jan; 🚻) It was at the invitation of François I that Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), aged 64, took up residence in this grand manor house, built in 1471. An admirer of the Italian Renaissance, the French monarch named Da Vinci 'first painter, engineer and king's architect', and the Italian spent his time here sketching, tinkering and dreaming up ingenious contraptions.

Fascinating scale models of 40 of his inventions are on display inside the house and around the lovely 7-hectare gardens.


### ★ **Château Gaillard** CHATEAU

( 02 47 30 33 29; [www.chateau-gaillard-amboise.fr](http://www.chateau-gaillard-amboise.fr); 99 av Léonard de Vinci & 29 allée du Pont Moulin; adult/child €13/11; ☀ 11am–7pm, shorter hours Jan–early Feb) The most exciting Loire château to open to visitors in years, Gaillard is the earliest expression of the Italian Renaissance in France. Begun in 1496, the château was inspired by the refined living that Charles VIII fell in love with during his Italian campaign. The harmonious, Renaissance-style **gardens** were laid out by master gardener Dom Pacello (1453–1534), an Italian Benedictine monk who brought the first orange trees to France.

In 1494 Charles VIII led a French invasion force into Italy. The expedition failed, but while there, the French king discovered the Renaissance, including the elegance and refinement that he sought to recreate at the Château Gaillard, his private residence and pleasure palace. The king brought 22 Italian master artisans back to France, including Dom Pacello, whose gardens gracefully blend in with the château and the site's geography. Half-a-dozen varieties of grape grow in the small vineyard. Gaillard was the site of France's first royal *orangerie* (used to protect sensitive fruit trees during winter), now home to 80 varieties of citrus.

The elegant château, its royal status indicated by the cornices' four parallel decorative elements, is decorated with 16th-century furniture and modern stained-glass medallions inspired by medieval miniatures. Beyond the 'cabinet of curiosities' – with its 16th-century, horned 'mask of shame' from Germany (high on the shelf) and antique snuff bottles – are a vaulted 13th-century **kitchen**, a medieval **courtyard**, a 17th-century **troglydite kitchen** and a 3m-wide **spiral staircase** from the Middle Ages.

### **Pagode de Chanteloup** HISTORIC SITE

( 02 47 57 20 97; [www.pagode-chanteloup.com](http://www.pagode-chanteloup.com); D431 at D31; adult/child €10/8; ☀ 10am–6pm late Mar–Sep, to 7pm Jun–Aug, 2–5pm Oct–11 Nov; 🚻) About 3km due south of Amboise, this seven-storey, vaguely Asian 'pagoda' (44m) was built between 1775 and 1778, when blending classical French architecture and Chinese motifs was all the rage. Clamber to the top for glorious views. From May to September, picnic *paniers* (baskets; adult/child €13/7.50) are available, and you can rent



## LOIRE BUBBLY

**Caves Monmousseau** (☎ 02 54 32 35 15; [www.monmousseau.com](http://www.monmousseau.com); 71 rue de Vierzon; €5; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct, 10am-6pm Jul & Aug) Perched quietly beneath the ruins of an imposing 11th-century *donjon* (tower) built by Foulques Nerra, the town of Montrichard, 9km east of Chenonceau, is a perfect spot for a fizzy break. Just outside town, Monmousseau's extensive wine cellars, carved into the tufa stone, create the perfect 12°C environment for ageing *crémant* (sparkling wine). One-hour tours (€8), starting at 10am and 2pm from April to October, explain the *méthode traditionnelle* (the traditional way to make bubbly, adopted from Champagne) and end with a tasting.

rowboats (€5 per hour) and – great for kids – play 18th-century outdoor games.

## Sleeping

**Éthic Étapes Île d'Or** HOSTEL €  
(Centre Charles Péguy; ☎ 02 47 30 60 90; [www.iledor-amboise.fr](http://www.iledor-amboise.fr); 1 rue Commire, Île d'Or; s/d/f incl breakfast €30/50/76; ☀ reception 10am-noon & 3-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 5-8.30pm Sat; @ ☎) Spartan but welcoming, this 114-bed hostel is 600m northwest of the entrance to the château, at the downriver tip of the Île d'Or. The 30 rooms have space for one to six people, industrial-strength furnishings and attached bath; most beds are bunks. Amenities include free washers and dryers and locked bicycle parking. Often full with school groups from March to June.

**Le Clos d'Amboise** HISTORIC HOTEL €€€  
(☎ 02 47 30 10 20; [www.leclosamboise.com](http://www.leclosamboise.com); 27 rue Rabelais; d €89-229, 6-person ste €209-369; P \* @ ☎) Overlooking a lovely garden with a 200-year-old cedar and a heated pool, this posh pad – most of it built in the 17th century – offers exquisite country living in the heart of town. Stylish features abound, from luxurious fabrics to antique furnishings. Half of the 20 rooms still have their original, now non-functioning, marble fireplaces.

**Château de Pray** HOTEL €€€  
(☎ 02 47 57 23 67; [www.chateaudepray.fr](http://www.chateaudepray.fr); rue du Cèdre, Chargé; d/q from €139/285; ☀ restaurant noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Thu-Sun, plus Tue & Wed

evenings Jun-Sep; P ☎) The 19 rooms of this 16th-century château, each named after a famous visitor, are brimming with antique furnishings and old-fashioned charm. Has a Michelin-starred French *gastronomique* restaurant (four/five/seven-course menu €59/78/98). Situated 3.5km northeast of Amboise's town centre, 300m off the D751.

## Eating

**★ Sunday Food Market** MARKET €  
(quai du Général de Gaulle; ☀ 7.30am-1.30pm Sun, small market 7.30am-1pm Fri) Voted France's *marché préféré* (favourite market) a few years back, this riverfront extravaganza, 400m southwest of the château, hosts 200 to 300 open-air stalls selling everything you need for a scrumptious picnic. So delicious it's worth timing your visit around.

**Bigot** PASTRIES €  
(☎ 02 47 57 04 46; [www.maisonbigot-amboise.com](http://www.maisonbigot-amboise.com); cnr rue Nationale & place du Château; breakfast €13-19, lunch menu €16; ☀ 8.30am or 9am-7pm or 7.30pm Tue-Sun, open Mon Easter-Oct; ☎) Founded by Madame Bigot's grandfather in 1913, this *salon de thé, pâtisserie* and *chocolaterie* is known for its *puits d'amour* (puff pastry filled with custard cream and rum), tarte tatin, chocolates, homemade ice cream and light meals (omelettes, quiches, meal-size salads) served all day long. Perfect for a sweet or savoury break.

**Le Patio** MODERN FRENCH €€  
(☎ 02 47 79 00 00; [lepatio.amboise@gmail.com](mailto:lepatio.amboise@gmail.com); 14 rue Nationale; menus lunch €19, dinner €32; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-8.30pm Thu-Mon, daily Jul & Aug; ☎) Serves creative, exquisitely presented French cuisine that garners rave reviews. Specialities include *cromesquis d'escargots* (crunchy fried balls of Burgundy snails) and slow-cooked lamb shank. Has a superb wine list, a glass-roofed courtyard and a Facebook page. Situated right next to the 15th-century Tour de l'Horloge (clock tower).

**L'Écluse** FRENCH €€  
(☎ 02 47 79 94 91; [www.ecluse-amboise.fr](http://www.ecluse-amboise.fr); rue Racine; lunch menu €19, other menus €27-50; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat early Feb-mid-Dec) On the banks of the bubbling L'Amasse (or La Masse) River next to an *écluse* (river lock), L'Écluse has generated enthusiasm and glowing reviews. The sharply focused menu is made up of just a handful of starters, mains and desserts, expertly prepared with fresh seasonal products from 15 Loire-area producers.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 47 57 09 28; www.amboise-valde Loire.co.uk; quai du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm or 6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun Apr-Oct, shorter hours & closed Sun Nov-Mar; 📄) Has walking-tour brochures, cycling maps and discount combo tickets for area châteaux (also available online).

## **i** Getting There & Around

### CAR

There's free parking west of the tourist office along quai du Général de Gaulle (ie along the river; parking is prohibited up the ramp on Friday and Sunday mornings because of the market) and, a few blocks inland, at place Richelieu and nearby Parking des Tanneurs.

### TRAIN

Amboise's **train station** (bd Gambetta) is 1.5km north of the château, on the opposite side of the Loire.

**Blois** €7.50 to €9, 20 minutes, 15 to 22 daily.

**Paris** €36 to €55, 1½ to 2¼ hours; a handful of direct TER trains go to Gare d'Austerlitz; non-direct TGV services go to Gare Montparnasse.

**Tours** €6, 17 to 24 minutes, 13 to 21 daily.

## Villandry

The six glorious landscaped gardens *à la française* of **Château de Villandry** (☎ 02 47 50 02 09; www.chateauvillandry.com; 3 rue Principale; chateau & gardens adult/child €12/7.50, gardens only €7.50/5, cheaper Dec-Feb, audio guide €4; ☎ 9am-5pm or 6.30pm year-round, château interior closed mid-Nov-early Dec & early Jan-early Feb) are some of France's finest, with more than 6 hectares of cascading flowers, ornamental vines, manicured lime trees, razor-sharp box hedges and tinkling fountains. Try to visit when the gardens – all of them organic – are blooming, between April and October. Tickets are valid all day (get your hand stamped). The website has details on special events.

The original gardens and château were built by Jean Le Breton, who served François I as finance minister and ambassador to Italy, and supervised the construction of Chambord (p407). During his ambassadorial service, Le Breton became enamoured with the art of Italian Renaissance gardening, later creating his own ornamental masterpiece at newly constructed Villandry. The current gardens, tended by 10 full-time expert gardeners, were recreated starting in 1908.

Wandering the pebbled walkways, you'll see the classical **Jardin d'Eau** (Water Garden), the hornbeam **Labyrinthe** (Maze) and the **Jardin d'Ornement** (Ornamental Garden), which depicts various aspects of love (fickle, passionate, tender and tragic) using geometrically pruned hedges and coloured flowerbeds. The **Jardin du Soleil** (Sun Garden) is a looser array of gorgeous multicoloured and multiscented perennials. But for many, the highlight is the 16th-century-style **Potager Décoratif** (Decorative Kitchen Garden), where cabbages, leeks and carrots are laid out to create nine geometrical, colour-coordinated squares.

After the gardens, the Renaissance **château** (built in the 1530s), surrounded by a watery moat, is a bit of a let-down. Nevertheless, highlights include the **Oriental drawing room**, with a gilded Moorish ceiling taken from a 15th-century palace near Toledo, and a **gallery** of Spanish and Flemish art. Best of all are the bird's-eye views across the gardens and the nearby Loire and Cher Rivers from the top of the 12th-century **donjon** (the only remnant of the original medieval château) and a **belvédère** (hillside panoramic viewpoint).

About 200m southwest of the chateau along the D16 you'll find a summer branch of Tours' **tourist office** (in an all-wood pavilion), several restaurants, a *boulangerie* and two places to stay.

The château is 16km southwest of Tours and 11km northeast of Azay-le-Rideau. Trains link Savonnières, 4km northeast of Villandry, with Tours (€3, 12 minutes, two to four direct daily).

## Langeais

POP 4718

No castle in the Loire is more authentically medieval in architecture, furnishings and spirit than the Château de Langeais, the focal point of a peaceful little town with lovely walking streets, several excellent restaurants and a bustling weekly **market** (off rue Gambetta; ☎ 8am-1pm Sun).

Built in the 1460s, the **Château de Langeais** (☎ 02 47 96 72 60; www.chateau-de-langeais.com; adult/child €10.50/5.20; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm or 7pm daily Apr-mid-Nov, 10am-5pm or 5.30pm mid-Nov-Mar) looks much as it did at the tail end of the Middle Ages, with crenellated ramparts and massive towers dominating the surrounding village; original

15th-century furniture fills its flagstoned chambers. In one room, a life-size wax-figure tableau portrays the **secret marriage** of Charles VIII and Anne of Brittany, held here on 6 December 1491, which brought about the historic union of France and Brittany.

The château, superbly preserved inside and out, presents two faces to the world. From the town you see a fortified castle, nearly windowless, with machicolated walls rising forbiddingly from the **drawbridge**, opened and closed by hand by staff at the start and end of each workday. But the newer sections facing the courtyard have large windows, ornate dormers and decorative stonework designed for more refined living.

Among the château's many fine, if faded, Flemish and Aubusson **tapestries**, look out for one from 1530 depicting astrological signs; three intricate panels with *millefleurs* ('thousand flowers') motifs; and seven panels from the famous Les Neuf Preux series (woven 1525–40), whose nine 'worthy knights' – personages from the Old Testament, Greco-Roman antiquity and the Middle Ages – represent the epitome of medieval courtly honour. In each room, plasticised sheets in eight languages provide information. There's a **children's corner** with picture books.

The **Chemin de Ronde** (Parapet Walk) gives you a knight's-eye view from the ramparts; gaps underfoot (machicolations) enabled boiling oil, rocks and ordure to be dumped on attackers. Across the château's courtyard and park, climb to the window of the ruined stone **keep**, constructed by great

10th-century builder Foulques Nerra (Fulk III), count of Anjou.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Langeais is 31km southwest of Tours and 10km west of Villandry. Its train station, 400m from the château, is on the line linking Tours (€6, 20 minutes, five to nine daily) with Saumur (€8.50, 25 minutes, six to 10 daily).

## Azay-le-Rideau

Romantic, moat-ringed **Château d'Azay-le-Rideau** (☎ 02 47 45 42 04; www.azay-le-rideau.fr; adult/child €11.50/free, audioguide €3; ☀ 9.30am–7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Apr–Jun & Sep, 10am–5.15pm Oct–Mar), built in the early 1500s on a natural island in the middle of the Indre River, is wonderfully adorned with elegant turrets, perfectly proportioned windows, delicate stonework and steep slate roofs. This is one of the Loire's loveliest Renaissance castles – Honoré de Balzac called it a 'multifaceted diamond set in the River Indre'. The famous, Italian-style **loggia staircase** overlooking the central courtyard is decorated with the salamanders and ermines of François I and Queen Claude.

The interior furnishings are mostly 19th-century, created by the Marquis Charles de Biencourt (who bought the château after the Revolution) and his heirs. The lovely **English-style gardens** are great for a stroll; the **Jardin des Secrets** features heritage vegetables and flowers. A sound-and-light spectacular, **Les Nuits Fantastiques**,

### DON'T MISS

#### SLEEPING BEAUTY

The creamy white towers and slate roofs of the **Château d'Ussé** (☎ 02 47 95 54 05; www.chateaudusse.fr; Rigny-Ussé; adult/child €14/5, audioguide €3; ☀ 10am–6pm or 7pm, closed 2 Nov–mid-Feb) offer sweeping views across the flat Loire countryside, the flood-prone Indre River and French-style formal gardens designed by André Le Nôtre, landscape architect of Versailles. The château's main claim to literary fame is that it served as the inspiration for Charles Perrault's classic fairy tale, *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, known in English as *Sleeping Beauty*.

Built on top of an 11th-century fortress (part of whose cellar you can visit), the modern-day château – a mix of medieval and Renaissance styles – dates mainly from the 15th to 17th centuries. In the gardens, the mostly Gothic **chapel** (1528) has a Renaissance-style doorway; inside, signs tell the story of the depredations visited upon Ussé during the French Revolution. Nearby, films on the château's upkeep and gardens can be seen inside three **caves** (cellars), while the **stables** display horse-drawn carriages and a tiny cart, designed to be pulled by a dog, that once amused privileged children.

The town of Rigny-Ussé is 12km northeast of Chinon.

is usually projected on the chateau's exterior in July and August.

Audioguides are available in five languages; one-hour guided tours in French are free. In the **Pressoir** (the outbuilding to the right as you exit the ticket-sales hall), there's a very worthwhile **exposition** on construction materials and methods and the restoration of antique furnishings; the videos of expert artisans at work are fascinating.

A number of places to eat are located within a few hundred metres of the chateau, around the main square (a parking lot) of the stone-built village centre.

Azay-le-Rideau is 26km southwest of Tours. The D84 and D17, on either side of the Indre, are great for countryside cycling. The train station, 2.5km west of the chateau, is linked to Tours (€6/3, 26/45 minutes by train/bus, five to nine daily) and Chinon (€6, 20 to 25 minutes, six to 10 daily).

## Loches

POP 6837

Loches, on the Indre River, spirals picturesquely up from the modern town – through ancient stone gates – to the citadel, a forbidding medieval stronghold established by Foulques Nerra in the early 11th century and later updated by Charles VII; kids, especially, will love the deep dungeons. In 1429 Joan of Arc met with Charles VII here and persuaded him to march north to claim the French crown. These days Loches is a sleepy place, great for a day of mellow exploration. The town is known for its bustling open-air food market.

### Sights

Loches' stand-out highlight is the beautiful and fascinating **Cité Royale de Loches** (☎02 47 19 18 08; www.citeroyaleloches.fr; ☎24hr), a 'royal city' also known as the Citadelle (citadel) and the Ville-Haute (upper city). To get there from the modern town centre, walk through **Porte Picois** (15th century) into the **Ville-Basse** (lower city), whose main street is the Grande Rue. Head southwest up rue du Château and through the forbidding **Porte Royale** (circa 1200) and you'll be inside a vast medieval bastion, the size of a small town – a few lucky people even live here! It's a great destination for kids who are into knights, castles and dungeons.

### Logis Royal

CHATEAU

(Royal Lodge; Cité Royale; adult/child incl Donjon €10.50/8.50; ☎9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Oct-Mar) The royal residence of Charles VII and his successors was originally built as a medieval fortress but was later converted into a Renaissance-style hunting lodge. In May 1429, after her victory at Orléans, Joan of Arc famously met Charles VII here for the second time and nudged him towards coronation. The multimedia museum has rooms dedicated to some big personalities: Charles VII, Agnès Sorel, Anne of Brittany and Joan of Arc.

### Donjon

TOWER

(Forteresse; Cité Royale; adult/child incl Logis Royal €10.50/8.50; ☎9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Oct-Mar) At the southern end of the Cité Royale, the rectangular, 36m-high Donjon (Tour Carrée; defensive tower) was Loches' original medieval stronghold, built in the early 11th century by the cruel and feared Foulques Nerra, count of Anjou. Though the interior floors have fallen away, you can still see various architectural details, including the remnants of an 11th-century chapel and fireplaces. Climb dizzying catwalks for fantastic views.

Next door to the Donjon is the notorious **Tour Neuve** (New Tower), built in the 15th century by Charles VII; its rooftop **Terrasse à Feu** (Gun Terrace), once a platform for firing artillery, is a fine viewpoint. In the basement, the circular **Cachots** (dungeons) are where the unfortunate Cardinal Balue was supposedly kept suspended from the ceiling in a wooden cage for betraying Louis XI. (In fact, this room was more likely a grain store, although you can see a replica of the cardinal's cage up the stairs next to the Donjon.)

Reached from the courtyard, the 15th-century **Martelet**, 27m deep, houses additional dungeons and 11th-century tufa quarries.

### Sleeping & Eating

#### Food Market

MARKET €

(rue de la République & place de la Marne; ☎8am-12.30pm Wed & Sat) Everything needed to assemble a gourmet picnic.

#### La Demeure Saint-Ours

B&B €

(☎06 33 74 54 82; www.saintours.eu; 11 rue du Château, Ville Basse; d €65-80; ☎) In a 16th-century town house, this B&B has five attractive, quiet rooms – accessed via a creaky, 16th-century wooden staircase – with wood-beam ceilings, centuries-old *tommettes* (red hexagonal floor tiles) and large bathrooms

(renovated in 2020). Situated midway between Porte Picois and Porte Royale. Great value.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (📍 02 47 91 82 82; [www.loches-valdeleire.com](http://www.loches-valdeleire.com); place de la Marne; ☀ 9am or 10am-12.30pm & 1.30pm or 2.30pm to 5pm or 7pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Sun Apr-Sep) Has information on Loches and southern Touraine, including charming nearby villages such as Chédigny, famed for its roses, and Montrésor. Situated a block from the train station, next to the river.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Loches is 68km southwest of Blois and 42km southeast of Tours. Trains and SNCF buses link the train station, across the narrow Indre River from the tourist office, with Tours (bus/train €3/9, one hour, five to 13 SNCF buses plus one or two trains daily).

## Chinon

POP 8567

Dominated by its towering medieval castle, Chinon is etched into France's collective memory both as the favourite fortress of Henry II (1133–89), king of England, and as the venue for Joan of Arc's first meeting with Charles VII, in 1429. Below the château is an appealing medieval quarter, a warren of narrow lanes whose white tufa houses are topped with black slate roofs. The whole town can easily be explored on foot.

Surrounding the town is one of the Loire's main wine-producing areas, and Chinon AOC ([www.chinon.com](http://www.chinon.com)) cabernet-franc vineyards stretch along both banks of the Vienne River. The town makes a good base for wine-cellar visits.

## **👁** Sights

★ **Forteresse Royale de Chinon** FORTRESS (📍 02 47 93 13 45; [www.forteressechinon.fr](http://www.forteressechinon.fr); adult/child €10.50/8.50; ☀ 9.30am-7pm May-Aug, to

5pm or 6pm Sep-Apr) Surrounded by massive walls, this hilltop castle – offering fabulous views across town, river and countryside – is split into three sections separated by dry moats. The ticket counter and shop are inside the 12th-century **Fort St-Georges**. Pass under the 14th-century **Tour de l'Horloge** (Clock Tower) and you'll come to the **Château du Milieu** (Middle Castle), vestige of a time when the Plantagenet court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine assembled here. Finally, **Fort du Coudray** sits on the tip of the promontory.

In the Château du Milieu, the restored south wing of the **Logis Royaux** (Royal Lodgings) has the recently reconstructed royal chambers of Charles VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine, scale models of the castle, Joan of Arc memorabilia and archaeological finds. In the garden you can see scale models of a *trébuchet* and a *bricole*, used in the Middle Ages to catapult projectiles at the enemy. At the far end, the round, 13th-century **Tour du Coudray** was used to imprison Knights Templar in the early 1300s (look for their graffiti inside) and hosted Joan of Arc in 1429.

The castle provides visitors with Histopad virtual reality tablets (in eight languages) that show various rooms as they might have looked in the Middle Ages. Kids get a booklet (in English and French) with activities at a dozen spots around the site. Two dozen audio and video commentaries (in four languages) are scattered around the castle; out-of-doors, look for wooden benches. The ticket counter can also supply you with a map of Chinon.

The château lays on all sorts of special kids' activities during French school holidays – the website has details.

## Cité Médiévale

HISTORIC SITE

(Medieval Town) François Rabelais (c 1494–1553) spent part of his childhood in Chinon – that's why you'll see Rabelais-related names dotted all around the old town. The narrow cobblestone streets and alleys present a fine cross-section of medieval architecture, best seen along **rue Voltaire** and its western continuation, **rue Haute St-Maurice**, and between there and the river.

## **🏠** Sleeping

### Hôtel Diderot

HISTORIC HOTEL €

(📍 02 47 93 18 87; [www.hoteldiderot.com](http://www.hoteldiderot.com); 4 rue de Buffon; d €70-110, q €160; 📶) This gorgeous town house is tucked amid luscious rose-filled

## **i** SAVE YOUR CHÂTEAU TICKET!

Paying full-price entry at Azay-le-Rideau, Brézé, Chinon, Langeais, Montsoreau or Villandry, or at Fontevraud, will get you reduced-price admission at the others.



gardens and crammed with polished antiques. The owners – Jean-Pierre, who's French, and Jamie, who hails from Florida – impart the sort of charm you'd expect for twice the price. The 26 cheerful rooms are all individually styled, some with 18th-century-style *jouy* wallpaper. No lift. Situated 250m north of place Jeanne d'Arc. Rates drop 30% from November to April.

### Hôtel de France

HOTEL €€

(☎02 47 93 33 91; www.bestwestern.com; 47 place du Général de Gaulle; d €99-139, 4-bed apt €139; 🍷🍷) Owned by the same couple since 1979, this impeccable hotel, right in the centre of town, has 30 rooms, some arrayed around an inner courtyard. Tastefully decorated in a contemporary style, those on the 3rd floor offer views of the château. Has enclosed bicycle parking. No lift.

### Eating

Several restaurants can be found along rue Voltaire and rue Haute St-Maurice. You can stock up for a picnic at **Carrefour City** (20 place du Général de Gaulle; ☀7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) on the main square.

### Food Market

MARKET €

(place Jeanne d'Arc; ☀7am-1.30pm Thu) Fruit, vegetables, cheeses and other picnic supplies.

### ★ Les Années 30

FRENCH €€

(☎02 47 93 37 18; www.lesannees30.com; 78 rue Haute St-Maurice; weekday lunch menu €19.50, dinner menus €28-46, veg menu €23; ☀12.15-1.30pm & 7.30-8.45pm Thu-Mon; 🍷) Expect the kind of meal you came to France for, with exquisite attention to detail, served in relaxed intimacy. The offerings range from *ris de veau* (veal sweetbreads) to venison (during the winter hunting season) to Guayaquil chocolate mousse. There's a golden-lit downstairs dining room and an elegant grey-and-white counterpart upstairs; in summer you can dine outside.

### La Part des Anges

FRENCH €€

(☎02 47 93 99 93; www.lapartdesanges-chinon.com; 5 rue Rabelais; 3-/4-course menus €35/40; ☀noon-1.30pm Wed-Sun & 7.30-8.15pm Wed-Sat) 'Between traditional and creative' – that's how chef Virginie describes the delicious dishes she prepares using local organic vegetables. Almost all the wines come from the Chinon AOC.

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

### IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF RABELAIS

La Devinière, the prosperous farm where François Rabelais (1483 or 1494–1553) – doctor, Franciscan friar, theoretician, author and all-around Renaissance man – lived for part of his childhood, inspired settings for some of his five satirical, erudite Gargantua and Pantagruel novels. Now home to the **Musée Rabelais** (La Devinière; ☎02 47 95 91 18; www.musee-rabelais.fr; 4 rue de la Devinière; adult/child €6/5; ☀10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm or 7pm Wed-Mon Apr-May & Sep, 10am-6pm or 7pm Jun-Aug, shorter hours Oct-Mar), the farmstead – surrounded by vineyards and expansive, rolling farmland – has some exhibits on Rabelais' life and genius, including early editions of his works, and an original 1951 Matisse charcoal portrait (the other four portraits are facsimiles). The English brochure is excellent.

It's situated 8.5km southwest of Chinon and 1.4km northeast of the centre of Seully.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 47 93 17 85; www.azay-chinon-valde Loire.com; 1 rue Rabelais; ☀9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm or 7pm daily May-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) Has a free walking-tour brochure and details on bike rental, kayaking, boat trips and hot-air balloons. Sells slightly reduced-price château tickets. There's a **summer kiosk** (av François Mitterrand; ☀10am-1pm & 2-5pm or 6pm Jun-late Sep) up near the château.

## Getting There & Around

The train station, 1km southeast of place du Général de Gaulle and the tourist office, has direct services to Tours (€9, 48/75 minutes by train/SNCF bus, four to nine daily) and Azay-le-Rideau (€5.30, 20 minutes, six to 11 daily). SNCF buses also stop in the centre of town.

Except on market day (Thursday), free parking is available 500m east of the town centre at place Jeanne d'Arc. There's more free parking above town at **Parking du Château** (av François Mitterrand), across av François Mitterrand from the upper entrance to the château.

A free, glass-enclosed **lift** (☀7am-11pm or midnight) links the town centre with the château.

## BALZAC IN SACHÉ

Meander down the Indre Valley along the tiny D84, passing mansions, villages and troglodyte caves, and 7km east of Azay-le-Rideau you'll come to sweet Saché. Once home to American sculptor Alexander Calder (one of his mobiles stands in the town square), it still celebrates the life of long-time resident Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), author of *La Comédie Humaine*.

You don't have to be a French-literature major to enjoy the lovely **Musée Balzac** (☎02 47 26 86 50; [www.musee-balzac.fr](http://www.musee-balzac.fr); rue du Château; adult/child €6/5; ☺10am-6pm or 7pm daily Apr-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Wed-Mon Oct-Mar), in a Renaissance manor house where Honoré de Balzac often stayed. On a quiet slope in a lush river valley, the museum has rooms furnished in the style of Balzac's time, as well as manuscripts, letters, first editions, lithographs, a print shop and excellent information in English. The gardens are lovely for a picnic – or to read a book by Balzac, which can be bought or borrowed here.

Dine afterwards at the aptly named **Auberge du Xlle Siècle** (☎02 47 26 88 77; <https://auberge12emesiecle.eatbu.com>; 1 rue du Château; menus €33-68; ☺noon-1.30pm Wed-Sun, 7.30-9pm Tue-Sat), where Kévin Gardien, who arrived in 2020, prepares traditional French cuisine made with local ingredients such as Loire trout, pork and veal. Meals are served inside an ancient half-timbered homestead and, when it's warm, outside on a lovely terrace. Situated 100m down the road from the museum.

Saché is 25km southwest of Tours and 18km southeast of Langeais.

## ANJOU

As you float down the Loire and enter Anjou, fortified châteaux give way to chalky-white tufa cliffs concealing an astonishing subterranean world of wine cellars, mushroom farms and (literally) underground art. Up on the surface, black slate roofs pepper the vine-rich land, which produces some of the Loire's best wines.

Angers, the historic capital of Anjou, is famous for its powerful dukes, the fortified hilltop château they left behind, and the stunning medieval Apocalypse Tapestry. Other architectural gems in Anjou include the medieval Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud, delightful riverside villages such as Candès-St-Martin, and some lovely châteaux. Europe's highest concentration of troglodyte dwellings dots the banks of the Loire around cosmopolitan, equestrian Saumur.

To take in the Anjou wine country by car, head northwest from Saumur along route D751 towards Gennes, or southeast on route D947 through Souzay-Champigny and Parnay. From Angers, cut southwest to Savennières.

## Saumur

POP 27,700

There's sparkly Parisian sophistication in Saumur but also an atmosphere of unhurried enjoyment. The local wines are world

famous, the restaurants just may be the Loire Valley's best, and the spot is gorgeous. The town is renowned for the École Nationale d'Équitation, a national riding school that's home to the crack Cadre Noir equestrian corps. Soft white tufa cliffs stretch along the riverbanks east and west of town, pierced by *habitations troglodytes* (cave dwellings).

## 📍 Sights & Activities

The **old town** is worth a wander – check out narrow **rue de la Tonnelle**, which links place de la République with place St-Pierre and its church. Saumur's tourist office has an English brochure detailing historical walks.

About 4km northwest of Saumur's town centre, a short stretch of the D751 in St-Hilaire-St-Florent is home to five wineries offering cellar tours and *dégustation* (wine tasting), among them **Ackerman** ([www.ackerman.fr](http://www.ackerman.fr)), **Bouvet Ladubay** ([www.bouvet-ladubay.fr](http://www.bouvet-ladubay.fr)), **Veuve Amiot** ([www.veuveamiot.fr](http://www.veuveamiot.fr)) and **Langlois-Chateau** (☎02 41 40 21 42; [www.langlois-chateau.fr](http://www.langlois-chateau.fr); 3 rue Léopold Palustré, St-Hilaire-St-Florent; tours adult/child €5/free; ☺shop 10am-noon & 2-6pm).

★ **École Nationale d'Équitation** FARM  
(☎02 41 53 50 60; [www.ifce.fr/cadre-noir](http://www.ifce.fr/cadre-noir); av de l'École Nationale d'Équitation, St-Hilaire-St-Florent; tours adult/child €8/6; ☺tours 2.30pm & 4pm Mon, 10am, 11am, 2.30pm & 4pm Tue-Fri, 10am & 11am Sat early Feb-Oct, more frequently early

Apr–mid-Sep) One of the world's premier equestrian academies, the prestigious French National Riding School is home to the Cadre Noir (p425), an elite group of riding instructors that's also an equestrian display team. Superb tours take you behind the scenes; kids will love to pat the horses in their spacious stalls – several stomp their feet insistently if you don't caress them! Commentary is in French, but written information is available in eight languages; call ahead for details on tours in English.

Tours (one hour) take visitors around the spacious campus, built in 1980, and stop by

the *manège* (riding arena), which has mirrors mounted on the walls, like a ballet studio. It's often possible to see horses and riders training (no photography); watch carefully and you'll get a sense of the incredibly intimate collaboration between horse and rider.

The riders and horses of the Cadre Noir, founded in 1825, are famous for their astonishing discipline and acrobatic prowess, all performed without stirrups. The school trains about 150 students, who are headed for careers as riding instructors, as well as their horses, 350 in number. France's Olympic eventing team trains here; the 2016

### DON'T MISS

#### TROGLODYTES: LIVING UNDERGROUND

For centuries the creamy-white tufa cliffs around Saumur have provided shelter and storage space for local inhabitants, leading to the development of a unique *culture troglodyte* (cave-dwelling culture). The naturally cool caves were turned into houses (*habitations troglodytes*) and incorporated into castles; some are still used by vintners and mushroom farmers. Many of the Loire's grandest châteaux were built from white tufa, and the quarrying, naturally, created caves.

Lots of caves can be found along the Loire east and west of Saumur (eg around Turquant), in Amboise and around the town of Doué-la-Fontaine. Stop by the Saumur tourist office (p425) for a complete list. Bring something warm to wear, as caves remain cool (13°C) year-round.

**Château de Brézé** (☎ 02 41 51 60 15; www.chateaubreze.com; 2 rue du Château, Brézé; adult/child €11.80/6.20, incl tour €17.90/10, audioguide €3; ☀ 10am–6pm or 7pm Feb–early Jan) Above ground, much of this U-shaped château, 12km south of Saumur, dates from the 19th century, as do the many intricately painted neo-Gothic and neo-Renaissance interiors. Down below, a network of subterranean rooms and passages, 1.5km of them open to the public, encompasses a *boulangerie*, wine cellars, defensive bastions and a troglodyte dwelling dating from at least the time of the Norman invasions (early 10th century).

**Rochemenier Village Troglodytique** (☎ 02 41 59 18 15; www.troglodyte.fr; 14 rue du Musée, Louresse-Rochemenier; adult/child €7/5; ☀ 9.30am–6pm May–mid-Sep, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun mid-Sep–Nov & Feb–Apr, closed Dec & Jan) Explore the remains of two underground farmsteads 25km southwest of Saumur, complete with dwellings, stables and a chapel, that were originally excavated to provide lime fertiliser. Farm tools and photos of former inhabitants evoke the hard-working spirit and simple pleasures of life underground.

**Troglodytes et Sarcophages** (☎ 06 77 77 06 94; www.troglodytes-sarcophages.fr; 1 rue de la Croix Mordret, Doué-la-Fontaine; adult/child €5.50/3.80; ☀ self-guided tours 10am–12.30pm & 2.30–7pm early Jul–late Aug, guided tours 2.30pm, 3.30pm & 4.30pm Thu–Mon early Apr–early Jul, late Aug–Oct & Christmas & Feb school holidays) From the 5th to the 9th centuries, a Merovingian-era mine here produced stone coffins that were exported all over western France. Later residents created a series of open-air courtyards, the ceilings held up by columns of natural stone. It's 20km southwest of Saumur.

**Le Mystère des Faluns** (Les Perrières; ☎ 02 41 59 71 29; https://le-mystere-des-faluns.com; 7 rue d'Anjou, Doué-la-Fontaine; adult/child €7/4.50; ☀ 10am–12pm or 12.30pm & 2–6pm Tue–Sun early Feb–1 Nov, 10am–7pm daily early Jul–mid-Sep; 🎧) Creative lighting and sound effects illustrating the origins of *falun* stone and its fossils turn this entire 600m walking route, through ancient quarries (nicknamed 'cathedral caves' for their lofty sloping walls), into a glowing, ever-changing work of art. It's about 1km northwest of Troglodytes et Sarcophages.

team, which won gold in Rio, included a member of the Cadre Noir.

You can recognise members of the Cadre Noir by their distinctive black (*noir*) jackets and hats (*képis* for men, *bicornes* for women), gold spurs and the three golden wings on their whips. Look closely at their collar insignia and at the gold buttons of their tunic: a flaming grenade means they're members of the French military, a sun that they are civilians. Saumur has been an equestrian centre since 1593.

The school is 4.5km due west of Saumur, just outside sleepy St-Hilaire-St-Florent. There is no public transport.

### Château de Saumur

CHATEAU

(☎ 02 41 40 24 40; www.chateau-saumur.fr; adult/child €7/5; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun early Feb-Jun & Sep-Dec, 10am-1pm & 2-7pm daily Jul & Aug) Soaring above the town's rooftops, Saumur's fairy-tale castle was largely built in the 13th century by Louis XI and has served variously as a fortress for protection from the Normans, a Renaissance palace, a Protestant stronghold and an army barracks. Today it houses Saumur's municipal museum, whose exhibits include excellent collections of furnishings, faience (earthenware) and equestrian gear, housed in a one-time abbey church.

### Musée des Blindés

MUSEUM

(☎ 02 41 83 69 95; www.museedesblindes.fr; 1043 rte de Fontevraud; adult/child €10/6; ☀ 10am or 11am-5pm or 6pm) Housed in a one-time cigarette factory, this nonprofit museum displays more than 200 *blindés* (tanks) and other 'armoured cavalry' vehicles – some in working order – from 17 countries. The world-class collection includes once top-secret tanks from all sides in WWI, WWII and the Cold War, including French models rarely seen overseas, the world's most complete collection of WWII-era German vehicles, and lots of Soviet Bloc tanks. Right near the exit, visitors can climb inside French, British and Swedish troop-transport vehicles.

### Sleeping

#### ★ Hôtel de Londres

HOTEL €

(☎ 02 41 51 23 98; www.lelondres.com; 48 rue d'Orléans; d €80-110, q €120, apt €120-150; 📞 📺 📶 📷) Built as an *hôtel de grand standing* (luxury hotel) and named in honour of the British capital in 1837, this family-run hotel has 29 spacious rooms decorated in jolly colours and two family-friendly

apartments, all with big windows and gleaming bathrooms. Sunday brunch (adult/child €24/14) is served from 11.30am to 3pm. Excellent value.

#### ★ Château de Beaulieu

B&B €€

(☎ 02 41 50 83 52; www.chateaubeauleu.fr; 98 rte de Montsoreau; d €120-160, q €190; ☀ mid-Mar-mid-Nov; 📞 📺 📶) Gregarious Dublin natives Mary and Conor welcome you with Irish warmth to their 1727 château. The five rooms are comfortably done up in classic style and the mood among guests is one of extended family. Sun yourself by the pool (next to the little vineyard) or play three-ball billiards in the grand salon. Situated 2.5km southeast of central Saumur.

#### ★ Château de Verrières

HERITAGE HOTEL €€€

(☎ 02 41 38 05 15; www.chateau-verrieres.com; 53 rue d'Alsace; d €189-349, ste €429; ☀ closed Dec & Jan; 📞 📺 📶) Built by the widow of one of Napoleon III's generals, this splendid Belle Époque mansion (1896) is surrounded by a 2-hectare English-style park. It's sumptuous throughout, with carved-wood balustrades, marble fireplaces and, in the 10 spacious rooms, antique writing desks. The magnificent, wood-panelled Salle de Musique has a window directly over the fireplace (flues take the smoke around it).

### Eating

With a long tradition of fine dining, Saumur has some of the best French restaurants in the Loire Valley. For restaurants and cafes with outdoor seating and a *boulangerie*, head to place St-Pierre, home of **Halles St-Pierre** (place St-Pierre; ☀ 8am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sat), the town's food market. Several brasseries can be found around the Théâtre, eg at place de la Bilange.

#### ★ Le Boeuf Noisette

FRENCH €€

(☎ 09 81 73 73 10; www.leboeufnoisette.fr; 29 rue Molière; menus €25-30; ☀ noon-2pm Tue, Thu, Fri & Sun, 7-10pm Tue-Sun; 📞) Talented young chef Delphine Rémy has been earning enthusiastic reviews for cuisine she describes as *française, locale et fraîche* (French, local and fresh). Her flagship dish is tender, locally raised Rouge des Prés *boeuf* (beef) served with *beurre noisette* (hazelnut-coloured butter sauce made with drippings and spices) and out-of-this-world steamed veggies. For dessert, try the orange cake liberally doused with triple sec. Reserve ahead.

## THERE'S A FUNGUS AMONG US

Mushroom lovers – or those open to being seduced by the charms of the *champignon* – can learn more about their favourite 'shrooms, tour caves and taste samples in the Saumur area.

**Le Saut aux Loups** (☎ 02 41 51 70 30; www.troglo-sautauxloups.com; D947, Montsoreau; menus €21-23; ☺ restaurant noon-2.30pm early Feb–mid-Nov, plus 7-9.30pm Jul & Aug, cave 10am-6pm or 7pm early Feb–mid-Nov; 📍) Deep inside this extensive tufa cave, the mushroom beds (adult/child €7/5.50) are a great intro to the dark, dank world of farming fungi. You can also dine on mushrooms, including *galipettes* (five for €14.50); the restaurant has plenty of veggie options. Situated 11km southeast of Saumur, at the western edge of Montsoreau, on the rte de Saumur (D947).

**La Cave aux Moines** (☎ 02 41 67 95 64; www.cave-aux-moines.com; 18 rue Foulques Nerra/D751, Préban, Chênehutte-Trèves-Cunault; menus €21-26; ☺ 10am-6.30pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, noon-4pm Sat & Sun rest of year; 📍 📍) Besides offering tours of their extensive, underground *champignonnière* (mushroom beds; adult/child €6/3), La Cave has a restaurant (open for lunch and dinner on weekends – daily mid-June to mid-September – plus Friday dinner) with all manner of *galipettes* (stuffed 'shrooms), snails and – their speciality – *fouées* (local breads baked in a wood-fired oven). Situated 10km northwest of Saumur.

**Musée du Champignon** (☎ 02 41 50 31 55; www.musee-du-champignon.com; rte de Gennes, St-Hilaire-St-Florent; adult/child €9/7; ☺ 10am-6pm or 7pm early Feb–mid-Nov) Get acquainted with some fabulous fungi at this mushroom museum, where you can see about a dozen varieties growing in glowing shades of orange, yellow, tan, brown and white. The shop sells shiitake-flavoured beer. Situated inside a cave at the western edge of St-Hilaire-St-Florent, 4.5km northwest of Saumur.

### ★ Le Gambetta

GASTRONOMY ccc

(☎ 02 41 67 66 66; www.restaurantlegambetta.fr; 12 rue Gambetta; menus lunch from €32, dinner €39-115; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.15-9pm Tue-Sat) Supreme elegance meets knock-your-socks-off creative French cuisine at Chef Mickaël Pi-hours' renowned establishment. Some *menus* include wine pairings perfectly chosen to complement the parade of gorgeously presented *gastronomique* dishes, punctuated by surprise treats from the kitchen. With the *carte blanche*, you choose the number of courses and the chef decides what each will be. Reserve ahead Friday night, Saturday and in summer.

### ★ Entertainment

#### ★ Cadre Noir

EQUESTRIAN SHOW

(☎ 02 41 53 50 80; www.ifce.fr/cadre-noir; l'École Nationale d'Équitation; Matinale adult/child €19/13, Gala from €35/15; ☺ specific dates Mar-Oct) The Cadre Noir equestrian display team puts on two types of astonishingly graceful show: **Matinales**, hour-long training demonstrations with commentary; and – this is what it's most famous for – ballet-like **Galas** that showcase horses' and riders' extraordinary skills. Headsets provide simultaneous translation into English. Reserve (well in advance

for the Galas) by phone or online, or via Saumur's tourist office.

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 02 41 40 20 60; www.saurmur-tourisme.com; 8bis quai Carnot; ☺ 9.15am-12.30pm & 2-6pm or 7pm Mon-Sat year-round, Sun hours vary; 📍 📍) Can supply you with a city map, information on nearby horse-riding options and a list of area sites open in winter. Has a free left-luggage service. Situated on the riverfront one block northwest of the bridge, pont Cessart.

**Maison des Vins** (☎ 02 41 38 45 83; mdvins.anjousaumur@gmail.com; 7 quai Carnot; ☺ 11am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Tue-Sat, plus Mon Jul-late Sep) Run by a winegrowers federation, this is an excellent place to sample (for a small fee) and purchase wines from 20 Saumur-area AOCs and get details on vineyard visits. Situated next to the tourist office.

### i Getting There & Around

#### BUS

The tourist office can provide details on bus services.

**Agglobus** (☎ 02 41 51 11 87; www.agglobus.fr; single/day ticket €1.40/3.80) *Ligne* (line) 1 links the train station and the city centre with Turquant, Montsoreau and the Abbaye Royale



## THE GREEN FAIRY: ABSINTHE

Some of France's most distinctive liqueurs are distilled in the Loire Valley, including the aniseedy (and allegedly hallucinogenic) brew known as absinthe. Distilled using a heady concoction of natural herbs, true absinthe includes three crucial components: green anise, fennel and the foliage of *Artemisia absinthium* (wormwood), used as a remedy since the time of the ancient Egyptians. Legend has it that absinthe was created by a French doctor (the wonderfully named Dr Pierre Ordinaire) in the late 1790s, and the recipe was acquired by the father-and-son team who established the first major absinthe factory, Maison Pernod-Fils, in 1805.

The drink's popularity exploded in the 19th century, when it was discovered by bohemian poets and painters (as well as French troops, who were given it as an antimalarial drug). Seriously potent (it's 62% to 72% alcohol by volume), absinthe's traditional green colour and supposedly psychoactive effects led to its popular nickname, 'the green fairy': everyone from Rimbaud to Vincent van Gogh sang its praises. Ernest Hemingway invented his own absinthe cocktail, ominously dubbed 'Death in the Afternoon'.

But the drink's reputation was ultimately its downfall: fearing widespread psychic degeneration, governments around the globe banned it in the early 20th century (France in 1915). In the 1990s a group of dedicated absintheurs reverse-engineered the liqueur, chemically analysing century-old bottles that had escaped the ban. In 2011 absinthe again became legal in France. It's traditionally mixed with very cold water streamed through a sugar cube – you can try it, as well as triple sec, at **Distillerie Combier** (☎ 02 41 40 23 02; www.combier.fr; 48 rue Beaurepaire, Saumur; tours adult/child €5/free; ☺ tours 10.30am, 2.30pm & 4pm or 4.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, plus Mon Jun-Sep; shop 10am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Tue-Sat year-round, Sun & Mon hours vary) in Saumur.

de Fontevraud a few times a day from Monday to Saturday.

**Aléop** (p431) Line 417 goes to Angers (1½ hours) via Chênèhutte-Trèves-Cunault and Gennes.

### TRAIN

Saumur's station is across the river from the town centre, 1.3km from the tourist office.

**Angers** €6, 21 to 40 minutes, nine to 19 daily.

**Langeais** €8.50, 25 minutes, seven to nine daily.

**Paris Gare Montparnasse** €26 to €65, two to three hours, 10 to 20 daily (requires one transfer).

**Tours** €12, 40 minutes, eight to 12 daily.

## East of Saumur

Some of the Loire's most exquisite scenery, including riverside tufa bluffs punctuated by cave houses, stretches along the D947 southeast of Saumur.

Many of the renowned AOC wine producers here, both small and large, offer free tastings at their cellars from spring to early autumn; see www.saumur-champigny.com (click 'Vineyard and Winemakers', then 'The Winemakers' Directory') for details that include websites and whether you need to

phone ahead. Tourist offices also have information. Note that winegrowers are especially busy during the *vendanges* (grape harvest) from late August to October.

## Turquant

POP 590

Ten kilometres southeast of Saumur, the picturesque and easily strollable village of Turquant is one of the best places in the Loire Valley to see troglodyte dwellings. Many have now been spruced up and converted into shops, galleries or restaurants.

**Les Pommes Tapées** (☎ 02 41 51 48 30; https://pommes-tapees.fr; 11 rue des Ducs d'Anjou; adult/child €7.50/4; ☺ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Nov, plus Mon Jun-Sep, 10am-5pm Thu-Sun Feb & Mar) is one of the last places in France producing traditionally made dried apples. See displays on how it's done, visit the tufa caves, sample the wares (€1) and buy some to take home.

## Sleeping & Eating

★ **Demeure de la Vignole** DESIGN HOTEL €€ (☎ 02 41 53 67 00; www.demeure-vignole.com; 3 impasse Marguerite d'Anjou; d €120-165, 4-person ste €220; ☺ closed mid-Nov-mid-Feb; 🍷 🍷) This swish hotel has 11 richly decorated rooms, four of them inside caves. The 15m heated

swimming pool is carved into the rock face, too. Very homey, and not just for hobbits. A refreshing change from the ordinary.

### L'Hélianthe

FRENCH €

(☎02 41 51 22 28; www.restaurant-helianthe.fr; rue-elle Antoine Cristal; mains €16.50; ☀noon-1.45pm Mon, Tue & Fri-Sun, 7-8.45pm Thu-Mon) Carved into the cliff behind Turquant's tiny *mairie* (town hall), this atmospheric troglodyte restaurant has a hearty menu firmly based on local products and classic French flavours. Specialities include Loire fish casserole and dishes made with *légumes oubliés* (heirloom vegetables) such as *panais* (parsnip), *topinambours* (Jerusalem artichoke) and *vitelottes* (purple potatoes).

### Bistroglo

BISTRO €€

(☎02 41 40 22 36; www.bistroglo.com; Atelier 3, rue du Château Gaillard; menus €19-25; ☀10.30am-9pm Tue-Sat, to 6pm Sun Apr-Sep; ☎) This bistro-style restaurant is situated *en troglo* (troglodyte, ie built into the cliff face) – thus the name. Artisanal beers and local wines are an excellent prelude to traditional French cuisine, including Loire Valley favourites such as *galipettes* (stuffed extra-large button mushrooms).

## Candes-St-Martin

POP 200

The picturesque village of Candes-St-Martin, about 1.5km southeast of Montsoreau, occupies an idyllic spot at the confluence of the Vienne and Loire Rivers. St Martin died here in 397, turning little Candes into a major pilgrimage destination.

For great panoramas, climb the tiny streets above the **church**, past inhabited cave dwellings, or head down to the benches and path along the waterfront.

### 📍 Sights & Activities

#### Collégiale St-Martin

CHURCH

(place de l'Église; ☀8.45am-6pm, to 7pm summer) This soaring, crenellated village church, built in the Gothic style from 1175 to 1240, venerates the spot where St Martin died in 397 and was buried for a while (his body was later spirited off to Tours). Enter via the exceptional side porch, decorated with two rows of statues.

#### Château de Montsoreau-Musée d'Art Contemporain

CHATEAU

(☎02 41 67 12 60; www.chateau-montsoreau.com; passage du Marquis de Geoffre, Montsoreau; adult/

child €10.20/6.20; ☀noon-6pm or 7pm Oct-Apr, 10am-7pm May-Sep, closed Jan) A surprising warning, written in gargantuan letters in the gravel of the courtyard, greets you as you enter this Renaissance-style chateau, made famous in Alexandre Dumas *père's* historical novel *La Dame de Monsoreau* and now a museum of conceptual art specialising in the UK- and US-based Art & Language movement. Many works feature words, often in English, with intellectual and theoretical pretensions that range from profound to silly. Temporary expositions change three times a year. For spectacular river views, climb to the roof of the tower. Has a restaurant featuring local organic products.

### 📍 Getting There & Away

Candes-St-Martin is midway between Saumur and Chinon (about 14km from each) and about 2km southeast of Montsoreau. From Saumur take the scenic D947, from Chinon the D751.

## Fontevraud-l'Abbaye

POP 1562

The charming, stone-built village of Fontevraud-l'Abbaye has been known since the Middle Ages for its illustrious abbey, burial place of some of France and England's most famous medieval royals.

### 📍 Sights

#### ★ Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud

HISTORIC SITE

(☎02 41 51 45 11; www.fontevraud.fr; adult/child €11/7.50, audioguide €4.50; ☀9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Nov-Mar, closed mid-Jan) The highlight of this 12th-century abbey complex is the vast but movingly simple church, notable for its soaring pillars, Romanesque domes and polychrome *gisants* (funerary effigies) of four illustrious Plantagenets: Henry II, king of England (r 1154–89); his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine (who retired

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

#### SAUMUR DAY TRIPPER

The gorgeous D751 from Saumur to **Genes** (population 2430) follows the banks of the Loire, sweeping through glades and along 8km of tiny white-stone villages belonging to the commune of **Chênehutte-Trèves-Cunault** (population 1050).

to Fontevraud following Henry's death); their son Richard the Lionheart; and Richard's brother King John's wife Isabelle of Angoulême. Signs are in English.

In the church's crypt lie the archaeological excavations of earlier churches; the entrance is in the left transept arm, behind the white cube.

The cloister is surrounded by one-time dormitories, workrooms and prayer halls; the **Salle Capitulaire** (chapter room), with murals of the Passion of Christ by Thomas Pot; and a wonderful Gothic-vaulted **refectory**, where the nuns would eat in silence while being read the Scriptures. Both the nuns and the monks of Fontevraud were, exceptionally, governed by an abbess, generally a lady of noble birth who had retired from public life. Outside, there are medieval-style gardens and a recently restored **kitchen** with 21 chimneys and a conical roof, built entirely from stone to make it fireproof.

In 1804, by Napoleonic decree, Fontevraud was turned into a notoriously harsh prison, a role it played until 1963. Author Jean Genet was imprisoned for stealing (but not here) and, based on that experience, wrote *Miracle de la Rose* (1946), which is set at Fontevraud. An exhibition opened in 2019 includes a model of the prison made by 19th-century prisoners.

A brand new **Musée d'Art Moderne** (modern-art museum) – housing the superb collection of the textile magnate Léon Cligman and his wife, the painter Martine Martine (Martine Lévy) – opened in the abbesses' one-time carriage house in December 2020. Highlights include works by Delacroix, Derain, Dufy, Corot, Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, de Vlaminck and the sculptor Germaine Richier.

Audioguides are available for adults and children in a variety of languages.

## Sleeping & Eating

There are several restaurants and a *boulangerie* at place des Plantagenêts.

### Fontevraud L'Hôtel

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎02 46 46 10 10; [www.hotel-fontevraud.com](http://www.hotel-fontevraud.com); 38 rue Saint Jean de l'Habit, Le Prieure Saint-Lazare; d/q Fri & Sat €170/210, Sun-Thu €145/180; ☺ restaurant 7.30-9.30pm Thu & Fri, noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Sat, noon-2pm Sun, plus extra days Apr-Oct; @📶) Ultramodern meets medieval at this luxurious hotel, situated on the abbey (p427) grounds in a one-time priory (the vehicle entrance is around the side of the

complex). The 54 sleek rooms are decorated in muted beiges and whites. The Michelin-starred gastronomic restaurant (menus from €70) serves seriously *haute* cuisine, conceived by award-winning chef Thibaut Ruggeri.

### Chez Teresa

CAFE €

(☎02 41 51 21 24; [www.lettersandlunchesfromtheloire.com](http://www.lettersandlunchesfromtheloire.com); 6 av Rochechouart; lunch menus €12.50; ☺ noon-8pm; 📶) English expats Teresa and Tony offer a cosy-warm welcome at this frilly little tearoom, stuffed with bric-a-brac from across the Channel. In the afternoon, pop by for a cuppa, little triangular sandwiches, scones with cream and jam, and cake, all for €9.80. The double/triple room upstairs costs €65/75, breakfast included. Just half a block from the abbey.

## Getting There & Away

Fontevraud-l'Abbaye is 16km southwest of Saumur along the D947, whose most attractive section runs along the south bank of the Loire between Saumur and Montsoreau.

## Angers

POP 156,000

An intellectual centre in the 1400s and a lively university city today, Angers – the historical seat of the Plantagenet dynasty and the dukes of Anjou – makes an engaging western gateway to the Loire Valley. The mostly pedestrianised old town supports a thriving cafe culture, thanks in part to the dynamic presence of over 40,000 students, as well as some excellent places to eat. The city is famous for two sets of breathtaking tapestries, one from the 14th century, the other from the mid-20th.

## Sight

### ★ Château d'Angers

CHATEAU

(☎02 41 86 48 77; [www.chateau-angers.fr](http://www.chateau-angers.fr); 2 promenade du Bout-du-Monde; adult/child €9.50/free, audioguide €3; ☺ 9.30am-6.30pm May-early Sep, 10am-5.30pm early Sep-Apr) Looming above the river, this forbidding medieval castle – seat of power of the once-mighty counts of Anjou – is ringed by moats, 2.5m-thick walls and 17 massive, menacing round towers. The centrepiece is the stunning **Tenture de l'Apocalypse** (Apocalypse Tapestry), a 104m-long series of tapestries commissioned in 1375 to illustrate the story of the final bloody battle

between good and evil, as prophesied in the Bible's book of Revelation.

The vivid scenes mix terror, pathos, extreme violence and humour, giving visitors an extraordinary peek into the medieval mind, its dreams and its deepest fears.

You can walk around the top of the castle's ramparts, which afford spectacular views, along the **Chemin de Rond** (Parapet Walk).

### Quartier de la Cité

HISTORIC SITE

One of the earliest examples of Angevin (Plantagenet) architecture in France, Gothic **Cathédrale St-Maurice** (place Monseigneur Chappouille; ☺ 8am-7pm or 8pm) is distinguished by a striking Norman (mid-1100s) portal decorated with rare polychrome figures, a nave from the same period, 13th- to 15th-century stained glass, a humongous organ and a supremely baroque baldachin (1758) over the high altar. From the square in front, a monumental staircase, **Montée St-Maurice**, leads down to a new **riverside esplanade**.

Right behind the cathedral stands the half-timbered **Maison d'Adam** (place Ste-Croix), one of the city's best-preserved

medieval houses (c 1500), which is decorated with a riot of carved, bawdy wooden sculptures. The Tree of Life, on the corner, was once flanked by Adam and Eve; another loved-up couple can be seen nearby.

### Musée des Beaux-Arts

GALLERY

(☎ 02 41 05 38 00; www.musees.angers.fr; 14 rue du Musée; adult/child €6/free; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Has an excellent 14th- to 20th-century collection (mainly paintings) that ranges from the French masters Ingres, Fragonard and Watteau to the Florentine Lorenzo Lippi to Flemish and Dutch Golden Age painters such as Jacob Jordaens. Also has a section on the history of Angers and hosts two special expositions a year. The audioguide, in four languages, is free. Don't miss the exuberant sculpture in the courtyard, *L'Arbre Serpents* (Serpent Tree) by Niki de Saint Phalle.

A hulking **blue gorilla** by the sculptor Olivier Courty (2019) can be found in the garden out back, accessible from 37 rue Toussaint.

### Galerie David d'Angers

MUSEUM

(☎ 02 41 05 38 90; www.musees.angers.fr; 33bis rue Toussaint; adult/child €4/free; ☺ 10am-6pm

## WORTH A TRIP

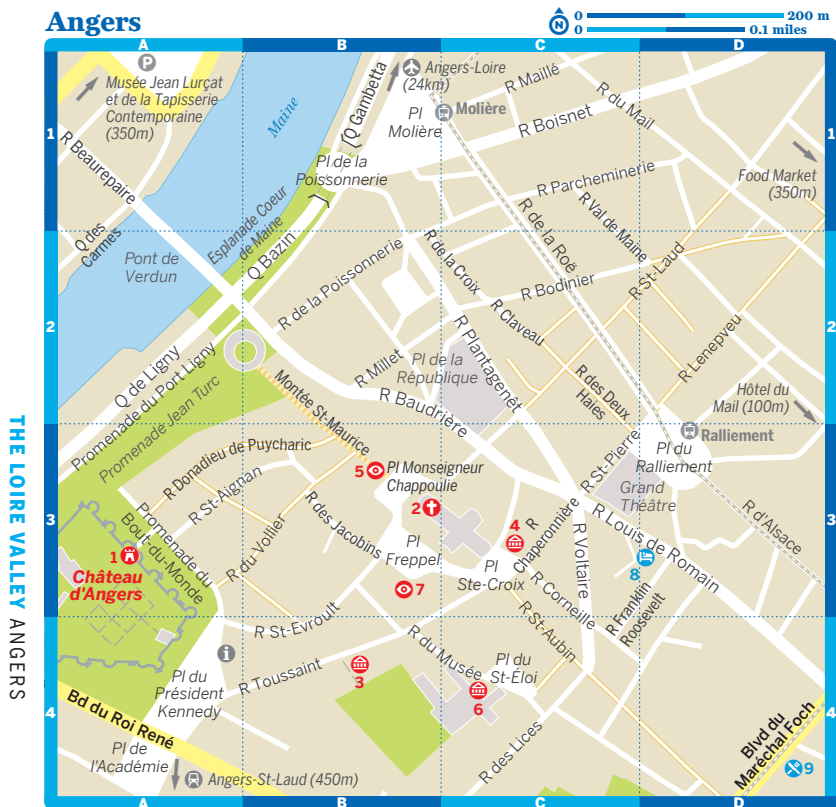
### ANGERS DAY TRIPPER

South of Angers, the Maine (France's shortest major river) joins the Loire for the final leg of its journey to the Atlantic. The river banks immediately west of this confluence remain the source of some of the valley's most notable wines, including Savennières (grown near the pretty village of the same name) and Coteaux du Layon. The area due south of Angers, between Gennes, Brissac-Quincé and Savennières, makes for great back-road exploration.

One of the Loire Valley's most opulent castles, the seven-storey **Château de Brissac** (☎ 02 41 91 22 21; www.chateau-brissac.fr; Brissac-Quincé; adult/child €12/4.50, gardens only €6/free; ☺ 10am-noon & 2-4.30pm or 5pm Wed-Mon Apr-Oct, 10am-4.30pm or 5pm daily Jul & Aug) – France's tallest – has been owned by the Brissac family for 18 generations (since 1502). Many of the 204 rooms are sumptuously furnished with antique furniture, Flemish tapestries and twinkling chandeliers. The serene 70-hectare grounds, whose vineyards boast four AOC vintages, can be visited on five themed paths. From May to September, three of the château's bedrooms turn into an opulent **B&B** (double from €390) – ideal for a honeymoon or a very special family vacation! Situated 19km south-east of Angers.

Owned and lived in by the same Irish family and its descendants since 1749, the elegant, Renaissance-style **Château de Serrant** (☎ 02 41 39 13 01; www.chateau-serrant.net; St-Georges-sur-Loire; tour adult/child €12/7.50; ☺ 9.45am-5.15pm Wed-Sun mid-Mar-early Nov, daily mid-Jul-mid-Sep), built on medieval foundations, is notable for its 12,000-tome library, huge kitchens, domestics' dining room and Chambre Empire, an extravagant domed bedroom designed for Napoléon (he stuck around for just two hours). To see the most interesting section, you have to take a 1¼-hour tour (in French, with reference text available in six languages), but you can visit the ground floor, two Louis XV-style rooms on the 1st floor, the chapel and the English-style gardens on your own (adult/child €10/5.50). Situated 20km west-southwest of Angers.

## Angers



THE LOIRE VALLEY ANGERS

## Angers

## Top Sights

- 1 Château d'Angers ..... A3

## Sights

- 2 Cathédrale St-Maurice ..... B3  
 3 Galerie David d'Angers ..... B4  
 4 Maison d'Adam ..... C3  
 5 Montée St-Maurice ..... B3  
 6 Musée des Beaux-Arts ..... C4  
 7 Quartier de la Cité ..... B3

## Sleeping

- 8 Hôtel Continental ..... D3

## Eating

- 9 Le Favre d'Anne ..... D4

Tue-Sun) The Angers-born sculptor Pierre-Jean David (1788–1856), aka David d'Angers, is renowned for his lifelike sculptures, which adorn public monuments such as the Panthéon in Paris and can be seen in the Louvre

and Paris' Père Lachaise cemetery. Here in the 12th-century Toussaint Abbey, flooded with light thanks to a striking glass-and-girder ceiling, you can admire original plaster studio casts and drawings of most of his creations.

A plaque in the courtyard is dedicated to Thomas Jefferson.

## Musée Jean Lurçat

 de la Tapisserie Contemporaine MUSEUM

(☎02 41 24 18 45; www.musees.angers.fr; 4 bd Arago; adult/child €6/free; ☀10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Inspired by the Apocalypse Tapestry in the château (p428), Jean Lurçat (1892–1966) began his epic tapestry masterpiece, *Le Chant du Monde* (Song of the World; 1957–61), just 12 years after the slaughter of WWII; scenes depict everything from the delights of Champagne to space exploration to nuclear holocaust. A quintessentially mid-20th-century meditation on the human condition, it is exuberant but contemplative,



and only guardedly optimistic. The museum also exhibits a changing kaleidoscope of extraordinarily beautiful 20th-century and 21st-century tapestries.

## Tours

### **Cointreau Distillery**

DISTILLERY

(☎02 41 31 50 50; [www.cointreau.com/fr/fr/distillerie-cointreau](http://www.cointreau.com/fr/fr/distillerie-cointreau); 2 bd des Bretonnières, St-Barthélemy-d'Anjou; 1¼/2hr tour €11/19; ☺ boutique 11am-6pm Tue-Sat) Drop by to sample and buy the bitter-orange liqueur just steps from where it's distilled. To discover (some of) Cointreau's production secrets, take a tour of the facilities; reserve ahead by phone or via the French-language website. Situated in an industrial zone 3km east of Angers' city centre (served by Irigo bus 6).

## Sleeping

### ★ **Hôtel du Mail**

HISTORIC HOTEL €

(☎02 41 25 05 25; [www.hoteldumail.fr](http://www.hoteldumail.fr); 8 rue des Ursules; d €85-105, tr/q €115/125; 📺📶) Rose-adorned carpets and bright-red walls greet you at this attractive hotel, renovated in late 2019. Arrayed around a quiet courtyard in a converted 17th-century convent, the 25 rooms have antique-style furnishings, creative light fixtures and white-tile bathrooms; superior rooms are spacious, and most have large windows. No lift. Situated 250m east of place du Ralliement.

### **Hôtel Continental**

HOTEL €

(☎02 41 86 94 94; [www.hotelcontinental.com](http://www.hotelcontinental.com); 14 rue Louis de Romain; s €85, d €104-128; 📺📶) Wedged into a triangular corner building (built 1890) smack in the city centre, this locally owned, ecologically certified ([www.ecolabel.eu](http://www.ecolabel.eu)), metro-style hotel has 25 rooms that are quiet, spotless and decked out with cosy pillows. Breakfast is organic and fair trade. There's an underground parking garage nearby. Deals are often available on their website.

## Eating

### **Food Market**

MARKET €

(place du Général Leclerc; ☺8am-1.30pm Sat) This huge weekly market sells edibles and, at nearby place Louis Imbach, flea-market goods.

### **Le Favre d'Anne**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎02 41 36 12 12; [www.lefavredanne.fr](http://www.lefavredanne.fr); 21 bd du Maréchal Foch; 2-course lunch menus €40, other

## ANGERS CITY PASS

Swing by the tourist office to pick up the Angers City Pass (€15/24/31 for 24/48/72 hours), good for entry to about two dozen Angers-area châteaux and museums and, with the three-day pass, the **Terra Botanica gardens** ([www.terraborotanica.fr](http://www.terraborotanica.fr)). Also gets you 50% off on four hours of daily parking and day passes for trams and buses.

menus €49-105; ☺noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Wed-Sat; 📺) Chef Pascal Favre d'Anne shut a Michelin-starred restaurant in order to travel around Asia for a year and then opened this place. Incredibly, he got his Michelin star back almost immediately. The *gastronomique* menu at this *loft culinaire* (culinary loft) is inspired by Pascal's travels but uses the freshest local products. Reserve ahead.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 41 23 50 00; [www.tourisme.destination-angers.com](http://www.tourisme.destination-angers.com); 7 place du Président Kennedy; ☺10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun & holidays Apr-Sep, 1.30-5.30pm Mon, 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar; 📺) Very helpful, with luggage lockers big enough for backpacks, locked bicycle-parking boxes (€3), public toilets, and loads of info on sights, activities (including cycling) and transport. Sells events tickets and the Angers City Pass.

## Getting There & Around

### **BUS**

Angers' **gare routière** (bus station) is right next to the train station. **Aléop** (☎02 41 22 72 95; <https://aleop.paysdelaloire.fr>; tickets €2-6.20) serves destinations within the Maine-et-Loire *département*, including the Château de Brissac and Doué-la-Fontaine (bus 405).

### **TRAIN**

**Angers-St-Laud Train Station** (place de la Gare) is 600m south of the château and the tourist office.

**Nantes** €12, 37 to 55 minutes, two to four per hour.

**Paris' Gare Montparnasse** €25 to €59, 1½ hours, almost hourly.

**Saumur** €6, 21 to 40 minutes, nine to 19 daily.

**Tours** €19.40, one to 1½ hours, five to eight direct daily.



SERGEY BRISTEVSKIY / SHUTTERSTOCK ©



1. Château Royal de Blois (p403) 2. Château de Chambord (p407)  
3. Château d'Azay-le-Rideau (p418) 4. Château de Villandry (p417)



NALAHTINUIY / SHUTTERSTOCK ©



## 2 Châteaux of the Loire Valley

The Loire Valley is the place to see castles, but with so many glorious options, what's the best way to spend your time?

For sheer architectural splendour, you can't top the big three: François I's country extravaganza Chambord (p407); Renaissance-era, river-spanning Chenonceau (p414); and the supremely graceful Cheverny (p408).

If you're looking for solitude, chances are that off-the-beaten-track châteaux, such as Brissac (p429) and Brézé (p423), will be much quieter.

For historical significance, at the top of the list are the royal château of Blois (p403), spanning four distinct periods of French architecture; Amboise (p415), home to a succession of French monarchs; the Forteresse Royale de Chinon (p420), where Joan of Arc held her momentous first rendezvous with the future King Charles VII; the forbidding Château d'Angers (p428), with its fantastic tapestry of the Apocalypse; and pastoral Le Clos Lucé (p415), where Leonardo da Vinci spent his final years.

Looking for a picture-perfect setting? Our choices are the moat-ringed Château d'Azay-le-Rideau (p418) and the stunning gardens at Villandry (p417) and Chaumont-sur-Loire (p409).

For literary connections, try Château d'Ussé (p418), the inspiration for Sleeping Beauty; or the Château de Montsoreau (p427), setting for a classic Alexandre Dumas novel.

### TOP TIPS

- In the summer, go first thing or late in the day to avoid the coach-tour crowds.
- Buy multi-château combo tickets, or pre-purchase tickets at tourist offices or online, for slight savings and to avoid queues.
- Remember that château ticket offices close from 30 to 60 minutes before the châteaux themselves.



2 VARI TURNOV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



4 LEONS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

1.61 million

### MAIN CITY

Dijon

### BEST DEPICTION OF BURNING IN HELL

Hôtel-Dieu des  
Hospices de Beaune  
(p448)

### BEST CELTIC TREASURE

Trésor de Vix  
(p455)

### BEST GOOD-LUCK CHARM

Rue de la Chouette,  
Dijon (p439)



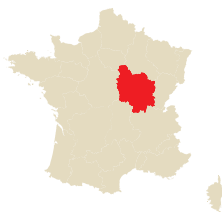
### WHEN TO GO

**May & Jun** Long, sunny days are ideal for boating on Burgundy's 1200km of placid waterways.

**Jul** Splendid weather makes summer a perfect time to cycle Burgundy's bike trails.

**Sep & Oct** Wine harvest season offers classic perspectives on Burgundy's vineyards.





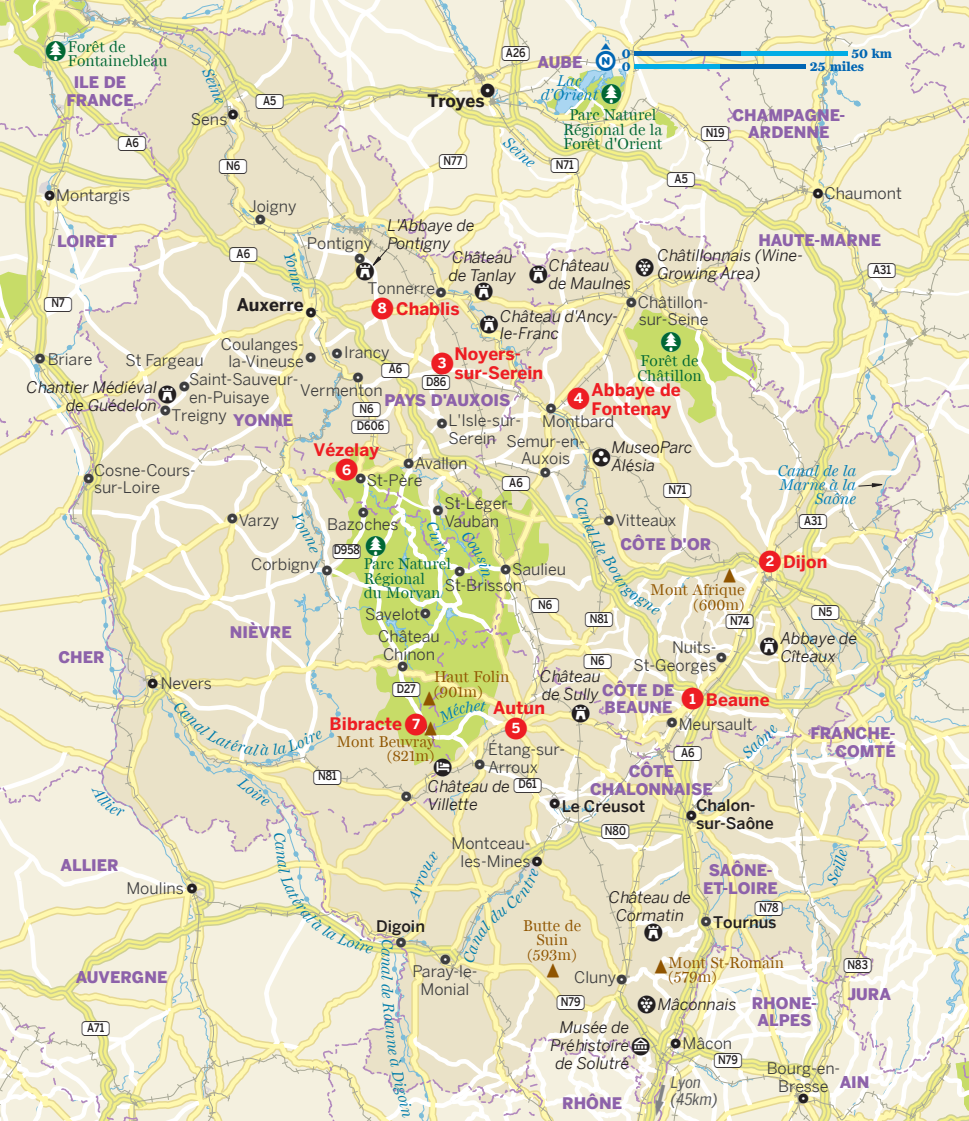
## Burgundy

**B**urgundy (Bourgogne in French) has some of France's most gorgeous countryside: medieval villages surrounded by neat rows of vines, rolling green hills dotted with mustard fields, vast expanses of forest. The region's towns and its dashing capital, Dijon, are heirs to a glorious architectural heritage that goes back to the Renaissance, the Middle Ages and into the mists of Gallo-Roman and Celtic antiquity. Throughout the region, wine and food come together in a particularly enticing way. Burgundy's four *départements* (Côte d'Or, Yonne, Saône-et-Loire and Nièvre) are a paradise for lovers of the great outdoors. Cycle through revered vineyards, hike the wild reaches of the Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan or glide along tranquil waterways in a canal boat.

### INCLUDES

Côte d'Or . . . . .	437	Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan . . .	466
Dijon . . . . .	437	Saône-et-Loire . . . . .	468
Yonne . . . . .	456	Autun . . . . .	468
Auxerre . . . . .	456	Cluny . . . . .	470
Chablis . . . . .	460	Mâcon . . . . .	472
Vézelay . . . . .	464		





## Burgundy Highlights

- 1 Beaune** (p448) Sampling Burgundy's renowned vintages in the heart of the vine-carpeted Côte d'Or.
- 2 Dijon** (p437) Soaking up the artistic glory assembled by the dukes of Burgundy on the medieval streets of the region's capital.
- 3 Noyers-sur-Serein** (p462) Watching the sun peek

over the medieval battlements of this multiturreted walled village.

- 4 Abbaye de Fontenay** (p454) Imagining medieval monastic life at this tranquil Cistercian abbey.
- 5 Autun** (p468) Contemplating Gislebertus' *Temptation of Eve*, a masterpiece of 12th-century stone carving.
- 6 Vézelay** (p464) Climbing

through idyllic green countryside and cobblestoned lanes to reach the medieval basilica that crowns this hilltop village.

- 7 Bibracte** (p467) Feeling the spirit of the ancient Gauls at Vercingétorix's mountaintop stronghold.
- 8 Chablis** (p460) Strolling or cycling through the rolling vineyards that produce Burgundy's most famous white wine.

## CÔTE D'OR

The Côte d'Or *département* is named after one of the world's foremost winegrowing regions, which stretches from Dijon, bursting with cultural riches, south to the wine town of Beaune and beyond. West of Dijon, other worthwhile destinations include the walled, hilltop town of Semur-en-Auxois, the bucolic Cistercian monastic site Abbaye de Fontenay and the historic Alésia battlefield where Julius Caesar vanquished the Gauls in 52 BCE. In the far northwest of the *département*, on the border with Champagne, Châtillon-sur-Seine displays some stunning Celtic treasures.

### Dijon

POP 159,168

Dijon is one of France's most appealing cities thanks to its compact and pedestrian-friendly centre, lively street scene and gorgeous architectural tapestry. Filled with elegant medieval and Renaissance buildings – some with polychrome tile roofs – that hark back to the city's 14th- and 15th-century heyday as the capital of the Duchy of Burgundy, the city's historic heart is wonderful for strolling, especially if you like to mix cultural riches with excellent food and fine wine.

### History

Dijon served as the capital of the duchy of Burgundy from the 11th to 15th centuries, enjoying a golden age during the 14th and 15th centuries under Philippe le Hardi (Philip the Bold), Jean sans Peur (John the Fearless) and Philippe le Bon (Philip the Good). During their reigns, some of the finest painters, sculptors and architects from around the continent were brought to Dijon, turning the city into one of the great centres of European art.

### Sights

All of Dijon's municipal museums are free except, occasionally, for special exhibitions. Major churches are open from 8am to 7pm.

*The Owl's Trail* (€3.50), available in 11 languages at the tourist office, details a self-guided city-centre walking tour that takes about an hour. The 22-stop route is marked on the pavement with bronze triangles.

### Palais des Ducs et des États de Bourgogne

PALACE

(Palace of the Dukes & States of Burgundy; place de la Libération) Once home to Burgundy's powerful dukes, this monumental palace and its neoclassical façade overlook place de la Libération, old Dijon's magnificent, semi-circular central square, laid out in 1686. The palace's eastern wing houses the outstanding Musée des Beaux-Arts, whose entrance is next to the **Tour de Bar**, a squat 14th-century tower that once served as a prison. The remainder of the palace houses municipal offices.

### ★ Musée des Beaux-Arts


MUSEUM

( 03 80 74 52 09; <https://beaux-arts.dijon.fr>; 1 rue Rameau; audioguide €4, guided tour €6;  10am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Oct-May, closed Tue year-round) **FREE** Extensively renovated from 2008 to 2019, Dijon's fine-arts museum – one of the most outstanding in France – occupies the east wing of the monumental Palais des Ducs. The star attraction is the wood-panelled **Salle des Gardes**, which houses the ornate, carved late-medieval sepulchres of dukes John the Fearless and Philip the Bold. Other sections focus on Egyptian art, the Middle Ages in Burgundy and Europe, and six centuries of European painting, from the Renaissance to modern times.

Highlights include a fine collection of 13th- and 14th-century primitives that reveal how medieval artistic and aesthetic sensibilities varied between Italy, Switzerland and the Rhineland; a smattering of old masters such as Lorenzo Lotto; quite a few naturalistic sculptures by Dijon-born François Rude (1784–1855); works by Manet, Monet, Matisse and Rodin; and the incomparable Pompon Room, tucked off a back staircase, packed with stylised modern sculptures of animals by François Pompon (1855–1933), who was born in Burgundy (in Saulieu).

### Tour Philippe le Bon

TOWER

(place de la Libération; adult/child €5/3;  guided tours 11am & 2.30pm Mon, every 45min 10.30am-noon & 1.45-4.45pm Tue-Sun Apr–mid-Nov, 2 to 5 times a day mid-Nov–Mar) For fantastic views over the old city's narrow streets and gracious squares, climb 316 winding steps to the top of this 46m-high, mid-15th-century tower. On clear days, views from the terrace up top extend all the way to Mont Blanc. Reserve guided tours at Dijon's tourist office.



## Dijon

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Musée des Beaux-Arts ..... F2

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Église Notre Dame ..... F2  
 3 Hôtel de Vogüé ..... F2  
 4 Jardin Botanique de l'Arquebuse ..... A2  
 5 Maison des Cariatides ..... G1  
 6 Musée Archéologique ..... D2  
 7 Musée de la Vie Bourguignonne ..... E4  
 8 Musée Magnin ..... F2  
 9 Palais des Ducs et des États de Bourgogne ..... F2  
 10 Rue de la Chouette ..... F1  
 11 Tour de Bar ..... F2  
 12 Tour Philippe le Bon ..... F2

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 13 Hôtel des Ducs ..... F2

- 14 Hôtel du Palais ..... F3  
 15 Hôtel Le Chambellan ..... G2  
 16 Hôtel Le Jacquemart ..... F1  
 17 La Cour Berbisey ..... D4  
 18 Le Petit Tertre ..... F1

### 🍴 Eating

- 19 Café de l'Industrie ..... E1  
 20 Chez Léon ..... E1  
 21 DZ'Envies ..... E1  
 22 Le Piano Qui Fume ..... D3  
 23 Les Halles Centrales ..... E1

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 24 Café Gourmand ..... F2  
 25 L'Age de Raisin ..... D4

### 🛍 Shopping

- 26 Moutarde Maille ..... D2  
 27 Mulot & Petitjean ..... D3

### Église Notre Dame

CHURCH

(place Notre-Dame; ☀8am-7pm) Built between 1220 and 1240, this Gothic masterpiece greets you with an extraordinary façade whose three tiers of leering gargoyles are separated by two rows of pencil-thin columns. High atop the façade, the 14th-century **Horloge à Jacquemart** – brought here from Belgium, as a trophy of war, by Philip the Bold in 1383 – chimes every quarter-hour.

### Hôtel de Vogüé

HISTORIC BUILDING

(8 rue de la Chouette) Behind Église Notre Dame, the 17th-century Hôtel de Vogüé is renowned for the ornate carvings around the arches of its exquisitely proportioned Renaissance courtyard. Walk through the pink stone archway for a peek.

### Rue de la Chouette

STREET

Around the north side of Église Notre Dame, this narrow street is named after the small stone owl (*chouette*) carved into the exterior corner of the chapel diagonally across from No 24. Said to grant happiness and wisdom to those who stroke it, it has been worn smooth by generations of fortune-seekers. Try it for yourself!

### Maison des Cariatides

HISTORIC BUILDING

(28 rue Chaudronnerie) Its Renaissance-style façade bursting with stone caryatids, soldiers and vines, Maison des Cariatides is one of Dijon's most ornate and entrancing buildings. Dating to the very early 1600s, it

was built by the Pouffiers, a wealthy family of local coppersmiths and merchants.

### Musée Archéologique

MUSEUM

(☎03 80 48 83 70; <https://archeologie.dijon.fr>; 5 rue du Docteur Maret; ☀9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Oct, Wed, Sat & Sun only Nov-Mar) **FREE** The big draw here is some truly amazing Celtic, Gallo-Roman and Merovingian artefacts, including a particularly fine 1st-century CE bronze of the Celtic river goddess Sequana standing on a dual-prowed boat. Upstairs, the early-Gothic hall (12th and 13th centuries), with its ogival arches held aloft by two rows of columns, once served as the dormitory of a Benedictine abbey.

### Musée de la Vie Bourguignonne

MUSEUM

(☎03 80 48 80 90; <http://vie-bourguignonne.dijon.fr>; 17 rue Ste-Anne; ☀9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) **FREE** Housed in a 17th-century Cistercian convent, this museum explores village and town life in Burgundy in centuries past with evocative tableaux illustrating dress, customs and traditional crafts. On the 1st floor, a whole street has been recreated, complete with a 19th-century pharmacy and numerous antique-filled shops (grocer, furrier, hatmaker, clockmaker, toy store and more).

### Musée Magnin

GALLERY

(☎03 80 67 11 10; [www.musee-magnin.fr](http://www.musee-magnin.fr); 4 rue des Bons Enfants; adult/child incl audioguide €3.50/free, during special exhibitions €5.50/free; ☀10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Sun) In 1938,

the sister-and-brother arts collecting team of Jeanne and Maurice Magnin turned their historic townhouse – built in the 1650s – over to the French state to display, in perpetuity, their extraordinary collection. Highlights include fine works from the Italian Renaissance, and Flemish and medieval paintings.

**Jardin Botanique de l'Arquebuse** GARDENS  
A delightful place for a Sunday stroll, this 5-hectare park south of the train station encompasses the colourful flower beds and rose trellises of Dijon's botanical gardens, along with an arboretum, a stream and a pond. It was established in 1833.

## Tours

The tourist office has details on a wide variety of tours of the city and nearby wine regions, and can make bookings.

English-language minibus tours operated by **Authentica Tours** (☎06 87 01 43 78; www.authentica-tours.com; half-/full-day tours per person from €65/130) and **Wine & Voyages** (☎03 80 61 15 15; www.wineandvoyages.com; tours €63-120) introduce the Côte d'Or vineyards. Reserve by phone, internet or via the tourist office.

## Sleeping

**Hôtel Le Chambellan** HOTEL €  
(☎03 80 67 12 67; www.hotel-chambellan.com; 92 rue Vannerie; d €55-65, q from €85, s/d with shared bathroom €37/39; 🏠) This long-time budget favourite in the heart of medieval Dijon mixes modern flair (bold colours, phone-charging ports, spiffy reading lamps) with the three Ps – *poutres, pierre, parquet* (exposed beams, stone and wood floors) – that epitomise owner Christophe Comte's long-standing fondness for the rustic. Has 24 rooms and three apartments.

**Hôtel Le Jacquemart** HOTEL €  
(☎03 80 60 09 60; www.hotel-lejacquemart.fr; 32 rue Verrière; s €59-65, d €67-75, q €95; 🏠) In the heart of old Dijon, this two-star hotel has 27 tidy, comfortable rooms and friendly staff. Rooms 5 and 6, in a 17th-century annexe just across the street, are larger and better equipped than those within the hotel's original core, and combine vintage touches (stone walls, beamed ceiling) with modern conveniences.

**Hôtel du Palais** HOTEL €  
(☎03 80 65 51 43; www.hoteldupalais-dijon.fr/accueil/; 23 rue du Palais; s/d from €39/65, tr

€75-105; 🏠🏠) This inviting three-star in a 17th-century *hôtel particulier* (private mansion) offers excellent value. The 13 rooms range from cosy, inexpensive 3rd-floor doubles tucked under the eaves to spacious, high-ceilinged family suites with abundant natural light. The location is unbeatable, on a quiet side street five minutes' walk from central place de la Libération.

**Le Petit Tertre** APARTMENT €€  
(☎03 80 52 74 07; www.lepetit-tertre.fr; 41 rue Verrière; s apt €65-93, d apt €83-111; 🏠🏠) For homey digs in the heart of medieval Dijon, this ensemble of five impeccably maintained apartments in a lovingly renovated family home is hard to beat. Each unique unit reflects the creative vision of the Franco-Japanese owners, with welcoming features that range from kitchen facilities, parquet floors and spacious bathrooms to a four-poster canopy bed or a Burgundian stone fireplace.

**Hôtel des Ducs** HOTEL €€  
(☎03 80 67 31 31; www.hoteldesducs.com; 5 rue Lamonnoye; d €89-124; 🏠🏠🏠🏠) Smack-dab in Dijon's medieval centre, this three-star hotel has 36 comfortable rooms and, in nearby buildings, 14 classic-contemporary studios. Offers themed escape games in the basement.

★ **La Cour Berbisey** B&B €€€  
(☎03 45 83 12 38; www.lacourberbisey.fr; 31 rue Berbisey; d/junior ste/ste €169/205/265; 🏠🏠) An arched red doorway in an ivy-draped wall leads to this luxurious B&B, easily Dijon's classiest mid-city accommodation. Three enormous suites with parquet floors, beamed ceilings and tall French windows are complemented by a junior suite and a smaller but equally comfortable double. Other pampering touches include an indoor swimming pool, sauna and antique-filled salon. Breakfast is included.

## Eating

Find loads of restaurants on buzzy rue Berbisey, around place Émile Zola, on rue Amiral Roussin and around the perimeter of the covered market. In the warm months, outdoor cafes and brasseries (restaurants) fill place de la Libération.

★ **Les Halles Centrales** MARKET €  
(rue Quentin; ☀8am-1pm Tue & Thu-Sat) Dijon's fabulous 19th-century covered market was enshrined as a national monument in 1975 after it narrowly escaped the wrecking ball.



## BURGUNDY WINE BASICS

Burgundy's epic vineyards extend approximately 250km from Chablis in the north to Beaujolais (almost!) in the south and comprise 84 Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) that were tweaked in 2020. Each micro-region has its own unique combination of characteristics – latitude, altitude, climate, sun exposure and, of course, soil – embodied in a concept called *terroir* (tair-WAHR) because it is the earth itself that imbues grapes with their unique qualities. However, some appellations, such as Crémant de Bourgogne (a light, sparkling white or rosé) and Bourgogne Aligoté, are produced in several regions.

### Wine Regions

Here's a brief survey of some of Burgundy's major growing regions (north to south):

**Chablis & Grand Auxerrois** Four renowned chardonnay white-wine appellations from 20 villages around Chablis. Part of the Auxerrois vineyards, Irancy produces excellent pinot-noir reds. The Tonnerrois vineyards produce good, affordable reds, whites and rosés.

**Châtillonnais** Some 20 villages around Châtillon-sur-Seine producing reds and whites.

**Côte d'Or** The northern section, the Côte de Nuits, stretches from Marsannay-la-Côte (near Dijon) south to Corgoloin and produces reds known for their robust, full-bodied character. The southern section, the Côte de Beaune, lies between Ladoix-Serrigny and Santenay and produces great reds and whites. Appellations from the area's hilltops are the Hautes-Côtes de Nuits and Hautes-Côtes de Beaune.

**Chalonnaise** The southernmost continuation of the Côte de Beaune's slopes is noted for its excellent red and white wines.

**Mâconnais** Known for rich or fruity white wines, like Pouilly-Fuissé chardonnay. (Beaujolais begins just south of here.)

### Want to Know More?

Tourist offices provide brochures including *The Burgundy Wine Road* and a useful map, *Roadmap to the Wines of Burgundy*. A handy website is [www.bourgogne-wines.com](http://www.bourgogne-wines.com).

A tremendous selection of books about wine are available at Beaune's Athenaeum de la Vigne et du Vin (p453). Look for these:

- ➔ *Côte d'Or: A Celebration of the Great Wines of Burgundy and My Favorite Burgundies* by Clive Coates.
- ➔ *The Wines of Burgundy* by Sylvain Pitiot and Jean-Charles Servant. Excellent overview.
- ➔ *The Climats and Lieux-dits of the Great Vineyards of Burgundy* by Marie-Hélène Landrieu-Lussigny and Sylvain Pitiot. Atlas of Burgundian vinicultural place names.
- ➔ *The Great Domaines of Burgundy and Grand Cru: the Great Wines of Burgundy Through the Perspective of Its Finest Vineyards* by Remington Norman.
- ➔ *Inside Burgundy* by Jasper Morris.
- ➔ *The Finest Wines of Burgundy* by Bill Nanson.
- ➔ *The Cook's Atelier: Recipes, Techniques and Stories from Our French Cooking School* by Marjorie Taylor and Kendall Smith Franchini.

### Take a Class!

Wine-tasting classes can help you make the most of your cellar visits.

**Sensation Vin** (☎ 03 80 22 17 57; [www.sensation-vin.com](http://www.sensation-vin.com); 2A rue Paul Bouchard, Beaune; tasting sessions from €35, wine tour €275-495; ☺ tasting classes 11am & 2.30pm Sun-Fri) Offers a 1½-hour essentials class (€35), half- and full-day tasting sessions and personalised wine-tasting circuits through the area's most famous vineyards.

**École des Vins de Bourgogne** (☎ 03 80 26 35 10; [www.ecoledesvins-bourgogne.com](http://www.ecoledesvins-bourgogne.com); 6 rue du 16e Chasseurs, Beaune) Offers a variety of courses – from a three-hour fundamentals class (€79) to a three-day wine-taster's certificate program (€795) – to refine your palate and expand your vinicultural terminology.

Its dozens of stalls buzz with activity four mornings a week, with Saturdays drawing the biggest crowds. It's the perfect place to mingle with Dijonnais locals while stocking up for a picnic of fresh produce, cheeses and charcuterie.

### Café de l'Industrie

BRASSERIE €

(☎03 80 30 20 81; 15 rue des Godrans; lunch menu €14.50; ☺6.30am-1am or 2am Tue-Sat) For a no-nonsense, good-value lunch, head one block west of Dijon's market and grab a side-walk table at this convivial corner brasserie, where hearty *plats du jour* (daily specials) go for just €10. In the evenings it turns into a hip bar, serving *planches* (platters) of cheese and charcuterie along with Burgundy wines.

### Le Piano Qui Fume

FRENCH €€

(☎09 70 35 84 63; www.lepianoquifume.com; 36 rue Berbisey; lunch menus €14.50-21, dinner menus €35-38; ☺noon-1.45pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 7-9.45pm Thu-Sat) Carefully chosen ingredients, reasonably priced wines and a lovely contemporary dining room with traditional touches (exposed brick walls and beams) are the hallmarks of this popular hideaway. The 'smoking piano's' lunchtime *plat du jour* (daily special) is brilliant value at €10.50.

### Chez Léon

BURGUNDIAN €€

(☎03 80 50 01 07; www.restochezleon.fr; 20 rue des Godrans; lunch menus €16.90-20.90, dinner menus €28-33; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sat) From bœuf bourguignon (beef marinated in young red wine) to *andouillettes* (chitterling sausages), this family-run eatery offers the perfect primer course in hearty, traditional regional fare celebrated in a cosy and joyful atmosphere. Has over 350 wines and, in the warmer months, outdoor seating.

### DZ'Envies

BURGUNDIAN €€

(☎03 80 50 09 26; www.dzenvies.com; 12 rue Odebert; lunch menus €17-21, dinner menus €32-40; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat) This zinging restaurant with cheery, informal decor is a good choice if you're tired of heavy Burgundian classics. The menu always involves seasonal, fresh ingredients, and dishes are imaginatively prepared and beautifully presented. At €21, the lunchtime 'I love Dijon' menu is a steal.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Lively bar-hopping neighbourhoods include rue Berbisey and the streets surrounding Les Halles.

## ★L'Age de Raisin

WINE BAR

(☎03 80 23 24 82; 67 rue Berbisey; ☺6pm-2am Tue-Sat) Stone walls, red-and-white-checked tablecloths and gracious service set the mood at this cosiest of Dijon wine bars. With late hours and a wealth of local vintages hand-selected by affable owners Jeff and Nadine, it doubles as a bistro, serving fabulous home-cooked *plats du jour* built from locally sourced organic produce. Reserve ahead at dinner time (*menus* €19.80-28).

### Café Gourmand

CAFE

(☎03 80 36 87 51; www.allocafegourmand.com; 9 place de la Libération; ☺noon-10pm May-Oct, noon-3pm & 6.45-10pm Mon-Sat & noon-3pm Sun Nov-Apr) You couldn't ask for a better backdrop for sipping aperitifs than this sidewalk cafe-restaurant on sprawling place de la Libération, facing the dramatic façade of Dijon's ducal palace. It's especially lovely in late afternoon, when the sun catches the terrace full force and you can watch the comings and goings of tourists, locals and kids playing in the fountains. Menus €23-27.



## Shopping

The main shopping precinct is along pedestrianised rue de la Liberté and perpendicular rue du Bourg.

### Mulot & Petitjean

FOOD

(☎03 80 30 22 45; www.mulotpetitjean.fr; 13 place Bossuet; ☺10am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat) The sweet-toothed may lose all self-control at this Dijon institution dating to 1796. Housed in a suitably gingerbread half-timbered building, it's famous for its scrumptious *pain d'épices* (gingerbread made with honey and spices).

The goodies are made at **La Fabrique de Pain d'Épices** (☎03 80 66 30 80; www.mulotpetitjean.fr; 6 bd de l'Ouest; adult/child €8/€free; ☺10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sat) nearby, which also has an interactive museum.

### Moutarde Maille

FOOD

(☎03 80 30 41 02; www.maille.com; 32 rue de la Liberté; ☺11am-7pm Mon-Sat) Consult a *maître moutardier* (master mustard expert) about all your mustard needs at this delightful – and pungent – shop, opened in 1845. Three-dozen varieties of mustard fill the shelves (cassis, truffle, celery etc), along with a host of rotating flavours for you to sample.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (📞 08 92 70 05 58 for €0.35 per min; [www.destinationdijon.com](http://www.destinationdijon.com); 11 rue des Forges; ☀️ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 5.30pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-4pm Sun Oct-Mar; 🗺️) Helpful office offering maps, themed walking tours (€8 to €12) and guided vineyard tours (from €65).

## **i** Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

**DiviaVélodi** ([www.divia.fr](http://www.divia.fr); subscription fee per day/week €1.50/7, rental first 30 min free, each additional 30 min €2) Dijon's version of Paris' Vélip' short-term rental system has 400 city bikes at 40 sites around town. Insert a credit card, get a passcode, choose a PIN and go.

### BUS

**Flixbus** (📞 01 76 36 04 12; [www.flixbus.fr](http://www.flixbus.fr); 53 rue Guillaume Tell) Bus travel to Paris and to cities around France.

**Mobigo** (📞 03 80 11 29 29; [www.viamobigo.fr](http://www.viamobigo.fr); single ticket/24-hour pass €1.50/7.20) Intra-departmental buses stop in front of the train station. Tickets, sold on board, cost the same regardless of destination. Bus LR113 goes to Beaune (1¼ hours, two or three times a day when school is in session) via wine towns such as Nuits-St-Georges (40 minutes).

### TRAIN

Destinations with direct services from Dijon include:

**Autun** €21, 1½ hours by train and then bus, five to seven daily

**Auxerre** €32, two hours, six to 12 daily

**Beaune** €10, 18 to 31 minutes, one to four per hour

**Lyon-Part Dieu** €31.60, two hours, hourly

**Mâcon** €21, 1¼ hours, 11 to 13 daily

**Paris Gare de Lyon** Regional train/TGV from €35/61, three/1½ hours, hourly

## Côte d'Or Vineyards

Burgundy's most renowned vintages come from the vine-covered Côte d'Or (literally Golden Hillside), the narrow, eastern slopes of a range of hills made of limestone, flint and clay that runs south from Dijon for about 60km. The exquisite terrain, with its patchwork of immaculate hand-groomed vines, is dotted with peaceful villages where every other stone house seems to have a wine cellar.

An oenophile's nirvana, the Côte d'Or vineyards are divided into two areas: Côte de Nuits to the north and Côte de Beaune to the south. The Côte de Nuits is noted for its powerful red wines, while the Côte de Beaune produces top-quality dry whites and delicate reds.

## Côte de Nuits

The Côte de Nuits winegrowing area extends from Marsannay-la-Côte, just south of Dijon, to Corgoloin, a few kilometres north of Beaune. All told, it's only a span of 30km, but with so many picturesque villages, vineyards and other attractions along the way, you could easily spend a whole day here, including stops for wine tasting, sightseeing and lunch.

Highlights include **Fixin**, with its distinctive polychrome bell tower; **Gevey-Chambertin**, where every other doorway seems to harbour its own winery; **Chambolle-Musigny**, with its old stone houses and fine restaurants photogenically tucked up against a rocky hillside; **Vougeot**, home to a venerable 16th-century wine-producing château where you can tour the historic wine presses; and **Nuits-St-Georges**, the Côte de Nuits' biggest town, where you'll find another cluster of fine restaurants and a pair of museums focused on the region's winemaking tradition and its famous blackcurrant liqueur, *crème de cassis*.

## Sights

**Château du Clos de Vougeot** MUSEUM, CASTLE (📞 03 80 62 86 09; [www.closdevougeot.fr](http://www.closdevougeot.fr); rue de la Montagne, Vougeot; adult/child €7.50/2.50; ☀️ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) This magnificent wine-producing château (estate) is regarded as the birthplace of Burgundian wines. Originally the property of the Abbaye de Cîteaux, 12km southeast from here, this 16th-century country castle served as a getaway for the monks, who stored their equipment and produced their wines here. Tours (€2.50; in French; at 10.30am and 2.30pm) offer a chance to discover the workings of enormous wine presses and casks.

### Cassissium

MUSEUM

(📞 03 80 62 49 70; [www.cassissium.fr](http://www.cassissium.fr); 8 passage Montgolfier, Nuits-St-Georges; adult/child €9.50/6.50; ☀️ 10am-1pm & 2-7pm Apr-Oct, 10.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm or 6pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar) This museum and factory spotlights *crème de cassis*, Burgundy's famous blackcurrant

liqueur. There's fun for the whole family: movies, displays, a 30-minute guided tour and a tasting, with nonalcoholic fruit syrups for the kids. In the industrial area east of N74.

### L'Imaginarium

MUSEUM

(☎ 03 80 62 61 40; www.imaginarium-bourgogne.com; av du Jura, Nuits-St-Georges; adult incl basic/grand cru tasting €10/21, child €7; ☺ 2-7pm Tue, 10am-7pm Mon & Wed-Sun, last admission 5.15pm) This gleaming modern museum is a good place to learn about Burgundy wines and winemaking techniques, with movies, exhibits and interactive displays, followed by your choice of tastings, from regional wines to *grands crus* (wines of exceptional quality).

### Sleeping

#### Maison des Abeilles

B&B €

(☎ 03 80 62 95 42; www.chambres-beaune.fr; 4 rue Pernand, Magny-lès-Villers; d €70-90, q €115-130; ☺) Food- and wine-lovers Céline and Tony maintain these six impeccably clean *chambres d'hôtes* in Magny-lès-Villers, a small village off rte des Grands Crus between Côte de Nuits, Haute Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune. Rooms have colourful linen, and breakfasts (included) are a feast of breads and homemade jams. The vast, flowery garden out back is another plus.

#### Hôtel de Vougeot

HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 80 62 01 15; www.hotel-vougeot.com; 18 rue du Vieux Château, Vougeot; d €88-133; ☐ ☺) At this gracious country manor, the 16 rooms – in three buildings – are comfortable and impeccably maintained, many with rustically stylish features such as stone walls or exposed beams. Angle for one of the 10 rooms with a view of the Vougeot vineyards.

#### Les Deux Chèvres

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 03 80 51 48 25; www.lesdeuxchevres.com; 23 rue de l'Église, Gevrey-Chambertin; r €195-295; ☺) After a day exploring the vineyards, this luxurious converted winery invites guests to unwind by the stone fireplace, relax on the spacious back patio and snuggle under Egyptian cotton sheets and goose-down duvets. The nine rooms, each unique, range from an upstairs unit with vineyard views to a bright superior with claw-foot tub, to a three-bedroom apartment. Breakfast included.

## Eating

### Chez Guy & Family

FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 80 58 51 51; www.chez-guy.fr; 3 place de la Mairie, Gevrey-Chambertin; lunch menu €18, other menus €24-34; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) The dining room here is large and light, and there's a tempting choice of dishes complemented by one of the finest wine lists in the entire Côte de Nuits region. Signature seasonal specialities include tender duckling, rabbit leg and pollock.

### Le Chambolle

BURGUNDIAN €€

(☎ 03 80 62 86 26; www.restaurant-lechambolle.com; 28 rue Caroline Aigle, Chambolle-Musigny; menus €29.50-45; ☺ 12.15-1.30pm & 7.15-8.30pm Thu-Tue) This unpretentious back-road gem creates traditional Burgundian cuisine, inspired by the seasons, with the freshest ingredients. Look for it on the D122, a bit west of Vougeot in gorgeous Chambolle-Musigny.

### ★ Le Millésime

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 03 80 62 80 37; www.restaurant-le-millesime.com; 1 rue Traversière, Chambolle-Musigny; lunch menus €19.90-22.50, dinner menus €33-70; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) This renowned venture is located in an exquisitely renovated *maison de village* (village house) in the picturesque heart of tiny Chambolle-Musigny. The chef combines fresh local ingredients and exotic flavours in his delectable creations. Dark-wood floors, floor-to-ceiling wine racks, well-spaced tables and a warm welcome create a relaxed vibe.

### La Cabotte

FRENCH €€€

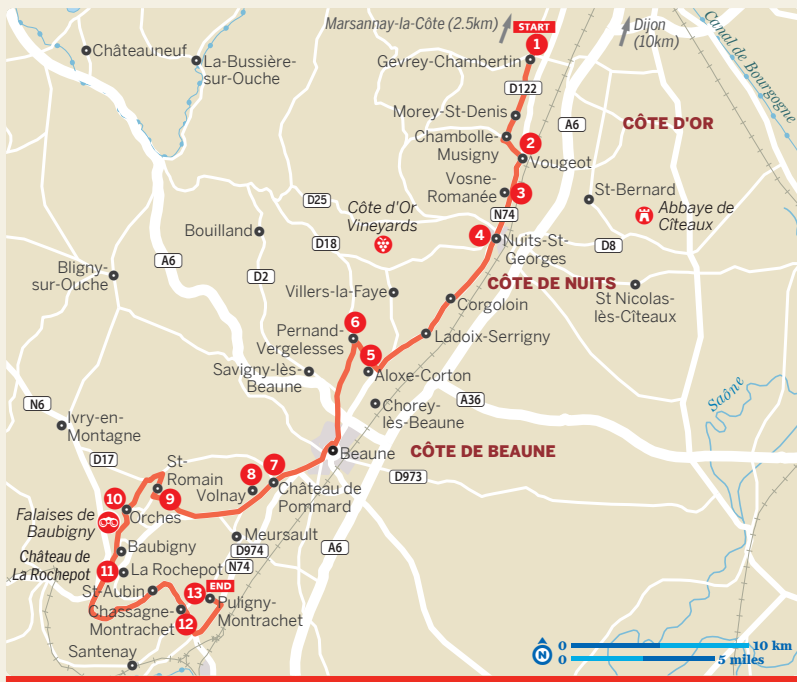
(☎ 03 80 61 20 77; www.restaurantlacabotte.fr; 24 Grande Rue, Nuits-St-Georges; menus €29.90-75; ☺ 12.15-1.30pm & 7.15-9pm Tue-Sat) This intimate restaurant serves up refined, inventive versions of French dishes. No artifice or posing here; just excellent, if sometimes surprising, food.

## Shopping

### Le Caveau des Musignys

WINE

(☎ 03 80 62 84 01; 1 rue Traversière, Chambolle-Musigny; tasting €8; ☺ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun) Directly below the fabulous Les Millésimes restaurant, this place represents about 120 Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune winegrowers.



## Driving Tour Route des Grands Crus

**START GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN**  
**END PULIGNY-MONTRACHET**  
**LENGTH 55KM; ONE DAY**

Burgundy's most famous wine route follows the tertiary roads west of the N74, wending through seas of cascading vineyards dotted with stone-built villages, church steeples and château turrets. Signposted in brown, the route provides a grand tour of world-renowned Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune.

Coming from Dijon, the Côte de Nuits begins in earnest just south of Marsannay-la-Côte. Most of the area's *grand cru* vineyards lie between **1** **Gevrey-Chambertin** and Vosne-Romanée. In **2** **Vougeot**, stop at the historic château. **3** **Vosne-Romanée** is famed for its prestigious Romanée Conti wines, among Burgundy's priciest. Continue south, to the Côte de Nuits' largest town, **4** **Nuits-St-Georges**, home to the Imaginari-um wine museum.

On the Côte de Beaune, the impossibly steep roof of Château Corton-André in

**5** **Aloxe-Corton** is easy to spot, just off the one-lane main street. From here, a brief detour northwest brings you to photogenic **6** **Pernand-Vergelesses**, in a little valley hidden from the N74. The vineyard-backed views down over the town are spectacular.

South of Beaune, the **7** **Château de Pom-mard**, surrounded by a stone wall, is on the D973 on the northeast edge of town. Wander quaint **8** **Volnay** to its hillside church. Off the main track, **9** **St-Romain** is a bucolic village situated right where vineyard meets pastureland, forests and cliffs. Hiking trails from here include the spectacular Sentier des Roches, a circuit that follows part of the GR7, and the D17 along the top of the Falaises de Baubigny (Baubigny cliffs), 300m above the Saône. Then, via the hillside hamlet of **10** **Orches**, which has breathtaking vineyard views, head to the fantastic 15th-century **11** **Château de La Rocheport**. For a pretty finale to your journey, drive down to the villages of **12** **Chassagne-Montrachet** and **13** **Puligny-Montrachet** to sample some of the world's most opulent whites.



## **i** Information

**Nuits-St-Georges Tourist Office** (📞03 80 62 11 17; [www.gevreynuitstourisme.com](http://www.gevreynuitstourisme.com); 3 rue Sonoys, Nuits-St-Georges; 🕒9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm or 6pm Tue-Sat year-round, plus 9.30am-1pm Sun Apr-Sep; 📍)

**Gevrey-Chambertin Tourist Office** (📞03 80 34 38 40; [www.gevreynuitstourisme.com](http://www.gevreynuitstourisme.com); 1 rue Gaston Roupnel, Gevrey-Chambertin; 🕒9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm or 6pm Tue-Sat year-round, plus 9.30am-1pm Sun Apr-Sep; 📍)

## Côte de Beaune

Welcome to one of the most prestigious winegrowing areas in the world. The Côte de Beaune area extends from **La-Loix-Serrigny**, just a few kilometres north of Beaune, to **Santenay**, about 18km south of the city. It includes the delightful villages of **Pernand-Vergelesses**, **Aloxe-Corton**, **Savigny-lès-Beaune**, **Chorey-lès-Beaune**, **Pommard**, **Volnay**, **Meursault**, **Puligny-Montrachet** and **Chassagne-Montrachet**, which boast Burgundy's most fabled vineyards. If you're looking for an upscale wine château experience, you've come to the right place.

## Sight

★ **Château de La Rochepot** CASTLE  
(📞07 60 50 25 62; [www.chateau-de-la-rochepot.com](http://www.chateau-de-la-rochepot.com); La Rochepot; adult/child self-guided €8.50/6.50; 🕒10am-5.30pm Wed-Mon Mar-Jun & Sep-Nov, 10am-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug) Its spires and multicoloured tile roofs rising dramati-

cally from thick woods above the ancient village of La Rochepot, this marvellous late medieval fortress offers fab views of the surrounding countryside. Inside you'll find Gothic and Renaissance furnishings, medieval weapons and even an old-time kitchen.

**Château de Meursault** WINERY  
(📞03 80 26 22 75; [www.chateau-meursault.com](http://www.chateau-meursault.com); 5 rue du Moulin Foulot, Meursault; tour incl 6-/8-wine tasting €25/35; 🕒10am-noon & 2-6pm Oct-Apr, 10am-6.30pm May-Sep) One of the prettiest of the Côte de Beaune châteaux, Château de Meursault has beautiful grounds and produces some of the most prestigious white wines in the world. Guided tours visit the estate's vast labyrinth of underground *caves* (wine cellars), the oldest dating to the 12th century; the 500-sq-metre 16th-century cellar is particularly impressive.

**Château de Pommard** WINERY  
(📞03 80 22 07 99; [www.chateaudepommard.com](http://www.chateaudepommard.com); 15 rue Marey-Monge, Pommard; 1hr tour incl 5-wine tasting €26; 🕒10.30am-6.30pm or 7.30pm) For many red-wine lovers, a visit to this superb château 3km south of Beaune – established in 1726 and US-owned since 2014 – is a true Burgundian pilgrimage. It offers several wine-related experiences, including English-language tours, a 2½-hour glimpse into the secrets of the sommelier and a kids' introduction to vineyard ecology followed by a fruit-juice tasting.

**Château de Savigny-lès-Beaune** MUSEUM, CASTLE  
(📞03 80 21 55 03; [www.chateau-savigny.com](http://www.chateau-savigny.com); Savigny-lès-Beaune; adult/child €11/5; 🕒9am-6.30pm mid-Apr–mid-Oct, 9am-noon & 2-5.30pm rest of yr) Drop in for wine tasting and stay to see the unexpected collection of race cars, motorcycles, aeroplanes and fire trucks. Last admission is 90 minutes before closing time.

## Activities

You'll find a huge variety of wine-tasting opportunities in the wine-producing villages. You can stop at famous wine châteaux or drop in at more laid-back small wineries and cellars – look for signs reading *dégustation* or *cave*.

**Château Corton-André** WINE  
(📞03 80 26 28 79; [www.corton-andre.com](http://www.corton-andre.com); rue Cortons, Aloxe-Corton; 🕒10am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Apr-Oct, shorter hrs & closed Sun afternoon Nov-Mar) **FREE** With its splendid cellars and colourful tiled roofs, this high-flying château –

### DON'T MISS

#### CYCLING THROUGH VINES

The 23km **Voie des Vignes** (Vineyard Way), a bike route marked by rectangular green-on-white signs, goes from Beaune's Parc de la Bouzaize via Pommard, Volnay, Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet and Chassagne-Montrachet to Santenay, where you can turn northwest and continue another 13km to Nolay, or pick up the southbound Voie Verte (Green Way) to Cluny. Beaune's tourist office sells the detailed bilingual *Guide Rando Cyclo* map (€3); alternatively you can download a rough PDF route guide at [www.beaune-tourisme.fr/pratique/brochures](http://www.beaune-tourisme.fr/pratique/brochures).

## BURGUNDY OUTDOORS

Tasting fine wines often involves hanging out in dimly lit cellars, but Burgundy is also a paradise for lovers of the great outdoors.

The **Comité Régional de Tourisme de Bourgogne-Franche-Comté** ([www.burgundy-tourism.com](http://www.burgundy-tourism.com)) has excellent online and printed information in English on outdoors options as well as a list of boat-rental companies.

### Hiking & Cycling

Burgundy has thousands of kilometres of walking and cycling trails, including sections of the long-distance GR2, GR7 and GR76. Varied local trails take you through some of the most ravishingly beautiful winegrowing areas in France, among them the vineyards of world-renowned Côte d'Or, Chablis and the Mâconnais (in Saône-et-Loire).

Rural footpaths criss-cross the Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan (some depart from the Morvan Visitors Centre) but you can also pick up trails from the Abbaye de Fontenay, Autun, Avallon, Cluny, Noyers-sur-Serein and Vézelay.

You can cycle on or very near the *chemin de halage* (towpath) of the Canal de Bourgogne all the way from Dijon to Migennes (225km). The section from Montbard to Tonnerre (65km) passes by Château d'Ancy-le-Franc; between Montbard and Pouilly-en-Auxois (58km), spurs go to the Abbaye de Fontenay and Semur-en-Auxois.

For details, maps and guides of Burgundy's *véloroutes* (bike paths) and *voies vertes* (green ways), see [www.burgundy-by-bike.com](http://www.burgundy-by-bike.com) or stop by a tourist office or bookshop.

### Canal & River Boating

Few modes of transport are as relaxing as travelling by houseboat, especially on Burgundy's 1200km of placid waterways ([www.french-waterways.com](http://www.french-waterways.com)), which include the Rivers Yonne, Saône and Seille and a network of canals, including the Canal de Bourgogne, the Canal du Centre, the Canal Latéral à la Loire and the Canal du Nivernais ([www.canal-du-nivernais.com](http://www.canal-du-nivernais.com)). Rental companies offer boats from late March to mid-November (canals close for repairs in winter).

**France Afloat** (Burgundy Cruisers; ☎ 03 86 81 54 55; [www.franceafloat.com](http://www.franceafloat.com); 1 quai du Port, Vermenton) Based in Vermenton (25km southeast of Auxerre).

**Locaboat Holidays** (☎ 03 86 91 72 72; [www.locaboat.com](http://www.locaboat.com); Port au Bois, Joigny) Based in Joigny (27km northwest of Auxerre).






### Hot-Air Ballooning

From about April to October you can take a stunning *montgolfière* (hot-air balloon) ride over Burgundy's vineyards, hills and rivers. About a dozen companies operate in the region, including **Air Escargot** (☎ 03 85 87 12 30; [www.air-escargot.com](http://www.air-escargot.com); 25 chemin du 6 Septembre 1944, Remigny; ☀ Apr-Oct), based in Remigny (20km southwest of Beaune). Book through the Beaune and Dijon tourist offices.

also known as Château Corton C – is a wonderful place for a free tasting session in atmospheric surrounds.

**Caveau de Puligny-Montrachet** WINE  
(☎ 03 80 21 96 78; [www.caveau-puligny.com](http://www.caveau-puligny.com); 1 rue de Poiseul, Puligny-Montrachet; 6-wine tasting €20; ☀ 9.30am-noon & 2-7pm Mar-Oct, 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb) Sample Puligny-Montrachet's namesake appellation along with other fine local wines in this comfortable, relaxed wine bar and cellar in the lovely town of Puligny-Montrachet. Knowledgeable hosts Julien and Emilien provide excellent advice (in good English).

### Sleeping

★ **Hôtel Villa Louise** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 03 80 26 46 70; [www.hotel-villa-louise.fr](http://www.hotel-villa-louise.fr); 9 rue Franche, Aloxe-Corton; d €109-205, ste €235-275;     ) This tranquil mansion – much of it from the 17th century – houses elegant, modern rooms, each of them dreamily different. The expansive garden stretches straight to the edge of the vineyard, with a sauna, hammam and indoor pool. Rents out bicycles for vineyard rides.

**Hôtel Olivier Leflaive** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€  
(☎ 03 80 21 37 65; [www.olivier-leflaive.com](http://www.olivier-leflaive.com); 10 place du Monument, Puligny-Montrachet; d €185-265;

☺ closed Christmas-early Feb; 📞📧📱📺 Occupying a 17th-century building in the heart of Puligny-Montrachet, this boutique hostelry – renovated, with art deco touches, in 2020 – delivers top service and classy comfort. The 17 rooms and suites are very spacious and come equipped with charming furnishings, top-quality linens and stylish bathrooms. The hotel offers personalised wine tours and tastings, and acclaimed dining right downstairs.

**La Cueillette** HERITAGE HOTEL €€€  
(☎03 80 20 62 80; www.lacueillette.com; rue de Cîteaux, Meursault; r €190-290; 📞📧📱📺) Occupying the grand old Château de Cîteaux, this hotel and spa offers luxurious accommodation on the edge of Meursault. The best rooms have private terraces overlooking the vineyards, while even guests in simpler units have access to amenities including the swimming pool and the elegant downstairs bar-salon with plush leather couches and rich burgundy-tone walls. Has an in-house *gastronomique* restaurant.

## Eating

Excellent restaurants are tucked away in most of the villages of the Côte de Beaune. It's generally best to reserve ahead.

**Le Chevreuil – La Maison de la Mère Daugier** FRENCH €€  
(☎03 80 21 23 25; www.lechevreuil.fr; place de la République, Meursault; menus €26-50; ☺ noon-1.30pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 7.15-9pm Thu-Tue) Chef Tiago is known for taking old-time Burgundian cuisine and either preparing it the traditional way or giving it a 21st-century spin. The house's signature *terrines chaudes de la mère Daugier* is a delectable blend of slow-cooked meats in a top-secret marinade, served here since 1872. Semiformal, with white tablecloths and delicate crystal.

**Le Cellier Volnaysien** BURGUNDIAN €€  
(☎03 80 21 61 04; www.restaurant-lecelliervolnaysien.com; 2 place de l'Église, Volnay; menus €20.50-32.50; ☺ noon-1.30pm Thu-Tue, 7.30-9pm Sat) Solid Burgundian cooking in a cosy, stone-vaulted dining room. Also has an excellent wine shop.

**Restaurant Olivier Leflaive** BISTRO €€€  
(☎03 80 21 37 65; www.olivier-leflaive.com; 10 place du Monument, Puligny-Montrachet; menus €33-49, wine pairings €26-94; ☺ 12.30-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm Wed-Sat) Known for growing exceptional wines, Olivier Leflaive also runs a bistro that marries seasonal French classics

with global flavourings, serving exceptional pairings of delectable cuisine and extraordinary wines from Burgundy and beyond. At the time of research, a *gastronomique* restaurant was planned here for 2021.

**Le Charlemagne** GASTRONOMY €€€  
(☎03 80 21 51 45; www.lecharlemagne.fr; 1 rte des Vergelesses, Pernand-Vergelesses; menus €68-98; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Thu-Mon) Imaginatively prepared dishes that meld *gastronomique* French cuisine with Japanese techniques and ingredients are served amid relaxing minimalist decor, with brilliant vineyard views. Acclaimed chef Laurent Peugeot got his Michelin star back in 2020.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 20, operated by **Côte & Bus** (☎03 80 21 85 09; www.coteetbus.fr; tickets €1.50), runs from Beaune southwest to several Côte de Beaune wine villages.

## Beaune

POP 21,000

Beaune (pronounced similarly to 'bone'), 44km south of Dijon, is the unofficial capital of the Côte d'Or. This thriving town's *raison d'être* and the source of its *joie de vivre* is wine: making it, tasting it, selling it, but most of all, drinking it. Consequently, Beaune is one of the best places in all of France for wine tasting, and one of Burgundy's top tourist destinations.

The jewel of Beaune's old city is the magnificent Hôtel-Dieu, France's most splendid medieval charity hospital. Hidden beneath the city's streets is a labyrinth of wine cellars, dating back several centuries, in which some of the world's most prestigious wines repose.

## Sights

The amoeba-shaped old city is enclosed by thick stone ramparts and a stream, which is in turn encircled by a one-way boulevard with seven names. The ramparts, which shelter wine cellars, are lined with overgrown gardens and ringed by a pathway that makes for a lovely stroll.

**★ Hôtel-Dieu des Hospices de Beaune** HISTORIC BUILDING  
(☎03 80 24 45 00; www.hospices-de-beaune.com; 2 rue de l'Hôtel-Dieu; adult/child €8.50/4; ☺ 9am-7.30pm late Mar-mid-Nov, 9-11.30am & 2-6.30pm rest of yr, last entry 1 hour before closing) A true architectural gem, this magnificent Gothic

## Beaune



BURGUNDY

## Beaune

**Top Sights**

- 1 Hôtel-Dieu des Hospices de Beaune.... B3

**Sights**

- 2 Basilique Collégiale Notre Dame..... B2  
 3 Maison des Climats..... C4  
 4 Moutarderie Fallot..... A4

**Activities, Courses & Tours**

- 5 Bourgogne Randonnées..... D3  
 6 Chemins de Bourgogne..... C4  
 7 Cook's Atelier..... C2  
 8 La Cave de l'Ange Gardien..... A2  
 9 Oenothèque Joseph Drouhin..... B3  
 10 Patriarche Père et Fils..... B2  
 Safari Tours..... (see 6)  
 11 Sensation Vin..... B2

**Sleeping**

- 12 Abbaye de Maizières..... B2

- 13 Chez Marie..... D4  
 14 Hôtel des Remparts..... C3  
 15 Les Jardins de Lois..... A4

**Eating**

- 16 Bistrot des Cocottes..... C4  
 17 Caves Madeleine..... C4  
 18 Food Market..... B3  
 19 La Lune..... A3  
 20 La Maison du Colombier..... B3  
 21 Le Bacchus..... C4  
 22 Loiseau des Vignes..... A3

**Drinking & Nightlife**

- 23 La Dilettante..... A4  
 24 Le Bistrot du Coin..... C3

**Shopping**

- 25 Athenaeum de la Vigne et du Vin..... B3

charity hospital, built in 1443, is topped by stunning turrets and steep-pitched rooftops covered in multicoloured tiles. Highlights inside include the barrel-vaulted **Grande Salle** (look for the dragons and peasant heads up on the roof beams); the mural-covered **St-Hughes Room**; an 18th-century **pharmacy** lined with flasks once filled with elixirs and powders; and the mesmerising **Polyptych of the Last Judgement**, a 15th-century Flemish masterpiece that depicts the glory and utter terror of Judgement Day.

### Moutarderie Fallot

FACTORY

(Mustard Mill; ☎ 03 80 22 10 10; www.fallot.com; 31 rue du Faubourg Bretonnière; adult/child €10/8; ☺ tasting room 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar, tours by arrangement) In business since 1840, Burgundy's last family-run mustard company offers guided tours that spotlight the condiment's history, folklore and traditional production techniques, with kid-friendly opportunities for hand-milling mustard seeds. Another tour focuses on Fallot's modern mustard-production facility. Reserve ahead at Beaune's tourist office. Drop-ins can sample and purchase more than a dozen varieties.

### Basilique Collégiale Notre Dame

CHURCH

(☎ tour info 06 72 43 76 06; www.beaune-tourism.com; place Général Leclerc; ☺ 8am-6pm or 7pm) Built from the mid-12th to 13th centuries,

this mainly Romanesque church, once affiliated with the monastery of Cluny, is notable for its extra-large porch and the five 15th-century tapestries displayed in the choir from May to October.

## Activities

Underneath Beaune's buildings, streets and ramparts, millions of dusty bottles of wine are being aged to perfection in cool, dark cellars. Wine-tasting options abound above ground and below.

### Oenothèque Joseph Drouhin

WINE

(☎ 03 80 24 68 88; www.drouhin-oenothèque.com; place du Général Leclerc; tour & guided tasting from €38; ☺ tours 10am, 2pm & 4pm Mon-Sat) Well-run tours explore the original 13th-century cellars of Beaune's Notre-Dame basilica, where the Drouhin family has operated its wine business for four generations. The fascinating historical tidbits you'll hear along the way are almost as good as the wine itself. Reserve ahead.

### La Cave de l'Ange Gardien

WINE

(☎ 03 80 24 21 29; www.lacavedelangegardien.com; 38 bd Maréchal Foch; tasting session €10) One of Beaune's most convivial wine-tasting experiences is offered by affable, bilingual Pierre and Nicole Jaboulet-Vercherre, whose family roots in the local winemaking business go back to 1834. Blind tastings of 10 wines last two hours or longer, with plenty of good

## THE CLIMATS: BURGUNDY'S UNIQUE WINEGROWING HERITAGE

The winegrowing regions of the Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune, on the slopes surrounding Beaune, are deeply culturally entwined with their landscape. The distinct sense of place associated with local viticulture has been ingrained in the Burgundian spirit since medieval times, when Cistercian and Benedictine monks established some of the region's earliest vineyards. Over the centuries, Burgundians began to recognise the unique characteristics of wines produced on specific plots of land, based on sun exposure, drainage, microclimate and soil type. Individual *climats*, or winegrowing parcels, were named and set apart using paths, *meurgers* (stone walls) and *cabottes* (vineyard huts), some of which survive to this day. In 2015, Unesco recognised Burgundy's 1247 *climats* as a 'cultural heritage of outstanding universal value'.

To fully appreciate the beauty and complexity of the *climats*, check out the giant multicoloured map at Beaune's **Maison des Climats** (www.climats-bourgogne.com; 6 bd Perpreuil, Porte Marie de Bourgogne; ☺ 9.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 1.30-4.30pm Sun Oct-Mar, no midday closure Apr-Sep) **FREE**, right next to the tourist office. The 9m-long display shows the elaborate mosaic of winegrowing plots in vivid detail, allowing you to discover exactly where that *grand cru* you just tasted was grown.

For more fun with *climats*, download onto your smartphone the free Balades en Bourgogne app from Côte d'Or Tourisme (www.cotedor-tourisme.com), which provides audio commentary on the viticultural history of each village as you walk, drive or cycle through.



## LEARN TO COOK LOCAL

If you love Burgundy's rich, hearty dishes, why not learn how to prepare them from a professional chef? Courses range from informal to chic.

- ▶ After a morning trip to the market, prepare and share a seven-course lunch with the dynamic mother-daughter duo who run the **Cook's Atelier** (☎ 03 80 24 61 80; www.thecooksatelier.com; 43 rue de Lorraine; full-day course per person €350) in Beaune.
- ▶ The refurbished 17th-century kitchens at Château d'Ancy-le-Franc (p461) make a fantastic venue for a cookery class with a top chef (€120 per person, minimum 10; reserve ahead), followed by lunch.
- ▶ Join Michelin-starred chef Laurent Peugeot in the kitchen of his award-winning Le Charlemagne (p448), in the heart of Côte d'Or wine country.
- ▶ The proprietors of La Cimentelle (p464), Nathalie and Stéphane, will show you how to make a *repas gastronomique* (gourmet meal) in a half-day course.

conversation thrown in as groups of a dozen people converge around tables in the long cellar room.

### Patriarche Père et Fils

<sup>WINE</sup>  
(☎ 03 80 24 53 78; www.patriarche.com; 7 rue du Collège; audioguide tour €17; 🕒 tours begin 9.30-11.15am & 2-5.15pm) In business since 1780, Burgundy's largest cellars have 5km of corridors lined with about three million bottles of wine. (The oldest is a Beaune Villages AOC from 1904!) Visitors armed with multilingual audioguides can tour the premises in 60 to 90 minutes, tasting 10 wines along the way and taking the *tastevin* (tasting cup) home.

### 👉 Tours

The tourist office (p453) handles reservations for cooking classes, hot-air-balloon rides, and vineyard tours run by companies including **Chemins de Bourgogne** (☎ 06 60 43 68 86; www.chemins-de-bourgogne.com; tours from €59) and **Safari Tours** (☎ 06 33 40 19 14; www.burgundy-tourism-safaritours.com; tours from €49).

### 🌸 Festivals & Events

#### Vente aux Enchères des Vins des Hospices de Beaune

<sup>WINE</sup>  
(Hospices de Beaune Wine Auction; www.hospices-de-beaune.com; 🕒 mid-Nov) On the third weekend in November, the Vente aux Enchères des Vins des Hospices de Beaune is the grandest of the Côte d'Or's many wine festivals. As part of this three-day extravaganza, the Hospices de Beaune holds a *vente aux enchères* (private auction) of wines from its endowment, 61 hectares of prime vineyards

bequeathed by benefactors. Proceeds go to the local hospital and to medical research.

### 🛏 Sleeping

Beaune and the surrounding wine-growing villages offer a nice mix of midrange and top-end sleeping options. For budget accommodation, Dijon is a much better bet.

#### ★ Les Jardins de Loÿs

<sup>B&B €€</sup>  
(☎ 03 80 22 41 97; www.jardinsdelois.com; 8 bd Bretonnière; d from €168; 📍) A flowery oasis just steps from the city centre, this luxurious B&B encompasses several ample rooms, including two suites and a 135-sq-metre top-floor apartment with gorgeous views of Beaune's rooftops. The vast garden, complete with rose bushes and fruit trees, makes a dreamy place to sit and enjoy wine grown on the hotel's private domaine.

#### Chez Marie

<sup>B&B €€</sup>  
(☎ 06 64 63 48 20; www.chezmarieabeaune.com; 14 rue Poissonnerie; d/q from €85/160; 📍) At this peaceful haven, Marie and Yves make visitors feel right at home, sharing conversation and travel-planning advice (especially for cyclists) over breakfast in the sweet central garden. The four rooms, including two family-friendly apartments with kitchenettes, are simple and airy. Has bikes for rent.

#### Hôtel des Remparts

<sup>HISTORIC HOTEL €€</sup>  
(☎ 03 80 24 94 94; www.hotel-remparts-beaune.com; 48 rue Thiers; d €70-150, ste €159-179; 📍) Set around two delightful courtyards, rooms in this 17th-century townhouse have red-tiled or parquet floors and simple antique furniture, and some come with exposed beams and a fireplace. Friendly staff can hire out bikes.

## ABBAYE DE CÎTEAUX

Rising from bucolic fields between Dijon and Beaune, the restored 11th-century **Abbaye de Cîteaux** (☎ 03 80 61 32 58; www.citeaux-abbaye.com; D996, St-Nicolas-lès-Cîteaux; guided tour adult/child €8/5.50; 🕒 tours begin 10.30am, 11.30am & 2.30-4.30pm Wed-Sat & Sun morning-late Apr-Sep) – founded in 1098 as the original abbey of the Cistercian monks – is well worth visiting for both its spiritual and historical significance. In the warm months you can visit the grounds on a 1½-hour guided tour (in French, with printed English commentary); reserve ahead. An audiovisual presentation on monastic life costs €1.50. The boutique sells edibles from monasteries around France, including the abbey's own cheese.

In contrast to the showy Benedictines of Cluny, the medieval Cistercian order was known for its austerity, discipline and humility, and for the productive manual labour of its monks, one result of which was groundbreaking wine-producing techniques. The abbey enjoyed phenomenal growth in the 12th century under St Bernard (1090–1153), and some 600 Cistercian abbeys soon stretched from Scandinavia to the Near East. Cîteaux was virtually destroyed during the Revolution and the monks didn't return until 1898, but today it is home to about 35 monks.

Visitors may attend daily prayers and Sunday Mass (10.30am) year-round – the website has times.

The abbey, 13km east of Nuits-St-Georges via the D116 or D8, is best reached by private vehicle or by taxi from the Nuits-St-Georges train station.

### Abbaye de Maizières HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(☎ 03 80 24 74 64; www.hotelabbayedemaizieres.com; 19 rue Maizières; d €159-255, ste €350-468; 🍷🍷🍷) Ensnconed in a 14th-century abbey, this atmospheric establishment oozes history from every graceful Gothic arch. Some of the 12 rooms and suites – luxuriously modernised – boast Cistercian-style stained-glass windows and exposed beams; those on the top floor offer views over Beaune's famed multicoloured tile roofs.

### Eating

Beaune is home to a host of excellent restaurants; you'll find many around place Carnot, place Félix Ziem and place Madeleine. Reserve ahead, especially in high season.

### Food Market MARKET €

(place de la Halle; 🕒 7am-1pm Wed & Sat) Beaune's Saturday food market is a sprawling affair, with vendors displaying their wares both indoors and on the cobblestones of place de la Halle. There's a much smaller  *marché gourmand* (gourmet market) on Wednesday morning.

### Bistrot des Cocottes BISTRO €

(☎ 03 80 24 02 60; www.bistrodescocottes.fr; 3 place Madeleine; mains €13.50-20; 🕒 noon-1am Tue-Sat) Tucked away on place Madeleine's quieter side, this classy-casual restaurant scores points for its all-day service (snacks are served between 4pm and 7pm) and its friendly and attentive waitstaff. But the

clinchier is the well-prepared, reasonably priced bistro fare, from grilled salmon with leek fondue to beef carpaccio with olive oil, basil and parmesan.

### ★ Caves Madeleine FRENCH €€

(☎ 03 80 22 93 30; www.cavesmadeleine.com; 8 rue du Faubourg Madeleine; mains €23-25; 🕒 noon-1.30pm & 7.15-9.45pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat) Focusing on fresh-from-the-farm vegetables and meat grown within a 100km radius of Beaune, this cosy little restaurant changes its menu daily. Reserve ahead for a private table, or enjoy a more convivial experience at the long shared table, backed by well-stocked wine racks. Also rents out rooms.

### Le Bacchus BURGUNDIAN €€

(☎ 03 80 24 07 78; 6 rue du Faubourg Madeleine; menus €26-31; 🕒 noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) Known for a warm welcome and excellent food. Multilingual Anna works the tables while Olivier whips up market-fresh  *menus* that mix classic bistro dishes with less-expected flavour combinations. Save room for desserts such as Bourbon vanilla crème brûlée, flambéed at your table.

### La Maison du Colombier TAPAS €€

(☎ 03 80 26 16 26; www.maisonducolombier.com; 1 rue Charles Cloutier; tapas & small plates €8-22; 🕒 6pm-midnight Mon-Fri) For a supremely cosy evening out, head for this 'gastro-bar' to dine in candlelit 16th-century surrounds. Grab a seat beside the brick-walled open kitchen, on

the sidewalk out front, or amid the labyrinth of stone-vaulted interior rooms to enjoy *tartines* (open-face sandwiches), tapas-sized plates of cheese, Iberian charcuterie, salmon tataki and more, accompanied by a good (if pricey) selection of Burgundian wines.

### La Lune

FUSION €€

(☎03 80 20 77 42; [la.lune.restaurant@gmail.com](mailto:la.lune.restaurant@gmail.com); 32 rue Maufoux; items €6-27; ☎7pm-midnight Tue-Sat) Grab a counter seat and enjoy chef Seiichi Hirobe's one-man show as he prepares French-Japanese fusion treats such as tuna tartare with poached egg and lotus root, or grilled scallops with *umeboshi* (Japanese pickled plum) sauce. The abundance of fresh veggies offers a nice break from Burgundy's rich fare. Has an excellent selection of both wine and sake.

### Loiseau des Vignes

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎03 80 24 12 06; [www.bernard-loiseau.com](http://www.bernard-loiseau.com); 31 rue Maufoux; lunch menus €28-46, dinner menus €59-119; ☎noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Part of the family-run Bernard Loiseau group, this *gastronomique* restaurant serves exquisite concoctions ranging from *pigeonneau* (squab) to *quenelles de sandre* (pike-fish dumplings). Has reasonably priced mid-day *menus*. The verdant garden is lovely in summer.



## Drinking & Nightlife

### Le Bistrot du Coin

WINE BAR

(☎06 99 42 65 43; [www.le-bistrot-du-coin-bar-beaune.eatbu.com](http://www.le-bistrot-du-coin-bar-beaune.eatbu.com); 2 place Félix Ziem; ☎10am-midnight Tue-Sat) This unpretentious corner bar boasts only a single stool inside, but that doesn't keep locals from crowding in day and night for glasses of wine, hard cider and platters of cheese and charcuterie (€10-18). In warmer weather, the scene moves out under the trees on the square in front.

### La Dilettante

WINE BAR

(☎03 80 21 48 59; 11 rue du Faubourg Bretonnière; ☎noon-midnight Mon, Tue & Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat) Booming even in the dead of winter, this relaxed wine bar serves a fabulous selection of wines and low-key nibbles such as croque monsieurs, soups, salads and small plates of cheese, Iberian ham and local charcuterie.



## Shopping

### Athenaeum de la Vigne et du Vin

BOOKS

(☎03 80 25 08 30; [www.athenaeumfr.com](http://www.athenaeumfr.com); 5 rue de l'Hôtel-Dieu; ☎10am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Sat) This fabulous bookshop stocks thousands of

wine-related titles, including many in English. Subjects covered include oenology (the art and science of winemaking), wine tasting, gastronomy, and literature about wine. There's also a nice selection of wine-related gifts.



## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 80 26 21 30; [www.beaune-tourisme.fr](http://www.beaune-tourisme.fr); 6 bd Perpreuil; ☎9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 5.30pm Sun Apr-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Mar) Helpful central office with lots of brochures about the town, nearby vineyards, and cultural and out-of-doors activities. Has an **annexe** ([www.beaune-tourisme.fr](http://www.beaune-tourisme.fr); 1 rue de l'Hôtel-Dieu; ☎10am-1pm & 2-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) opposite the Hôtel-Dieu.



## Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

**Bourgogne Randonnées** (☎03 80 22 06 03; [www.bourgogne-randonnees.fr](http://www.bourgogne-randonnees.fr); 7 av du 8 Septembre; bikes per day/week from €19/96; ☎9am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sun Mar-Oct) Rents everything you need to explore the area by bike (bikes, helmets, panniers, baby seats, tandems) and offers excellent advice on local cycling itineraries.

### BUS

Mobigo (p443) Bus LR113 (two or three daily when school is in session) links the boulevards around Beaune's old city with Dijon (1¼ hours), stopping in Nuits-St-Georges,

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

#### IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE GAULS

It was on the site of **MuséoParc Alésia** ([www.alesia.com](http://www.alesia.com); Alise-Ste-Reine; adult/child €12/7; ☎10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, to 5pm mid-Feb-Mar & Nov; 🗺), in 52 BCE, that Julius Caesar and his Roman legions defeated the Gauls under Vercingétorix, ending Gallic (Celtic) rule in France. To learn more than enough to make sense of Astérix comics, visit both the well-organised interpretative centre – which has entertaining programmes and workshops for kids – and the vestiges of the Gallo-Roman city that developed after the battle. Well worth the drive from Semur-en-Auxois (16km) or Dijon (67km).

Vosne-Romanée, Vougeot, Chambolle-Musigny, Gevrey-Chambertin and other Côte de Nuits villages along the way.

### TRAIN

Beaune's train station is about 250m east of the old town along av du 8 Septembre. Destinations served include:

**Dijon** €10, 18 to 31 minutes, one to four per hour

**Lyon Part-Dieu** from €27.20, 1¾ hours, every one or two hours

**Mâcon** €16, 55 minutes, nine to 20 daily

**Nuits-St-Georges** €5, 10 minutes, 10 to 18 daily

**Paris Gare de Lyon** €36, 3½ hours, five direct daily

## Pays d'Auxois

West of Dijon, along and around the Canal de Bourgogne, the Pays d'Auxois is a rolling land of mustard fields, wooded hills and escarpments dotted with fortified hilltop towns, including Semur-en-Auxois. Tucked into this verdant landscape are a pair of exceptional historical sites, the Cistercian abbey of Fontenay and the MuséoParc Alésia historical museum.

### SEMUR-EN-AUXOIS & AROUND

POP 4492

Perched on a granite spur and surrounded by a hairpin turn in the River Armançon,


the picturesque fortress town of Semur-en-Auxois is guarded by four massive pink-granite bastions. The centre is laced with cobbled lanes flanked by attractive houses.

### Sights

Most of the old city was built when Semur was an important religious centre boasting six monasteries. Just beyond the tourist office, pass through two concentric medieval gates, **Porte Sauvigne** (1417) and fortified **Porte Guillier** (14th century), to reach pedestrianised **rue Buffon**, lined with 17th-century houses. Further on, the **Promenade du Rempart** affords panoramic views from atop Semur's medieval battlements. Don't worry about the menacing cracks in the 44m-high **Tour de la Orle d'Or** – they've been there since 1589!


### Grand Forge du Buffon

HISTORIC SITE

( 03 80 92 10 35; [www.grandeforgedebuffon.fr](http://www.grandeforgedebuffon.fr); adult/child €8/6.50; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) Situated 23km north of Semur-en-Auxois on the pastoral banks of the Armançon River (and right near the Canal de Bourgogne), this was one of the first fully integrated factories, built in 1778 by Georges-Louis Leclerc, the Count of Buffon and a mathematician and naturalist. Extant buildings include a blast furnace that was


### DON'T MISS

#### UNESCO WORLD TREASURE: FONTENAY

Founded in 1118 and enshrined as a Unesco World Heritage Site, the **Abbaye de Fontenay** (Fontenay Abbey;  03 80 92 15 00; [www.abbayedefontenay.com](http://www.abbayedefontenay.com); adult/child self-guided tour €10/7, guided tour €12.50/7.90; ☀ 10am-6pm early Apr–mid-Nov, 10am-noon & 2-5pm mid-Nov–early Apr) offers a fascinating glimpse of the austere, serene surroundings in which Cistercian monks lived lives of contemplation and manual labour. Set at road's end in a bucolic wooded valley beside a tranquil stream, this restored masterpiece of medieval monastic architecture includes an unadorned Romanesque church, a barrel-vaulted monks' dormitory, and Europe's earliest metallurgical forge, complete with a working reconstruction of the hydraulic hammer used by 13th-century monks.

A self-guided tour of the abbey, with printed information in six languages, is available year-round. From early April to mid-November, guided tours (in French with multilingual handout) begin at 10am, 11am, noon, 1.45pm, 2.45pm, 4pm and 5pm.

From the parking lot, the GR213 trail forms part of two verdant walking circuits: one to Montbard (13km return), the other (11.5km) through Touillon and Le Petit Jailly. Maps and extensive guides to plant life are available in the abbey shop.

Fontenay is 25km north of Semur-en-Auxois and 6km away from the Montbard train station, an easy hop from Dijon (€16, 35 minutes, 10 to 18 a day). A taxi ([www.montbard-taxi.fr](http://www.montbard-taxi.fr);  06 08 82 20 61) from the station to the abbey costs about €17 (more on Sundays and holidays).

used for casting molten metals and a supply channel with paddlewheel.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel des Cymaises

HOTEL €

(📍 03 80 97 21 44; www.hotelcymaises.fr; 7 rue du Renaudot; d/tr/q €79/92/113; 📞) In the heart of the old town, this grand 18th-century *maison bourgeoise* has 18 comfortable, slightly worn rooms, some with exposed wooden beams, and a bright veranda for breakfast. There's free parking in the courtyard, and a relaxing garden out back.

### ★ La Porte Guillier

B&amp;B €€

(📍 03 80 97 3119; www.laporteguillier.com; 5bis rue de l'Ancienne Comédie; d €100-120, tr/q €140/170; 📞) At this delightful B&B, housed in a fortified stone gateway from the 14th century, three generously sized rooms sport charming old furniture, and two enjoy stellar views of medieval Semur's main street. Breakfast brims with organic specialities.

### Pâtisserie Alexandre

PASTRIES €

(📍 03 80 97 08 94; 1 rue de la Liberté; 🕒 7.30am-7pm Tue-Fri, 7am-1pm & 2-7pm Sat, 7am-1pm Sun) The speciality at this historic pâtisserie is *granit rose de l'auvois*, a pink confection laden with sugar, orange-infused chocolate, cherries, almonds and hazelnuts.

## Information

The **tourist office** (📍 03 80 97 05 96; www.terres-auvois.fr; 2 place Gaveau; 🕒 9.30am-12.15pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus Sun Jun-mid-Sep; 📞) has a free walking-tour brochure in English.

## Getting There & Away

Mobigo (p443) bus LR119 (two to six daily) links Semur-en-Auxois with Dijon (1½ hours) and Avallon (40 minutes), while bus LR120 goes to Montbard (20 minutes, six to eight daily), on the Paris-Dijon rail line.

## Châtillon-sur-Seine

POP 5700

On the northern fringes of Burgundy, Châtillon-sur-Seine has a picturesque old quarter by the river, well-preserved buildings and a not-to-be-missed archaeology museum. It's also a good base if you want to explore the atmospheric Forêt de Châtillon and the Châtillonnais vineyards.

## CHEESE PAIRINGS

What could be a tastier pairing with a glass of local wine than one of Burgundy's Appellation d'Origine Protégé (AOP) cheeses? There are three, all made with cow's milk.

**Époisses** Invented in the 16th century by the monks at the Abbaye de Cîteaux, Époisses is a soft, round, orange-skinned white cheese. It takes a month to make, using washes of salt water, rainwater and Marc de Bourgogne (local pomace brandy), resulting in a strong, creamy flavour.

**Soumaintrain** Milder than Époisses, Soumaintrain has a spicy burst at the end of a tasting. Similar in appearance to Époisses.

**Chaource** These elegant little wheels of soft white cheese can be quite fluid when young. A bit like Camembert, they are ideal with sparkling wines.

## Sights

### ★ Musée du Pays

#### Châtillonnais – Trésor de Vix

MUSEUM

(📍 03 80 91 24 67; www.musee-vix.fr; 14 rue de la Libération; adult/child €7/3.50; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Wed-Mon Sep-Jun, daily Jul & Aug) Châtillon's star attraction is the **Trésor de Vix** (Vix Treasure), a collection of Celtic, Etruscan and Greek objects from the 6th century BCE. Highlights includes an exquisitely ornamented, jaw-droppingly massive Greek crater; easily the largest known bronze vessel from the ancient world, it's 1.64m high, with a weight of 208.6kg and a capacity of 1100L!

The treasure was discovered in 1953 in the tomb of the Dame de Vix, a Celtic princess who controlled the trade in Cornish tin in the 6th century. Mined in Cornwall, the tin was brought by boat up the Seine as far as Vix and then carried overland to the Saône and the Rhône, whence river vessels conveyed it south to Marseille and its most eager consumers, the Greeks.

## Activities

### Wine Tasting

Among the wines produced in the Châtillonnais vineyards, north of town, is Burgundy's



own bubbly, Crémant de Bourgogne. Follow the 120km-long **Route du Crémant** (www.bourgogne-wines.com), marked by white-on-brown signs, through the vineyards – and allow plenty of time for a wine tasting. Châtillon's tourist office can supply you with details and a map.

The Champagne region's Côte des Bar vineyards are just a few kilometres further north.

### Walking

The town's commercial centre, rebuilt after WWII, is bordered by two branches of the Seine, here hardly more than a stream. For an enjoyable walk with fine views, start at the lovely green park surrounding **Source de la Douix**, an artesian spring, and climb up to the crenellated 16th-century **Tour de Gissey**.

The immense **Forêt de Châtillon** begins a few kilometres southeast of Châtillon. This peaceful haven is covered mainly by broad-leaved trees, including beeches and horn-beams, and criss-crossed by walking trails.

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 03 80 91 13 19; www.chatillonais-tourisme.fr; 1 rue du Bourg; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr, to 6pm May, Jun & Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Jul & Aug)

### i Getting There & Away

Bus LR124, operated by Mobigo (p443), goes to Dijon's train station (1¼ hours, three to five Monday to Saturday, one on Sunday), while LR126 links Châtillon with Montbard's TGV train station (40 minutes, four to six daily Monday to Friday, three daily Saturday and Sunday).

## YONNE

The Yonne *département*, roughly midway between Dijon and Paris, has long been Burgundy's northern gateway. The verdant countryside harbours the magical hilltop village of Vézelay (a Unesco World Heritage Site), the white-wine powerhouse of Chablis, and the picturesque medieval village of Noyers-sur-Serein, along with off-the-beaten-track treasures in places like Tonnerre and La Puisaye.

Canal boats cruise from the ancient river port of Auxerre and other towns throughout the region.

## Auxerre

POP 36,569

The alluring riverside town of Auxerre (*oh-sair*) has been a port since Roman times. The old city clambers up the hillside on the western bank of the River Yonne. Wandering through the maze of its cobbled streets, you come upon Roman remains, Gothic churches and timber-framed medieval houses. Views span a jumble of belfries, spires and steep tiled rooftops.

The area south of the city, anchored by the pretty town of Irancy, is known for its ruby-red wines. Auxerre also makes a good base for exploring northern Burgundy, including Chablis, and is an excellent place to hire a canal boat. Quiet backroads and walking trails thread through the forests, fields, pastures and vineyards of the surrounding Auxerrois and Tonnerrois countryside, making for some lovely walking and cycling.

### 👁 Sights

Get wonderful city views from **Pont Paul Bert** (1857) and, 350m to the northwest, the arched **footbridge** over the Yonne. For a self-guided architectural walking tour, pick up *In the Steps of Cadet Roussel* (€1.50) or an audioguide (€5) at the tourist office (p459).

### Abbaye St-Germain

ABBAY

(☎ 03 86 18 02 90; www.auxerre.fr; place St-Germain; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-5pm or 6pm, Wed-Mon Sep-Jun, daily Jul & Aug) **FREE** This ancient abbey, its church held aloft by dramatic flying buttresses, began as a basilica above the tomb of St Germain, the 5th-century bishop who made Auxerre an important Christian centre. By medieval times it was attracting pilgrims from all over Europe. The **crypt**, accessible by tour (€7; in French, with English handout), contains some of Europe's finest examples of Carolingian architecture. Supported by 1200-year-old oak beams, the walls and vaulted ceiling are decorated with 9th-century frescoes; the innermost sanctuary shelters St Germain's tomb.

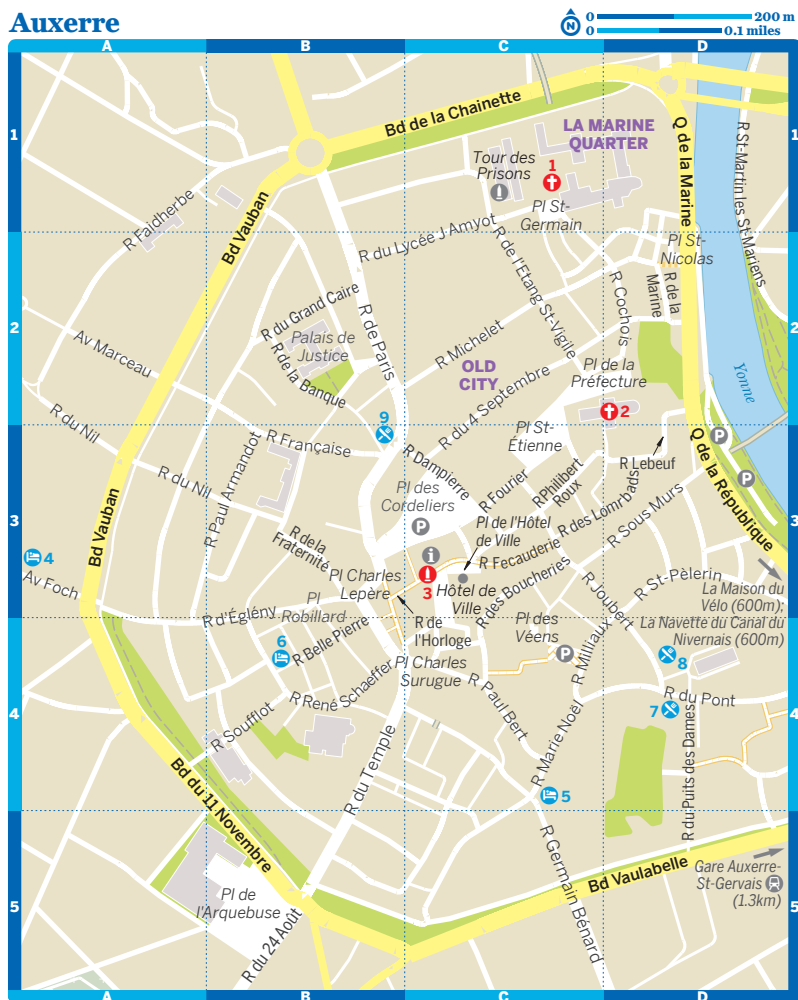
Housed around the abbey's cloister, the **Musée d'Art et d'Histoire** (admission free) displays prehistoric artefacts, Gallo-Roman sculptures and rotating contemporary art exhibits.

### Tour de l'Horloge

TOWER

(btwn place de l'Hôtel de Ville & rue de l'Horloge) In the heart of Auxerre's partly medieval

## Auxerre



commercial precinct, this golden, spire-topped clock tower was built in 1483 as part of the city's fortifications. On the beautiful 17th-century clock faces (there's one on each side), the sun-hand indicates the time of day; the moon-hand shows the day of the lunar month.

### Cathédrale St-Étienne

CATHEDRAL

(place St-Étienne; crypt adult/child €3.50/free, son et lumière show €5; ☞ cathedral 9am-6pm, crypt 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 2-6pm Sun) This Gothic cathedral and its stately 68m-high bell tower dominate Auxerre's skyline. The choir, ambulatory and some of the vivid

## Auxerre

### Sights

- 1 Abbaye St-Germain ..... C1
- 2 Cathédrale St-Étienne ..... D2
- 3 Tour de l'Horloge ..... C3

### Sleeping

- 4 Hôtel Les Maréchaux ..... A3
- 5 La Maison des Randonneurs ..... C4
- 6 Le Relais des Saints Pères ..... B4

### Eating

- 7 Bistro L'Aspérule ..... D4
- 8 La P'tite Beursaude ..... D4
- 9 Pause Gourmande ..... B3

## IRANCY & COULANGES-LA-VINEUSE WINE COUNTRY

Ask locals where they go to taste the wines of western Burgundy and many will answer: **Irancy** ([www.irancy.org](http://www.irancy.org)). This relatively recent AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée; as of 1999) uses predominantly pinot noir grapes. The winemaking villages in the area are supremely picturesque.

Set in rolling hills and spring-blooming cherry orchards, Irancy and nearby **Coulanges-la-Vineuse**, which has its own appellation, lie 13km south of Auxerre. Explore and you'll find many *domaines* where you can sample. In Irancy you can visit organic producer **Thierry Richoux** (☎03 86 42 21 60; 73 rue Soufflot; ☀9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat). In Coulanges-la-Vineuse stop by **Clos du Roi** (☎03 86 42 25 72; [www.closduroi.com](http://www.closduroi.com); 17 rue André Vildieu; ☀9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) or, in the heart of the village, **Domaine Maltoff** (☎03 86 42 32 48; [www.maltoff.com](http://www.maltoff.com); 20 rue d'Aguesseau; d/q €81/122; ☎), which is also a B&B. Just north of Irancy, in **St-Bris-le-Vineux**, another worthwhile stop is **Domaine Bersan** (☎03 86 53 33 73; [www.bersan.fr](http://www.bersan.fr); 20 rue du Docteur Tardieu; ☀9am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat), a winery that's been in the same family for more than five centuries; ask to tour the medieval cellars below the tasting room.

stained-glass windows date from the 1200s. The 11th-century Romanesque **crypt** is ornamented with remarkable frescoes, including a scene of *Christ à Cheval* (*Christ on Horseback*; late 11th century) unlike any other known in Western art. There's usually an hour-long **son et lumière** (sound-and-light show; €5) in summer.



### Activities

Cycling options include the towpath along the Canal du Nivernais to Clamecy (about 60km) and Decize (175km); for a map, see [www.burgundy-by-bike.com](http://www.burgundy-by-bike.com) (search for Canal du Nivernais). **La Navette du Canal du Nivernais** (☎03 86 46 24 99; [www.navette-nivernais.fr](http://www.navette-nivernais.fr); 1 place Achille Ribain; per cyclist/bike from €45/10), a trailer-equipped minivan, is available to transport cyclists and their bikes back to their original starting point.

### La Maison du Vélo

CYCLING, BOATING

(☎03 86 46 24 99; [www.maison-velo.fr](http://www.maison-velo.fr); 1 place Achille Ribain; bikes per half/full day €11/20, electric boats per 1hr/day €35/120; ☀9am-noon & 2-6pm Easter-mid-Sep) Rents out bicycles along with electric boats for self-guided excursions on the Canal du Nivernais.



### Sleeping

#### La Maison des Randonneurs

HOSTEL €

(☎03 86 41 43 22; [www.maison-rando.fr](http://www.maison-rando.fr); 5 rue Germain Bénard; dm/tw €19/38; ☎) Bordering a leafy park within easy walking distance of Auxerre's centre, this hostel features three types of dorms (six-bed, four-bed and

three-bed) along with singles and bunk-bed twins. Amenities include bike hire, laundry service (per machine €3) and a communal kitchen. Check-in is between 4pm and 7pm from April to September; call to coordinate the rest of the year.

#### Le Relais des Saints Pères

B&B €

(☎06 49 82 97 87; [www.relais-saintsperes.fr](http://www.relais-saintsperes.fr); 12 rue Belle Pierre; d €70-90, q €130; ☎) In a 17th-century building with powder-blue shutters, this B&B offers four comfortable rooms under the eaves. Breakfast is served on the outdoor terrace in good weather. Has bikes (free) and children's activities.

#### Domaine Dessus Bon Boire

B&B €

(☎03 86 53 89 99; [www.dessusbonboire.com](http://www.dessusbonboire.com); 19 rue de Vallan, Vaux; s/d/q €58/68/100; ☎) In sleepy riverside Vaux, 6km south of Auxerre, this family-run B&B offers impeccable rooms and plenty of peace and quiet. Friendly owners Catherine and André Donat, who have worked in organic viticulture since 2000, organise tours to local vineyards and share their extensive knowledge of the region's wines.

#### Hôtel Les Maréchaux

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 86 51 43 77; [www.hotel-lesmarechaux.com](http://www.hotel-lesmarechaux.com); 6 av Foch; d €64-139; ☎☎☎☎) Decorated in opulent 19th-century style, this imposing establishment has 25 rooms, some with views of the spacious private park out back; a bar; and common areas brimming with character.

## Eating

**★ Pause Gourmande** MEDITERRANEAN €€  
 (☎03 86 33 98 87; [www.lapausegourmande-89.com](http://www.lapausegourmande-89.com); 65 rue de Paris; menu €25, incl 2 glasses of wine €32; ☀9am-5.30pm Tue & Thu-Sat, to 1.30pm Wed) This sweet, unpretentious lunchtime eatery features an ever-changing monthly *menu* built around fresh local produce and delectable desserts.

Before noon and after 1.30pm it doubles as a *salon de thé*, serving home-baked pastries.

**La P'tite Beursaude** BURGUNDIAN €€  
 (☎03 86 51 10 21; <https://la-ptite-beursaude.business.site>; 55 rue Joubert; lunch menus €21, dinner menus €29-31.50; ☀noon-1.30pm & 7.30-8.45pm Thu-Mon) Waitresses wearing traditional Morvan dress serve excellent fish and meat dishes at this cosy eatery – an excellent introduction to Burgundian *cuisine du terroir* (traditional cuisine deeply connected to the land) such as steak with Époisses cheese.

**Bistro L'Aspérule** FUSION €€  
 (☎03 86 33 24 32; [www.restaurant-asperule.fr](http://www.restaurant-asperule.fr); 34 rue du Pont; lunch/dinner menus €27/38; ☀noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm Tue-Sat) Fine French cuisine with a subtle Japanese twist is the speciality at this classy bistro, run by Michelin-starred chef Keigo Kimura. Everything is beautifully presented, with lots of seasonal produce in the mix.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 86 52 06 19; [www.ot-auxerre.fr](http://www.ot-auxerre.fr); 7 place de l'Hôtel de Ville; ☀9am-6pm or 7pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun Apr-Sep, shorter hours Oct-Mar; 📞) Auxerre's well-run tourist office has details on outdoor activities, including bike and boat rentals.

## Getting There & Away

### TRAIN

Trains run from **Gare Auxerre-St-Gervais** (rue Paul Doumer), 1km east of the centre. On some routes, depending on the time you travel, your service may be a bus, rather than a train.

**Avallon** €10, train/bus 50 minutes/1hr, five daily

**Dijon** €32, two hours, six to 12 daily

**Paris Gare de Lyon** €32, 1¾ hours, five to seven daily

**Sermizelles-Vézelay** €10, train/bus 40/52 minutes, six daily

## La Puisaye

The countryside west of Auxerre, known as La Puisaye, is a lightly populated landscape of woods, winding creeks and dark hills. The area is best known as the birthplace of Colette (1873–1954), author of *La Maison de Claudine* and *Gigi* and 50 other novels – much of her work explores her rural Burgundian childhood.

## Sights

**★ Chantier Médiéval de Guédelon** CASTLE  
 (☎03 86 45 66 66; [www.guedelon.fr](http://www.guedelon.fr); D955, Treigny; adult/child €15/12; ☀10am-5.30pm or 6.30pm Jul & Aug, Thu-Mon May, Jun, Sep & Oct, Thu-Tue Apr) It's such a crazy – and such a French – idea that it's genius: build a medieval fortified castle from scratch using only the technologies, materials and tools available in the 13th century. Work started in 1997 and has been going on ever since at the same leisurely pace that saw medieval cathedrals take a century or more to construct. No electricity or power tools here: stone is quarried on-site using iron hand tools forged by a team of blacksmiths, who also produce vital items such as door hinges. Clay for tiles is fired for three days using locally cut wood, and mortar is transported in freshly woven wicker baskets.

All around the site, you can see skilled artisans – their labours informed by archaeological research – hard at work, doing literally everything by hand; they're happy to talk to visitors about their craft. Child-oriented activities include stone carving (using especially soft stone). Wear closed shoes as the site is often a sea of muck.

Guédelon is 45km southwest of Auxerre and 7km southwest of St-Sauveur-en-Puisaye, with plenty of signposts to guide you as you draw near. Admission is €1 cheaper online.

**Château de Ratilly** CASTLE  
 (☎03 86 74 79 54; [www.chateauderatilley.fr](http://www.chateauderatilley.fr); Treigny; adult/child €5/free; ☀10am-noon & 2-5.30pm or 6pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, hours vary mid-Sep–mid-Jun) The elegant 13th-century Château de Ratilly sits in verdant countryside near Treigny. Interior rooms display a collection of pottery by the Pierlot family and host a changing series of excellent contemporary art exhibitions and concerts. Don't miss the magnificent 17th-century dovecote, with its original ladders and more than 1000 nesting

holes for birds. Opening hours can vary; call ahead.

### Musée Colette

MUSEUM

(☎03 86 45 61 95; [www.musee-colette.com](http://www.musee-colette.com); Château de St-Sauveur, St-Sauveur-en-Puisaye; adult/child €7/5; ☀10am-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Oct) Colette, author of *La Maison de Claudine* and *Gigi*, lived until the age of 18 in the tiny town of St-Sauveur-en-Puisaye, 40km southwest of Auxerre. The Musée Colette, in the village château, displays letters, manuscripts, two furnished rooms from her apartment in Paris' Palais Royal, and photos featuring her iconic hairdo.

## Chablis

POP 2318

The well-to-do, picturesque town of Chablis, 20km east of Auxerre on the River Serein, has made its fortune growing, ageing and marketing the dry white wines – sometimes described as ‘flinty’ – that have carried its name to the four corners of the earth.

Chablis is made exclusively from chardonnay grapes and originated with the monks of Pontigny. Now it is divided into four AOCs: Petit Chablis, Chablis, Chablis Premier Cru and, most prestigious of all, Chablis Grand Cru. The seven *grands crus* are lovingly grown on just 1 sq km of land on the hillsides northeast of town.

### Sights

Southeast along rue Porte Noël are the twin bastions of Porte Noël (1778), formerly Chablis' southern town gate.

Nearby villages worth exploring include **Chablis**, which offers great views; **Chichée** and **Chemilly**, both on the River Serein; and **Chitry-le-Fort**, famous for its fortified church. The lovely hillside village of **Fleys** has a number of wineries.

### Abbaye de Pontigny

ABBEY

(☎03 86 47 54 99; [www.abbayedepontigny.com](http://www.abbayedepontigny.com); Pontigny; ☀abbey 9am-6pm, shop & grounds 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sun) **FREE** Founded in 1114, this abbey rises from the lush mustard fields 15km north of Chablis. The spectacular *abbatiale* (abbey church) is one of the last surviving examples of Cistercian architecture in Burgundy. The simplicity and purity of its white-stone construction reflect the austerity of the Cistercian order. On summer days sunshine filtering through the high windows creates an amazing sense

of peace and tranquillity. *Discovering Pontigny* (€2.50), on sale in the gift shop, points out fascinating architectural details.

The Gothic sanctuary, 108m long and lined with 23 chapels, was built in the mid-12th century; the wooden choir screen, stalls and organ loft were added in the 17th and 18th centuries. Monks here were the first to perfect the production of Chablis wine.

### Activities

Wine can be tasted and purchased at dozens of places around Chablis; the tourist office (p461) has a comprehensive list.

### La Chablisienne

WINE

(☎03 86 42 89 98; [www.chablisienne.com](http://www.chablisienne.com); 8 bd Pasteur; ☀9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm or 7pm) To sample lots of different vintages under one roof, try La Chablisienne, a cooperative cellar that brings together over 300 small producers. Products include six of Chablis' seven *grands crus*.

### Walking

An amble through Chablis' vineyard-cloaked hills is the perfect way to connect with the *terroir* before tipping. Vineyard walks from Chablis include the **Circuit des Grands Crus** (8km), the **Circuit des Clos** (13km to 24km, depending on your route) and the **Circuit du Moulin des Roches** (15.5km to 33km). The tourist office (p461) sells topoguides and IGN maps.

### Cycling

Cycling is a great way to tour the Chablis countryside. One flat, lush option is the 45km **Chemin de Serein**, which follows the old Tacot rail line southeast to Noyers-sur-Serein and L'Isle-sur-Serein. The tourist office (p461) hires **bikes** (per hour/half-day/full day €4/11/20) from Easter to early November.

### Tours

#### Chablis Vitours

WINE

(☎06 11 47 82 98; [www.chablis-vitours.fr](http://www.chablis-vitours.fr); 1 chemin des Vignes, Aigremont; 1½hr/2½hr/full-day tour per person €30/90/180) Tour the vineyards by minibus.

### Sleeping

#### Chambres d'Hôtes du Faubourg St-Pierre

B&B €

(☎03 86 42 83 90; [www.faubourg-saint-pierre.com](http://www.faubourg-saint-pierre.com); 17 rue Jules Rathier; d from €80;  ) Occupying a stately, lovingly preserved bourgeois



townhouse from the 1700s, this B&B has three large, bright – and very romantic – rooms. Our choice is ‘Pauline’, with honey-coloured parquet flooring and a marble fireplace.

**★ Maison du Moulin des Roches** B&B €€  
(☎06 73 20 80 50; [www.chablis-maisondumoulin-desroches.fr](http://www.chablis-maisondumoulin-desroches.fr); chemin du Moulin des Roches; d/q €125/195; 📞) This lovingly renovated B&B, beside an old mill on the River Serein 1km outside Chablis, offers two spacious, elegantly appointed doubles and a pair of two-room family suites. Guests have access to a high-ceilinged fireplace room, a gym and a relaxing *hammam* (one hour €30 per person).

**Hôtel du Vieux Moulin** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€  
(☎03 86 42 47 30; [www.larochewines.com](http://www.larochewines.com); 18 rue des Moulins; d €150-195, ste €245; 📞 📺 📶) Housed in an 18th-century mill in the centre of Chablis, the five rooms and two suites – understated and very contemporary – afford luscious views of a branch of the Serein. The breakfast room has *grand cru* views.

## Eating

**Le Syracuse** BURGUNDIAN, PIZZA €  
(☎03 86 42 19 45; [www.lesyracuse-chablis.com](http://www.lesyracuse-chablis.com); 19 rue Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny; menus €24-32,

pizza €13; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) Friendly and refreshingly down-to-earth, Le Syracuse – now run by the son of the long-time owner – serves both solid Burgundian fare and delicious pizza. There’s a stone-vaulted interior dining room and a sunny terrace.

**Les Trois Bourgeons** BISTRO €€  
(☎03 86 46 63 23; [www.restaurant-chablis.fr](http://www.restaurant-chablis.fr); 10 rue Auxerroise; 3-course menu €31.50; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Offers a classic *bistronomique* experience – gastronomic dining with bistro atmosphere and prices. Run by a trio of Japanese chefs who honed their skills in Michelin-starred restaurants, it serves up everything from Burgundian meat-based classics to snails to local trout.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 86 42 80 80; [www.escale-chablis.fr](http://www.escale-chablis.fr); 1 rue du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny; ☺10am-1pm & 2-6pm) Offers free maps of the town and surrounding vineyards, and has details on visiting wineries. Rents bicycles from April to October.

## Getting There & Away

A car is your best bet – Chablis is not served by regularly scheduled public transport.

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

#### CASTLE ENCOUNTERS

**Château d’Ancy-le-Franc** (☎03 86 75 14 63; [www.chateau-ancy.com](http://www.chateau-ancy.com); 18 place Clermont-Tonnerre, Ancy-le-Franc; adult/child incl grounds \$13/8, guided tour €2 extra; ☺10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, Sun & holidays early Feb-mid-Dec) The Italian Renaissance makes a cameo appearance at this imposing château, built in the 1540s by celebrated Italian architect Serlio. The richly painted interior – including the 32m mural in the **Pharsale Gallery** – is mainly the work of Italian artists brought to Fontainebleau by François I. Don’t miss Diane de Poitiers’ private apartments on the ground floor, with their late-16th-century frescoes. Situated 19km southeast of Tonnerre (a 20-minute drive via the D905).

**Château de Tanlay** (☎03 86 75 70 61; [www.chateaudetanlay.fr](http://www.chateaudetanlay.fr); 2 Grande Rue Basse; adult/child €10/5; ☺ tours 10am, 11.15am, 2.15pm, 3.15pm & 4.15pm Wed-Mon Apr-mid-Nov) Dominating the northern edge of the tranquil riverside village of Tanlay, the elegant French Renaissance-style Château de Tanlay is surrounded by a wide moat and elaborately carved outbuildings. Guided tours of the interior are offered in French and English; highlights include the **Grande Galerie**, whose walls and ceiling are completely covered with trompe l’œil. Look for it 10km east of Tonnerre, via the D905 and D965.

**Château de Maulnes** (☎03 86 75 25 85; [www.maulnes.fr](http://www.maulnes.fr); Cruzy-le-Châtel; adult/child €7/3.50; ☺10am-7pm early Jul-Aug, 2-6pm Wed-Sun Apr-early Jul & Sep-mid-Nov) The only château in France with a pentagonal floor plan, Renaissance-era Château de Maulnes, 24km east of Tonnerre, is a fascinating sight, though the rooms are unfurnished.

## Tonnerre

POP 4761

Tiny Tonnerre is full of surprises. The ancient gushing spring at its heart is pure magic, and the Chevalier d'Éon museum, devoted to one of France's most colourful 18th-century figures, makes this a worthwhile detour for anyone passing near. Beyond the town's less inspiring outskirts, the surrounding Tonnerrois vineyards produce some excellent wines, and two nearby châteaux offer a glimpse of the region's engaging Renaissance history.

### Sights

#### Fosse Dionne

SPRING

(rue de la Fosse Dionne) Some 200L of water per second gush this natural spring that was sacred to the Celts and whose vivid blue-green tint hints at its great depth. Legend has it that a serpent lurks at the bottom. Forming a picturesque backdrop behind the great circular pool are a mid-18th-century washing house, a semicircle of ancient homes and a steep forested hillside.

#### Musée du Chevalier d'Éon

MUSEUM

(☎06 86 37 25 63; 22 rue du Pont; guided tour €12/free; ☺by appointment) Charles d'Éon de Beaumont, an 18th-century French diplomat and spy for Louis XV, spent nearly half of his life assuming the role of a woman and dressing accordingly, spreading the fame of Tonnerre's wines across Europe during stints in St Petersburg and London. His one-time home is now a museum run by one of his descendants, the affable Philippe Luyt, who leads tours (in French; call for details).

### Sleeping

#### La Ferme de Fosse Dionne

B&amp;B €

(☎07 71 18 31 66; www.ferme-fosse-dionne.eu; 11 rue de la Fosse Dionne; d €82; ☺) This delightful hostelry, in a late-18th-century farmhouse just above Fosse Dionne, has its own *salon de thé* (tearoom). Owners Marina and Gérard speak French, English and Russian, and also offer dorm beds (per person €29) in their *gîte d'étape* (walkers' lodge) next door.

### Information

The **tourist office** (☎03 86 55 14 48; www.escale-en-tonnerrois.fr; 12 rue Général Campeanon; ☺10am-1pm & 2-6pm, may be closed Sun & Mon Nov-Mar) has maps of the city and the

surrounding Tonnerrois vineyards, along with walking tour info. It is situated just below Fosse Dionne for most of the year but moves to the **Hôtel Dieu**, an impressive, 13th-century charity hospital, from July to September.

### Getting There & Away

By rail, Tonnerre is linked to Dijon (€21, one hour, eight to 10 daily) and Auxerre (€10, 50 minutes, two direct trains daily; otherwise transfer in Laroche-Migennes).

## Noyers-sur-Serein

POP 594

A delightful stop on any Burgundy itinerary, the walled medieval village of Noyers (*nwa-yair*), 30km southeast of Auxerre, is surrounded by rolling pastureland, wooded hills and a sharp bend in the River Serein.

Stone ramparts and fortified battlements enclose much of the village and, between the two imposing **stone gateways**, cobbled streets lead past 15th- and 16th-century gabled houses, wood and stone archways, and several art galleries. Lines carved into the façade of the 18th-century **mairie** (town hall), next to the library, mark the level of historic floods.

### Activities

For a beautiful walk, take **chemin des Fossés** just outside Noyers' clock-topped southern gate, and follow it northeastwards between the River Serein and the village's 13th-century fortifications – 19 of the original 23 towers are extant. A few hundred metres beyond the last tower, climb the marked trail to Noyers' ruined hilltop château (the site of ongoing excavations), then follow signs to the **Belvédère Sud** for spectacular perspectives on the town and the valley below. The tourist office can provide information on several longer hikes in the region.

### Sleeping & Eating

#### Le Tabellion

B&amp;B €€

(☎06 86 08 39 92, 03 86 82 62 26; www.noyers-tabellion.fr; 5 rue du Jeu de Paume; d €92; ☺) Friendly, knowledgeable and multilingual, owner Rita Florin runs this attractive B&B in a former notary's office right next to the church. The three tastefully furnished and charmingly rustic rooms are brimming with personality, and there's a delightful garden at the back.

**Côté Serein**

ACCOMMODATION SERVICES €€

(☎06 42 07 43 64; [www.noyers-sur-serein.fr](http://www.noyers-sur-serein.fr); 11 rue de Venoise; r €89-135; 🏠🚰) Hosts Lionel and Marie-Noëlle rent out 21 beautifully appointed rooms, suites and apartments in several historic Noyers buildings. Guests enjoy free use of rowboats and kayaks, and are welcomed (over a glass of Chablis) with oodles of tips for exploring the local area, including walking itineraries through the surrounding vineyards.

**Les Granges**

CAFE €

(☎03 86 55 45 91; <https://lesgrangesnoyers.wixsite.com/les-granges>; 7 promenade du Pré de l'Échelle; snacks from €5; ☺ noon-6.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Fri, noon-6.30pm Sat-Mon) Harpist Haude Hodanger runs this inviting little tearoom between the river and the town's southern gate, serving sweet and savoury treats such as bœuf bourguignon, trout with wild berries, fruit or chocolate charlottes and lemon pies, all accompanied by teas, coffees and local wines.

**★ Restaurant La Vieille Tour**

FRENCH €€

(☎03 86 82 87 36; [www.lavieilletour.fr](http://www.lavieilletour.fr); rue Porte Peinte; menus €25-29; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.15-9pm Fri-Tue; 🍷) Adjacent to the clock tower at the entrance to the historic centre, young chefs Laurens and Hélène serve a delicious, unpretentious and ever-changing menu featuring creative takes on Burgundian staples – and vegetarian dishes – inspired by their globe-trotting travels.

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎03 86 82 66 06; [www.tourisme-serein.fr](http://www.tourisme-serein.fr); 12 place de l'Hôtel de Ville; ☺ 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat)

**i Getting There & Away**

When school is in session, **Mobigo** ([www.viamo.bigofr.fr](http://www.viamo.bigofr.fr)) bus L807 links Noyers-sur-Serein with the train stations in Tonnerre and Avallon once a day. Otherwise you'll need your own vehicle.

**Avallon**

POP 6791

The once-strategic walled town of Avallon, on a picturesque hilltop overlooking the green terraced slopes of two River Cousin tributaries, was in centuries past a stop on the coach road from Paris to Lyon. At its most animated during the Saturday morning market, the city makes a good base for

exploring Vézelay and the Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan.

**👁 Sights & Activities**

A pathway descends from the ancient gateway **Petite Porte**, affording fine views over the Vallée du Cousin. You can also walk around the walls, with their 15th- to 18th-century towers, ramparts and bastions.

For a bucolic walk or bike ride in the **Vallée du Cousin**, take the shaded, one-lane D427, which follows the gentle rapids of the River Cousin through forests and lush meadows. The tourist office sells hiking maps and has information on Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan.

**Collégiale St-Lazare**

CHURCH

(rue Bocquillot; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-6pm) Eight centuries ago, pilgrims flocked here to venerate a piece of the skull of St Lazarus, believed to provide protection from leprosy. The early-12th-century church once had three portals, but one was crushed when the northern belfry came a-tumblin' down in 1633; the two remaining portals are grandly decorated in Romanesque style, though much of the carving has been damaged.

**Musée de l'Avallonnais**

MUSEUM

(☎03 86 34 03 19; [www.museeavallonnais.com](http://www.museeavallonnais.com); 5 rue du Collège; adult/child €3/free, Wed free; ☺ 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Sep, 2-6pm Sat & Sun Feb, Mar & Oct) Founded in 1862, this wonderful small museum displays a series of expressionist watercolours by Georges Rouault (1871-1958) and an excellent art-deco silver collection by renowned designer and jeweller Jean Després (1889-1980). Upstairs, don't miss the permanent exhibition on the Southeast Asian Yao people.

**🛏 Sleeping****Camping Municipal  
Sous Roche**

CAMPGROUND €

(☎03 86 34 10 39; [www.campingsousroche.com](http://www.campingsousroche.com); sites per adult/child/tent/car €4.40/3/3.30/3.30, chalet €75-90; ☺ Apr-mid-Oct; 🏠🚰) Avallon's delightful city-owned campground is 2km southeast of the old city, just across the road from the River Cousin's forested banks. The many amenities include a heated swimming pool, bike rental and play areas for kids.

**Hôtel Les Capucins**

HOTEL €

(☎03 86 34 06 52; [www.avallonlescapucins.com](http://www.avallonlescapucins.com); 6 av Président Doumer; d €54-68, q €92; 🏠🚰) On a quiet, plum-tree-lined side street near

the train station, Avallon's best-value hotel has 25 spotless, well-appointed rooms. The attached restaurant (menus €16.50 to €38) serves up well-prepared Burgundian dishes.

### ★ La Cimentelle

B&amp;B €€

(☎) 03 86 31 04 85; www.lacimentelle.com; 4 rue de la Cimentelle, Vassy-lès-Avallon, Étaule; d €100-128, ste €150-315; (☎) Situated on shady, extensive grounds 6km north of Avallon, this 19th-century château offers luxuriously appointed rooms and two fantastic family suites (breakfast included). The heated swimming pool is open from April to October. Don't miss the sumptuous *tables d'hôte* meals (adult/child €48/20 including drinks). Nathalie, your amenable hostess, speaks English.



### Eating

#### Dame Jeanne

TEAHOUSE €

(☎) 03 86 34 58 71; www.damejeanne.fr; 59 Grande Rue Aristide Briand; snacks €9-13; ☺ 8am-7pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat; (☎) Folks come from the countryside for sweet and savoury breakfasts, delicious lunches or special pastry treats accompanied by tea, hot chocolate, coffee and wine. Sit in the back garden or the cheerful 17th-century salon. Situated just north of the tourist office.

#### Auberge du Pot d'Étain

BURGUNDIAN €€€

(☎) 03 86 33 88 10; www.potdetain.com; 24 rue Bouchardat, L'Isle-sur-Serein; menus €29-50; ☺ 7-8.30pm Tue, noon-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun Feb-Dec, closed last 2 weeks of Oct; (☎) At this gastronomic gem, 15km northeast of Avallon, the classically Burgundian menu revolves around fresh local meats, fish and vegetables, while the epic 60-page wine list has been recognised as one of France's top five. Also has nine

immaculate, comfy, country-style rooms (€65 to €98).

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎) 03 86 34 14 19; www.destinationgrandvezelay.com; 6 rue Bocquillot; ☺ 9.30am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-4pm Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Apr & May, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar; (☎) In a 15th-century building just south of the clock tower.

### i Getting There & Away

#### BUS

Mobigo (p443) operates bus LR119 from Avallon to Dijon (2¼ hours, two to five daily). The tourist office has schedules.

#### TRAIN

The SNCF station is about 1km northeast of the centre. On some routes, depending on the time you travel, your SNCF service may be a bus, rather than a train.

**Auxerre** €10, train/bus 50 minutes/1hr, five daily

**Paris Gare de Bercy** €36, 2¾ hours, one or two direct daily; trips requiring a transfer may take you to Paris Gare de Lyon

**Sermizelles-Vézelay** €5, 11 minutes by train (or bus), five or six daily

## Vézelay

POP 439

The tiny hilltop village of Vézelay – a UNESCO World Heritage Site – is one of France's architectural gems. Perched on a rocky spur crowned by a medieval basilica and surrounded by a sublime patchwork of vineyards, sunflower fields and cows, Vézelay seems to have been lifted from another age.

### DON'T MISS

#### BEYOND THE BASILICA: VÉZELAY'S HIDDEN HILLSIDE CHAPEL


Vézelay's imposing hilltop basilica naturally commands the lion's share of visitors' attention, but a lesser-known treasure lies hidden out back. Accessible by a lovely 15-minute stroll down a signposted trail behind the basilica, the Romanesque **Chapelle Ste-Croix** (La Cordelle; ☺ hours vary) – affectionately nicknamed 'La Cordelle' after the rope belts of the Franciscan monks who adopted this spot in the 13th century – slumbers on an idyllic hillside, with espaliered grapevines climbing its stone façade. This beautiful, simple chapel was built to commemorate Bernard de Clairvaux' preaching of the Second Crusade on this very spot in 1146. Nowadays there's no sign of the throngs that filled the fields nearly nine centuries ago. Rather, the chapel has become an off-the-beaten-track refuge for pilgrims and others seeking a place for peaceful meditation in the heart of the Burgundian countryside.

One of the main pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela in Spain starts here.

Bordering the northwestern tip of the Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan, the surrounding region harbours a number of historic sites and attractive villages.

## Sights

The **park** behind Basilique Ste-Madeleine affords wonderful views of the Vallée de Cure and nearby villages. A dirt road leads north to the old and new **cemeteries**.


Southeast of Vézelay at the base of the hill, the tiny village of **St-Père** has a Flamboyant Gothic church and an archaeological museum housing finds from the nearby ancient saltwater springs **Fontaines Salées** ( 03 86 33 37 36; [www.saint-pere.fr](http://www.saint-pere.fr); adult/child €6/3; ☀ 10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct). About 2km further south, the village of **Pierre-Perthuis** (literally 'pierced stone') is named after a natural stone arch; nearby, a graceful **stone bridge**, built in 1770, spans the Cure River underneath a modern highway bridge.


**★ Basilique Ste-Madeleine** CHURCH  
([www.basiliquedevézelay.org](http://www.basiliquedevézelay.org); ☀ 7am-8pm)

Founded in the 880s on a former Roman and Carolingian site, Vézelay's stunning hill-top basilica was rebuilt between the 11th and 13th centuries. On the famous 12th-century tympanum, visible from the narthex (enclosed porch), Romanesque carvings show an enthroned Jesus radiating his holy spirit to the Apostles. The nave has typically Romanesque round arches and detailed capitals, while the transept and choir (1185) have Gothic ogival arches. The mid-12th-century crypt houses a reliquary reputedly containing one of Mary Magdalene's bones.

The church has had a turbulent history. Damaged by the great fire of 1120, trashed by the Huguenots in 1569, desecrated during the Revolution and repeatedly struck by lightning, by the mid-1800s it was on the point of collapse. In 1840 the architect Viollet-le-Duc undertook the daunting task of rescuing the structure. His work, which included reconstructing the western façade and its doorways, helped Vézelay, previously a ghost town, spring back to life.

Visitors are welcome to attend (or observe) the hauntingly sung prayers and Masses; see the website for times. Concerts of sacred music are held in the nave from June to September.

**Musée Zervos** GALLERY  
( 03 86 32 39 26; [www.musee-zervos.fr](http://www.musee-zervos.fr); 14 rue St-Étienne; adult/child €5/free; ☀ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon mid-Mar-mid-Nov, daily Jul & Aug) This fantastic museum, in the exquisite townhouse of Nobel Prize-winning pacifist writer Romain Rolland (1866-1944), displays the collection of Christian Zervos (1889-1970), an art critic, gallerist and friend of many modern art luminaries. He and his wife Yvonne collected paintings, sculptures and mobiles by Calder, Giacometti, Kandinsky, Léger, Miró and Picasso (for whom he created a pivotal 22-volume catalogue).

**Maison Jules Roy** HISTORIC BUILDING  
( 03 86 33 35 01; Le Clos du Couvent, off rue des Écoles; ☀ 2-6pm Wed-Sun) **FREE** Up near the top of town, the former home of Algerian-born writer Jules Roy (1907-2000) is an enchanting spot with fine views of the basilica. Walk around the beautiful gardens and see the writer's study.

## Activities

Vézelay is popular with walkers, in part due to its status as one of the trailheads of the Chemin St-Jacques, the hugely popular medieval pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, known as St-Jacques-de-Compostelle in French. The surrounding area is criss-crossed with well-maintained trails passing through lovely, pastoral landscapes. **Promenade des Fossés** circumnavigates Vézelay's medieval ramparts. A footpath with fine views of the basilica links **Porte Neuve**, a fortified gate on the northern side of the ramparts, with the village of **Asquins** (ah-kah) and the Cure River. The GR13 trail also passes by Vézelay.

**AB Loisirs** OUTDOORS  
( 03 86 33 38 38; [www.abloisirs.com](http://www.abloisirs.com); rue du Gravier, St-Père; ☀ by arrangement) This well-established outfit rents mountain bikes (from €25 per day) and kayaks (€16 to €38) and leads outdoor activities such as cave exploration (half-day €39). Bikes can be brought to your hotel. It's best to phone ahead. Situated about 3km southeast of Vézelay.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Auberge de Jeunesse & Camping de l'Ermitage** CAMPGROUND, HOSTEL €  
( 03 86 33 24 18, 06 38 77 15 33; [www.camping-auberge-vezelay.com](http://www.camping-auberge-vezelay.com); route de l'Étang; dm €16-20, sites per adult/child/tent/car €4/2.50/2/1; ☀ camping Apr-Oct, hostel year-round) For thrifty



## VAUBAN'S CHATEAU

The **Château de Bazoches** (📍03 86 22 10 22; [www.chateau-bazoches.com](http://www.chateau-bazoches.com); Bazoches; adult/child €9.50/5; ☀️9.30am-6pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm late Mar-Jun & Sep, to 5pm Oct-mid-Nov, 2-6pm early Feb-late Mar) sits magnificently on a hillside with views to Vézelay, 12km to the north. Built in the 13th century and visited by royalty including Richard the Lionheart, it was acquired by field marshal and military strategist Marquis de Vauban in 1675. The château displays a decent collection of 17th- and 18th-century paintings and furniture.

The real appeal for French history buffs will be the chance to see the very room where Vauban, the most acclaimed military architect of his time, drafted plans for 300 fortified towns all over France. The château is still owned by his descendants.

visitors who don't mind a short trek into town, this spartan but well-maintained campsite and hostel, 1km south of Vézelay, is a great deal. Has well-equipped four- to 10-bed dorms with individual kitchenettes and gleaming bathrooms.

### Cabalus

GUESTHOUSE €

(📍03 86 33 20 66; [www.cabalus.com](http://www.cabalus.com); rue St-Pierre; r €42-62) Cabalus offers four simple, spacious rooms with sturdy beams, ancient tiles and stone walls in a 12th-century building half a block from the cathedral. Decoration is sparse and cheaper rooms have shared toilets (all rooms have private showers), but it's hard to beat for location, price and quirky historic charm.

### Hôtel SY Les Glycines

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(📍03 86 47 29 81; [www.vezelay-laterasse.com](http://www.vezelay-laterasse.com); rue St-Pierre; r €67-181; ☀️reception 8am-noon & 3-8pm; 📞) Named for the wisteria that cascades over the entrance, this lovingly renovated 18th-century house near the hilltop has 13 rooms with period features such as brick tile floors or exposed wood beams. Some also have vintage mirrors, stone fireplaces, canopy beds or tapestries, and two boast basilica views.

### Hôtel SY La Terrasse

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(📍03 86 33 25 50; [www.vezelay-laterasse.com](http://www.vezelay-laterasse.com); 2 place de la Basilique; r €95-143; 📞) In

a plum location opposite the basilica, this tiny hotel has six spacious rooms, many with unique touches such as direct basilica views from the bathtub in room 2 and a 12th-century stone window frame above the bed in room 4.

### Restaurant SY La Terrasse

BISTRO €

(📍03 86 33 25 50; [www.vezelay-laterasse.com](http://www.vezelay-laterasse.com); place de la Basilique; mains €15-28, lunch menus €19.50-24; ☀️noon-2pm & 7-8.30pm) Stone walls, decorative tiled floors, smooth jazz and a roaring fire on chilly nights make this one of Vézelay's cosiest eateries. Menu options include locally grown snails, bœuf bourguignon and Charolais steak. The bar, well stocked with whiskeys, wines and rum, is a great spot for a nightcap.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (📍03 86 33 23 69; [www.destinationgrandvezelay.com](http://www.destinationgrandvezelay.com); 12 rue St-Étienne; ☀️10am-1pm & 2-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jun & Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar; 📞) Sells hiking maps and has details of cultural events.

## i Getting There & Away

Mobigo (p443) bus LR505 (15 minutes, two daily) links Vézelay with tiny Sermizelles train station, 10km to the northeast, from where SNCF buses and trains go to Avallon (€5, 12 minutes, five a day), Auxerre (€10, 40 to 50 minutes, six a day) and Paris Gare de Bercy (€36, 2½ hours, one or two direct a day).

## PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL DU MORVAN

The 2999-sq-km Morvan Regional Park, bounded more or less by Avallon, Vézelay, Corbigny, Luzu, Autun and Saulieu – and straddling Burgundy's four *départements* (with the majority in the Nièvre) – encompasses 700 sq km of dense woodland, 13 sq km of lakes, and vast expanses of rolling farmland broken by hedgerows, stone walls and stands of beech, hornbeam and oak. The park is home to 247 species of fauna so it's a great place to observe some of France's largest and most majestic birds of prey as they scan for field rodents.

During WWII units of the French *Résistance* were very active in the mountainous Morvan. The bravery and sacrifices of the *maquis* (guerrilla fighters) are

commemorated at 21 sites ([www.museerestancemorvan.fr/en](http://www.museerestancemorvan.fr/en)) around the park.

## Sights

Several museums and historic sites around the park, collectively known as the **Écomusée du Morvan**, explore traditional Morvan life and customs. The most important of these are located in the village of St-Brisson.

For spectacular panoramic views of the Morvan, climb to **Le Signal d'Uchon**, a 681m granite outcrop at the park's south-eastern corner, 22km south of Autun (a 30-minute drive).

**★ Bibracte** ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE  
(☎03 85 86 52 35; [www.bibracte.fr](http://www.bibracte.fr); St-Léger-sous-Beuvray; ☺year-round) **FREE** This hilltop stronghold of the ancient Gauls and the adjacent **Museum of Celtic Civilisation** (St-Léger-sous-Beuvray; adult/child incl audioguide €7.50/5.50; ☺10am-6pm mid-Mar-mid-Nov, to 7pm Jul & Aug) offer a compelling portrayal of pre-Roman France in the years prior to the arrival of Julius Caesar's legions. Crowning beautiful Mont Beuvray, 25km west of Autun, the site boasts expansive views and numerous walking trails, including the **GR13**, through high-altitude fields and 1 sq km of forest.

Bibracte served as the capital of the Celtic Aedui people during the 1st and 2nd centuries BCE. It was here, in 52 BCE, that Vercingétorix was declared chief of the Gaulish coalition shortly before his defeat by Julius Caesar at Alésia. Caesar himself also resided here before the city decamped to Augustodunum (Autun). Stone remnants include ancient ramparts and several building complexes, all in varying states of excavation.

**Musée de la Résistance en Morvan** MUSEUM  
(☎03 86 78 72 99; [www.museerestancemorvan.fr/en](http://www.museerestancemorvan.fr/en); St-Brisson; adult/child €6.50/4, incl Maison des Hommes et des Paysages €8.50/6.50; ☺10am-1pm & 2-6pm May-Sep, to 5pm Apr & Oct-mid-Nov) Chronicles key events and characters in the local French Resistance with photos, maps, letters, Vichy-era propaganda posters and other artefacts. An excellent first stop for visitors interested in the Morvan's WWII history.

## Activities

The Morvan (a Celtic name meaning 'Black Mountain') offers an abundance of options

to fans of outdoor activities. On dry land choose from **walking** (the park has more than 25000km of marked trails), **mountain biking**, **horse riding**, **rock climbing** and **orienteering**. On water, there's **rafting**, **canoëing** and **kayaking** on several artificial lakes and the Chalaux, Cousin, Cure and Yonne rivers, along with excellent trout **fish-ing** in the River Méchet. Lac de Pannecièrre, Lac de St-Agnan and Lac des Settons have **water-sports** centres.

Guided walks of the park, some at night (eg to observe owls), are available from April to October, and there are children's activities in July and August. **Boat tours** are available at Lac des Settons.

In the mood for **swimming**? Head to Lac des Settons or Lac de St-Agnan, which offer 'beaches' (a loose term by anyone's standards).

The Morvan Visitors Centre and its website have a comprehensive list of outdoor sites and operators.

## Sleeping & Eating

The park has a good choice of campgrounds and B&Bs, as well as a few hotels. The Morvan Visitors Centre and its website have details on accommodation.

**★ Château de Villette** B&B €€€  
(☎06 31 52 13 18; [www.chateaudevillette.eu](http://www.chateaudevillette.eu); Poil; d/q from €145/225, 6-person cottage from €195; ☺☺) Set in a 5-sq-km private estate 11km south of Bibracte, this delightful 16th- and 18th-century château offers a glimpse of the luxurious life of Burgundy's landed aristocracy. After waking up in a ravishingly furnished period room, suite or cottage, you can cycle, look for escargots in the rolling countryside, play tennis or relax by the stress-melting pool. Reserve ahead.

## Information

**Morvan Visitors Centre** (Maison du Parc; ☎03 86 78 79 57; [www.parcumorvan.org/le-parc/la-maison-du-parc](http://www.parcumorvan.org/le-parc/la-maison-du-parc); St-Brisson; ☺9.30am or 10am-12.30pm & 1pm or 2-5.30pm Apr-mid-Nov, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Wed-Fri mid-Nov-Mar) Surrounded by hills, forests and lakes, this part of the Maison du Parc complex can supply you with hiking and cycling maps and guides. By car, follow the 'Maison du Parc' signs 14km west from Saulieu to St-Brisson. The website has details (in French) about local festivals, outdoor activities and lodging.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Park headquarters in St-Brisson is 33km south of Avallon via the D10 and 45km north of Autun via the D980 and D20.

Buses, run by Mobigo (p443), link parts of the park once or twice a day with Avallon (line LR123), Autun (LR123 and LR718), Dijon and Saulieu (LR118) and Semur-en-Auxois (LR120).

## SAÔNE-ET-LOIRE

Midway between Dijon and Lyon, Burgundy's southernmost *département*, Saône-et-Loire, is an inviting land of rolling green fields criss-crossed by hedgerows and dotted with indigenous Charolais beef cattle. During the region's medieval heyday it was home to the largest church in all of Christendom, the magnificent abbey of Cluny. These days it's a sleepier place, but pretty châteaux and little-known Romanesque chapels still sit around almost every bend, hinting at Saône-et-Loire's long history and making this a delightful area for a road trip.

Other regional highlights include the cathedral and Gallo-Roman ruins at Autun and the winegrowing villages around Mâcon, which produce some of France's finest whites. Several rivers, the Canal du Centre and some fabulous bike paths meander through Saône-et-Loire's forests and pastureland.

## Autun

POP 14,843

Autun is a low-key town, but almost two millennia ago – when it was known as Augustodunum – it was one of the most important cities in Roman Gaul, boasting 6km of ramparts, four monumental gates, two theatres, an amphitheatre and a system of aqueducts. Beginning in 269 CE, the city was repeatedly sacked by barbarian tribes and its fortunes declined, but things improved considerably in the Middle Ages, making it possible to construct an impressive cathedral. The hilly area around Cathédrale St-Lazare, reached via narrow cobblestone streets, is known as the old city.

If you have a car, Autun is an excellent base for exploring the southern parts of the Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan.

## **o** Sights & Activities

Autun's key medieval sights surround the cathedral at the top of the old city, while the Roman ruins are more widely dispersed around the urban periphery.

For a stroll along the city walls (part-Roman but mostly medieval), walk from av du Morvan south to the 12th-century **Tour des Ursulines** and follow the walls to the northeast. The **chemin des Manies** leads out to the Pierre de Couhard, where you can pick up the **Circuit des Gorges**, three marked forest trails ranging from 4.7km to 11.5km (IGN map 2925 SB Autun – Le Creusot).

The **water-sports centre** at Plan d'Eau du Vallon (an artificial lake east of the centre) rents kayaks, paddle boats and bikes.

### ★ Cathédrale St-Lazare CATHEDRAL

(place du Terreau; chapter room adult/child €2/free; ☺cathedral 8am-6pm year-round, chapter room 10am-noon Tue-Sat & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) Originally Romanesque, this cathedral was built in the 12th century to house the sacred relics of St Lazarus. Over the main doorway, the famous **Romanesque tympanum** shows the Last Judgment surrounded by zodiac signs, carved in the 1130s by Gislebertus, whose name is inscribed below Jesus' right foot. Ornamental capitals by Gislebertus and his school, described in a multilingual handout, adorn the columns of the nave; several especially exquisite capitals are displayed at eye level upstairs in the chapter room.

### Musée Rolin MUSEUM

(☎03 85 54 21 60; www.museerolin.fr; 3 rue des Bancs; adult/child €6.50/free; ☺10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Wed-Mon Oct-Mar) Don't miss this superb collection of Gallo-Roman artefacts, 12th-century Romanesque art, 15th-century paintings and modern art including work by Maurice Denis, Jean Dubuffet and Joan Miró. The indisputable masterpiece here is the *Temptation of Eve*, an unusually sensual (for its time) stone bas-relief by Gislebertus.

### Théâtre Romain ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(Roman Theatre; ☺24hr) **FREE** As you walk around this ancient theatre, designed to hold 16,000 people, try picturing the place filled with cheering (or jeering), toga-clad spectators. From the top look southwest to see the **Pierre de Couhard** (Rock of Couhard), the 27m-high remains of a Gallo-Roman pyramid that was probably a tomb.

## Temple de Janus

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

**FREE** Long associated (wrongly) with the Roman God Janus, this 24m-high temple, in the middle of farmland 800m north of the train station, is thought to have originally been a site for Celtic worship. It exudes an imposing, mysterious energy, despite the fact that only two of its massive walls still stand.

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ Maison Sainte-Barbe

B&B €€

(☎03 85 86 24 77; www.maisonsaintebarbe.com; 7 place Ste-Barbe; d/q from €76/114; 📞) In a 15th-century old-city townhouse, this colourful, spotless B&B has five spacious, light-filled rooms, including one with fine views of the cathedral and a two-bedroom suite that's perfect for families. There's a verdant courtyard out back.

### ★ Moulin Renaudiots

B&B €€

(☎03 85 86 97 10; www.moulinrenaudiots.com; 1 chemin du Vieux Moulin; d €140-165; 🕒late Mar-mid-Nov; 📞📺📺) The exterior of this old water mill, run by friendly French-American couple Evelyne and Trevor, is 17th-century stately; inside, it's a minimalist's dream, with vast bedrooms, tasteful colour schemes and luxurious linens. A sumptuous *table d'hôte* dinner (€54) is available on Saturdays and Mondays. Situated 3km southeast of Autun.

### ★ Comptoir Cuisine

BURGUNDIAN €€

(☎03 85 54 30 60; 13 place du Terrear; menus €26-32; 🕒noon-1.15pm & 7.15-9pm Tue-Sat) At this intimate, modern bistro, with only 24 place settings, the simple menu features three market-fresh mains each day: one meat, one fish and one veggie, finished off with exquisite desserts.

### Le Monde de Don Cabillaud

SEAFOOD €€

(☎03 85 82 48 30; 4 rue des Bancs; menus €32-37; 🕒noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) This convivial restaurant is renowned for its seafood dishes, prepared in a variety of styles and presented with a minimum of fuss by Italo-French chef-owner Vincent Bevacqua.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 85 86 80 38; www.autun-tourisme.com; 13 rue Général Demetz; 🕒9am or 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm or 7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun early Apr-mid-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat mid-Sep-early Apr) Sells a self-guided walking-tour

## WORTH A TRIP

### AUTUN DAY TRIPPER

**Château de Sully** (☎03 85 82 09 86; www.chateaudesully.com; adult/child incl tour & gardens €8.90/4, gardens only €4.40/2; 🕒gardens 10am-5pm, hourly tours of château 9.30am-3.30pm Thu-Sun Apr-Oct) Hidden away in the countryside 15km northeast of Autun, this Renaissance-style château has a beautifully furnished interior and a lovely English-style garden. It was the birthplace of Marshal MacMahon, Duke of Magenta and president of France from 1873 to 1879, whose ancestors fled Ireland several centuries ago and whose descendants still occupy the property.

brochure (€2) and hiking maps. Has information on the Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan.

## Getting There & Away

Mobigo (p443) bus LR706 links Autun with Le Creusot train station (one hour, one to five a day), which is on the Paris-Lyon TGV line.

Autun's **train station** (av de la République) is on a slow tertiary line that requires a change of train to get almost anywhere. Destinations in Burgundy include Beaune (€16, 1¼ hours) and Dijon (€21, 1¾ hours).

## Tournus

POP 6916

Tournus, on the Saône, is known for its 10th- to 12th-century Romanesque abbey church, **Abbatiale St-Philibert** (www.tournus-tourisme.com; 🕒8am-6pm or 7pm). The city is surrounded by scenic countryside, best viewed along small rural roads such as the D14, D15, D82 and D56, which pass through tiny villages, many with charming churches of their own. The medieval hilltop village of **Brancion**, with its 12th-century church and **château** (☎03 85 32 19 70; www.chateau-de-brancion.fr; adult/child €6/3, audioguide €2; 🕒10am-12.30pm & 1.15-6.30pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Oct-mid-Nov), is a lovely place to wander, while **Chardonnay** is, as one would expect, surrounded by vineyards. There's a panoramic view from 579m **Mont St-Romain**, 22km southwest of town.

## Getting There & Away

The train station is just north and across the D906 from Tournus' abbey. Trains (10 to 21 a

day) run north to Beaune (€10, 35 minutes) and Dijon (€16, one hour), and south to Mâcon (€5, 17 minutes) and Lyon (€18.60, one hour).

## Cluny

POP 5104



The remains of Cluny's great abbey – Christendom's largest church until the construction of St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican – are fragmentary and scattered, barely discernible among the houses and green spaces of the modern-day town. But with a bit of imagination, it's possible to picture how things looked in the 12th century, when Cluny's Benedictine abbey, renowned for its wealth and power and answerable only to the pope, held sway over 1100 priories and monasteries stretching across Europe.

The village of Cluny and the green countryside surrounding it make a pleasant area to spend a day or two. Nearby you can visit Cormatin, 14km to the north, home to a lavish Renaissance-style château, and Paray-le-Monial, about 50km to the west of Cluny, known for its 11th-century Romanesque basilica.

### Sights



#### Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie

MUSEUM

( 03 85 59 12 79; rue de l'Abbatiale; combined ticket with Église Abbatiale & Tour des Fromages adult/child €10.50/free;  9.30am-6pm or 7pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar) For a fascinating historical perspective on Cluny and its abbey, start your visit at this archaeological museum inside the Palais Jean de Bourbon. Displays include a historically accurate scale model of the entire Cluny complex, a reproduction of the abbey's façade as it looked in the Middle Ages and some superb Romanesque clere-stories and other stonework salvaged from medieval houses around town.

#### ★ Église Abbatiale

CHURCH


(Abbey Church;  03 85 59 15 93; www.cluny-abbaye.fr; place du 11 Août 1944; adult/child incl museum & Tour des Fromages €10.50/free;  9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar) Cluny's vast abbey church, built between 1088 and 1130, once extended from the map table in front of the **Palais Jean de Bourbon** to the trees near the octagonal **Clocher de l'Eau Bénite** (Tower of the Holy Water) and the adjoining square **Tour de l'Horloge** (Clock Tower) – a staggering 187m! A short film (multilingual headsets available) helps modern-day

visitors envision the grandeur of the medieval abbey while exploring its scattered ruins. English-language audioguides (€3) and self-guided tour booklets are available.

Abbey visitors also have access to the grounds of the adjacent **École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts et Métiers**, an institute for training mechanical and industrial engineers that's centred on an 18th-century cloister. At the far edge of the grounds, don't miss the 13th-century **Farinier** (flour storehouse), under whose soaring wood-framed roof a series of eight finely carved capitals from the abbey's choir are now housed.

#### Tour des Fromages

TOWER

(rue Mercière; adult/child €2.80/1.50;  9.30am-6.30pm May & Jul-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Apr & Jun, to 5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar) To fully appreciate the abbey's vastness, climb the 120 steps to the top of this tower, once used to ripen cheeses. Access is through the tourist office.

#### Haras National

FARM

(National Stud Farm;  03 85 32 09 73; www.equivallee-haras-cluny.fr/haras-national-de-cluny; 2 rue Porte des Prés; guided tour adult/child €7/3, self-guided visit to stables €3) Founded by Napoléon in 1806, the Haras National houses some of France's most impressive thoroughbreds, ponies and draught horses. To see the majestic equines up close, join a tour, available from April to early November. Tours often begin at 11am and/or 3.30pm, but days vary, so see the website for details. Self-guided visits are possible on certain days from mid-June to September (eg on Wednesday and Friday, Saturday and Sunday in July and August) and during some school holidays. In summer, reserve ahead for the special afternoon equestrian *démonstrations* of dressage, show jumping and blacksmithing (adult/child €9.50/5.50) and the Spectacle Équestre, a horse show that takes place on Fridays (adult/child €18/10).

### Sleeping

#### ★ Le Clos de l'Abbaye

B&B €

( 06 25 45 30 95; www.closdelabbaye.fr; 6 place du Marché; d €70-80, q €125-150; ) At this handsome old house, directly across the square from the abbey, the three spacious, stylishly decorated bedrooms and two family-friendly suites are flanked by a lovely garden with facilities for kids. Gracious owners Claire and Pascal are excellent tour advisers who direct guests to little-known treasures. There's a



wonderful Saturday morning market just outside the front door.

**Hôtel de Bourgogne** HISTORIC HOTEL €€  
(☎03 85 59 00 58; www.hotel-cluny.com; place de l'Abbaye; d/ste €96/159; ☺ Feb-Nov; P ☺) Built in 1817, this family-run hotel sits right next to the remains of the abbey. It has a living-room-like lounge, 13 antique-furnished rooms and three family-friendly apartments. Breakfast (€12) is served in an enchanting courtyard.

## Eating

**Le Pain sur la Table** BAKERY €  
(☎03 85 59 24 50; www.lepainsurlatable.fr; 1 Pont de l'Étang; daily specials €12; ☺ bakery 8am-7pm Tue-Sat, lunch noon-2pm Tue-Sat; ☺) A local favourite, this organic bakery – near the bridge at Cluny's southern edge – doubles as an informal restaurant serving healthy soups, sandwiches and other light meals. The daily-changing lunch menu always includes at least one vegetarian appetizer and main dish. Outside of the midday hours, it's a great spot for coffee and fresh-baked pastries.

★ **La Halte de l'Abbaye** BURGUNDIAN €€  
(☎03 85 59 28 49; halte.cluny@gmail.com; 3 rue Porte des Prés; menus from €20; ☺ noon-3pm Wed-Sun & 7-9.15pm Tue-Sat, may close in winter) Artisanal *andouillette* sausage, Charolais steak tartare and even *tête de veau* (calf's head) are among the classic Burgundian dishes on the menu at this convivial, family-run spot a block northeast of the abbey gates – look for the green shutters. Hard-working owners Franck and Séverine offer nonstop service throughout the afternoon, making it a convenient break between sightseeing stints.

★ **La Table d'Héloïse** BURGUNDIAN €€  
(☎03 85 59 05 65; www.hostelleriedeheloise.com/restaurant-cluny; 7 rue de Mâcon; lunch menu

€21, dinner menus €35-52; ☺ 12.15-1.45pm Fri-Tue, 7.30pm-8.45pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat) South of town, this family-run restaurant with a charmingly cosy interior is a terrific place to sample traditional Burgundian specialties, from dexterously prepared *escargots de Bourgogne* (Burgundy snails) to tender Charolais rib-eye steak, and from ripe Époisses cheese to the devastatingly delicious desserts. Book ahead for a table on the light-filled verandah overlooking the Grosne River.

**Restaurant de l'Abbaye** THAI, BURGUNDIAN €€  
(☎03 85 59 11 14; www.hotelrestaurantabbaye-cluny.fr; 14ter av Charles de Gaulle; menus €23-35; ☺ 11.45am-1.30pm Thu-Mon & 6.30-9pm Wed-Mon) Run by a Franco-Thai couple, this innovative fusion restaurant (at Cluny's Hôtel de l'Abbaye) serves traditional French and Burgundian dishes alongside 'Bourghthai' offerings that meld local ingredients with Thai savoir-faire. Escargot spring rolls, anyone?

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 85 59 05 34; www.cluny-tourisme.com; 6 rue Mercière; ☺ 9.30am-6.30pm May & Jul-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Apr & Jun, to 5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar; ☺) Well-stocked office with local hiking and cycling maps (€1 each) and events tickets; also sells a variety of books and IGN maps.

## Getting There & Away

Mobigo (p443) bus LR701 (three to 10 a day, no service in July and August) links the bus stop on rue Porte de Paris with the Mâcon-Loché TGV station (25 minutes) and Mâcon (40 minutes). Bus LR709 goes to Paray-le-Monial (one hour, two or three a day Monday to Saturday). Schedules are posted at the bus stop and the tourist office.

### DON'T MISS

#### CYCLING THE GREEN WAY

An old railway line and parts of a former canal towpath were turned into France's very first **Voie Verte**, a series of paved 'greenways' around the Saône-et-Loire *département* that are designed for walking, cycling and in-line skating. From Cluny, the Voie Verte heads north, via vineyards and valleys, to Givry (42km) and Santenay, where you can pick up the **Voie des Vignes** (Vineyard Way) to Beaune, or circle back around to Cluny on the 145km **Grande Boucle de Bourgogne du Sud** loop ride. Tourist offices have a free cycling map, *Voies Vertes et Cyclotourisme – Bourgogne du Sud*, or visit [www.burgundy-by-bike.com](http://www.burgundy-by-bike.com).

## Mâcon

POP 34,448

The Mâconnais, Burgundy's southernmost winegrowing area, produces mainly dry whites. At its heart, 70km north of Lyon on the west bank of the Saône, lies the city of Mâcon, which has a pair of museums, some excellent restaurants and a small but pleasant-enough historic centre near the riverfront.

Beyond these urban attractions, Mâcon's main appeal lies in the surrounding countryside. If you're after top-quality Mâconnais wines, head to the nearby villages of Fuissé, Vinzelles and Pouilly, which produce the area's best whites. For a bird's-eye perspective of the entire region, don't miss the easy climb to the summit of the Roche de Solutré, 10km west of town.

### Sights & Activities

#### Maison de Bois

HISTORIC BUILDING

(rue Dombey) The all-wood Maison de Bois, facing 95 rue Dombey and built around 1500, is decorated with carved wooden figures, some of them very cheeky indeed.

#### Musée Départemental de Préhistorie et Solutré

MUSEUM

(☎03 85 35 82 81; <http://rochedesolutre.com>; chemin de la Roche, Solutré-Pouilly; adult/child incl audioguide €5/free; ☀10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 1-5pm Nov-Mar) This museum displays finds from one of Europe's richest prehistoric sites, occupied from 35,000 to 10,000 BCE. A lovely 20-minute walk from here will get you to the top of the rocky outcrop known as the **Roche de Solutré**, from where Mont Blanc can sometimes be seen, especially at sunset. Situated about 10km west of Mâcon.

#### Château de Fuissé

WINE

(☎03 85 35 61 44; [www.chateau-fuisse.fr](http://www.chateau-fuisse.fr); Le Plan, Pouilly-Fuissé; ☀9am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri, by reservation Sat & Sun) The Pouilly-Fuissé AOC is world-famous for its prestigious white wines. For the ultimate experience, reserve ahead for tastings at this magnificent estate, 9km southwest of Mâcon.

### Sleeping

#### La Source des Fées

B&amp;B €€

(☎03 85 35 67 02; [www.lasourcedesfees.fr](http://www.lasourcedesfees.fr); route du May, Fuissé; r €128-168; 📞) Tucked into the courtyard of a winegrowing domaine, the three doubles and two spacious family suites here share access to a Jacuzzi and some nice

walking loops. Dinners (€29.50) can be arranged, with preferential pricing on wine from the on-site cellars.

#### Hôtel d'Europe et d'Angleterre

HOTEL €€

(☎03 85 38 27 94; [www.hotel-europeangle-terre-macon.com](http://www.hotel-europeangle-terre-macon.com); 92-109 quai Jean-Jaurès; d €78-165, ste €125-229; 📞📞📞) This grand old dame on the riverfront is Mâcon's best city-centre option, with suites overlooking the Saône. The first giraffe ever to visit Europe stayed here, on the way to Paris, in 1827.

### Eating

You'll find a number of excellent restaurants one block inland from the river. There's a lively market on Saturday mornings.

For a memorable dining experience, seek out the fine-dining establishments tucked away in the Mâconnais vineyards.

#### L'Ethym' Sel

BURGUNDIAN €€

(☎03 85 39 48 84; [www.lethymysel.fr](http://www.lethymysel.fr); 10 rue Gambetta; menus €19-37; ☀noon-1.45pm Mon-Sat & 7-9.30pm Thu-Sat) Two blocks south of the tourist office, this modern *semi-gastronomique* bistro showcases French and Burgundian specialties, including locally raised Charolais steak. Mâconnais wines are attractively priced. Excellent value.

#### ★ Ma Table en Ville

BURGUNDIAN €€€

(☎03 85 30 99 91; [www.matableenville.fr](http://www.matableenville.fr); 50 rue de Strasbourg; lunch menus €20-26, dinner menus €42-59; ☀12am-1.30pm & 7-9pm Mon-Fri) Combining top-of-the-line gastronomy with an unfailingly welcoming atmosphere, this husband-and-wife venture is a total gem. Chef Gilles Bérard brings decades of experience in Michelin-starred restaurants to his market-fresh menus, while Laurence tends to diners, sharing her exhaustive knowledge of artisanal Mâconnais wines. Colourful modern artwork fills the bright dining area, enhancing the relaxed feel.

#### L'O des Vignes

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎03 85 38 33 40; [www.lodesvignes.fr](http://www.lodesvignes.fr); rue du Bourg, Fuissé; lunch menu €28-34, dinner menus €50-100; ☀noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Thu-Mon) Burgundy-born chef Sébastien Chambru builds his *menus* around seasonal produce, incorporating culinary influences from his wide-ranging international career. Offers a wonderful gastronomic experience among the vineyards – accompanied by Pouilly-Fuissé whites, of course. Situated 9km southwest of Mâcon via the D172.

## **i** Information

Across the street from the 18th-century town hall, the **tourist office** (☎ 03 85 21 07 07; [www.macon-tourism.com](http://www.macon-tourism.com); 1 place St-Pierre; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm daily Jul & Aug, Mon-Sat Sep-Nov, Tue-Sat Dec-Jun) has information on touring the vineyards, including the Route des Vins Mâconnais-Beaujolais.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### **BUS**

Mobigo (p443) bus LR701 (three to 10 a day, no service in July and August) links Mâcon with Cluny (40 minutes).

### **TRAIN**

Mâcon-Ville station is on the main line linking Dijon (€21, 1¼ hours, 11 to 13 daily) and Beaune (€16, 55 minutes, nine to 20 daily) with Lyon Part-Dieu (from €14.30, 37 to 53 minutes, about 15 a day). The fastest service to Paris (from €55, 1¾ hours) is from Mâcon-Loché TGV station, 5km southwest of town.



## Medieval Art & Architecture

Once a powerful duchy and a major ecclesiastical centre, Burgundy attracted the foremost European artists and builders of the Middle Ages. Now graced with a bounty of extraordinary architecture and excellent museums, the region offers visitors an exhilarating blend of art, cuisine and outdoor activities among its rolling, vine-clad emerald hills.

### The Cistercians

Burgundy's medieval clergy established abbeys and churches that remain some of the world's best examples of Romanesque architecture. The austere Cistercian order was founded at the Abbaye de Cîteaux in 1098 by monks seeking to live by St Benedict's teachings: *pax, ora et labora* (peace, prayer and work). Their spectacular, early 12th-century Abbaye de Pon-

tigny (p460) is one of the finest surviving examples of Cistercian architecture in Burgundy – the purity of its unadorned white stone reflects the simplicity of the monks' lives. The Abbaye de Fontenay (p454; founded in 1118), a Unesco World Heritage Site, sits in a peaceful forested valley that's perfect for contemplation.

### The Benedictines

Cluny's 12th-century Benedictine abbey (p470), now a sprawling ruin woven into the fabric of the town, once held sway over 1100 priories and monasteries stretching from Poland to Portugal. Aside from its imposing central towers, it's only a shell of its former self, but visitors can still conjure up its full medieval grandeur with the help of a virtual-reality video presentation.



CANALASTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



2

ELTRAVO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

1. Abbaye de Fontenay (p454) 2. Hôtel-Dieu des Hospices de Beaune (p448) 3. Semur-en-Auxois (p454)



3

JENIFOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## Autun & Vézelay

The 12th-century Cathédrale St-Lazare (p468) in Autun is world-renowned for its deceptively austere Gislebertus carvings: a fantastic tympanum of the Last Judgment and extraordinary capitals depicting Bible stories and Greek mythology. The adjacent Musée Rolin holds another Gislebertus masterpiece, *The Temptation of Eve*, whose sensitive (and sensual) portrayal of its female subject was nothing short of revolutionary for its time.

Vézelay's Basilique Ste-Madeleine (p465), another Unesco World Heritage Site, was founded in the 880s. One of the starting points of the Chemin de St-Jacques pilgrimage trail to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, it is adorned with Romanesque carvings and attracts both religious and artistic pilgrims. Nearby, the medieval walls and turrets of Noyers-sur-Serein (p462) and

Semur-en-Auxois (p454) are some of the most impressive vestiges of Burgundian secular architecture.

## The Dukes of Burgundy

Let's not forget the royals. Medieval Dijon was home to the powerful Dukes of Burgundy – men with fabulous names such as John the Good, Philip the Bold and John the Fearless – who turned the city into one of the most important centres of European art. Explore the dukes' monumental palace (p437) in Dijon, home to an excellent fine-arts museum. Or head south to Beaune, where in 1443 Nicolas Rolin, chancellor to Philip the Good, established a charity hospital, the Hôtel-Dieu des Hospices de Beaune (p448), which houses Rogier van der Weyden's fantastic (and fantastical) *Polyptych of the Last Judgment*.



## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

3.51 million

### LOCAL ICON

Guignol the puppet  
(p495)

### BEST BOUCHONS

Le Musée (p491)

### BEST SWEETS

Montélimar Nougat  
(p503)

### BEST MICHELIN STARS

Restaurant Pic  
(p502)



### WHEN TO GO

#### Jun & Jul

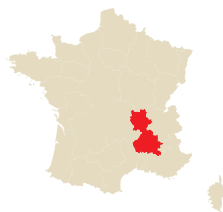
Live performances in ancient Gallo-Roman theatres at Vienne's renowned jazz festival or Lyon's Nuits de Fourvière.

#### Nov

Celebrate the tapping of the first bottles of Beaujolais nouveau, the third Thursday in November.

#### Early Dec

See Lyon spectacularly illuminated during the Fête des Lumières.



## Lyon & the Rhône Valley

**A**t the crossroads of central Europe and the Atlantic, the Rhineland and the Mediterranean, grand old Lyon is France's gastronomic capital. Savouring timeless dishes in checked-tableclothed *bouchons* (small bistros) creates unforgettable memories – as do the majestic Roman amphitheatres of Fourvière, the cobbled Unesco-listed streets of Vieux Lyon, and the audacious architecture of the new Confluence neighbourhood. North of Lyon, Beaujolais produces illustrious wines, while the hilltop village of Pérouges is a perennial film location. Downstream, the Rhône forges past Vienne's Roman ruins and the centuries-old Côtes du Rhône vineyards, opening to sunny vistas of fruit orchards, lavender fields and the distant Alps as it continues south past Valence and Montélimar.

### INCLUDES

Lyon .....	479	South of Lyon .....	500
North of Lyon .....	497	Vienne .....	500
Beaujolais .....	497	Valence.....	501
La Dombes .....	499	Gorges de l'Ardèche. .	503



# Lyon & the Rhône Valley Highlights

**1 Lyon** (p479)  
Delving into a labyrinth of *traboules* (secret passageways) and sampling Lyonnais specialities in a *bouchon*.

**2 Beaujolais** (p497)  
Touring the vine-ribbed hills of this delightfully peaceful winegrowing region.

**3 Vienne** (p500)  
Seeing dramatic Gallo-Roman ruins, including a perfectly preserved Corinthian columned temple.

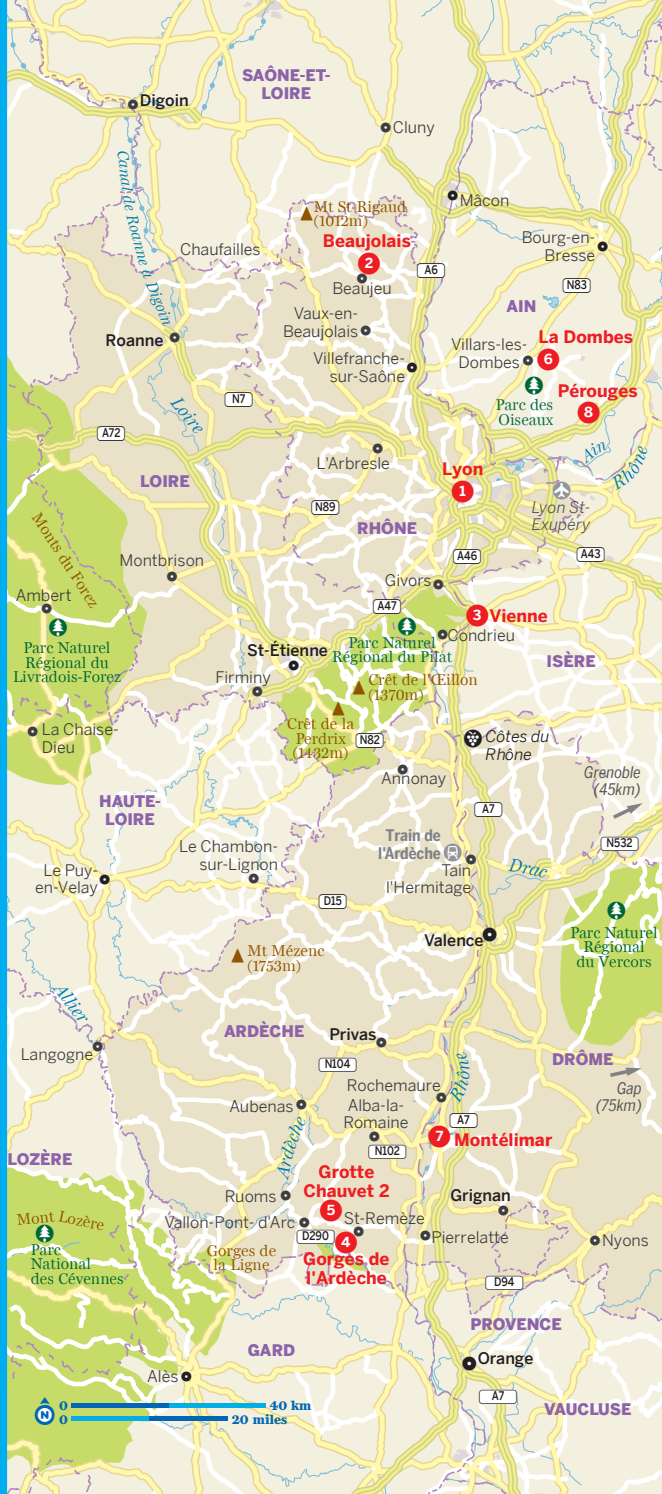
**4 Gorges de l'Ardèche** (p504)  
Canoeing along these wonderfully scenic gorges, including beneath the stunning natural stone bridge Pont d'Arc.

**5 Grotte Chauvet 2** (p503)  
Gazing with awe at this replica cave housing brilliantly reproduced prehistoric paintings.

**6 La Dombes** (p499)  
Driving or biking around a lake-dotted region, famous for its great restaurants specialising in frogs' legs and carp.

**7 Montélimar** (p503)  
Visiting 14th-century battlements and tasting delectable nougat in this sun-drenched town near the edge of Provence.

**8 Pérouges** (p485)  
Strolling the cobbled alleyways of this achingly picturesque medieval village.



## LYON

POP 516 000

Commanding a strategic spot at the confluence of the Rhône and the Saône Rivers, Lyon has been luring people ever since the Romans named it Lugdunum in 43 BCE. A commercial, industrial and banking powerhouse for the past 500 years, Lyon is France's third-largest city, and offers today's urban explorers a wealth of enticing experiences.

Outstanding museums, a dynamic cultural life, busy clubbing and drinking scenes, a thriving university and fantastic shopping lend the city a distinctly sophisticated air, while adventurous gourmands can indulge in their wildest gastronomic fantasies. Don't leave the city without sampling some Lyonnais specialities in a *bouchon* – the quintessential Lyon experience.


### Sights

A number of sights lie in the city centre, which occupies a long peninsula between the rivers known as Presqu'île. Rising to the north of the Presqu'île is the hillside Croix Rousse, which also harbours worthwhile museums and buildings. West across the Saône sits the medieval quarter of Vieux Lyon, which has plenty of attractions and sights, including museums and religious buildings.

### Vieux Lyon

Lyon's Unesco-listed old town, with its narrow streets and medieval and Renaissance houses, is divided into three quarters: St-Paul (north), St-Jean (middle) and St-Georges (south).

Lovely old buildings line rue du Bœuf, rue St-Jean and rue des Trois Maries. Crane your neck upwards to see gargoyles and other cheeky stone characters carved on window ledges along rue Juiverie, home to Lyon's Jewish community in the Middle Ages.

**Cathédrale St-Jean-Baptiste** CATHEDRAL  
([www.cathedrale-lyon.fr](http://www.cathedrale-lyon.fr); place St-Jean, 5e; ☎cathedral 8.15am-7.45pm Mon-Fri, 8am-7pm Sat & Sun, treasury 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat;  Vieux Lyon) Lyon's partly Romanesque cathedral was built between the late 11th and early 16th centuries. The portals of its Flamboyant Gothic façade, completed in 1480 (and recently renovated), are decorated with 280 square stone medallions. Inside, the

### LYON CITY CARD


The excellent-value **Lyon City Card** ([www.lyoncitycard.com](http://www.lyoncitycard.com); 1/2/3 days adult €27/37/47, child €19/26/33) offers free admission to every Lyon museum, the roof of Basilique Notre Dame de Fourvière, guided city tours, Guignol puppet shows and river excursions (April to October), along with numerous other discounts.

The card also includes unlimited citywide transport on buses, trams, the funicular and the metro. Full-price cards are available at the tourist office and some hotels, or save nearly 10% by booking online and presenting your confirmation number at the tourist office.

highlight is the astronomical clock in the north transept.

### **Musées Gadagne**

MUSEUM

(☎04 78 42 03 61; [www.gadagne.musees.lyon.fr](http://www.gadagne.musees.lyon.fr); 1 place du Petit Collège, 5e; both museums adult/child €8/free; ☎10.30am-6.30pm Wed-Sun;  Vieux Lyon) Housed in a 16th-century mansion built for two rich Florentine bankers, this twin-themed exhibition space incorporates an excellent local history museum, **Musée d'Histoire de Lyon**, which chronicles the city's layout as its silk-weaving, cinema and transportation evolved, and an international puppet museum, **Musée des Arts de la Marionette**, that pays homage to Lyon's iconic puppet, Guignol. On the 4th floor, a cafe adjoins tranquil, terraced gardens, here since the 14th century.

### **Le Petit Musée**

#### **Fantastique de Guignol**

MUSEUM

(☎04 78 37 01 67; [www.le-petit-musee-fantastique-de-guignol.boutiquecardelli.fr](http://www.le-petit-musee-fantastique-de-guignol.boutiquecardelli.fr); 6 rue St-Jean, 5e; adult/child €5/3; ☎10.30am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sun, 2-6pm Mon;  Vieux Lyon) The star of this tiny, two-floor museum is Guignol, the Lyonnais puppet famous for its slapstick antics and political commentary. Various animated scenes as well as an audioguide give details about the beloved puppet.

### Fourvière

More than two millennia ago, the Romans built the city of Lugdunum on the slopes of Fourvière. Today this prominent hill on







## Lyon

### 📍 Sights

- 1 Basilique Notre Dame de Fourvière..... B5
- 2 Cathédrale St-Jean-Baptiste..... D6
- 3 Fresque des Lyonnais..... D2
- 4 Le Petit Musée Fantastique de Guignol..... D4
- 5 Musée de l'Imprimerie..... F4
- 6 Musée des Beaux-Arts..... F3
- 7 Musée Gallo-Romain de Fourvière..... A6
- 8 Musées Gadagne..... D4
- 9 Opéra de Lyon..... F2
- 10 Place Bellecour..... E7
- 11 Place des Terreaux..... E3
- 12 Théâtre Romain..... A6

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 13 Les Bateaux Lyonnais..... E6
- 14 Lyon Explorer..... F3

### 📍 Sleeping

- Artelit..... (see 24)
- 15 Auberge de Jeunesse du Vieux Lyon..... C7
- 16 Away Hostel..... G1
- 17 Collège Hotel..... D4
- 18 Cour des Loges..... D5
- 19 Grand Hôtel des Terreaux..... E3
- 20 Hotel Carlton..... G6
- 21 Hôtel de Paris..... E3
- 22 Hôtel Le Boulevardier..... F4
- 23 Jardin d'Hiver..... F8
- 24 Lyon Renaissance..... C5

### 🍴 Eating

- 25 Café des Fédérations..... E3
- 26 Chez Albert..... D2
- 27 Chez Hugon..... F3
- 28 Chez Paul..... E3
- 29 Cinq Mains..... C7
- 30 Daniel et Denise..... C6

- 31 Diploid..... E3
- 32 In Cuisine..... E7
- 33 La Bonâme de Bruno..... G1
- 34 La Cuisinerie..... C7
- 35 La Mère Brazier..... G1
- 36 Le Bouchon des Filles..... D2
- 37 Le Garef..... G3
- 38 Le Musée..... F4
- 39 Le Potager des Halles..... D2
- 40 Le Tire Bouchon..... C5
- 41 Les Fines Gueules..... D4
- 42 Les Mauvaises Herbes..... D2
- 43 Les Terrasses de Lyon..... C5
- 44 Terre Adélice..... D5

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 45 Bar du Passage..... F3
- 46 Dam's Pub..... D2
- 47 Groom..... G1
- 48 La Boite à Café – Café Mokxa..... F2
- 49 La Cave d'à Côté..... F4
- 50 La Maison M..... D2
- 51 La Ruche..... G4
- 52 L'Antiquaire..... D2
- 53 Le L Bar..... G3
- 54 Le XS Bar..... G4
- 55 Slake..... E6
- 56 Soffa..... F2

### 📍 Entertainment

- 57 Fnac Billetterie..... F7
- 58 La Clef de Voûte..... F1
- Opéra de Lyon..... (see 9)
- 59 Théâtre La Maison de Guignol..... C6
- 60 Théâtre Le Guignol de Lyon..... D4

### 📍 Shopping

- 61 Le Village des Créateurs..... E2
- 62 Marché St-Antoine..... E5

the Saône's western bank is topped by a showy 19th-century basilica and the **Tour Métallique**, an Eiffel Tower-like structure (minus its bottom two-thirds) built in 1893 and used as a TV transmitter.

Footpaths wind uphill to Fourvière from Vieux Lyon, but the funicular is the least taxing way up; catch it just up the escalators from the Vieux Lyon metro station.

**Basilique Notre Dame de Fourvière** CHURCH (📍 04 78 25 13 01; www.fourviere.org; place de Fourvière, 5e; rooftop tour adult/child €12/5; 🕒 basilica 7am-7pm, tours 2.30 & 4pm Wed, Sat & Sun Apr, May & Oct, 11am, 2.30pm & 4pm Mon-Sat, 2.30pm & 4pm Sun Jun-Sep, 2.30 & 3.30pm Wed, Sat & Sun Nov; 🚶 Fourvière) Crowning the hill, with stunning city panoramas from its terrace, this superb example of late-19th-century

French ecclesiastical architecture is lined with magnificent mosaics. From April to November, free 30-minute discovery visits take in the main features of the basilica and crypt; otherwise, 90-minute rooftop tours ('Visite Insolite') climax on the stone-sculpted roof. Reserve tickets in advance online for the latter.

**Musée Gallo-Romain de Fourvière** MUSEUM (📍 04 72 38 49 30; www.museegalloromain.grandlyon.com; 17 rue Cléberg, 5e; adult/child €4/free; 🕒 11am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 Fourvière) For an enlightening historical perspective on the city's past, start your visit at this archaeological museum on the hillside of Fourvière. It hosts a wide-ranging collection of ancient artefacts found in the Rhône Valley, as well as superb mosaics.

## Théâtre Romain

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

(rue Cléberg, 5e; 🏛️ Fourvière, Minimes) Lyon's Roman theatre, built around 15 BCE and enlarged in 120 CE, sat an audience of 10,000. Romans held poetry readings and musical recitals in the smaller, adjacent *odéon*.

## 📍 Presqu'île

Lyon's city centre lies on this peninsula, 500m to 800m wide, bounded by the rivers Rhône and Saône.

## Musée des Beaux-Arts

MUSEUM

(☎️ 04 72 10 17 40; www.mba-lyon.fr; 20 place des Terreaux, 1er; adult/child €8/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed, Thu & Sat-Mon, 10.30am-6pm Fri; 🚶 Hôtel de Ville) This stunning and eminently manageable museum showcases France's finest collection of sculptures and paintings outside of Paris, from antiquity onwards. Highlights include works by Rodin, Monet and Picasso. Download the free audioguide app in advance (via the website) and be sure to stop for a drink or meal on the delightful stone terrace off its cafe-restaurant, or take time out in its tranquil cloister garden.

## Place des Terreaux

SQUARE

(🚶 Hôtel de Ville) The centrepiece of the Presqu'île's beautiful central square is a

19th-century **fountain** made of 21 tonnes of lead and sculpted by Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi (of Statue of Liberty fame). The four horses pulling the chariot symbolise rivers galloping seawards. The **Hôtel de Ville** fronting the square's east side was built in 1655 but was given its present ornate façade in 1702. Daniel Buren's polka-dot 'forest' of 69 **granite fountains** is embedded in the ground across much of the square.

## Opéra de Lyon

ARCHITECTURE

(www.opera-lyon.com; 1 place de la Comédie, 1er; 🚶 Hôtel de Ville) Lyon's neoclassical 1831-built opera house was modernised in 1993 by renowned French architect Jean Nouvel, who added the striking semi-cylindrical glass-domed roof. On its northern side, boarders and bladers buzz around the fountains of **place Louis Pradel**, surveyed by the **Homme de la Liberté** (Man of Freedom) on roller skates, sculpted from scrap metal by Marseille-born César Baldaccini.

For drinks with a magnificent view, head up to the 7th-floor terrace bar Les Muses.

## Place Bellecour

SQUARE

(🚶 Bellecour) One of Europe's largest public squares, gravel-strewn place Bellecour was laid out in the 17th century. In the centre is an equestrian statue of Louis XIV.

### DON'T MISS

#### LYON'S HIDDEN LABYRINTH

Deep within Vieux Lyon and Croix Rousse, dark, dingy *traboules* (secret passages) wind their way through apartment blocks, under streets and into courtyards. In all, 315 passages link 230 streets, with a combined length of 50km.

A couple of Vieux Lyon's *traboules* date from Roman times, but most were constructed by *canuts* (silk weavers) in the 19th century to transport silk in inclement weather. Resistance fighters found them equally handy during WWII.

Genuine *traboules* (derived from the Latin *trans ambulare*, meaning 'to pass through') cut from one street to another. Passages that fan out into a courtyard or cul-de-sac aren't *traboules* but *miraboules* (two of the finest examples are at 16 rue Bœuf and 8 rue Juiverie, both in Vieux Lyon).

Vieux Lyon's most celebrated *traboules* include those connecting 27 rue St-Jean with 6 rue des Trois Maries and 54 rue St-Jean with 27 rue du Bœuf.

Step into Croix Rousse's underworld at 9 place Colbert, crossing cour des Voraces – renowned for its monumental seven-storey staircase – to 14bis montée St-Sébastien, and eventually emerging at 29 rue Imbert Colomès. From here a series of other *traboules* zigzags down the slope most of the way to place des Terreaux.

For more detailed descriptions and maps of Lyon's *traboules*, download the free iPhone app **Traboules by Lyon Tourism and Conventions** (www.traboules-lyon.fr). Many guided walking **tours** (☎️ 04 72 77 69 69; www.visiterlyon.com; tours adult/child €6/free; 🕒 by reservation) run by Lyon's tourism guides also visit *traboules*.

From December to March, a 60m-high Ferris wheel provides a fine view over the city.

### Musée des Tissus

MUSEUM

(☎04 78 38 42 00; www.mtmdad.fr; 34 rue de la Charité, 2e; adult/child €12/free; ☺10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Ampère) Extraordinary Lyonnais and international silks are showcased here.

### Musée de l'Imprimerie

MUSEUM

(☎04 78 37 65 98; www.imprimerie.lyon.fr; 13 rue de la Poulallerie, 2e; adult/child €8/free; ☺10.30am-6pm Wed-Sun; 🚶 Cordeliers) From early equipment through to computerised technology, this absorbing museum traces the history of the city's printing industry.

## 👁 Croix Rousse

Independent until it became part of Lyon in 1852, and retaining its own distinct character with its bohemian inhabitants and lush outdoor food market, the hilltop quarter of Croix Rousse slinks north up the steep *pentès* (slopes) from place des Terreaux.

Following the introduction of the mechanical Jacquard loom in 1805, Lyonnais *canuts* built tens of thousands of workshops in the area, with large windows to let in light and hefty wood-beamed ceilings more than 4m high to accommodate the huge new machines. Weavers spent 14 to 20 hours a day hunched over their looms breathing in silk dust. Two-thirds were illiterate and everyone was paid a pittance; strikes in 1830-31 and 1834 resulted in the deaths of several hundred weavers.

Nowadays, most workshops have long since been converted into chic loft apartments, but a few have been saved by the Soierie Vivante association (www.soierie-vivante.asso.fr).

Hidden Croix Rousse gems include **place Bertone**, a leafy square that doubles as an open-air stage for ad-hoc summer entertainment; the **Jardin Rosa Mir** (<http://rosa.mir.free.fr>; enter via 87 Grande Rue de la Croix Rousse, 4e; ☺2-5.30pm Sat Apr-Oct; 🚶 Hénon) **FREE**, a walled garden decorated with thousands of seashells; and the panoramic **Parc de La Cerisaie** (25 rue Chazière, 4e; 🚶 Croix Rousse).

### Maison des Canuts

WORKSHOP

(☎04 78 28 62 04; www.maisondescanuts.com; 10-12 rue d'Ivry, 4e; adult/child €8/free; ☺10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, guided tours 11am & 3.30pm Mon & Sat; 🚶 Croix Rousse) On the guided tour, learn about weavers' labour-intensive life and the industry's evolution, see manual looms in use, and browse the silk boutique. Tours in French are an hour long, or reserve online for a shorter English version (€5.50, 30 minutes).

### Atelier de Tissage

WORKSHOP

(☎04 78 27 17 13; www.soierie-vivante.asso.fr; 12bis rue Justin Godart, 4e; guided tour adult/child €7/free, combined ticket with Atelier de Passementerie €10/free; ☺guided tours 2pm & 4pm Tue-Sat; 🚶 Croix Rousse) Accessible strictly by guided tour, this wonderful old workshop houses looms that produce large fabrics. It's best visited in conjunction with the nearby **Atelier de Passementerie** (☎04 78 27 17 13; www.soierie-vivante.asso.fr; 21 rue Richan, 4e; guided tour adult/child €7/free, combined ticket with Atelier de Tissage €10/free; ☺boutique 1.30-6pm Tue, 9am-noon & 1.30-6pm Wed-Sat, guided tours & demonstrations 2pm & 4pm Tue-Sat; 🚶 Croix Rousse).

## 👁 La Confluence

Lyon's newest neighbourhood lies at Presqu'île's southern tip where the Rhône

### DON'T MISS

#### RIVERSIDE MAKEOVERS

Much to the joy of resident Lyonnais, the riverbanks north of the Confluence have been treated to a serious makeover. The Rhône's Rive Gauche (Left Bank), once the domain of high-speed traffic and car parks, has been extensively redeveloped in the past decade to provide Lyon with landscaped walking, cycling and inline skating paths, along with tiered seating where locals lounge on sunny days. Known as the **Berges du Rhône**, the project spans 10 hectares, along more than 5km of riverfront.

A separate riverside beautification project, **Les Rives de Saône**, is 15km of pedestrian walkway that stretches north along the Saône between the Confluence and Île Ste-Barbe, north of Lyon.

## PÉROUGES

French film buffs will recognise photogenic Pérouges (pop 1200). Situated on a hill 30km northeast of Lyon, this enchanting yellow-stone medieval village has long been used as a set for films such as *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (*The Three Musketeers*). It's worth braving the summertime crowds to stroll its uneven cobbled alleys, admire its half-timbered stone houses and liberty tree on place de la Halle (planted in 1792), and wolf down *gallettes de Pérouges* (warm, thin-pizza-crust-style sugar-crusted tarts) with cider.

Should you be unable to tear yourself away, overnight at **Le Grenier à Sel** (☎06 98 87 62 16, 04 74 46 71 90; www.hebergement-perouges.fr; rue des Rondes; d €85-135, q €130; 🏠🚰), a medieval town house with five romantic rooms mixing modern and vintage. 'Gargouille' has its own terrace and inspirational countryside views, while nest-cosy 'Remparts' is the couples' favourite.

Pérouges' **tourist office** (☎09 67 12 70 84; www.perouges.org; 9 rte de la Cité; 🕒10am-1pm & 1.30pm-5pm May-Aug, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-5pm Sat & Sun Apr, Sep & Oct, closed Thu, Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) is on the main road opposite the village entrance.

**Cars Philibert** (☎08 10 74 47 44; www.philibert-transport.fr) bus 132 (€2, one hour) runs eight times daily (weekdays), four times on Saturdays and twice on Sundays from central Lyon to the Pérouges turn-off on route D4 (a 15-minute walk from the village).

and the Saône meet. The former industrial wasteland has been brought back to life by a multimillion-euro urban-renewal project, recognised for its cutting-edge, environmentally sustainable design.

Phase One has seen the whimsical re-modelling of existing buildings, including the **Pavillon des Douanes** (customs house), whose balconies are now surmounted by pairs of giant orange frogs, and **La Surcière**, a converted 1930s sugar warehouse that houses a nightclub (p494) on its top floor and hosts art exhibits during Lyon's **Biennale d'Art Contemporain** (www.labiennaledelyon.com; 🗓Sep-Dec).

Recently built structures to look out for include **Ycone**, an innovative residential tower by Jean Nouvel, and **French Tech Tower**, which houses tech start-ups inside the redesigned Halle Girard.

**Musée des Confluences** MUSEUM  
(☎04 28 38 12 12; www.museedesconfluences.fr; 86 quai Perrache, 6e; adult/child €9/free; 🕒10.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚶T1) This eye-catching building, designed by the Viennese firm Coop Himmelb(l)au, is the crowning glory of Lyon's newest neighbourhood, the Confluence, at Presqu'île's southern tip. Lying at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône rivers, this ambitious science-and-humanities museum is housed in a futuristic steel-and-glass transparent crystal. Its distorted structure is one of the city's iconic landmarks.

Its artfully displayed permanent exhibitions are arranged thematically into four sections. The 'Origins' exhibition focuses on the origins of the Earth and the various theories of evolution; the 'Eternity' exhibition is devoted to death rites; 'Societies' explores how human groups are organised and interact; while 'Species' is devoted to natural history. Leave plenty of time to also explore the excellent temporary exhibitions.

**Aquarium du Grand Lyon** AQUARIUM  
(☎04 72 66 65 66; www.aquariumlyon.fr; 7 rue Stéphane Déchant, La Mulatière; adult/child €15/11; 🕒11am-6pm Wed-Sun Sep-Jun, daily Jul, Aug & school holidays; 🚶Maison du Confluent) Just west of the Confluence, Lyon's well-thought-out aquarium is home to some 300 marine species, including more than 5000 fish. Buses 15, 88 and C10 link it with place Bellecour.

You get a 10% discount if you buy your ticket (Billet Malin) online at least one day in advance.

## 📍 Rive Gauche

The Rhône's Rive Gauche (Left Bank) harbours parks, museums and day-to-day Lyonnais amenities, including the city's university and transport hubs.

**Parc de la Tête d'Or** PARK  
(www.loisirs-parcdelatetedor.com; bd des Belges, 6e; 🕒6.30am-10.30pm mid-Apr-mid-Oct, to 8.30pm rest of yr; 🚶C1, C5, 🚶M Masséna) If you're museumed out, head to this lovely



## THE PLACE TO BE

**Mob Hotel** (☎ 04 58 55 55 88; www.mobhotel.com; 55 quai Rambaud, 2e; d from €75; 📶; 🚶 T1) The Mob Hotel is a magnet for designers and the creative set. Metal lacework encases the avant-garde building overlooking the Saône, while the inside is a playful mixture of polished concrete, pale blond woods, artful lighting and subtle pastels. Book a Master Mob room for a balcony and ample space.

The 1st-floor terrace is the place to be on warm days, and the restaurant serves excellent pizzas made from organic, locally sourced ingredients. Regular events include yoga and Pilates classes, as well as DJ-fueled parties on weekends.

space north of the centre, which provides a green haven for nature lovers and families. Spanning 117 hectares, France's largest urban park was landscaped in the 1860s. It's graced by a lake (rent a row boat), botanic gardens with greenhouses, rose gardens, a zoo and a tourist train. Take bus C1 (from Part-Dieu train station) or bus C5 (from place Bellecour and Hôtel de Ville) to the Parc Tête d'Or-Churchill stop.

### Musée d'Art Contemporain

GALLERY

(☎ 04 72 69 17 17; www.mac-lyon.com; 81 quai Charles de Gaulle, 6e; adult/child €8/free; ☺ 11am-6pm Wed-Sun; 🚶 C1, C4, C5) Lyon's contemporary-art museum mounts edgy temporary exhibitions and a rotating permanent collection of post-1960 art. It sometimes closes for several weeks between exhibitions, so check to make sure there's something on. Buses stop right out front.

### Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 72 73 99 00; www.chrd.lyon.fr; 14 av Berthelot, 7e; adult/child €8/free; ☺ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun; 🚶 Perrache, Jean Macé) The WWII headquarters of Gestapo commander Klaus Barbie evokes Lyon's role as the 'Capital of the Resistance' through moving multimedia exhibits. The museum includes sound recordings of deportees and Resistance fighters, plus a varied collection of everyday objects associated with the Resistance (including the parachute Jean Moulin used to re-enter France in 1942).

### Musée Lumière

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 78 78 18 95; www.institut-lumiere.org; 25 rue du Premier Film, 8e; adult/child €8.50/free; ☺ 10am-6.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Monplaisir-Lumière) Cinema's glorious beginnings are showcased at the art nouveau home of Antoine Lumière, who moved to Lyon with sons Auguste and Louis in 1870. The brothers shot the first reels of one of the world's first motion pictures, *La Sortie des Usines Lumières (Exit of the Lumières Factories)* here on 19 March 1895.

### 👉 Tours

The tourist office (p495) offers an outstanding choice of tours.

### LyonExplorer

WALKING

(☎ 07 69 61 34 29; www.lyonexplorer.com; place des Terreaux; ☺ tour 10.30am Tue-Sun; 🚶 Hôtel de Ville) Energetic Lyon local Nico and his team of guides lead these fascinating 2½-hour walking and storytelling tours that take you to some of the lesser-known spots around the city. The meeting spot is near Bartholdi Fountain in place des Terreaux. The tour is free, though tips are highly encouraged.

### Les Bateaux Lyonnais

BOATING

(Croisière Promenade; ☎ 04 78 42 96 81; www.lesbateauxlyonnais.com; 2 quai des Célestins, 2e; river excursions adult/child from €14/7; ☺ daily Apr-Oct; 🚶 Bellecour, Vieux Lyon) From April to October, river excursions depart from Lyon City Boat's dock along the Saône. Advance bookings are essential for lunch and dinner cruises (Croisière Restaurant; ☎ 04 78 42 96 81; www.lesbateauxlyonnais.com; 16 quai Claude Bernard, 7e; 2½hr lunch/dinner cruise €50/59, 5½hr lunch cruise €69; ☺ Tue-Sun by reservation; 🚶 Ampère, Guillotière, 🚶 T1), which leave from a separate dock on the Rhône.

### ★ Festivals & Events

#### ★ Fête des Lumières

WINTER FESTIVAL

(Festival of Lights; www.fetedeslumieres.lyon.fr; ☺ Dec) Over four days around the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (8 December), magnificent sound-and-light shows are projected onto key buildings, while locals illuminate windowsills with candles. This is Lyon's premier festival, and it's so colourful that it's worth timing your trip around it. Note that every hotel will be fully booked.

#### Nuits de Fourvière

PERFORMING ARTS

(Fourvière Nights; ☎ 04 72 57 15 40; www.nuitsdefourviere.com; ☺ Jun & Jul) A diverse programme



sunny rooms with tall ceilings, wood floors and oversized windows. The cafe is a good place to meet other travellers, and it usually has events going on, like walking tours, yoga brunches and communal dinners.

### Hôtel Le Boulevardier

HOTEL €

(☎ 04 78 28 48 22; [www.leboulevardier.fr](http://www.leboulevardier.fr); 5 rue de la Fromagerie, 1er; d €73-83, tw €83-93, tr €103; 📶; 🚗; 🏠) Hôtel de Ville, Cordeliers) Le Boulevardier is a bargain 14-room hotel with snug, spotless rooms. It sports quirky touches such as old skis and tennis racquets adorning the hallways. No two rooms are alike; some have exposed brick walls and wooden ceilings. It's up a steep spiral staircase above a cool little cafe, which doubles as reception.

### ★ Jardin d'Hiver

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 04 78 28 69 34; [www.guesthouse-lyon.com](http://www.guesthouse-lyon.com); 10 rue des Marronniers, 2e; s/d €110/130; 📶; 🚗; 🏠) Bellecour) Chic and centrally located, this 3rd-floor B&B (no lift) has two spacious rooms replete with modern conveniences – one in understated purple and pistachio, the other in vivid purple and orange. Friendly owner Annick Bournonville serves 100% organic breakfasts in the foliage-filled breakfast room. English and Spanish are spoken.

### Grand Hôtel des Terreaux

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 78 27 04 10; [www.hotel-lyon-grandhoteldesterreaux.fr](http://www.hotel-lyon-grandhoteldesterreaux.fr); 16 rue Lanterne, 1er; s €108-120, d €120-270; 📶; 🚗; 🏠; 🍷) Hôtel de Ville) This

four-star venture ideally positioned southwest of place des Terreaux is fair value, especially if you can score a promotional deal online. It offers neat, well-equipped rooms with retro-chic decor. Its distinctive characteristic is the lovely indoor pool next to the breakfast room. No private parking.

### Hôtel de Paris

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 78 28 00 95; [www.hoteldeparis-lyon.com](http://www.hoteldeparis-lyon.com); 16 rue de la Platière, 1er; s €63-140, d €89-199; 📶; 🚗; 🏠; 🍷) Hôtel de Ville) This centrally located, remodelled hotel in a 19th-century bourgeois building features individually decorated themed rooms. The spacious, front-facing double with *bouchon*-inspired piggy decor and red-and-white-checked bedspreads is among the best. Room 30 (the 'Apple') and room 52 (the 'Marco Polo') are not bad either. Only the top three floor rooms have air-con. Check the website for promotional deals.

### Hotel Carlton

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 78 42 56 51; [www.sofitel.com](http://www.sofitel.com); 4 rue Jussieu, 2e; r from €170; 📶; 🚗; 🏠) Cordeliers, Bellecour) This vintage hotel tempts with soundproofed rooms done up in brilliant reds, lovingly restored with period furniture, mouldings and wallpaper. Options range from 15-sq-m 'Cocoon' units to circular 40-sq-m corner suites, many overlooking pedestrianised place de la République. A sauna, spa and sumptuous

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### TOP THREE: BREAKFAST, BRUNCH OR CAFE-LIGHT LUNCH

When a quick bite in between sights is needed, try one of these favourite hot spots for breakfast, brunch or a light lunch.

**L'Instant** (☎ 04 78 29 85 08; [www.linstant-patisserie.fr](http://www.linstant-patisserie.fr); 3 place Marcel Bertone, 4e; pastries €2.80-3.50; ☺ 8am-7pm; 📶; 🚗) Croix Rousse) A great place in Croix Rousse to start the day, this hybrid cafe-pastry shop overlooking lovely place Marcel Bertone packs a punch. Stop in for a tea or coffee coupled with one of the delightful in-house *tartes*. The mellow setting and relaxed urban vibe add to the appeal. Ample outdoor seating on warm days.

**Diploid** (☎ 04 69 67 58 93; [www.diploid.fr](http://www.diploid.fr); 18 rue de la Platière, 2er; mains €5.50-11.50, brunch menu €23; ☺ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat, 11am-4.30pm Sun; 🚗) Hôtel de Ville) One of the best places in town for a filling breakfast, Diploid serves up fluffy pancakes and French toast as well as lovely pastries and great coffees amid exposed-stone walls and basket-style light fixtures. The small friendly cafe also has changing lunch specials. Brunch on Sunday is a big draw (reserve ahead).

**In Cuisine** (☎ 04 72 41 18 00; [www.incuisine.fr](http://www.incuisine.fr); 1 place Bellecour, 2e; mains €11, menu €16.50; ☺ 11am-6.30pm Tue-Sat; 🚗) Bellecour) Equal parts bookstore, cafe and restaurant, this foodie haven has an astonishing selection of culinary, gastronomic and wine titles. It also offers demonstrations, tastings, cooking courses and lunch (from noon to 2pm) in its tearoom. The menu changes weekly; it specialises in market-fresh cuisine with a twist.

breakfast featuring traditional Lyonnais specialities add to the appeal.

## Rive Gauche

### Le Flâneur

HOSTEL €

(☎09 81 99 16 97; [www.leflaneur-guesthouse.com/en](http://www.leflaneur-guesthouse.com/en); 56 rue Sébastien Gryphe, 7e; dm/s/d from €20/46/61; 📶; 🚗 Saxe-Gambetta) The dorm rooms are simple, but the welcome is warm at this convivial hostel on the Rive Gauche (left bank). The huge bar lounge area is perhaps the best feature here, and is the setting for occasional concerts (jazz, Balkan folk), workshops, art openings, discussions and other community events.

### ★ Mama Shelter

HOTEL €€

(☎04 78 02 58 00; [www.mamashelter.com/en/lyon](http://www.mamashelter.com/en/lyon); 13 rue Domer, 7e; r €79-323; 📶; 🚗 Jean Macé) Lyon's branch of this trendy hotel chain has sleek decor, carpets splashed with calli-graffiti, firm beds, plush pillows, modernist lighting and big-screen TVs offering free in-room movies. A youthful crowd fills the long bar at the low-lit restaurant. The residential location 2km outside the centre may feel remote, but it's only three metro stops from Gare de la Part-Dieu and place Bellecour.

## Eating

A flurry of big-name chefs presides over a sparkling restaurant line-up that embraces all genres: French, fusion, fast and international, as well as traditional Lyonnais *bouchons*.

## Vieux Lyon

Vieux Lyon has a surfeit of restaurants, most aimed at tourists.

### ★ La Cuisinerie

FUSION €

(☎04 78 60 91 86; [www.lacuisinerie.com](http://www.lacuisinerie.com); 16 rue St-Georges; lunch menu €11-17, small plates €6-13; ☀️noon-2pm & 7pm-midnight Mon-Sat; 📶; 🚗 Vieux Lyon) A charming new addition to Vieux Lyon's St-Georges neighbourhood, La Cuisinerie has a deliciously innovative menu of tapas-sized plates with global influences. You can sample a wide range of flavours (including vegetarian dishes) in small plates like chicken and goat cheese *churros*, crayfish ravioli, or smoked-salmon blinis with wasabi cream, among dozens of other options.

## WORTH A TRIP

### THE POPE OF FRENCH CUISINE

#### Restaurant Paul Bocuse

(☎04 72 42 90 90; [www.bocuse.fr](http://www.bocuse.fr); 40 quai de la Plage, Collonges au Mont d'Or; menus €180-240; ☀️noon-1.15pm & 8-9.15pm) Some 7km north of Lyon, this double-Michelin-starred restaurant (formerly triple) was the flagship of the city's most decorated chef, Paul Bocuse. Although Bocuse is no longer around, his recipes continue to dazzle foodies, including his signature *soupe aux truffes noires VGE* (truffle soup created for French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 1975) offered during winter.

### ★ Daniel et Denise

BOUCHON €€

(☎04 78 42 24 62; [www.danieletdenise.fr](http://www.danieletdenise.fr); 36 rue Tramassac, 5e; mains €17-29, 2-course lunch menu €21, dinner menus €37-60; ☀️noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat; 🚗 Vieux Lyon) One of Vieux Lyon's most dependable and traditional eateries, this classic spot is run by award-winning chef Joseph Viola. Come here for elaborate variations on traditional Lyonnais themes.

### ★ Cinq Mains

BISTRO €€

(☎04 37 57 30 52; [www.facebook.com/cinqmains](http://www.facebook.com/cinqmains); 12 rue Monseigneur Lavarenne, 5e; menu lunch/dinner €22/35; ☀️noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat; 🚗 Vieux Lyon) When young Lyonnais Grégory Cuilleron, his brother Thibault and their friend Antoine Larmaraud opened this 'neobistro' in 2015, it was an instant hit. They're working wonders at this cool loft-like space with a mezzanine, serving up tantalising creations based on what they find at the market. A new generation of chefs, and a new spin on Lyonnais cuisine.

#### Les Terrasses de Lyon

FRENCH €€€

(☎04 72 56 56 02; [www.villaflorintine.com/en/restaurant.html](http://www.villaflorintine.com/en/restaurant.html); 25 montée St-Barthélémy, 5e; lunch menu €49, dinner menus €77-120; ☀️noon-1.15pm & 7.30-9.15pm Mon-Sat; 📶; 🚗 Vieux Lyon) Offering sweeping views over the city, this superbly located restaurant serves up imaginative and beautifully executed dishes, including veal ribs roasted in hay and walnut pearly *jus*. A thoughtful touch is the excellent *menu maraîcher*, a vegetarian tasting menu.

## DON'T MISS

## LYONNAIS BOUCHONS

A *bouchon* might be a 'bottle stopper' or 'traffic jam' elsewhere in France, but in Lyon it's a small, friendly bistro that cooks up traditional cuisine using regional produce. *Bouchons* originated in the first half of the 20th century when many large bourgeois families had to let go of their in-house cooks, who then set up their own restaurant businesses. The first of these *mères* (mothers) was Mère Guy, followed by Mère Filloux, Mère Brazier (under whom Paul Bocuse trained) and others. Choose carefully – not all *bouchons* are as authentic as they first appear. Many of the best are certified by the organisation Les Bouchons Lyonnais – look for the metal plate on their façades depicting traditional puppet Gnafron (Guignol's mate) with his glass of Beaujolais.

Kick-start a memorable gastronomic experience with a *communard*, a blood-red aperitif of Beaujolais wine mixed with *crème de cassis* (blackcurrant liqueur), named after the supporters of the Paris Commune killed in 1871. When ordering wine with your meal, ask for a *pot* – a classically Lyonnais 46cL glass bottle adorned with an elastic band to prevent wine drips – of local Brouilly, Beaujolais, Côtes du Rhône or Mâcon, costing around €9 to €12; a smaller, 25cL version called *fillette* costs between €5 and €7.

Next comes the entrée, perhaps *salade de cervelas* (salad of boiled pork sausage sometimes studded with pistachio nuts or black truffle specks), or *caviar de la Croix Rousse* (lentils in creamy sauce). Hearty main dishes include *boudin blanc* (veal sausage), *boudin noir aux pommes* (blood sausage with apples), *quenelles* (feather-light flour, egg and cream dumplings), *quenelles de brochet* (pike dumplings served in a creamy crayfish sauce), *andouillette* (sausage made from pigs' intestines), *gras double* (a type of tripe), *pieds de mouton/veau/couchon* (sheep/calf/pig trotters), *tablier de sapeur* ('fireman's apron'; actually meaning breaded, fried tripe) and *poulet au vinaigre* (chicken cooked in vinegar).

For the cheese course, choose between *fromage blanc* (a cross between cream cheese and natural yoghurt); *cervelle de canut* ('brains of the silk weaver'; *fromage blanc* mixed with chives and garlic), which originated in Croix Rousse and accompanied every meal for 19th-century weavers; or local St Marcellin ripened to gooey perfection.

Desserts are grandma-style: think *tarte aux pommes* (apple tart), or the Lyonnais classic *tarte aux pralines*, a brilliant rose-coloured confection made with *crème fraîche* and crushed sugar-coated almonds.

Little etiquette is required in *bouchons*. Seldom do you get clean cutlery for each course, and mopping your plate with a chunk of bread is fine. In the most popular and traditional spots, you'll often find yourself sitting elbow-to-elbow with your fellow diners at a long row of tightly wedged tables. Advance reservations are recommended.

Several classics worth seeking out:

**Le Gare** (☎ 04 78 28 16 94; 7 rue du Gare, 1er; lunch/dinner menus €22/30; ☺ noon-1pm & 7.30-9pm Mon-Fri; 🏠 Hôtel de Ville)

**Chez Hugon** (☎ 04 78 28 10 94; www.bouchonlyonnais.fr; 12 rue Pizay, 1er; menu €29; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Fri; 🏠 Hôtel de Ville)

**Le Poëlon d'Or** (☎ 04 78 37 65 60; www.lepoelondor-restaurant.fr; 29 rue des Remparts d'Ainay, 2e; menus €18-35; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Mon-Fri; 🏠 Ampère-Victor Hugo)

**Chez Paul** (☎ 04 78 28 35 83; www.bouchonchezpaul.fr; 11 rue Major Martin, 1er; lunch menu €15.50, dinner menus €17-27; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Mon-Sat; 🏠 Hôtel de Ville)

**Le Tire Bouchon** (☎ 09 83 22 88 47; https://le-tire-bouchon-lyon.fr; 16 rue du Bœuf, 5e; dinner menus €28-43; ☺ 7-10pm; 🏠 Vieux Lyon)

**Café des Fédérations** (☎ 04 78 28 26 00; www.restaurant-cafedesfederations-lyon.com; 8-10 rue Major Martin, 1er; lunch menus €23-26, dinner menu €28; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.45-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun; 🏠 Hôtel de Ville)

**Les Fines Gueules** (☎ 04 78 28 99 14; www.fines-gueules.fr; 16 rue Lainerie, 5e; menus lunch/dinner €20/€30, mains €19-28; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat; 🏠 Vieux Lyon)



## Presqu'île

In the Presqu'île, cobbled rue Mercière and rue des Marronniers – both in the 2e (M Bellecour) – are chock-a-block with sidewalk terraces in summer. In the 1er, the tangle of streets south of the opera house, including rue du Garet, rue Neuve and rue Verdi, is equally jam-packed with eateries.

### Le Potager des Halles BISTRO, TAPAS €

(☎04 78 00 24 84; [www.lepotagerdeshalles.com](http://www.lepotagerdeshalles.com); 3 rue de la Martinière, 1er; mains €11-22, weekend brunch €29; ☉ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat; M Hôtel de Ville) Opposite the colourful Fresque des Lyonnais, this gourmet bistro is a dreamy spot for a tasty lunch or to while away an evening. Happy diners throng the high-ceilinged main dining room, cosy upstairs balcony and sidewalk tables, lingering over wine and creative seasonal dishes.

### ★ Le Musée BOUCHON €€

(☎04 78 37 71 54; 2 rue des Forces, 2e; lunch mains €14, lunch menu €26, dinner menu €31; ☉ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat; M Cordeliers) Housed in the stables of Lyon's former Hôtel de Ville, this delightful *bouchon* serves a splendid array of meat-heavy Lyonnais classics, including a divine *poulet au vinaigre* (chicken cooked in vinegar). The daily changing *menu* features eight appetisers and eight main dishes, plus five scrumptious desserts, all served on cute china plates at long family-style tables.

### Chez Albert FRENCH €€

(☎04 78 27 95 56; [www.chez-albert-restaurant.eatbu.com](http://www.chez-albert-restaurant.eatbu.com); 10 place Fernand Rey; mains €20, menu lunch/dinner €18/30; ☉ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat; ☎; M Hôtel de Ville) The bright purple exterior is an apt introduction to the bold flavours of Chez Albert, a local favourite. Inside, the walls are strung with cooking implements, oil paintings and myriad roosters. None of this distracts from the changing hand-scrawled menu of roast meats and seafood, creative casseroles and Asian-accented salads (helpful English-speaking staff can guide you).

### Pizzeria Napoli ITALIAN €€

(☎04 78 37 23 37; [www.pizzeria-napoli-lyon.com](http://www.pizzeria-napoli-lyon.com); 45 rue Franklin, 2e; mains €13-24; ☉ noon-2pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat; ☎; M Ampère) In business since 1966, family-owned Pizzeria Napoli serves some of Lyon's best pizzas, topped with quality ingredients and fired up in a wood-burning oven.

### Le Bouchon des Filles FRENCH €€

(☎04 78 30 40 44; [www.lebouchondesfilles.com](http://www.lebouchondesfilles.com); 20 rue Sergent Blandan, 1er; menu €28; ☉ 7-10pm daily & noon-1.30pm Fri-Sun; M Hôtel de Ville) This contemporary ode to Lyon's legendary culinary *mères* (mothers) is run by an enterprising crew of young women with deep roots in the local *bouchon* scene and a flair for fine cooking. The light and fluffy quenelles are among the best you'll find in Lyon, and the rustic-chic decor, with wooden beams and deep red walls, is warm and welcoming.

### Brasserie Georges BRASSERIE €€

(☎04 72 56 54 54; [www.brasseriegeorges.com](http://www.brasseriegeorges.com); 30 cours de Verdun, 2e; mains €19-25, menus €23-28; ☉ 11.30am-11pm Sun-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat; M Perrache) Opened as a brewery in 1836 (and still offering three homebrews on tap), Georges' cavernous 1924 art deco interior can feed 2000 a day! Famous customers have included Rodin, Balzac, Hemingway, Zola, Verne and Piaf. Food spans onion soup, sauerkraut with smoked pork belly, roasted sea bass, Lyonnais specialities and a smattering of vegetarian options.

### Thomas FRENCH €€€

(☎04 72 56 04 76; [www.restaurant-thomas.com](http://www.restaurant-thomas.com); 6 rue Laurencin, 2e; lunch menu €22, dinner menu €47; ☉ 11am-2pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Fri; M Ampère) One of Lyon's savviest chefs, Thomas Ponson, infuses his cooking with a panoply of flavours. He gives taste buds the choice between formal dining at his eponymous restaurant; more casual fare in his Bouchon Thomas; and more casual still at his tapas-inspired Bistrot Thomas.

## Croix Rousse

Croix Rousse is a great neighbourhood for foodies, with a range of affordable eateries with bags of character.

### Les Mauvaises Herbes VEGETARIAN €

(☎04 27 01 52 26; [www.facebook.com/lmh.lyon](http://www.facebook.com/lmh.lyon); 3 rue du Jardin des Plantes; lunch menu €15.50-€19, small plates €7-12; ☉ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Thu-Sat, 7-10pm Tue & Wed; ☎; M Croix-Paquet) A creative spot dreamed up by three eco-minded Lyonnais friends, this sunny, easy-going place serves up excellent organic fare, most of which is vegan. At lunchtime, you can stop in for changing specials, or come back in the evening for good wines (or teas), plus small plates such as smoked lentil and walnut terrine, smooth hummus, or flavour-packed Brussels sprouts.

**La Bonâme de Bruno**

FRENCH €€ (☎04 78 30 83 93; [www.restaurant-labonamedebruno.com](http://www.restaurant-labonamedebruno.com); 5 Grande Rue des Feuillants; lunch menus €14-20, dinner menus €30-39; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-11pm Sat; 🚗 Croix Paquet) Great food and atmosphere come together at this airy yet intimate eatery that's somewhere on the continuum between bistro and gastronomic. The high-ceilinged, parquet-floored dining room conjures the spirit of a 19th-century dance studio, while the *menus*, prepared with enthusiasm and creativity, change regularly based on Bruno's whims. Desserts are especially memorable.

**Le Canut et Les Gones**

BISTRO €€ (☎04 78 29 17 23; [www.lecanutetlesgones.com](http://www.lecanutetlesgones.com); 29 rue de Belfort, 4e; lunch menus €19-22, dinner menu €34; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat; 🚗 Croix Rousse) With three cosy rooms and funky retro decor featuring dozens of antique clocks, this laid-back neighbourhood eatery draws a savvy local crowd with creative cuisine built around produce from Croix Rousse's market.

**Balthaz'art**

FRENCH €€ (☎04 72 07 08 88; [www.restaurantbalthazart.com](http://www.restaurantbalthazart.com); 7 rue des Pierres Plantées, 1er; lunch menus €18-21, dinner menus €30-35; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Thu-Sat, 7.30-9.30pm Tue & Wed; 🚗 Croix Rousse) A block south of Croix Rousse's central square, this cheerful burgundy-red eatery with artwork-covered walls draws animated

crowds with its excellent-value lunches and sumptuous multicourse dinners. Inventive meat and fish dishes – including its signature *tartare de bœuf Montbéliarde* with capers, olives, preserved lemon and coriander – come accompanied with plenty of seasonal vegetables.

**La Mère Brazier**

GASTRONOMY €€€ (☎04 78 23 17 20; [www.lamerbrazier.fr](http://www.lamerbrazier.fr); 12 rue Royale; lunch menus €70-75, dinner menus €115-190; ☺ 12.30-1.15pm & 7.45-9pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jul; 🚗 Croix Paquet) Chef Mathieu Viannay has reinvented the mythical early-20th-century restaurant that earned Mère Eugénie Brazier Lyon's first trio of Michelin stars in 1933 (a copy of the original guidebook takes pride of place). Viannay is doing admirable justice to Brazier's legacy, claiming two Michelin stars himself for his assured cuisine accompanied by an impressive wine list.

**Drinking & Nightlife**

Lyon's beer-thirsty students keep the scene lively and the bars and clubs pumping at weekends. Vieux Lyon has an extraordinary concentration of British and Irish pubs. For offbeat bars, scout out alternative Croix Rousse.

Many establishments start as a relaxed place for a drink (and often serve food, too), morphing into jam-packed bars and/or live-music and dancing venues as the night wears on.

**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE****SPECIALIST COFFEE & TEA**

**La Boite à Café – Café Mokxa** (☎04 27 01 48 71; [www.arcticjuicecafe.com](http://www.arcticjuicecafe.com); 3 rue de l'Ab-bé Rozier, 1er; ☺ 8am-5pm; ☎; 🚗 Croix Paquet, Hôtel de Ville) A favourite haunt of Lyonnais caffeine fiends and students, this laid-back place on the Croix Rousse slopes roasts its own beans and serves Sunday brunch. In summer, tables spill onto charming, circular place du Forez. It also serves superb pastries.

**Slake** (☎04 78 38 24 38; [www.slake-coffee.com](http://www.slake-coffee.com); 9 rue de l'Ancienne Préfecture; ☺ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat, from 11am Sun; ☎; 🚗 Bellecour) A buzzing and decidedly hip coffee house around the corner from place des Jacobins, Slake makes beautiful lattes (the kind with artful designs atop) as well as other caffeinated goodness. All go nicely with the pastries and tarts. Come at lunchtime for soups, salads and sandwiches.

There's also Sunday brunch (€22).

**Sofffa** (☎04 27 82 93 67; [www.facebook.com/hellosofffa](http://www.facebook.com/hellosofffa); 17 rue Ste-Catherine, 1er; ☺ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri; 🚗 Hôtel de Ville) A novel concept in Lyon, Sofffa charges by time (€5 the first hour, €2 each subsequent half-hour) during which your coffees and snacks are free. A smattering of leather armchairs, mismatched tables and art-covered stone walls set the scene for chit-chat and/or people-watching.

## **i** LGBT LYON

Declared France's most gay-friendly city in 2014 by the magazine *Têtu*, Lyon has scads of venues.

Guys' favourite places to party include **Le XS Bar** (19 rue Claudia, 2e; ☎ 4pm-12.30am; **M** Cordeliers) and the city's oldest gay bar, **La Ruche** (22 rue Gentil, 2e; ☎ 5pm-1am; **M** Cordeliers). Lesbian venues are limited to **Le L Bar** (19 rue du Gare, 1er; ☎ 6pm-2am Mon-Sat; **M** Hôtel de Ville). For up-to-the-minute listings, visit the website *Hétéroclite* ([www.heteroclite.org](http://www.heteroclite.org)), or check with the **Centre LGBTI de Lyon** (☎ 04 78 27 10 10; [www.centrelgbtilyon.org](http://www.centrelgbtilyon.org); 19 rue des Capucins, 1er; **M** Croix Paquet), which organises social events.

Lyon's **Lesbian & Gay Pride** ([www.fierte.net](http://www.fierte.net); ☎ Jun) march and festivities hit the streets each year in June. In March, the city hosts a popular week-long LGBT film festival, **Écrans Mixtes** ([www.festival-em.org](http://www.festival-em.org); ☎ Mar).

### Presqu'île

#### L'Antiquaire

COCKTAIL BAR

(☎ 06 34 21 54 65; [www.facebook.com/theanti](http://www.facebook.com/theanti) quarryroom; 20 rue Hippolyte Flandrin, 1er; ☎ 6pm-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; **M** Hôtel de Ville) Old-time jazz, flickering candles and friendly suspenders-wearing barkeeps set the mood in this atmospheric speakeasy-style bar. The painstakingly prepared cocktails are first-rate (try a Penicillin made from scotch, ginger, honey, lemon and peat whisky) and are best sipped slowly at one of the dark wood and leather booths.

#### Bar du Passage

COCKTAIL BAR

(☎ 04 78 28 11 16; [www.le-passage.com/bar](http://www.le-passage.com/bar); 8 rue de Plâtre, 1er; ☎ 7pm-1am Tue & Wed, to 3am Thu-Sat; **M** Hôtel de Ville) Like a vestige from another time, the low-lit Bar du Passage impresses with its mural-covered ceiling, stuffed leather armchairs and vintage jazz soundtrack. The cocktails (€10-14) are nicely balanced. To get here, find the Restaurant du Passage sign, walk to the back of the alley and ring the buzzer.

#### Dam's Pub

BAR

(☎ 04 72 02 32 50; [www.damspub.com](http://www.damspub.com); 4 place Sathonay, 1er; ☎ 7am-1am; **M** Hôtel de Ville) A staple of Lyon's easy-going pub scene, Dam's is a lively spot for a pint no matter the hour. It has good beers on tap (including the Belgian ale Saint Stefanus), televised sport, decent pub grub and a well-placed terrace overlooking place Sathonay.

#### La Cave d'à Côté

WINE BAR

(☎ 04 78 28 31 46; 7 rue Pléney, 1er; ☎ 6pm-1am Tue-Sat; ☎; **M** Cordeliers) Hidden in a tiny alleyway, this cultured bar and wine shop feels

like a rustic English gentlemen's club with leather sofas and elegant armchairs.

Also serves a smattering of small plates and pizza.

#### La Maison M

CLUB

(☎ 04 72 00 87 67; [www.mmlyon.com](http://www.mmlyon.com); 21 place Gabriel Rambaud, 1er; ☎ 7pm-4am Wed-Sat; **M** Hôtel de Ville) A fantastic addition to Lyon's nightlife scene, La Maison M has three separate spaces: a tropical-style bar near the entrance, a dance floor to the left and a cosy lounge off to the right. DJ parties feature nights of samba (with Brazilian cocktails to match), cumbia, hip hop and new-wave disco.

### Croix Rousse

#### Modernartcafé

BAR

(☎ 09 84 23 01 59; <http://modernartcafe.free.fr>; 65 bd de la Croix Rousse, 4e; ☎ 5pm-1am Mon-Fri; ☎; **M** Croix Rousse) Changing art on the walls and various photography-, music- and video-driven events make this art bar a linchpin of Croix Rousse's creative community.

#### Groom

BAR

([www.groomlyon.com](http://www.groomlyon.com); 6 rue Roger Violi, 1er; ☎ 7pm-1am Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat; **M** Croix-Paquet) This downstairs cocktail den has a winning formula of great cocktails and friendly staff, plus an excellent line-up of bands and DJs throughout the week. Draws include indie rock, funk and jazz.

### Entertainment

The leading what's-on guide with both print and online editions is *Le Petit Bulletin* ([www.petit-bulletin.fr/lyon](http://www.petit-bulletin.fr/lyon)). Other helpful websites with entertainment listings include

## DON'T MISS

## DRINKS AFLOAT

Along quai Victor Augagneur on the Rhône's left bank, a string of *péniches* (barges with onboard bars) serve drinks from mid-afternoon onwards. To study your options, stroll the quayside between Pont Lafayette and Pont de la Guillotière.

Set in a *péniche* on the Rhône. **Le Sirius** (☎ 04 78 71 78 71; www.lesirius.com; 4 quai Victor Augagneur, 3me; ☺ 2pm-midnight; 📍 Place Guichard, Cordeliers) draws a party crowd to its DJ-fuelled nights and concerts. Check online for its latest line-up, which leans towards jazz, hip hop, reggae, African rhythms and swing.

www.lyon-france.com/L-Agenda and www.lyonclubbing.com (both in French).

Tickets are sold at **Fnac Billeterie** (www.fnacspectacles.com; 85 rue de la République, 2e; ☺ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Bellecour).

**Opéra de Lyon**

OPERA

(☎ 04 69 85 54 54; www.opera-lyon.com; 1 place de la Comédie, 1er; 📍 Hôtel de Ville) Lyon's premier venue for opera, ballet and classical music.

**Auditorium Orchestre****National de Lyon**

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(☎ 04 78 95 95 95; www.auditorium-lyon.com; 149 rue Garibaldi, 3e; ☺ Sep-Jun; 📍 Part-Dieu, ☑ Part-Dieu-Servient, Part-Dieu-Ville) Built in 1975, this spaceship-like auditorium houses the National Orchestra of Lyon, along with workshops, jazz and world-music concerts.

**La Clef de Voûte**

JAZZ

(☎ 04 78 28 51 95; www.laclefdevoute.fr; 1 place Chardonnet; ☺ 7.30pm-midnight Wed-Mon; 📍 Croix-Paquet) One of Lyon's most atmospheric music venues, La Clef de Voûte is set in a stone-walled, candelit cellar dating from the 18th century. Aside from an excellent line-up of live jazz, there's cheese and anti-pasti platters, and good wines by the glass. Concerts start at 8.30pm.

★ **Le Sucre**

LIVE MUSIC

(www.le-sucre.eu; 50 quai Rambaud, 2e; ☺ 8pm-1am Thu-Sun; ☑ T1) Down in the Confluence neighbourhood, Lyon's most innovative club hosts DJs, live shows and eclectic arts events on its super-cool roof terrace atop La Sucrière, a 1930s sugar factory.

**Maison de la Danse**

DANCE

(☎ 04 72 78 18 00; www.maisondeladanse.com; 8 av Jean Mermoz, 8e; ☑ Bachut-Mairie du 8ème) Lyon's home of contemporary dance, Maison de la Danse specialises in mainstream and avant-garde productions by French and international companies.

**Hangar du Premier Film**

CINEMA

(www.institut-lumiere.org; 25 rue du Premier Film, 8e; 📍 Monplaisir-Lumière) This former factory and birthplace of cinema now screens films of all genres and eras in their original languages. From approximately June to September, the big screen moves outside.

**Shopping**

Vieux Lyon's narrow streets are dotted with galleries, and antiquarian and secondhand bookshops.

High-street chains line rue de la République and rue Victor Hugo, while upmarket boutiques and design houses stud rue du Président Édouard Herriot, rue de Brest and the streets between place des Jacobins and place Bellecour. More cluster between art galleries and antique shops around rue Auguste Comte, 2e.

**Le Village des Créateurs**

FASHION &amp; ACCESSORIES

(☎ 04 78 27 37 21; www.villagedescreateurs.com; Passage Thiaffait, 19 rue René Leynaud, 1er; ☺ workshop 1-7pm by reservation Wed-Sat, boutique 11am-1pm & 2-7pm Tue-Sat; 📍 Croix Paquet) Housed in an arcaded courtyard on the Croix Rouse slopes, this innovative cluster of workshop-boutiques showcases the artwork of a dozen up-and-coming local designers. The workshops can be visited by advance reservation or you can pick up items from the adjacent shop, VDC/B, which serves as a sales outlet, specialising in clothing and accessories.

**Les Puces du Canal**

MARKET

(☎ 04 69 85 66 28; www.pucesducanal.com; 3 rue Eugène Pottier, Villeurbanne; ☺ 7am-1pm Thu & Sat, to 3pm Sun; ☑; ☑ Le Roulet) With more than 400 exhibitors showcasing their wares in the northeastern suburb of Villeurbanne, France's second-biggest flea market is a fun place to browse, especially for antiques and furniture. Sunday draws the biggest crowds. You'll also find a few snack stands and sit-down restaurants.

From downtown Lyon, take metro line A east to the Laurent Bonnevey stop, then transfer to bus 7 northbound and get off at

Le Roulet. Alternatively, on Monday through Saturday, catch metro A to Charpennes, then transfer onto bus 37 to Le Roulet.

### Pôle de Commerces et de Loisirs Confluence

SHOPPING CENTRE

(www.confluence.fr; 112 cours Charlemagne, 2e; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; 🚶 Montrochet) This vast complex of over 100 restaurants and shops (mostly outlets of major international companies) constitutes the commercial hub of Lyon's new Confluence neighbourhood.

### i Information

**SOS Médecins** (☎ 04 78 83 51 51; www.sos-medecin-lyon.fr; ☎ 24hr) Medical emergency hotline.

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 72 77 69 69; www.lyon-france.com; place Bellecour, 2e; ☎ 9am-6pm; 🗺; 🚶 Bellecour) In the centre of Presqu'île, Lyon's exceptionally helpful, multilingual and well-staffed main tourist office offers a variety of city walking tours and sells the Lyon City Card (www.lyoncitycard.com).

### i Getting There & Away

#### AIR

**Lyon-St-Exupéry Airport** (LYS; www.lyonaeroports.com) Located 25km east of the city, with 40 airlines (including many budget carriers) serving more than 120 direct destinations across Europe and beyond.

#### BUS

International bus companies **FlixBus** (www.flixbus.fr/eurolines; Gare de Perrache, 2e; ☎ 9am-7pm; 🚶 Perrache) and **Blablabus** (www.blablacar.fr/bus/destinations/lyon; Gare de Perrache, 2e) offer services to Spain, Portugal, Italy, Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Switzerland, Belgium, Romania and the United Kingdom from the Centre d'Échange building at the north end of the Perrache train complex. Follow signs for 'Cars Grandes Lignes' and 'Galerie A: Gare Routière Internationale'.

#### TRAIN

Lyon has two main-line train stations: **Gare de la Part-Dieu** (place Charles Béraudier, 3e; 🚶 Part-Dieu), 1.5km east of the Rhône, and **Gare de Perrache** (cours de Verdun Rambaud,

### GUIGNOL: LYON'S HISTORIC PUPPETS

The history of Lyon's famous puppet, Guignol, is intertwined with that of the city. In 1797, out-of-work silk-weaver Laurent Mourguet took up dentistry (ie pulling teeth). To attract patients, he set up a puppet show in front of his chair, initially featuring the Italian Polichinelle (who became Punch in England). Success saw Mourguet move into full-time puppetry, creating Guignol in about 1808 and devising shows revolving around working-class issues, the news of the day, social gossip and satire.

Today this little hand-operated glove puppet pops up all over his home town, including on the **Fresque des Lyonnais** (cnr rue de la Martinière & quai St-Vincent, 1er; 🚶 Hôtel de Ville) mural and at puppet museums.

Guignol's highly visual, slapstick-style antics appeal equally to children and adults (theatres also stage some adult-only evening performances). Shows are in French but also incorporate traditional Lyonnais dialect, such as the words *quinquets* (eyes), *picou* (nose), *bajafier* (talking nonstop) and *gones* (kids, and, by extension, all Lyonnais).

In addition to **Puppet Theatre** (Le Véritable Guignol du Parc; ☎ 06 12 42 48 71; www.theatre-guignol-lyon.fr; place de Guignol, 6e; adult/child €4.50/4; ☎ 3pm, 4.30pm & 6pm Wed, Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 3pm & 4.30pm Nov-Mar; 🚶 C1, C5, 🚶 Masséna) performances at Parc de la Tête d'Or, Lyon has three dedicated Guignol theatres:

**Théâtre La Maison de Guignol** (☎ 04 72 40 26 61; www.lamaisondeguignol.fr; 2 montée du Gourguillon, 5e; tickets adult/child €11/9, adult-only evening show €20; ☎ Wed-Sun; 🚶 Vieux Lyon) Quaint St-Georges theatre.

**Guignol, un Gone de Lyon** (☎ 04 72 32 11 55; www.guignol-un-gone-de-lyon.com; 65 bd des Canuts, 4e; adult/child €10/8; ☎ performances 3.30pm Wed, Sat & Sun Oct-Jun; 🚶 Hénon) In Croix Rousse; puppeteers give audiences a behind-the-scenes peek at the props and puppets after certain performances.

**Théâtre Le Guignol de Lyon** (☎ 04 78 29 83 36; www.guignol-lyon.net; 2 rue Louis Carand, 5e; adult/child €11/8; 🚶 Vieux Lyon) In Vieux Lyon.

Check individual websites for ticket prices (around €10 or €11) and schedules (typically Wednesdays and weekends, with extra dates added during school holidays).



## LYONNAIS FOOD MARKETS

Food shopping in Lyon is an unmissable part of the city's experience. And with so many urban spaces and parks, there are plenty of picnic spots too.

Lyon's famed indoor food market **Les Halles de Lyon Paul Bocuse** (☎ 04 78 62 39 33; [www.hallespaulbocuse.lyon.fr](http://www.hallespaulbocuse.lyon.fr); 102 cours Lafayette, 3e; ☀ 7am-10.30pm Tue-Sat, to 4.30pm Sun; 🚶 Part-Dieu) has 48 vendors selling their renowned wares. Pick up a round of impossibly runny St Marcellin from legendary cheesemonger Mère Richard, and a knobbly Jésus de Lyon from pork butcher Collette Sibilia. Or enjoy a sit-down lunch of local produce at the stalls, lip-smacking *coquillages* (shellfish) included.

Lyon has two main outdoor food markets: the **Marché de la Croix Rousse** (bd de la Croix Rousse, 1er; ☀ 6am-1pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Croix Rousse) and the **Marché St-Antoine** (quai St-Antoine, 1er; ☀ 6am-1pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Bellecour, Cordeliers). Each has more than 100 vendors.

2e; 🚶 Perrache). Some local trains stop at **Gare St-Paul** ([www.ter.sncf.com/auvergne-rhone-alpes](http://www.ter.sncf.com/auvergne-rhone-alpes); 11bis place St-Paul, 5e; 🚶 Vieux Lyon) and **Gare Jean Macé** ([www.ter.sncf.com/auvergne-rhone-alpes](http://www.ter.sncf.com/auvergne-rhone-alpes); place Jean Macé, 7e; 🚶 Jean Macé). There's also a TGV station at Lyon-St-Exupéry Airport. Buy tickets online or at stations.

Destinations by direct TGV include the following:

**Dijon** €32, two hours, at least six daily

**Lille-Europe** €108, three hours, at least eight daily

**Marseille** €52, 1¾ hours, every 30 to 60 minutes

**Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport** €88, two hours, at least nine daily

**Paris Gare de Lyon** €75, two hours, every 30 to 60 minutes

## **i** Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

**Lyon-St-Exupéry Airport** The **Rhôneexpress** ([www.rhoneexpress.fr](http://www.rhoneexpress.fr); adult/youth/child €16.30/13.60/free) tramway links the airport with the Part-Dieu train station in under 30 minutes. It's a five- to 10-minute walk from the arrivals hall; follow the red signs with the Rhôneexpress train logo. Trams depart half-hourly from 5am to 10pm. Online purchases and round-trip travel qualify for discounts.

By taxi, the 30- to 45-minute trip between the airport and the city centre costs around €53 during the day and €69 between 7pm and 7am.

### BICYCLE

Pick up a red-and-silver bike at one of the 300-odd bike stations throughout the city and drop it off at another with Lyon's **Vélo'v** ([www.velop.grandlyon.com](http://www.velop.grandlyon.com); 30-minute ride €1.80, unlimited 24hrs €4) bike-rental scheme. A one-ride ticket is €1.80 for the first 30 minutes and

then €0.05 per minute for the next half-hour. Every subsequent half-hour escalates the rate by €0.05. Alternatively, you can buy a day pass with unlimited half-hour rides (€4). Pay all fees with a chip-enabled credit card using machines installed at bike stations.

### BOAT

**Le Vaporetto** (☎ 08 20 20 69 20; [www.lesyachtsdelyon.com](http://www.lesyachtsdelyon.com); 1-way adult/child €5/2; ☀ mid-Mar-Dec) operates *navettes* (passenger ferry boats) to Lyon's new Confluence neighbourhood. Boats (€5) depart every 80 minutes between 10.20am and 9pm from riverbank docks on the Saône near place St-Paul and place Bellecour. Heading north, boats depart the Confluence dock between 9.30am and 8.10pm. Travel time is 30 minutes from the **St-Paul dock** (quai de Bondy, 5e; 🚶 Hôtel de Ville, Vieux Lyon) and 20 minutes from the **Bellecour dock** (quai des Célestins, 2e; 🚶 Bellecour, Vieux Lyon).

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Buses, trams, a four-line metro and two funiculars linking Vieux Lyon to Fourvière and St-Just are operated by TCL ([www.tcl.fr](http://www.tcl.fr)), which has information offices dispensing transport maps at major metro stations throughout Lyon. Public transport runs from around 5am to midnight.

Tickets valid for all forms of public transport cost €1.90 (€17.60 for a *carnet* of 10) and are available from bus and tram drivers as well as machines at metro entrances. Tickets allowing two consecutive hours of travel after 9am or unlimited travel after 7pm cost €3.20, and an all-day ticket costs €6.20. Bring coins, as machines don't accept notes (or some international credit cards). Time-stamp tickets on all forms of public transport or risk a fine.

Holders of the Lyon City Card ([www.lyoncitycard.com](http://www.lyoncitycard.com); 1/2/3 days adult €27/37/47, child €19/26/33) receive free unlimited access to Lyon's transport network for the duration of the card's validity.

## TAXI

Taxis hover in front of both train stations, on the place Bellecour end of **rue de la Barre (2e)**, at the northern end of rue du **Président Édouard Herriot (1er)** and along **quai Romain Rolland in Vieux Lyon (5e)**.

**Allo Taxi** (☎ 04 78 28 23 23; www.allotaxi.fr)

**Taxis Lyonnais** (☎ 04 78 26 81 81; www.tl.fr)

## NORTH OF LYON

Lush green hills, lakes and vineyards unfold to the north of cosmopolitan Lyon.

## Beaujolais

Ah, Beaujolais, where the unhurried life is complemented by rolling vineyards, beguiling villages, old churches, splendid estates and country roads that twist into the hills. This rural paradise is within easy reach of Lyon, which is a mere 50km to the southeast.

An oenophile's nirvana, the region is synonymous with its fruity red wines, especially its 10 premium *crus*, and the Beaujolais Nouveau, drunk at the tender age of just six weeks. Vineyards stretch south from Mâcon along the right bank of the Saône for some 50km. Renowned wine-producing villages include Brouilly, Villié-Morgon, Fleurie, Juliéna, Moulin-à-Vent and St-Amour Bellevue. Be sure to factor in plenty of time for wine tasting.

## 👁️ Sights

### Salles-Arbussonnas-en-Beaujolais Priory

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Musée le Prieuré; ☎ 04 74 07 31 94; www.salles-arbussonnas.fr; 3 rue du Chapitre, Salles-Arbussonnas-en-Beaujolais; museum adult/child €4.50/free; ☺ museum 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sun Mar-Dec) For architecture buffs, this 10th-century priory founded by the monks of Cluny is a must. It's notable for its superb Roman cloister and elaborate porch. Adjacent to the building is a small museum that displays art exhibits and Gallo-Roman artefacts and also explores monastic life in past centuries in Salles-Arbussonnas.

### La Maison du Terroir Beaujolais

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 74 69 20 56; www.lamaisonduterroirbeaujolais.com; place de l'Hôtel de Ville, Beaujeu; ☺ 10am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Sep-Dec & Mar-Jun) **FREE** This exhibition space has a series of rooms with audiovisual displays that

highlight the wine, food and culture of the Beaujolais. If you'd rather not visit the galleries, it's worth exploring the shop, which is packed with gourmet regional foodstuffs, including cheeses, jams, charcuterie and, of course, Beaujolais wine. Also rents bikes (half-/full day €13/19) and electric bikes (€25/35).



## Activities

### Beaujolais Greenway

PARK

(Voie Verte du Beaujolais) Set on a converted railway line, this greenway runs for 15km between Beaujeu and Belleville. It's paved and mostly flat, making it ideal for cycling, inline skating or running. From Beaujeu, you can access the greenway about 1km southeast of the tourist office. Bike hire is available at La Maison du Terroir Beaujolais.

### Wine Tasting

#### Château de Juliéna

WINE

(☎ 06 85 76 95 41, 04 74 04 49 98; www.chateaudedejuliéna.com; rte de Vaux, Juliéna; free tour 4.30pm Tue-Fri mid-Jun-Oct, by reservation €8 Jan-Dec, aperi-vin €18, picnic €40; ☺ by reservation) A beauty of a castle, the 16th-century Château de Juliéna occupies a delightful estate. No doubt you'll be struck by the cellars, the longest in the region. Free tours include three tastings, but if you phone ahead you can try all their wines (tour €8). The château also offers an *aperi-vin* (tasting and snacks; €18) and a two-hour picnic (€40).

#### Caveau du Moulin à Vent

WINE

(☎ 03 85 35 58 09; www.moulin-a-vent.net; 1673 rte du Moulin à Vent, Moulin à Vent, Romanèche-Thorins;

## DON'T MISS

### BEAUJOLAIS NOUVEAU

At the stroke of midnight on the third Thursday (ie Wednesday night) in November – as soon as French law permits – the *libération* (release) or *mise en perce* (tapping; opening) of the first bottles of cherry-bright Beaujolais Nouveau is celebrated around France and the world. In Beaujeu, 64km northwest of Lyon, there's free Beaujolais Nouveau for all as part of the **Sarmentelles de Beaujeu** (www.sarmentelles.com; ☺ Nov), a giant street party that kicks off the day before Beaujolais Nouveau for five days of wine tasting, live music and dancing.

☺ 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Thu-Mon Sep-mid-Dec & Mar-Jun) Dubbed the 'King of Beaujolais', the Moulin à Vent (Windmill) appellation is a particularly charming wine to sample in situ: its Caveau du Moulin à Vent, across the road from the windmill, provides a prime wine-tasting opportunity.

### Caveau de Morgon

WINE

(☎ 04 74 04 20 99; www.morgon-fr.cabanova.com; Château Fontcrenne, rue du Château de Fontcrenne, Villié-Morgon; ☺ 10am-noon & 2.30-7pm Feb-Oct, to 6pm Nov & Dec) Morgon wine, anybody? Expand your knowledge of the local appellation with a tasting session at this vaulted cellar, which occupies a grandiose 18th-century château in the heart of town – it can't get more atmospheric than that.

### Domaine des Vignes du Paradis – Pascal Durand

WINE

(☎ 03 85 36 52 97; www.saint-amour-en-paradis.com; En Paradis, St-Amour Bellevue; ☺ 10am-12pm & 2-6pm) Not to be missed in St-Amour is this award-winning domaine run by fifth-generation vintners. It welcomes visitors to its intimate cellars and sells St-Amour wines at unbeatable prices.

## Sleeping

The Beaujolais villages and their vineyard-stitched surrounds have some charming, if rather expensive, hotels and B&Bs. If you're on a budget, consider a day trip from Lyon, Mâcon or Villefranche-sur-Saône.

### Les Folies de la Serve

B&amp;B €

(☎ 06 95 99 68 55; www.lesroulottes.com; La Serve, Ouroux; caravan/cabin €69, d €95; ☺ Apr-mid-Nov;  ) Run by traditional caravan-maker Pascal and his wife Pascaline, this unique place has two romantically furnished gypsy caravans built in 1900 and 1930 and a cabin amid the B&B's fields (€3 to €5 extra per night for heating). Bathrooms are provided in the main farmhouse, which has two whimsical en-suite guestrooms.

### ★ L'Auberge du Paradis

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 85 37 10 26; www.aubergeduparadis.fr; Le Plâtre Durand, Le Bourg, St-Amour-Bellevue; d €150-260; ☺ restaurant noon-12pm & 7.30-9pm Thu-Sat, 7.30-9pm Wed & Sun;    ) Beaujolais' iconic, much-beloved inn occupies a village house restyled into an urban-chic, design-led boutique hotel. Oh, and there's a fantastic bistro and restaurant with creative,

inspired cooking (mains €11 to €18; expect top-quality ingredients served with a symphony of spices) drawing diners from afar.

### Les Buis du Chardonnet

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 04 74 03 64 76; www.lesbuisduchardonnet.com; Chardonnet, 399 rte des André, Cogny; s/d €79/90;  ) If you're after hush and seclusion, this B&B with a green ethos – it was built as a positive-energy home – is the answer. The three sunny rooms have great picture windows and command superlative views of the vineyards. Madame Perroud is a former English teacher and willingly shares her great knowledge of all things Beaujolais – in perfect English, of course.

### Auberge de Clochemerle

HOTEL €€


(☎ 04 74 03 20 16; www.aubergedeclochemerle.fr; 173 rue Gabriel Chevallier, Vaux-en-Beaujolais; d €110-150, q €240, restaurant menus €48-84;  ) A pleasant combination of modern and traditional, this atmospheric hotel smack dab in the centre of Vaux-en-Beaujolais has 10 stylishly refitted rooms, some with vineyard views. Dining at its decadent restaurant is a treat. Chef Romain creates elaborate Beaujolais meals using the best local ingredients, and his wife Delphine is a renowned sommelier – wine pairings are an adventure in themselves. Brilliant value.

## Eating

With such fine wine flowing, dining well is a given. Most winegrowing villages have great bistros and inns where you can sample regional cuisine. Many B&Bs can also prepare tasty dinners on request. For foodies, a smattering of top-rated restaurants await; some of the best fine-dining addresses are attached to hotels.

### Joséphine à Table

FRENCH €

(☎ 03 85 37 10 26; www.josephineatable.fr; Le Plâtre Durand, St-Amour-Bellevue; lunch menu €15, mains €15-21; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat; ) This easy-going, much-loved bistro always packs a crowd for its excellent-value cooking, which showcases the region's stellar produce. Corks on the ceiling and corkscrews at every table are a subtle reminder that you're in wine country (with a great wine menu, of course).

### La Terrasse du Beaujolais

FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 74 69 90 79; www.la-terrasse-du-beaujolais.fr; La Terrasse, Chiroubles; menus €27-59; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-8.30pm Wed-Sat Mar-Nov, noon-2pm

Thu-Sun Dec-Feb, closed mid-Jan) That view! Perched high above Chiroubles at an altitude of 760m, this well-known venture offers a sensational panorama over the entire Beaujolais region, the Saône valley and the Alps. Food-wise, it's no less impressive, with hearty regional dishes, including *coq au beaujolais* (chicken cooked in Beaujolais wine) and *andouillette* (chitterlings). End on a sweet high with one of the excellent homemade desserts.

### ★ Au 14 Février

FUSION ccc

(☎03 85 37 11 45; www.sa-au14fevrier.com; Le Plâtre Durant, St-Amour Bellevue; menus €87-125; ☺noon-2pm & 7.30-9pm Fri-Sat, noon-2pm Sun, 7.30-9pm Mon) For a gastronomic experience in the Beaujolais area, look no further than this gem of a restaurant. A true alchemist, Japanese chef Masafumi Hamano has got the magic formula right, fusing French with Japanese to create stunning, colourful cuisine, perfectly matched with French wines. It's housed in a traditional *maison de village* that has been entirely refurbished and modernised.

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 74 07 27 40; www.beaujolaisvignoble.com; place de l'Hôtel de Ville, Beaujeu; ☺10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, mornings only Sun Apr-Jun & Oct) Beaujeu's tourist office provides information on wine cellars where you can taste and buy local wine. It can also help with accommodation.

Around 35km north of Lyon, the Villefranche-sur-Saône **tourist office** (☎04 74 07 27 40; www.beaujolaisvignoble.com; 96 rue de la Sous-Préfecture, Villefranche-sur-Saône; ☺10am-1pm & 2.30pm-6pm May-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Oct-Apr) has info on southern Beaujolais.

### i Getting There & Around

To explore the delightful backroads and vineyards of Beaujolais, it's best to have your own set of wheels (and a non-drinking driver!).

For outdoorsy types, it's also possible to rent bikes at La Maison du Terroir Beaujolais (p497) in Beaujeu. It costs €13/19 for a half-/full day or €25/35 if you want an electric bike.

To get here by public transport, catch a train from Lyon to Belleville (€9.90, 35 minutes), where bus 235, operated by **Les Cars du Rhône** (☎08 00 10 40 36; www.carsdurhone.fr), travels 10 times a day – weekdays only – to Beaujeu (€2, 27 minutes).

### WORTH A TRIP

#### LAZY LUNCH CALL

**Le Thou** (☎04 74 98 15 25; www.lethou.com; Le Village, Bouligneux; menus €27-64; ☺noon-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) Occupying a lovingly restored inn, Le Thou is headed up by chef Stéphane König, who is known for his creative (and sometimes surprising) take on regional staples. Well-spaced tables, colourful paintings adorning the walls and a warm welcome create an easy air.

Bonus: there's a garden terrace in the warm months. Find Le Thou in Bouligneux, about 4km northwest of Villars-les-Dombes.

## La Dombes

Known as the land of a thousand lakes, La Dombes is a bucolic region that's famed for its farm-fresh produce. People come from far and wide to sample frogs' legs, local chicken or carp at one of the area's many inns. Located just east of the Beaujolais region, this marshy area invites leisurely walks and bike rides through peaceful countryside that seems little-changed over the centuries.

In fact, these *étangs* (shallow lakes) were created from malarial swamps over the past 600 years by farmers. Today they are used as fish ponds and then drained to grow crops on the fertile lake bed. While it's not big on sights, this rural territory makes an idyllic counterpoint to the bustle of Lyon, 40km to the southwest.

Observe local and exotic birds, including dozens of pairs of storks, at the 35-hectare **Parc des Oiseaux** (☎04 74 98 05 54; www.parcdesoiseaux.com; RD 1083, Villars-les-Dombes; adult/child €20/15; ☺9.30am-6pm mid-May-mid-Nov), a landscaped bird park home to some 300 species of birds on the edge of Villars-les-Dombes.

Most visitors explore the area as a day trip from Pérouges or Lyon. Favourite lunch spots cooking up tried-and-true La Dombes frogs' legs include **Le Comptoir des Dombes** (☎04 72 88 50 69; www.lecomptoirdesdombes.com; rue de Trevoux, Lapeyrouse-Mornay; mains €15-20, lunch menu €13.50, dinner menus €25-44; ☺noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Thu-Sat, noon-1.30pm Mon & Wed) in the village of Lapeyrouse and **La Bicyclette Bleue** (☎04 74

98 21 48; [www.labicyclettebleue.fr](http://www.labicyclettebleue.fr); Le Pont, Joyeux; mains €20-24, lunch menus €24-33, dinner menus €24-40; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm Wed-Sun Mar-Sep, closed Tue Jul & Aug), known for its dining-biking combo. Rent wheels to explore 12 mapped lakeland trails.

Villars-les-Dombes' train station is linked to Lyon's Part-Dieu (€8.40, 40 minutes, hourly), but you really need your own wheels – two or four – to explore the area.

## SOUTH OF LYON

Wine country beckons downstream from Lyon, along with Roman ruins, live jazz, nougat and Valrhona chocolate, all set to a spectacular backdrop of the Alps in the distance.

## Vienne

POP 29,300

France's Gallo-Roman heritage is alive and well in this laid-back riverfront city, whose compact old quarter hides spectacular Roman ruins, including a temple and a theatre. The theatre relives its glory days as a performance venue each summer during Vienne's two-week jazz festival – a must for music lovers.

### Sights

#### Musée Gallo-Romain

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 74 53 74 01; [www.musees-gallo-romains.com](http://www.musees-gallo-romains.com); d) D502, St-Romain-en-Gal; adult/child €6/free; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Across the Rhône from Vienne, the Musée Gallo-Romain highlights Vienne's historical importance, displaying several rooms full of dazzling mosaics and models of ancient Vienne, surrounded by the actual excavated remains of the Gallo-Roman city.

**Temple d'Auguste et de Livie** HISTORIC SITE  
(place Charles de Gaulle) **FREE** Best of all the Roman monuments in Vienne is this striking Roman temple right in the heart of the old town. Take a look at the superb Corinthian columns. It was built around 10 BCE to honour Emperor Augustus and his wife, Livia.

#### Théâtre Romain

THEATRE

(☎ 04 74 78 71 17; [www.theatreantiquevienne.com](http://www.theatreantiquevienne.com); rue du Cirque; adult/child €3/free; ☺ 9.30am-12.45pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 1-5.30pm Nov-Mar) This vast, well-preserved Roman amphitheatre was built around 40-50 CE at the base of Mt Pipet, on the eastern fringes of the old town. At that time, it was one of the largest theatres in the Roman empire – it was designed to seat between 11,000 and 13,000 spectators. It's a key venue during Vienne's Jazz Festival in June and July, hosting performances throughout the summer.

### Festivals & Events

#### Jazz Festival

MUSIC



([www.jazzvienne.com](http://www.jazzvienne.com); ☺ late Jun-early Jul) This two-week jazz festival held in late June/early July is said to be one of France's finest international jazz festivals, and it does attract some very big names, including Youssou N'Dour, Marcus Miller and Lisa Simone. Most concerts are held in the fabulous surrounds of the Roman theatre.

### Sleeping & Eating

Rue des Clercs and its offshoots, as well as place Charles de Gaulle, are lined with tempting eateries and lively bars.

#### Ibis Budget

HOTEL €

(☎ 08 92 70 09 68; [www.ibis.com](http://www.ibis.com); Cours de Verdun; d €55-85;  ) Yes, we know it's a chain hotel, but this abode gets by on its super-handly location – a waddle away from restaurants,

### WORTH A TRIP

#### CONDRIEU & CÔTE RÔTIE

Wine buffs, take note: the Rhône Valley boasts two appellations that rank among the most prestigious in France: Condrieu and Côte Rôtie. While Condrieu is beloved by white-wine (viognier) aficionados, Côte Rôtie is a hallowed name among red-wine connoisseurs. Most of the Côte Rôtie vineyards, which extend over three villages, including Ampuis, are devoted to the syrah grape. Mixed with a bit of viognier, the Côte Rôtie produces rich reds, known for their robust, full-bodied character. A few kilometres further south, the Condrieu winegrowing area is a bit larger, and includes the small town of Condrieu. In all villages belonging to these appellations, you'll pass plenty of producers offering *dégustation* (tasting) en route. Both areas are within easy reach of Vienne.



monuments and the train station – and its private parking (€7). It offers functional chain-hotel rooms with off-the-shelf furnishings and small bathrooms.

★ **Hôtel de la Pyramide** HOTEL **ccc**  
 (☎04 74 53 01 96; www.lapyramide.com; 14 bd Fernand-Point; d €200-300, ste €350-460; 📞📧📺) Relax into the lap of luxury at this apricot-coloured villa overlooking La Pyramide (a 15.5m-tall obelisk dating from the Roman times). It contains beautifully appointed rooms and a few top-notch suites. Foodies, rejoice: facilities include a bistro and a gastronomic restaurant with two Michelin stars (*menus* €69 to €180). This tasteful haven is in a quiet neighbourhood on the southern outskirts of town.

★ **L'Espace PH3** FRENCH **cc**  
 (☎04 74 53 01 96; www.lapyramide.com; 14 bd Fernand Point; meat & fish €64-70, lunch menu €26, dinner menus €149-180; ☀️noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm) Overseen by two-Michelin-starred chef Patrick Henriroux, L'Espace PH3 offers a good-value gastronomic menu, serving a small selection of French classics with a creative twist. The lunch *menu* is an absolute steal. In summer, meals are served out on the superb garden terrace.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 74 53 70 10; www.vienne-tourisme.com; 2 cours Brillier; ☀️9.30-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm) Has details of museums and historical sites in the Viennois area. It also offers bike hire (€10/15 per half-/full day) as well as electric bikes (€20/30 per half-/full day).

## Getting There & Away

Trains link Vienne with Lyon's three main stations (€7.30, 20 to 35 minutes, at least hourly) as well as Valence Centre (€14, 50 minutes, at least hourly). All trains to Valence TGV station require changing at Valence Centre.

## Valence

POP 63,700

Welcome to the Midi (as the French call the south)! With its warm weather, honey-coloured light, relaxed atmosphere and generous cuisine, it's easy to see why Valence advertises itself as the northern gateway to Provence. Its quaint old town is well endowed with eateries, convivial cafes and

## DON'T MISS

### FAMILY FAVE: DEATH BY CHOCOLATE

**Cité du Chocolat Valrhona** (☎04 75 09 27 27; www.citeduchocolat.com; 12 av du Président Roosevelt, Tain l'Hermitage; adult/child €10.50/€8.50; ☀️10am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 5.30pm Sun) Death by chocolate! On the main road in Tain l'Hermitage, the Cité du Chocolat is a chocoholic's dream come true. This vast complex run by Valrhona, one of the world's leading chocolate manufacturers, takes you through each stage of the production process thanks to extremely well-thought-out interactive displays, workshops and hands-on exhibits. Of course, the supersized adjoining boutique is a treasure trove of chocolate goodies. And yes, it includes tastings.

historic buildings, and the Musée de Valence will appeal to culture aficionados.

## Sights & Activities

**Musée de Valence** MUSEUM  
 (☎04 75 79 20 80; www.museeavalence.fr; 4 place des Ormeaux; adult/child €6/free; ☀️2-6pm Tue, 10am-12pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sun) This great museum adjoining the cathedral offers a comprehensive and well-organised collection of art and archaeology from the Rhône Valley. Of particular interest are the superb mosaics and artefacts dating from the Roman era, as well as the series of red chalk sketches and paintings by Hubert Robert (1733-1808). There is also a lovely vaulted gallery. For knockout views of the city and the Rhône Valley, head to the top floor, which has a *belvédère* (viewpoint).

**Cathédrale St-Apollinaire** CATHEDRAL  
 (place des Ormeaux; ☀️9am-6pm) A major landmark in the old town, this impressive cathedral dates from the late 11th century but was largely destroyed in the Wars of Religion before being reconstructed in the 17th century. The square bell tower is a more recent addition – it was built in the 19th century.

**L'École Scook** COOKING  
 (☎04 75 44 14 14; www.scook.fr; 243 av Victor Hugo; ☀️by reservation) Serious foodies will want to sign up at three-Michelin-star chef

Anne-Sophie Pic's cutting-edge cooking school, **Scook**. It offers 1½-hour (from €65) and three-hour courses (from €112), plus courses for kids from six years old upwards (€42 per 90 minutes). It also provides wine-tasting classes. See the website for exact dates.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Les Négociants

HOTEL €

(☎04 75 44 01 86; www.hotelvalence.com; 27 av Pierre Semard; d €48-87;    ) This well-run venture with modernised rooms is definitely good value. The cheaper doubles have minuscule bathrooms but are perfectly serviceable. It's just steps from the railway station and a five-minute stroll from the historic centre. There's private parking (€7) about 300m away. Another draw is the on-site restaurant.

### ★ La Maison de la Pra

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 75 43 69 73; www.maisondelapra.com; 8 rue de l'Équerre; d €125-250;    ) Such charm! If you've ever wanted to stay in a 16th-century *hôtel particulier* (private mansion), this bijou B&B enticingly positioned in a quiet alley near the town hall is the real deal. It offers five stadium-sized suites with beamed ceilings, period furniture and artworks. They're smack in the centre but still feel very quiet. Good English is spoken.

### Maison Pic

HOTEL €€€

(☎04 75 44 15 32; www.anne-sophie-pic.com; 285 av Victor Hugo; d €280-430, ste €380-600; ☺closed 24 Dec-10 Jan;    ) The Pic family's truffle-coloured, 1889-established inn has ultra-chic rooms mixing antique, contemporary and cutting-edge design. It is often fully booked with gastronomes, here for the three-Michelin-starred **Restaurant Pic** (☎04 75 44 15 32; www.anne-sophie-pic.com/valence/#restaurant; 285 av Victor Hugo; menu €320; ☺noon-1.15pm & 7-8.30pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) or the less formal bistro **André** (☎04 75 44 15 32; www.anne-sophie-pic.com/valence/#andre; 285 av Victor Hugo; mains €22-32, menus €39-72; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10pm). One downside: its location, on a busy road about 2km south of the old town, isn't exactly five-star.

### Maison Nivon

BAKERY €

(☎04 75 44 03 37; www.nivon.com; 17 av Pierre Semard; suisses from €12.50; ☺6am-7pm Tue-Sun) In business since 1856, this venerable bakery near the train station is one of the best places to sample Valence's classic orange-rind-flavoured shortbread in the shape of a Vatican Swiss guard. Ask for a *suissse*!

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 75 44 90 40; www.valence-romans-tourisme.com; 11 bd Bancel;

## ST-ÉTIENNE

Down-to-business St-Étienne (pop 173,000), 62km southwest of Lyon, is drawing on its Industrial Revolution origins and its history of arms, bicycle, textile and ribbon production to reinvent itself as a 'design city'. It still preserves fascinating vestiges from its past, including an old coal mine you can visit not far from the town centre at the **Musée de la Mine** (☎04 77 43 83 23; www.musee-mine.saint-etienne.fr; 3 bd Franchet d'Esperey, Parc Joseph Sanguedolce; adult/child €8.50/free; ☺10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Sun).

St-Étienne hosts the forward-looking **Biennale Internationale Design** (www.bien-nale-design.com; ☺Apr-Aug) fair for one month kicking off in March every odd-numbered year. Otherwise, delve into its design scene at the **Cité du Design** (☎04 77 49 74 70; www.citedudesign.com; 3 rue Javelin Pagnon; adult/child €6.50/5, guided tour €2; ☺10am-6pm Tue-Sun, guided tours 3pm Sat & Sun), and contemporary art at the **Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain** (MAM; ☎04 77 79 52 52; www.mam-st-etienne.fr; rue Fernand Léger, St-Priest-en-Jarez; adult/child €6.50/free; ☺10am-6pm Wed-Mon), 2.5km north in St-Priest-en-Jarez.

Should you consider an overnight, **La Villa Roassieux** (☎04 77 41 20 87; www.villaroassieux.fr; 5 passage Jean Baptiste Corot; s €110-125, d €120-150, ste from €160-220;    ) – a country-chic B&B with heated saltwater pool in a vintage manor southeast of the centre – is the address.

Hourly (or more frequent) trains link St-Étienne with Lyon's Gare de la Part-Dieu (€12.10, 50 minutes) or Gare Perrache.

🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat; 🚫)  
 Located two blocks north of the train station.

## **i** Getting There & Away

From Valence Centre station (also known as Valence-Ville), there are trains at least hourly to the following destinations (many also stop at Valence TGV Rhône-Alpes Sud station, 10km east):

**Avignon Centre** from €16, about 1¼ hours

**Grenoble** from €16, about one hour

**Lyon (Gare Part-Dieu or Gare Jean-Macé)** train/TGV from €16/30, 35 minutes (TGV) to 1¼ hours

**Marseille** from €25, 1¼ (TGV) to 2½ hours

**Montélimar** from €6.80, 21 minutes (TGV) to one hour

## Gorges de l'Ardèche

Be prepared to fall on your knees in awe: the steep and spectacular limestone Gorges de l'Ardèche cut a curvaceous swath through the high scrubland along the serpentine Ardèche River, a tributary of the Rhône. The main gorges begin 7km before **Vallon-Pont-d'Arc** and empty into the Rhône Valley near **St-Martin-d'Ardèche**. En route, they pass beneath the Pont d'Arc, a sublimely beautiful stone arch created by the river's torrents.

From Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, the area's main hub, the scenic riverside D290 zigzags for 29km along the canyon's rim, with 11 *belvédères* revealing dazzling vistas of horse-shoe bends, and kayakers in formation far below. It can, however, turn into a chaotic traffic jam in midsummer.

Vallon-Pont-d'Arc is also the main base for visiting Grotte Chauvet 2, which houses replicas of amazing prehistoric paintings.

## **👁** Sights

### ★ Grotte Chauvet 2 MUSEUM

(📞 04 75 94 39 40; [www.grottechauvet2ardeche.com](http://www.grottechauvet2ardeche.com); Plateau du Razal; adult/child €17/8.50; 🕒 10.30am-7pm mid-Jun-5 Jul, 9am-8pm 6 Jul-Aug, 9am-6.30pm Sep & Oct, 10.30am-5pm Nov & Dec) This unique complex about 7km north-east of Vallon-Pont-d'Arc takes you on an incredible journey back in time. The biggest replica cave in the world, it was built a few kilometres north of the original Grotte Chauvet site and contains 1000 painstakingly reproduced paintings as well as around 450 bones and other debris. An hour-long tour takes visitors along a raised walkway,

## MONTÉLIMAR NOUGAT

An appealing place (once you're through its industrial outskirts), Montélimar has an atmospheric old town and a grassy, cafe-lined promenade that carves a C-shape through its centre. The town is 49km south of Valence in the sunny section of the Drôme *département*, known as Drôme Provençale. An obligatory stop for sweet teeth, Montélimar is famous for its delectable nougat, which took off after WWII when motorists travelling to the French Riviera stopped here to buy the sweeter-than-sweet treat to munch en route.

past panels displaying hundreds of breathtakingly sophisticated drawings of various animal species, including lions, panthers, rhinoceros and mammoths.

The original Grotte Chauvet, which was discovered in 1994 and is now a Unesco World Heritage Site, is not open to the public. It's the oldest known and best-preserved cave decorated by humans; the actual paintings date back 36,000 years. Specialists used 3D modelling techniques and a high-precision scanner to create a three-dimensional digital model of the original cave.

Due to visitor limitations, it often sells out – buy your ticket online a few days in advance.

### Pont d'Arc

NATURAL FEATURE

(Vallon-Pont-d'Arc) Spanning the Ardèche Gorge, this striking natural bridge is a must-see when visiting the area. Located 5km south of Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, this 54m-high arch makes a fine destination for a scenic walk (with routes beginning in Vallon-Pont-d'Arc). In the summer, it's also a popular destination for kayaking.

### Grotte de la Madeleine

CAVE

(📞 04 75 04 22 20; [www.grottemadeleine.com](http://www.grottemadeleine.com); D290, rte touristique des Gorges; adult/child €11/6.50; 🕒 11am-6pm Apr-Jun, 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Sep, to 5pm Oct & Nov) The Ardèche plateau is riddled with caves. One of the most atmospheric is Grotte de la Madeleine, which features impressive and colourful stalactite formations. A light show adds to the thrill. Near the ticket office you'll find one of the most spectacular *belvédères*, with awe-some views of the gorges.

## STRIDE OUT!

The **Sentier Aval des Gorges**, which descends 2km to the river and follows the gorge for another 10km, is a great way to experience the mind-boggling beauty of the gorges. Shorter walks on the plateau above afford sensational views. The tourist office (p505) in Vallon-Pont-d'Arc has leaflets and maps.

## Activities

Vallon-Pont-d'Arc is the main water-sports base (April to September); its tourist office (p505) has lists of lots of local operators. Options range from 4km half-day trips to 58km overnight trips (the latter involve camping in the gorge). Tariffs and trip durations depend on how far you want to travel. Most outfits charge roughly similar rates: around €24/35 for a half-/full-day descent. Return transport is included in rental prices. Safety kit is provided, but you'll get wet, so dress appropriately. Minimum age is seven. Book in advance to secure online discounts.

Some operators are also based in St-Martin d'Ardeche.

**Base Nautique du Pont d'Arc** WATER SPORTS  
(☎04 75 37 17 79; www.canoe-ardeche.com; D290, rte touristique des Gorges, Vallon-Pont-d'Arc; per adult/child from €21/12, 2-day from €60/35, 3-day €80/55; ☀Apr-Oct) Hire canoes and kayaks through Base Nautique du Pont d'Arc. Options range from 4km half-day trips to 58km overnight camping excursions. Minimum age is seven, and online discounts are available with advance booking.

## Sleeping

Most accommodation is located in or around the main towns of Vallon-Pont-d'Arc and St-Martin d'Ardeche, at the western and eastern ends of the gorges respectively. In summer, make sure you book ahead.

**Camping du Pont d'Arc** CAMPGROUND €  
(☎04 75 88 00 64; www.campingdupontdarc.com; D290, rte touristique des Gorges; campsites €16-28; ☀mid-Apr-Sep) Adjacent to stunning Pont d'Arc, this tree-shaded three-star campground has its own riverside beach and offers boat trips down the gorges.

**★ Le Belvédère** HOTEL €  
(☎04 75 88 00 02; www.hotel-ardeche-belvedere.com; D290, rte touristique des Gorges; d €65-135,

q €140-190; ☀Apr-5 Oct, restaurant Wed-Mon; ☎☎☎☎) Just 300m away from the Pont d'Arc, the aptly named Belvédère has 30 rooms that have been sleekly refitted. Half of the rooms have views of the gorges, and some come with a balcony. Facilities include a swimming pool, a canoe/kayak rental outlet and a well-regarded on-site restaurant (mains €17 to €22).

## **★ Prehistoric Lodge** LODGE €€

(☎04 75 87 24 42; www.prehistoric-lodge.com; 3290 rte touristique des Gorges; d €107-127, lodge d €117-167; ☀Apr-Sep; ☎☎) By far the most unusual sleeping option in the Gorges de l'Ardeche, this good find offers eight luxury safari tents (called 'lodges') and four modern, snazzily decorated rooms with private terraces. Best of all, it's in a verdant property right on the river's edge, with direct access to a swimming area and superlative gorge views.

## **Jardins de Prasserat** FARMSTAY €€

(☎06 86 68 03 02; Ferme de Prasserat, off D579, Vallon Pont d'Arc; d €80-90; ☎☎) Some 2.5km northwest of Vallon Pont d'Arc, this delightfully rustic farmhouse offers three pleasantly set rooms with stone walls and views over the gardens or rolling hills in the distance. Bruno, the kind-hearted owner, has a wealth of information on the area, and spreads a fine breakfast (by request) that includes homemade jams and sometimes eggs from his own hens.

## Eating

Places to eat are limited in the gorges themselves, although there are a few tiny villages with seasonal restaurants and roadside snack bars dotted along the route – but you might find it more convenient to pack a picnic.

Vallon-Pont-d'Arc and St-Martin d'Ardeche both have plenty of eating options.

## **Le Chelsea** FRENCH €€

(☎04 75 88 01 40; www.lechelsea.com; 45 bd Peschaire-Alizon, Vallon-Pont-d'Arc; mains €17-19, menus €22-31; ☀noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Thu-Tue Feb-mid-Nov) No, it's not a pub, but a traditional *maison de village* (old stone terraced house) with a snug, colourful dining room and an inviting, leafy terrace in warm weather. Enjoy wholesome meat or fish dishes served with fresh seasonal vegetables.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (📞 04 28 91 24 10; [www.vallon-pont-darc.com](http://www.vallon-pont-darc.com); Pôle de la Gare Routière, Vallon-Pont-d'Arc; ☀️ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat; 📶) Has some useful leaflets on walking itineraries and lists of canoeing and kayaking outlets. In Vallon-Pont-d'Arc village centre.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Four daily SNCF buses link Vallon-Pont-d'Arc's Gare Routière (located next to the tourist office) with Montélimar's train station (€11.40, 1¼ hours) and Valence's TGV station (€21.50, 2½ hours).



## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

3.3 million

### NUMBER OF PEAKS ABOVE 3500M

40

### BEST FONDUE

Crèmerie du Glacier  
(p516)

### BEST OFF-PISTE

La Vallée Blanche  
(p512)

### BEST ALPINE CITADEL

Briançon (p550)

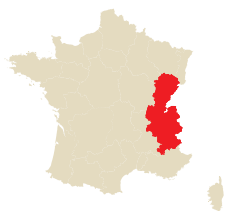


### WHEN TO GO

**Dec–Feb** Ski season begins, Venetian carnival livens up Anney and *vin jaune* (golden-hued, slow-matured wine) is poured in Jura.

**Mar & Apr** Long sunny days meet enduring snow; brace yourself for end-of-season parties.

**Jul & Aug** The Tour de France whizzes by, and it's hiking prime time.



# French Alps & the Jura Mountains

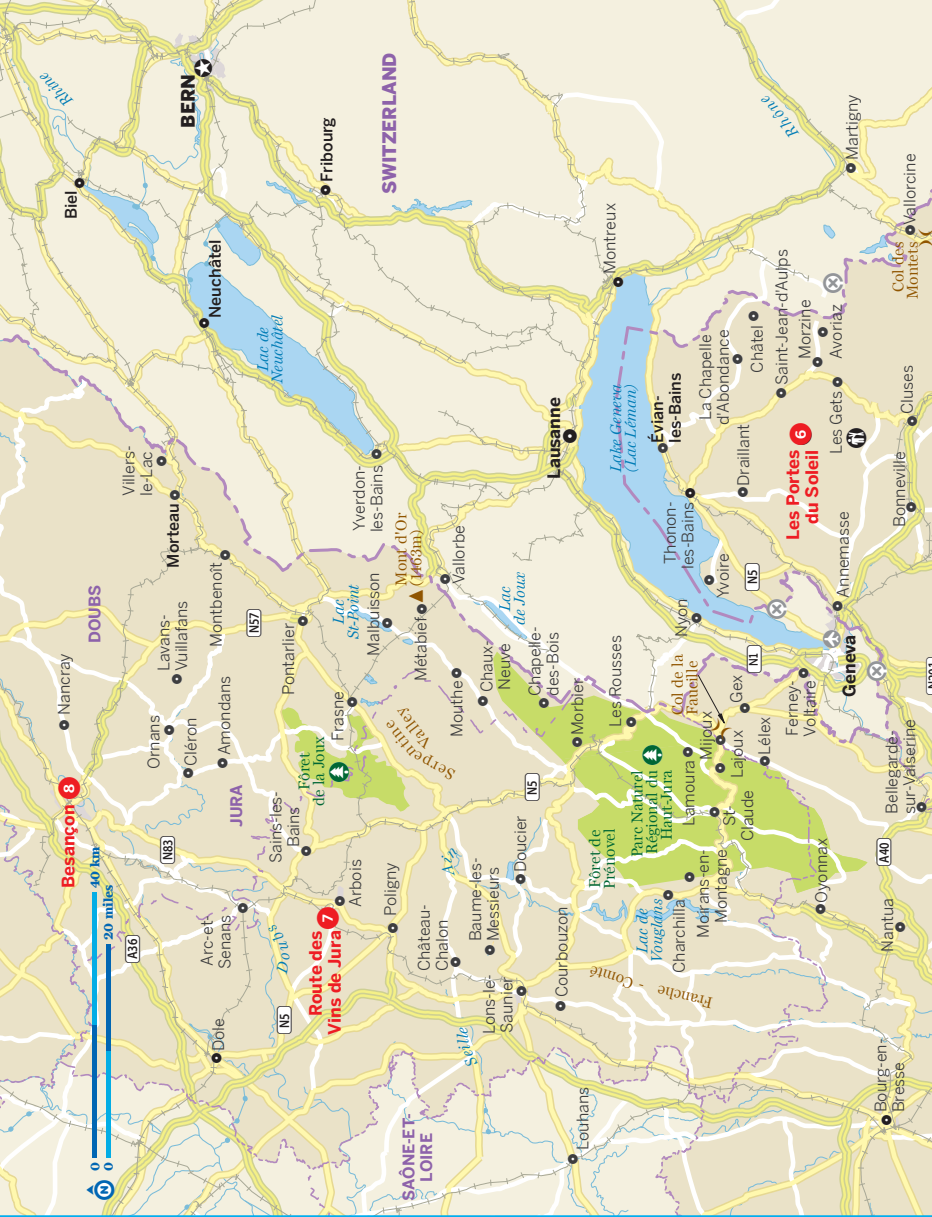
**H**igh up in the French Alps, it's enthralling to imagine the forces that shaped these saw-edged peaks. Rumbling across seven European countries, the Alps reach their maximum height at Mont Blanc (4807m). Buckling northwest along the Swiss border are the less mighty Jura Mountains, where life unfolds along slower rhythms: winemaking, cross-country skiing and tinkling cow bells. Routes into the Alps' otherworldly realms are many: aboard cable cars that fly to knee-trembling heights, or in the company of mountain guides who set out into snowy oblivion. Winter or summer, this forbidding terrain commands respect: the French Alps' mirror lakes, dramatic granite spires and crevasse-scarred glaciers form one of Europe's true epics.

## INCLUDES

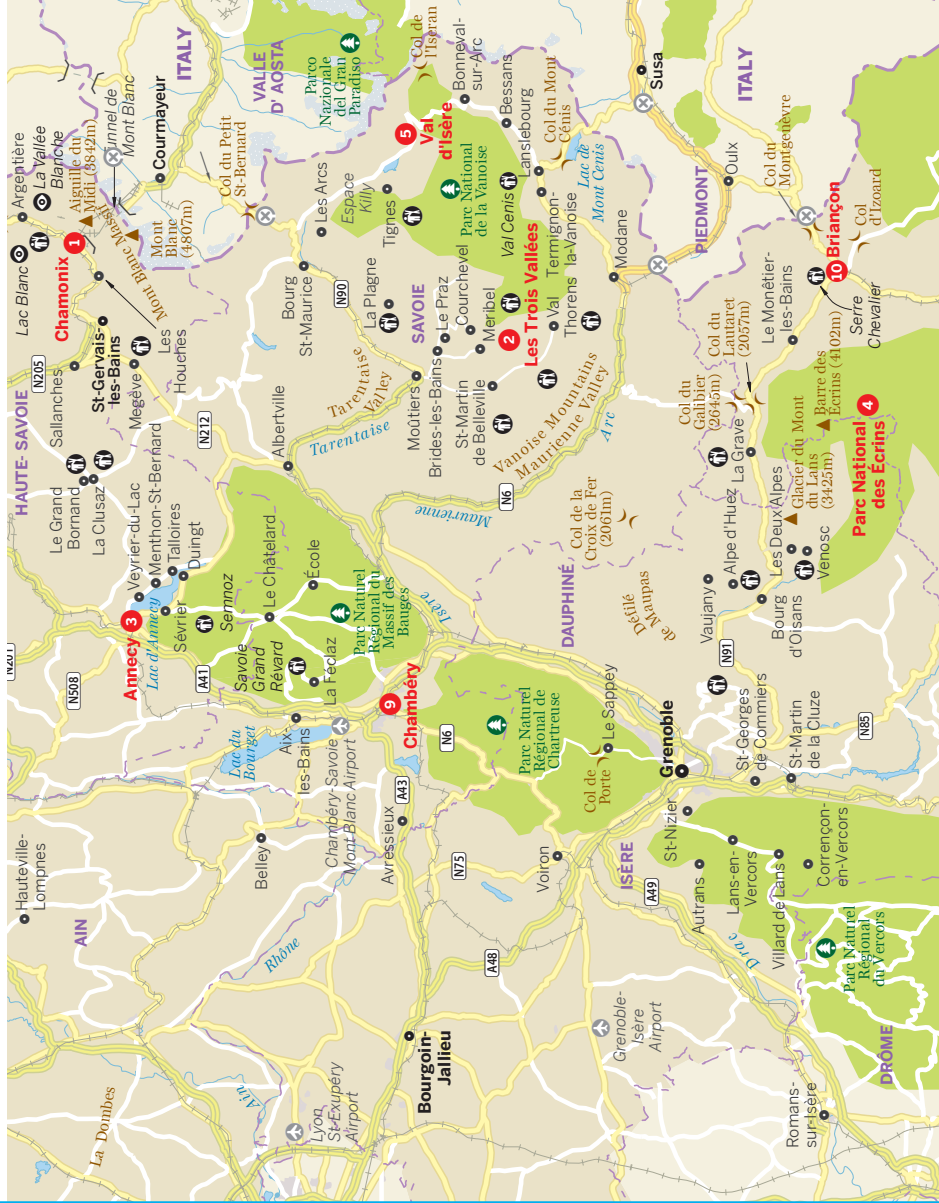
Chamonix . . . . .	510	Grenoble . . . . .	539
Les Portes du Soleil .	520	Parc National des Écrins . . . . .	546
Annecy . . . . .	523	Besançon . . . . .	552
Chambéry . . . . .	528	Parc Naturel Régional du Haut-Jura . . . . .	558
Les Trois Vallées . . .	531		
Val d'Isère . . . . .	534		

## French Alps & the Jura Mountains Highlights

- 1 Chamonix** (p510) Feeling your heart hammer as you ascend – or descend – the glacial steeples in the shadow of Mont Blanc.
- 2 Les Trois Vallées** (p531) Thundering across the world's biggest ski area before frolicking in après-ski bars.
- 3 Annecy** (p523) Navigating the medieval lanes of the 'Alpine Venice' towards its stately château.
- 4 Parc National des Écrins** (p546) Tackling almost 700km of high-country hiking trails among icy lakes and craggy peaks.
- 5 Val d'Isère** (p534) Chasing







powdery bliss by day, spa-soaking or fine-dining by night.

**6 Portes du Soleil** (p520) Being spoilt for snowy choice between tree-lined runs, border-crossing trails and the infamously steep Swiss Wall.

**7 Route des Vins du Jura** (p552) Sipping golden vin jaune (a slow-matured regional wine) amid bucolic vines.

**8 Besançon** (p552) Surveying distant peaks from 17th-century ramparts.

**9 Chambéry** (p528) Wandering between centuries-old townhouses and trompe l'oeil murals.

**10 Briançon** (p550) Tackling the best ski area you've never heard of, then retreating to a fairy-tale citadel.

## SAVOIE

The mountainous Savoie extends from Lake Geneva's southern shores to western Europe's highest peak, mighty Mont Blanc (4807m).

Savoie has been a magnet for health-conscious, well-heeled jet-setters since an 18th-century thermal spa boom in towns like Aix-les-Bains and Évian-les-Bains. Today, however, it's winter sports that are Savoie's *raison d'être*. Snowheads travel far and wide for resorts that are among the largest and most snow-sure in Europe. The *crème de la crème* are Les Trois Vallées, Chamonix and Val d'Isère, which glitter with premium accommodation and restaurants. Slightly easier on the wallet and still accessing wondrous snow are Les Portes du Soleil and St-Gervais.

Come summer, mountain bikers and hikers venture to the rugged, cave-speckled regional parks of Chartreuse, Vanoise and Bauges.

Almost as pleasing is Savoie's traditional cuisine, a farmhouse menu of melted cheese, *saucisson sec* (dried sausage) and herbal liqueurs – burned off rapidly by mountain adventures (we hope).

## Chamonix

POP 8611 / ELEV 1035M

Mountains loom large almost everywhere you look in Chamonix. Skiers and sightseers are launched by cable car to heights of 3842m on the Mont Blanc massif, while the glacial void of La Vallée Blanche – one of Europe's most fêted off-piste adventures – beckons to the brave. Skiers and boarders have a choice of pistes along the valley, while in summer the same lifts access hiking and biking trails.

Chamonix has a long history as a mountaineering and winter-sports hub. Rediscovered as a tourist destination by Brits William Windham and Richard Pococke in 1741, it hosted the first ever Winter Olympics in 1924.

For all the desolate beauty of the mountains, downtown Chamonix hums with life. Streets are lined with post-piste restaurants, outdoor gear stores and boisterous bars. If you do the nightlife justice, it'll exhaust you as much as the mountains.

## Sights

### ★ Aiguille du Midi

VIEWPOINT

The great rocky fang of the Aiguille du Midi (3842m), rising from the Mont Blanc massif, is one of Chamonix' most distinctive features. The 360-degree views of the French, Swiss and Italian Alps from the summit are (quite literally) breathtaking. Year-round, you can float a cool 2800m up from Chamonix to the Aiguille du Midi on the vertiginous **Téléphérique de l'Aiguille du Midi** ([www.montblancnaturalresort.com](http://www.montblancnaturalresort.com); place de l'Aiguille du Midi; adult/child return to Aiguille du Midi €65/55.30, to Plan de l'Aiguille €33.50/28.50; ☀ 6.30am-5pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Sep-Jun). Dress warmly: even in summer, temperatures can be positively frigid.

Up top, you can take in the view in literally every direction (including straight down, thanks to the glass-floored **Step into the Void**), and ski back into town via the glaciers of the Vallée Blanche (p512). Halfway up, **Plan de l'Aiguille** (2317m) is a terrific place to start hikes or paraglide (p514); one-way tickets are available.

From the Aiguille du Midi, between late May and September, you can continue for a further 50 minutes of mind-blowing scenery – think glaciers and spurs, seracs and shimmering ice fields – in the smaller bubbles of the **Télécabine Panoramique Mont Blanc** (Aiguille du Midi; adult/child return from Chamonix €97/81; ☀ 9am-4pm Jul & Aug, to 3pm late May, Jun & Sep) to Pointe Helbronner (3466m) on the France-Italy border. The **SkyWay Monte Bianco** ([www.montebianco.com](http://www.montebianco.com); Pointe Helbronner; adult/child €52/36.40; ☀ Jun-Sep) cable car can then take you a further 4km to the Val d'Aosta ski resort of Courmayeur, on the Italian side of Monte Bianco.

### ★ Mer de Glace

GLACIER

**FREE** France's largest glacier, the 'Sea of Ice', flows 7km down the northern side of Mont Blanc, scarred with crevasses formed by the immense pressure of its 90m-per-year movement. The **Train du Montanvers** (☎ 04 50 53 22 75; [www.montblancnaturalresort.com](http://www.montblancnaturalresort.com); 35 place de la Mer de Glace; adult/child return €34/28.90; ☀ 10am-4pm late Dec-mid-Mar, to 5pm mid-Mar-Apr), a picturesque, 5km-long cog railway opened in 1909, links Gare du Montanvers with Montanvers (1913m), from where a cable car (free) and then 580 stairs descend to reach the glacier and the **Grotte de Glace** **FREE**.



On a more sombre note, look out for plaques on the walk down indicating the height of the glacier between 1985 and 2018 – it's one thing to read about climate change and shrinking glaciers, but seeing it in person is particularly alarming. Because every year more steps need to be added to reach the glacier (there were only three in 1988), glacier access will likely be relocated 500m up valley in the near future.

On foot, the Mer de Glace can be reached from Plan de l'Aiguille on the Grand Balcon Nord trail (p513). The two-hour uphill trail from Chamonix starts near the summer luge track. Traversing the crevassed glacier requires proper equipment and an experienced guide.

### Le Brévent

VIEWPOINT

The highest peak on the western side of the Chamonix Valley, Le Brévent (2525m) has tremendous views of the Mont Blanc massif, myriad hiking trails through a nature reserve, ledges to paraglide from and some vertiginous black runs.

Reach it by linking the **Télécabine de Planpraz** (29 rte Henriette d'Angeville; from Chamonix return adult/child €18.50/15.70; ☀ 8.20am–5.30pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Sep–Jun), 400m west of the tourist office, with the **Téléphérique du Brévent** ([www.montblancnaturalresort.com](http://www.montblancnaturalresort.com); from Chamonix return adult/child €33.50/28.50; ☀ mid-Dec–mid-Apr & mid-Jun–mid-Sep). Plenty of family-friendly trails begin at **Planpraz** (2000m), and the Liaison cable car connects to the adjacent ski fields of La Flégère.

### Musée Alpin

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 50 55 29 46; [www.musee-alpin-chamonix.fr](http://www.musee-alpin-chamonix.fr); 89 av Michel Croz; adult/child €6/free; ☀ 2–6pm Wed–Mon, 10am–1pm & 2–6pm Wed–Mon Jul, Aug & school holidays) This diverting two-level museum allows you to wander through Chamonix history, from butter moulds and farming tools of yore to the dawn of the 18th-century tourism boom. There's mountain history galore, including the early days of the high mountain guides and fascinating stories of the first female alpinists. The museum is expected to close for major renovations in 2021; check online for the latest updates.

### Musée des Cristaux

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 50 54 78 39; [www.mineralogie-chamonix.org](http://www.mineralogie-chamonix.org); 615 allée Recteur Payot; adult/child €5.90/free; ☀ 2–6pm Sep–Jan & May, 10am–1pm & 2–6pm Apr, Jun–Aug & school holidays) Beautifully lit

collections of crystals, many from around Mont Blanc, are exposed within this small museum. The adjoining **Espace Tairraz**, which underwent renovations in 2020, focuses on the art and science of mountaineering with creative interactive displays and photos and videos of seemingly impossible ascents. Situated behind the church.



## Activities

### Winter

Extreme descents, glorious off-piste terrain and unbeatable Mont Blanc views – skiing in Chamonix is so darn fantastic that skiers don't even mind that accessing the slopes involves lots of land transport to and from the lifts.

Best for beginners are **Le Tour & Vallorcine**, **Les Planards**, **Les Chosalets**, **Les Houches** and **La Vormaine**. For speed and challenge, it has to be **Brévent-Flégère** (1030m to 2525m), above Chamonix, and **Les Grands Montets** (1235m to 3300m), accessible from the attractive village of Argentière, 9km north of the town. Boarders seeking big air zip across to the kickers and rails at **Les Grands Montets snow park** and the natural halfpipe in **Le Tour**. And backcountry bliss is never far off – sign up for a ski touring trip with a certified guide (p515).

Chamonix' ski season runs from mid-December to mid-April.

### LIFT PASSES

Details of all passes can be viewed at [www.montblancnaturalresort.com](http://www.montblancnaturalresort.com).

**Chamonix Le Pass** (one/two/six days €55/107/275) Gets you up to most Chamonix ski domains, around 118km of pistes.

**Mont Blanc Multipass** (one/two/six days €67/80/125.50) In summer, this pass affords access to all operating lifts and the Montanvers–Mer de Glace train (p510).

**Mont Blanc Unlimited Pass** (one/two/six days €67/133/327) A worthwhile investment for serious skiers, this pass grants access to all lifts in the Chamonix Valley, Courmayeur in Italy and Verbier in Switzerland, plus the Aiguille du Midi cable car (p510) and the Montanvers–Mer de Glace train.

## Chamonix



### ★ La Vallée Blanche

(☺ Jan-Apr) This jaw-dropping 2800m descent is the ride of a lifetime and probably Europe's most famous off-piste experience. Beginning at the Aiguille du Midi, the 20km route darts over several crevasse-riddled glaciers and returns to Chamonix either

SKIING

through the forest or on the Montenvers train. Skiers must be comfortable on un-groomed terrain, confident on red pistes and in good shape; the reward is access to a landscape of eerie, unearthly beauty. The route can only be tackled with a *guide de haute montagne* (certified mountain guide).

## Chamonix

### 📍 Sights

- 1 Musée Alpin .....C3  
2 Musée des Cristaux .....A3

### 🏔 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 3 Association Internationale des Guides du Mont Blanc .....A4  
4 Centre Sportif Richard Bozon .....C1  
5 Cham' Aventure .....B3  
6 Chamonix Experience.....C6  
7 Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix .....B3  
8 Ice Skating Rink.....C1  
Office de Haute Montagne.....(see 7)  
9 Slash .....B2  
10 Téléphérique de l'Aiguille du Midi .....B6

### 🏠 Sleeping

- 11 Grand Hôtel des Alpes.....B4  
12 Hotel L'Oustalet.....B5

- 13 Hôtel Richemond.....A4  
14 La Folie Douce.....B2  
15 Pointe Isabelle.....C3

### ☕ Eating

- 16 Café du Génépý.....B2  
17 Hibou Deli.....B1  
18 Le Cap Horn.....B3  
19 Le Chaudron.....B3  
20 Munchie .....B3  
21 Pizzeria des Moulins.....B2  
22 Sesame .....A4

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 23 Bar'd Up .....B2  
24 Bistrot des Sports.....B2  
25 Elevation 1904.....C3  
26 Jekyll & Hyde.....A6  
27 Les Caves.....B3  
28 MBC .....D1

If you don't mind splitting the costs with strangers, the Compagnie des Guides (p515) runs daily group trips for an unbeatable €96 per person. The Aiguille du Midi ticket is purchased separately. You may need to rent crampons depending on the conditions; a mountaineering backpack is essential. Your guide will provide you with an avalanche beacon and mountaineering harness (for crevasse rescue).

### Summer

Summer in Chamonix officially runs from mid-June to mid-September, though if you arrive a week or two earlier or later, you'll avoid the crowds – just know many cable cars won't be running. When enough snow melts (usually mid-June), hikers can take their pick of 350km of spectacular marked trails, many easy to get to by cable car. In late June and July there's enough light to walk until at least 9pm.

*Balcon* (literally 'balcony') trails, both *grand* and *petit*, run along both sides of the valley. The challenging Grand Balcon Nord (p513) is up around 2000m, while the three-hour **Petit Balcon Sud** (from Argentière to Servoz) is slightly above the valley's villages at 1250m.

### Lac Blanc

HIKING

This jewel-like glacial lake (2352m), surrounded by the razor peaks of the Aiguilles Rouges, is usually accessible to hikers from mid- or late June through October. Two gentle hours from **Télesiège de l'Index** (www.montblancnaturalresort.com; adult/child return

from Les Praz €30/25.50; ☺ Dec-Apr & mid-Jun-Sep) lead along the western valley to stunning **Lac Blanc**. There's also the steeper trail from the new Télécabine de la Flégère (p513).

Reserve a bunk at the **Refuge du Lac Blanc** (☎ 06 02 05 08 82; www.refugedulacblanc.fr; dm incl half-board adult/child €56/50; ☺ mid-Jun-Sep), a wooden chalet famed for its top-of-Europe Mont Blanc views.

For a calf-stiffening challenge, experienced trekkers can take the 1050-vertical-metre hike from Argentière (3½ hours one way).

### Grand Balcon Sud Trail

HIKING

This easygoing trail skirts the western side of the valley at an altitude of around 2000m, commanding terrific views across the valley to Mont Blanc. To avoid hoofing it 900m up the slope, take the **Télécabine de la Flégère** (35 rte des Tines; return adult/child from Les Praz €19/16.20; ☺ 8.50am-4.30pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) from Les Praz or the Télécabine de Planpraz (p511) from Chamonix; walking between the two takes about two hours.

### Grand Balcon Nord Trail

HIKING

(☺ mid-Jun-Oct) Summer walking trails you can pick up at Plan de l'Aiguille – halfway up the Téléphérique de l'Aiguille du Midi (p510) – include the challenging Grand Balcon Nord, which takes you to the dazzling Mer de Glace (p510), from where you can walk or take the Train du Montenvers (p510) down to Chamonix.

## CHILD'S PLAY

There's plenty to amuse the kids around Chamonix. In the warm season, little ones will love getting close to free-roaming chamois, ibex and whistling marmots at the **Parc de Merlet** (www.parcdeemerlet.com; 2495 chemin de Merlet, Les Houches; adult/child €8/5; ☀ 9.30am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May, Jun, Sep), 13km by road (5km on foot) southwest of central Chamonix in Coupeau (across the Arve River from Les Houches). Or treat them to a fun-packed day on the beginner ski area or 1.3km alpine coaster at the **Domaine des Planards** (☎ 04 50 53 08 97; www.planards.fr; 351 chemin du Pied du Grépon; ski passes per day adult/child €27/25, 1/6 luge rides €8/39; ☀ ski area 9am-5pm Dec-Apr, luge 10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 2-5pm Dec-Apr), near the chairlift in Les Planards, 500m east of Gare du Montenvers.

There's a wide variety of day-long and half-day outdoor programs tailored for children aged three to seven, eight to 12, and 13 to 17 at **Cham' Aventure** (☎ 04 50 53 55 70; www.cham-aventure.com; 190 place de l'Église, Maison de la Montagne; ☀ hours vary) – biking, canyoning, treasure hunts, a ropes course and more (from €42).

Back in Chamonix, the indoor **ice skating rink** (☎ 04 50 53 12 36; 165 rte de la Patinoire; adult/child €6.60/4.90, skate hire €4.40; ☀ 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 3.30-6.30pm Sat & Sun, plus 9-11pm Wed) provides amusement when the weather blows in, as do sports activities at the adjacent **Centre Sportif Richard Bozon** (☎ 04 50 53 23 70; www.chamonix.net/english/leisure/sport-centers/richard-bozon; 214 av de la Plage; pool adult/child €6.60/4.80; ☀ noon-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 2-7.30pm Sat & Sun), with indoor and (in summer) outdoor swimming pools.

## Cycling

Lower-altitude trails, such as the Petit Balcon Sud (p513), are perfect for biking. Most outdoor-activity specialists arrange guided mountain-biking expeditions. Talk to bike 'n' board shop **Slash** (☎ 09 73 24 81 84; www.slashchamonix.com; 404 rue Joseph Valot; bike rental per day €30-95; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm) about bike hire and trail recommendations.

## Paragliding

On clear days in summer and winter, the sky above Chamonix is speckled with colourful paragliders wheeling down from the heights. Tandem flights from Planpraz (2000m) start at around €110 per person; from the Plan de l'Aiguille (experienced flyers only), count on €300. **AirSports Chamonix** (☎ 06 76 90 03 70; www.airsportschamonix.fr) and **Summits** (☎ 04 50 53 50 14; www.summits.fr) are trusted local operators; book a couple of days ahead.

## Sleeping

All lodging in the Chamonix valley includes a *carte d'hôte* (guest card), which grants you free transport on public buses and the Mont Blanc Express train between Servoz and Vallorcine.

## **Le Chamoniard Volant**

HOSTEL €  
(☎ 04 50 53 14 09; www.chamoniard.com; 45 rte de la Frasse; dm/sheets €23/6; ☀ Dec-Sep;  

Long a favourite of low-budget climbers and ski bums, this basic place has 4-, 6- and 8-bunk dorms, plus one giant 18-person room (€3 cheaper); bathrooms and showers are downstairs. Self-caterers can use the kitchen, and reasonable meals (including packed lunches from €7.90) are available.

Route de la Frasse is 1km north of town, along rte du Bouchet.

## **Le Vert Hôtel**

HOSTEL €  
(☎ 04 50 53 13 58; www.verthotel.com; 964 rte des Gaillands; dm/d from €40/90;   Surprisingly affordable, Le Vert attracts outdoorsy types who'd rather spend their money on gear than lodging. Accommodation runs from basic dorms to comfy doubles and there's a really great pan-Asian restaurant. *Navettes* (shuttle buses) to central Chamonix, 2km to the northeast, stop right outside.

## **La Folie Douce**

HOSTEL €€  
(☎ 04 50 55 10 00; www.lafoliedoucehotels.com; 823 allée Recteur Payot; dm/d/f from €60/250/350;    The après-ski brand has taken the party to a new level with this reimagined, 250-room, belle-époque palace, perched pretty above the town. Guaranteed to keep you entertained, La Folie offers everything from aerial dance performances and live bands to cabaret dinners, after-hours clubbing and yoga classes in the spa –

and let's not forget the swooning views from the outdoor terrace.

And for those who prefer to sleep? Bring earplugs. Four-person dorms have no privacy curtains and are a bit of a squeeze, but they do come with en-suite bathrooms and lockers. Doubles are considerably more plush, with glass-panelled bathrooms, Nespresso machines and industrial-chic design.

### Hôtel Richemond

HOTEL €€

(☎04 50 53 08 85; www.richemond.fr; 228 rue du Docteur Paccard; s/d/q from €69/109/140; ☺mid-Dec–mid-Apr & mid-Jun–mid-Sep; 📍🚶🚰🚰) In a grand old building constructed in 1914 (and run by the same family ever since), this hotel – as friendly as it is central – has 52 spacious rooms with views of either Mont Blanc or Le Brévent; some are pleasantly old-fashioned (retaining original furniture and cast-iron bathtubs); others are recently renovated in white, black and beige. Outstanding value.

### Hôtel Aiguille du Midi

HOTEL €€

(☎04 50 53 00 65; www.hotel-aiguilledumidi.com; 479 chemin Napoléon, Les Bossons; d €112-180; ☺mid-Dec–early Apr & mid-May–Sep; 📍🚶🚰🚰) Run by the same family since 1908, the peaceful Aiguille du Midi has stunning views of its namesake. There are three styles of comfortable rooms (including accessible options), an outdoor heated pool for summer fun and an excellent restaurant. Bus and train stops to Chamonix, 3km north-east, are right around the corner.

### Pointe Isabelle

HOTEL €€

(☎04 50 53 12 87; www.pointeisabelle.com; 165 av Michel Croz; d/f €164/268; 📍🚶🚰🚰) Named for 19th-century British mountaineer Isabella Straton, whose grandchildren opened the hotel, this pleasing spot lies just west of Chamonix train station. Loosely vintage in theme, Pointe Isabelle has rooms with a striking violet colour scheme, very comfy beds and glossy modern bathrooms.

### Hotel L'Oustalet

HOTEL €€

(☎04 50 55 54 99; www.hotel-oustalet.com; 330 rue du Lyret; s/d/f €130/165/220; ☺mid-Dec–mid-May & mid-Jun–Sep; 📍🚶🚰🚰) A block from the Aiguille du Midi cable car, this lift-equipped hotel has 15 plain but well-maintained rooms, snugly built of thick pine, opening onto balconies with Mont Blanc views. To unwind, curl up by the fire with a *chocolat chaud* (hot chocolate) or loll about in the Jacuzzi, *hammam* or sauna – or, in summer, dip into the garden pool.

### ★ Grand Hôtel des Alpes

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(☎04 50 55 37 80; www.grandhoteldesalpes.com; 75 rue du Docteur Paccard; d/ste from €295/585; ☺mid-Dec–mid-Apr & mid-June–late Sep; 📍🚶🚰🚰) Exuding belle-époque charm, this buttercup and powder-blue hotel is one of the prettiest buildings in Chamonix. Established in 1840, the hotel's 30 rooms have a classic style: flowing drapes, wood-panelled ceilings and glossy marble bathrooms. There's a glamorous-feeling wellness centre, and in winter a scrumptious teatime cake buffet

## **i** TREK PLANNER

It takes three years of rigorous training to become an *accompagnateur en moyenne montagne* (mountain leader) and a full five years to be certified as a *guide de haute montagne* (high-mountain guide), though many train for a decade. Only the latter are authorised to lead groups on to glaciers or on mountaineering ascents. Recommended companies include the following:

**Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix** (☎04 50 53 00 88; www.chamonix-guides.com; 190 place de l'Église, Maison de la Montagne; ☺8.30am–7pm mid-Dec–late Apr & mid-June–mid-Sep, closed Sun & Mon rest of year)

**Association Internationale des Guides du Mont Blanc** (☎04 50 53 27 05; www.guides-du-montblanc.com; 9 passage de la Varlope)

**Chamonix Experience** (☎04 50 93 23 14; www.chamex.com; 610 rte Blanche; ☺9am–noon & 3–7pm Dec–early May & Jun–Sep)

Inside the Maison de Montagne, the **Office de Haute Montagne** (OHM; ☎04 50 53 22 08; www.chamoniarde.com; 190 place de l'Église, Maison de la Montagne; ☺9am–noon & 3–6pm Mon–Sat) has information on trails, hiking conditions, weather forecasts and *refuges* (mountain huts), plus topoguides and maps that are free to consult.



(4pm to 6pm) greets skiers back from the slopes.

### Refuge du Monteners

HOTEL €€€

(☎04 50 53 87 70; [www.refugedumonteners.com](http://www.refugedumonteners.com); Le Monteners; half-board dm/d/f from €80/250/490; ☺Nov-Sep; 📶📶) There's just one way to access this iconic mountain address, overlooking the shimmering ice of Mer de Glace – by the Train du Monteners (p510) cog railway. Its 20 designer-chic, wood-panelled rooms have glacier views, and hikers and families are well catered for with an insanely stylish 10-bed dorm, cosy double rooms and comfortable family options. Rates include dinner and breakfast.

The Grand Hôtel du Monteners first opened its doors in 1880 to provide food and shelter for Chamonix's early mountaineers, and was remodelled in 2017 as a chic boutique hotel and glamorous hostel.



### Eating

#### Pizzeria des Moulins

PIZZA €

(☎06 68 70 99 82; [www.facebook.com/pizzeria-desmoulins](http://www.facebook.com/pizzeria-desmoulins); 107 rue des Moulins; pizzas €9-16; ☺noon-midnight) Cham's best pizzas, piled with buffalo mozzarella, forest mushrooms and Savoyard ham, puff up in the oven of this little gourmet joint. Reservations are essential for dining in, but you can always get takeaway if (or rather, when) they're packed with ravenous diners.

#### Hibou Deli

DELI €

(☎04 50 96 65 13; [www.hibou-chamonix.com](http://www.hibou-chamonix.com); 416 rue Joseph Vallot; mains €9.50-13.50; ☺11am-8.30pm Mon-Sat mid-Dec-early May & mid-Jun-early

Oct; 📶📶) This minuscule shopfront kitchen nourishes fondue-weary diners with big portions of sticky miso aubergine, cauliflower korma and other earthy dishes inspired by North African and Asian cuisine. There are a few tiny stools to perch on but you might prefer to grab and go. Plentiful vegan and gluten-free options, too.

#### Sesame

CAFE €

(☎04 56 66 02 92; [www.sesame-montblanc.com](http://www.sesame-montblanc.com); 70 ave Ravel le Rouge; mains €12.50-16.50; ☺10.30am-11pm Tue-Sun; 📶📶) Those on a plant-based diet will want to drop by this chill hangout, which is Chamonix' only all-organic, vegan restaurant. Main courses change daily, but expect the likes of portobello burgers, stuffed aubergines, sweet potato gnocchi and fennel salad, plus cold-pressed juices.

#### Café du Génépy

CAFE €

(18 impasse du Génépy; menus €6.90-11.90; ☺8am-6.30pm; 📶) Casual and modern, the Génépy is great for an inexpensive but quality meal at any time of day: pastries, soups, quiches and plenty of sweet treats lead the way.

#### ★Le Cap Horn

FRENCH, SEAFOOD €€

(☎04 50 21 80 80; [www.caphorn-chamonix.com](http://www.caphorn-chamonix.com); 74 rue des Moulins; lunch/dinner menus from €23.50/37; ☺noon-3pm & 7-10.30pm; 📶) Housed in a candlelit, two-storey chalet decorated with model sailing boats – joint homage to the Alps and Cape Horn – this highly praised restaurant serves French and Asian dishes such as pan-seared duck breast with honey and soy sauce, an ample sushi menu,

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### A TRADITIONAL FOREST LUNCH

**Crèmerie du Glacier** (☎04 50 54 07 52; [www.lacremierieduglacier.fr](http://www.lacremierieduglacier.fr); 766 chemin de la Glacière, Argentière; mains €7-15, fondues €15-20; ☺noon-2pm & 7-9pm mid-Dec-mid-May & late Jun-mid-Sep, closed Wed in winter) A wooden forest chalet is the setting for chef Claudy's *croûte aux fromages* (bread drenched in a secret white-wine sauce, topped with cheese and baked) and other cheesy Savoyard delights, including *gratin d'oeufs* (creamy baked eggs) and half a dozen kinds of fondue (the best with forest mushrooms). Reserve by phone and follow the signpost from the roundabout near the bridge at the southern entrance to Argentière.

To get there, you have several options. In winter, ski down on Piste de la Pierre à Ric (red) or cross-country ski over on Piste de la Moraine. In summer, hike over from the Petit Balcon Nord trail, 15 minutes away.

In winter or summer, walk or drive east for about 1km from the base of Téléphérique Lognan-Les Grands Montets; if you're equipped with snow tyres, take one-lane chemin de la Glacière.

and a marvellous range of seafood like red tuna *taquitos* and fish stew. Reserve for dinner Friday and Saturday in winter and summer.

### Munchie

FUSION €€

(☎04 50 53 45 41; [www.streamcreek.com/munchie](http://www.streamcreek.com/munchie); 87 rue des Moulins; small plates €14.50-16, mains €25-28; ☎7pm-2am) Franco-Japanese-Scandinavian fusion may not be the most obvious recipe for success, but this casual, Swedish-skipped restaurant has been making diners happy since 1997. There's a sharing plate concept with sushi plates resembling little works of art, and the excellent seafood and passionfruit ceviche, teriyaki duck and alcoholic Oreo milkshakes have brought local acclaim. Reservations recommended.

### Le Chaudron

FRENCH €€

(☎04 50 53 40 34; 79 rue des Moulins; mains €24-33; ☎7-9.30pm or later mid-Dec-Apr & mid-Jun-Sep) Making stylish use of a 100-year-old mule stable (the faux cowhide recalling its rustic origins), the Cauldron offers Savoyard cuisine with a twist, in a cosy setting. There's venison ravioli with pears, while dishes like scallop risotto and wood-grilled steak are refined without ever feeling fussy.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Whether you're looking for a glammed-up cocktail bar, a spit-and-sawdust pub, or something in between, Chamonix nightlife rocks. For a bar crawl, head to central rue des Moulins, where wall-to-wall watering holes keep buzzing until about 1am. La Folie Douce Hotel (p514) also keeps the party going until the wee hours.

### Elevation 1904

BAR

(☎04 50 53 00 52; [www.elevation1904.com](http://www.elevation1904.com); 259 ave Michel Croz; ☎7.30am-1.30am) Parka-clad revelers leave the skis and boards outside and crowd into Elevation after a hard day's shredding to refuel with cocktails, cold beer, filling grub and the occasional DJ night.

### MBC

MICROBREWERY

(Micro Brasserie de Chamonix; ☎04 50 53 61 59; [www.mbcx.com](http://www.mbcx.com); 350 rte du Bouchet; ☎4pm-1am Mon-Thu, 10am-1am Fri-Sun) This Canadian-run microbrewery is one of Chamonix' most unpretentious and gregarious watering holes, pouring its own locally made blonde, stout, pale ale, German-style wheat beer and mystery beer of the month. Soaking it up is a

menu of huge burgers, poutine and vegetarian choices.

### Bistrot des Sports

PUB

(☎04 50 53 00 46; 182 rue Joseph Vallot; ☎8am-2am) In the 19th century, climbing parties used to assemble in the Bistrot des Sports before setting out to conquer Mont Blanc. A merry medley of mountaineers, skiers and tourists still gather in this welcoming bar and brasserie, whose worn wooden benches and retro sports posters whisper to the good old days. Closes earlier if it's not busy.

### Bar'd Up

BAR

(123 rue des Moulins; ☎4pm-late) This Anglophone dive bar borrows Irish, English and Aussie insignia in its bid to be the friendliest, grungiest place in Cham. Setting the scene are a pool table, sports screenings, stray surf boards and a low ceiling. Accommodating staff reel you in, and the reasonably priced drinks and music (live and recorded) finish you off.

### Les Caves

BAR

(☎04 50 21 80 80; [www.caphorn-chamonix.com](http://www.caphorn-chamonix.com); 80 rue des Moulins; ☎6pm-2am mid-Dec-Oct) Spread over four levels with cosy hidden corners, this futuristic/rustic disco chalet – stone archways, fancy disco balls, sleek leatherette seats – transforms itself from suave jazz and cocktail bar into a buzzing danceteria after 10.30pm.

### Jekyll & Hyde

PUB

(☎04 50 55 99 70; [www.facebook.com/jekyllchamonix](http://www.facebook.com/jekyllchamonix); 71 rte des Pélerins, Chamonix Sud; ☎6pm-2am; ☎) This British-owned après-ski mainstay has a split personality: upstairs the 'Jekyll' has really good pub food (from seafood tapas and sweet-and-sour duck to plenty of veggie options), live music, DJs and comedy; check their Facebook page for events. Downstairs, the 'Hyde' is cosier and more relaxed. Both have good Irish beer and a friendly vibe.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 50 53 00 24; [www.chamonix.com](http://www.chamonix.com); 85 place du Triangle de l'Amitié; ☎9am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep & mid-Dec-Apr, shorter hours rest of year; ☎)

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

It's worth dropping by the **bus station** (☎04 50 53 01 15; 234 av Courmayeur, Chamonix Sud;

## STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN?

Every year, an astounding 20,000 people attempt to summit Mont Blanc, and every year, at least a dozen of them – sometimes more – die along the way: rockfall, loss of balance, avalanches, adverse weather and poor judgement are the primary culprits. In 2019, new regulations were put in place to ensure all climbers prebook a bed in one of three huts (Goûter, Tête Rousse and Nid d'Aigle), but authorities stopped short of instituting a permit system to further limit the crowds.

Although some guides commonly portray the ascent as technically undemanding ('a long walk' is a popular description), Mont Blanc is no place to begin your mountaineering career. If you've never worn a pair of crampons, climbed above 3500m, been caught by a thunderstorm or thick fog above the treeline, or performed a self-arrest with an ice axe, you're better off gaining experience on a less crowded mountain, where there is no pressure to summit. Even with a professional guide, the Alps can be a deadly playground, and warming temperatures have made them more so. Carefully assess your capabilities and motivation before signing up for the trip of a lifetime, or it could very well be your last.

🕒 tickets 8am-noon & 1.15-6.30pm in winter, shorter hours rest of year) for timetables and reservations (highly recommended) or you can book tickets online on BlaBlaBus ([www.ouibus.com](http://www.ouibus.com)). Direct services reach Annecy (from €14, 1½ hours, four daily) and Lyon Perrache (from €21, 3¼ hours, at least one daily).

International routes include the following:

**Courmayeur, Italy** One-way €6, one hour, four daily. Run by FlixBus ([www.flixbus.com](http://www.flixbus.com)). Savda ([www.savda.it](http://www.savda.it)) also runs buses for €15.

**Geneva, Switzerland** (airport and bus station) One-way €14, 1½ to two hours. Several companies run this trip, including BlaBlaBus.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

➤ Chamonix is linked to Courmayeur in Italy's Val d'Aosta by the 11.5km-long **Tunnel de Mont Blanc** ([www.atmb.com](http://www.atmb.com); toll one-way/return €46.30/57.80).

➤ When the Col des Montets (between Argentière and Vallorcine) is closed by snow, signs will direct you to drive through the rail tunnel. Current conditions can be found at [www.chamonix.com](http://www.chamonix.com).

➤ The valley's main car-hire company is **Europcar** (☎04 50 53 63 40; [www.europcar.com](http://www.europcar.com); 36 place de la Gare; 🕒8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat).

### TRAIN

From Chamonix to other destinations around France, including Lyon, Annecy and Paris, you'll need to change trains at St-Gervais-les-Bains (€11.70, 45 minutes, hourly).

The scenic, narrow-gauge **Mont Blanc Express** ([www.mont-blanc-express.com](http://www.mont-blanc-express.com)) glides from the Swiss town of Martigny to Chamonix, taking in Argentière and Vallorcine en route. It's free between Servoz and Vallorcine with a *carte d'hôte* (guest card).

## Getting Around

### BUS

➤ Public buses run by Chamonix Bus ([www.chamonix-bus.com](http://www.chamonix-bus.com)) serve all the towns, villages, ski lifts and attractions in the Chamonix Valley, from Argentière (Col des Montets in summer) in the northeast, to Servoz and Les Houches in the southwest.

➤ All buses are free with a *carte d'hôte*, except the wintertime Chamo' Nuit night buses linking Chamonix with Argentière and Les Houches (last departures from Chamonix 11.30pm or midnight; €2).

## Megève/St-Gervais

An upmarket Alpine paradise twinned with a sedate, all-season retreat, Megève/St-Gervais makes much of its mountainous location, 15km due west of Mont Blanc (4807m).

Megève was developed in the 1920s for Baroness de Rothschild of the famous banking family. Today it's an Alpine daydream made real: horse-drawn carriages and exquisitely arranged boutique windows spill into cobbled, medieval-style streets lined with chalets. In winter, Megève attracts a well-off crowd (including lots of families), but the scene is very laid-back in summer. Set beautifully in wooded hills, the well-equipped **Camping Les Dômes de Miage** (Nature & Lodge Camping; ☎04 50 93 45 96; [www.natureandlodge.fr](http://www.natureandlodge.fr); 197 rte des Contamines, St-Gervais; unpowered sites €22.20-2760, powered sites €26.80-32.20; 🕒mid-May-mid-Sep; 🏠) is an ideal spot if you want to wake up to Mont Blanc.

Slightly lower down the valley, unpretentious St-Gervais-les-Bains is linked to Chamonix by the legendary *Mont Blanc Express* train. Most of the town is undistinguished 20th-century sprawl, but the lovely central square, with its baroque church, has a distinctly Alpine feel.

Both villages access the 445km *Domaine Évasion Mont Blanc* ski area.



## Activities

Megève's **Palais des Sports** (☎04 50 21 15 71; [www.lepalaismegeve.com](http://www.lepalaismegeve.com); 247 rte du Palais des Sports, Megève; ☀ hours vary) has plenty of active distractions year-round. The **Bureau des Guides** (☎04 50 21 55 11; [www.guides-megeve.com](http://www.guides-megeve.com); 76 rue Ambroise Martin, Maison de la Montagne, Megève; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm, closed Sat & Sun low season) can organise a huge range of all-season outdoor activities, from ice and rock climbing to canyoning and snowshoeing.

### Tramway du Mont Blanc

CABLE CAR

(☎04 50 53 22 75; [www.montblancnaturaleresort.com](http://www.montblancnaturaleresort.com); av de la Gare, St-Gervais; return to Bellevue/Nid d'Aigle €33.50/38.50; ☀ 4-6 departures daily mid-Dec-early Apr, 8 daily early Jun-mid-Sep) France's highest rack-and-pinion railway, first chiselled into the mountain in 1907, ascends from St-Gervais-Le-Fayet (590m) to Bellevue (1900m; one hour). In summer, when you can hike back down, it climbs all the way to Nid d'Aigle (2372m), on the cusp of the Bionnassay glacier (80 minutes).

## Winter

Having the Mont Blanc massif as a backdrop makes for fabulously scenic **skiing**. Between 850m and 2353m high, pistes are accessible both from Megève and, via the St-Gervais-Bettex cable car, from near the centre of St-Gervais ([www.ski-saintgervais.com](http://www.ski-saintgervais.com)). About 325km of the area's downhill runs are divided between three separate collections of slopes: **Mont d'Arbois-St-Gervais**, **Le Jaillet-Combloux-La Giettaz** and **Rochebrune-Cote 2000**. Skiing here is mostly for beginners and cruisy intermediates; snow quality is not always great at the lower altitudes.

Bank on €49.50 for a ski pass for the entire **Domaine Évasion Mont Blanc**, whose 445km of pistes include surrounding villages. *Mont Blanc Unlimited* (€133 for two days) also gets you access to Chamonix stations, Verbier and Courmayeur.

## Summer

In summer, both towns make superb bases for **hiking**, with trails for walkers and hikers of all levels, including young children. Panoramic trails abound, including many in the Bettex, Mont d'Arbois and Mont Joly (2525m) areas. Tourist offices sell IGN hiking maps.

Some of the best **mountain-biking** terrain, with downhill runs accessible by lift, is between Val d'Arly, Mont Blanc and Beaufortain. In Megève, several winter-sports gear-rental shops hire out bikes in summer. Megève-based **Bike Addict** (☎06 83 27 89 73; [www.bike-addict-megeve.com](http://www.bike-addict-megeve.com); 2hr lesson/day excursion €90/250) can arrange bespoke MTB itineraries for families, hardened cyclists and everything in between.

## Information

**Megève Tourist Office** (☎04 50 21 27 28; [www.megeve.com](http://www.megeve.com); 70 rue de Monseigneur Conseil, Megève; ☀ 9am-7pm late Dec-mid-Apr, Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year; ☎)

**St-Gervais Tourist Office** (☎04 50 47 76 08; [www.saintgervais.com](http://www.saintgervais.com); 43 rue du Mont-Blanc, St-Gervais; ☀ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year; ☎)

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

From late December to March and from June through September, Megevexpress ([www.megevexpress.com](http://www.megevexpress.com)) offers door-to-door transfers between Geneva Airport and Megève or St-Gervais (€39.50, 1½ hours). Cheaper services from Geneva Airport to St-Gervais train station (from €23, 1¼ hours, four daily) can be booked

### DON'T MISS

#### THE VILLAGE POTTER

**Atelier du Potier** (☎04 50 47 71 41; 18 chemin du Vieux Pont; ☀ hours vary)

The potter's studio, a rambling, post-plastered workshop and gallery, is tucked away near the church in the centre of St-Gervais. Local legend Monsieur Baranger can often be seen at his wheel, where he throws pots, plates, ornaments and vases. Hours are irregular but the workshop usually opens in mornings and afternoons (he'll hang a sign if he goes for a siesta).

through BlaBlaBus ([www.ouibus.com](http://www.ouibus.com)). Reserve at least 24 hours ahead.

## TRAIN

The train station nearest Megève is 12km north in Sallanches; take bus 83 to the railhead (€5.50, 25 minutes, six to 10 daily Monday to Saturday, also Sunday in ski season and July and August).

The St-Gervais-Le-Fayet train station is 2km northwest of the centre of St-Gervais. If you're heading to Chamonix, change here for the Mont Blanc Express. Geneva requires changing trains in Bellegarde, Vallorcine or La Roche-sur-Foron (it's better to get a bus).

Destinations include the following:

**Annecy** €16, 1½ hours, hourly

**Chamonix** €11.70, 45 minutes, hourly

**Lyon** €38.20, 3¼–four hours, 10 daily

**Paris Gare de Lyon** from €104, from five hours, 11 daily

## Les Portes du Soleil

For winter-sports fans across Europe, Les Portes du Soleil have a winning formula. France's second-largest ski area (after Les Trois Vallées), the gigantic 'Gates of the Sun' have a favourable climate that combines powder snow, picturesque tree-fringed runs, exciting après-ski and easy access to Geneva airport. There's also the novel possibility of skiing in and out of Switzerland within a day (no passport needed).

A dozen villages access Les Portes du Soleil but **Morzine** (1000m), the big daddy for nightlife and gastronomy, is best-known. Further up the valley is car-free **Avoriaz** (1800m), a purpose-built ski resort that's chock full of 1960s apartment blocks, but is the best bet for reliable snow in warmer weather. Horse-drawn sleighs romantically ferry new arrivals to and from the village centre. Arriving by road via Cluses, you hit the smaller ski station of **Les Gets** (1172m), whose easy access to sheltered, tree-lined ski runs has made it a favourite with families.

## Sights & Activities

### Abbaye d'Aulps

ABBEY

([www.abbayedaulps.fr](http://www.abbayedaulps.fr); rte de l'Abbaye, St-Jean-d'Aulps; adult/child €7/3.50; ☀10am–7pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) The eerie skeleton of an 11th-century Cistercian abbey stands on this hilly site, accompanied by a visitors centre that illuminates the daily lives of monks. By road, it's 8km north of Morzine.

## Bureau des Guides

OUTDOORS

(☎04 50 75 96 65; [www.guides-morzine.com](http://www.guides-morzine.com)) This 15-strong team of mountain guides can lead you off-piste skiing, or organise warm-weather frolics such as hiking, biking, rock and via-ferrata climbs, canyoning and paragliding, and the tough **Noire de Morzine**, Morzine's heart-stopping 3.2km, 500-vertical-metre bike descent from the top of the **Pliénéy cable car** (Taille de Mas du Plénéy, Morzine; 1/5/8 trips in summer €5.30/18.70/28).

## Winter

The stats speak for themselves at this gigantic snow-sports resort. The 195 ski lifts at Les Portes du Soleil (<http://en.portesdusoleil.com>) access 306 **ski runs**, covering between 450km and 650km depending on how they're measured. A single transfrontier ski pass covers it all (per day/week €57/321). Most go for the full package but if you aren't a confident skier, you can trim the price by confining your skiing to one area, such as Morzine-Les Gets (per day €43) or Avoriaz (per day €47).

Frequent powder, nursery slopes for little kids, toboggan runs, indoor pool and spa complexes, children's clubs and snow play areas make Les Portes du Soleil a great choice for families. Morzine offers ideal beginner and intermediate terrain, with scenic runs through the trees for windy days. The snow-sure slopes of higher-elevation Avoriaz are great for intermediate skiers but can also challenge the more advanced. Plus, it's freestyle heaven for **snowboarders**, with dozens of snow parks to play in and a fantastic superpipe near the top of the Prodains cable car.

The area's most famous piste is **Le Pas de Chavanette**, better known as the *Mur Suisse* (Swiss Wall), on the border with Switzerland (reached from Avoriaz). The

## CENT SAVER

Les Portes du Soleil's hottest summer deal is the **Multi Pass**, which costs €2 per day if you're staying here and €10 for day trippers. Available from early June to early September, the pass covers cable cars and chairlifts (some of which only run from late June) for hikers, as well as access to sporting facilities such as tennis courts, ice rinks and swimming pools.



ungroomed slope is famous for its giant meagles and steep, icy headwall, reaching an angle of 35 to 40 degrees at the top.

## Summer

In summer, the slopes attract **mountain bikers** (late June to early September; €28/112 per day/week) to 650km of trails, including invigorating routes such as the 80km circular Enduro Tour des Portes du Soleil. **Walkers** can pick and choose from 800km of marked trails. The extensive summer lift network takes the slog out of reaching higher altitudes.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Hideout Hostel

HOSTEL €

(☎07 68 63 48 21; www.hideout-hostel.com; 60 rte des Udrezants, Morzine; dm/tw incl breakfast €44/140; ☺Dec-Apr & Jun-Sep;      A welcome place to stay for those on a budget, the Hideout has an excellent restaurant and two bars, and gets high marks for cleanliness. Six- and four-person dorms are basic but will do the trick; however, bring earplugs if you're a light sleeper. Rates vary considerably throughout the year. Airport shuttles can be arranged (€40 one-way).

### ★ The Farmhouse

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€€

(Le Mas de la Coutettaz; ☎04 50 79 08 26; www.thefarmhouse.fr; 429 chemin de la Coutettaz, Morzine; half-board per person €238; ☺mid-Dec-mid-Apr & Jun-mid-Sep;      This welcoming British-owned guesthouse has 11 individually decorated rooms spread across a gorgeous pre-Revolutionary manor house, the oldest building in Morzine. Dining is a lavish, candlelit affair around one huge banquet table; in summer it's a B&B, and in winter (when a one-week minimum may apply) it offers half-board.

### ★ Le Clin d'Oeil

FRENCH €€

(☎04 50 79 03 10; www.restaurant-leclin.com; 63 rte du Plan, Morzine; fondue/dinner menus from €17/34; ☺7-9.30pm;                                                    <

**Morzine Tourist Office** (📞 04 50 74 72 72; [www.morzine-avoriaz.com](http://www.morzine-avoriaz.com); 26 place du Baraty, Morzine; ☀️ 8.30am-7pm mid-Dec–mid-Apr & mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat rest of year; 📄) Has excellent brochures in English and can help find accommodation through **Morzine Réservation** (📞 04 50 79 11 57; [www.resa-morzine.com](http://www.resa-morzine.com); Office du Tourisme, 26 place du Baraty, Morzine).

## **i** Getting There & Away

It's straightforward to get to Les Portes du Soleil from Geneva airport, 83km to the west. A plethora of buses and shared taxis run from the airport to the resorts. Door-to-door transfers need to be booked in advance and start at around €28.50. Morzexpress ([www.morzexpress.com](http://www.morzexpress.com)) is a reliable operator.

Altbuis ([www.altibus.com](http://www.altibus.com)) line 91 links Les Portes du Soleil's three resorts with the railheads of Thonon-les-Bains (€11, one hour, three to eight daily) and Cluses (€11, one hour, four to seven daily). You can reserve your tickets online.

Within the Morzine area, free shuttle buses serve all the lifts between mid-December and mid-April, including a dainty miniature train that trundles between the Super Morzine lift and Plénèy.

## Évian-les-Bains

POP 9098

Standing regally on the southern shore of Lake Geneva (Lac Léman), Évian-les-Bains was a favourite country retreat for the Dukes of Savoy and remains a popular spa destination, particularly in summer.

Old-world glamour and modern-day commercialism clash in Évian. The world-famous mineral water, which takes at least 15 years to trickle down through the

Chablais Mountains, is an arm of multinational food corporation Danone, but it can be freely sipped at taps beneath a lacy colonnade. The town is jewelled with attractive Belle Époque buildings, but the casino, resorts and busy centre can distract from lake-shore serenity.

Évian is compact and easily explored on foot. Facing the flowery lakefront promenade (along quai Baron de Blonay and quai Paul Léger) are a number of impressive Victorian and Belle Époque buildings, including (from east to west): the **Palais Lumière** (📞 04 50 83 15 90; quai Charles-Albert-Besson; adult/child €10/free; ☀️ Tue-Sun 10am-7pm, from 2pm Mon); the **Villa Lumière** (📞 04 50 83 10 00; rue de la Source de Clermont; ☀️ 9-11am & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri) **FREE**; the **Théâtre** (📞 04 50 26 85 00; quai Besson) and the **Casino** (📞 04 50 26 87 87; [www.casino-evian.com](http://www.casino-evian.com); quai Baron-de-Blonay; ☀️ 10am-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat).

### Source Cachat

SPRING

(20 av des Sources; ☀️ 24hr) **FREE** Locals take pleasure in hauling huge canisters to these outdoor taps and filling them with Évian water, straight from the source. The taps are framed by pink-and-white neoclassical archways resembling an iced cake.

### CGN Cruises

BOATING

([www.cgn.ch](http://www.cgn.ch); place du Port; one-way €20) Join local commuters for the scenic, 35-minute boat ride to the Swiss city of Lausanne. Boats depart every hour or two.

## **i** Information

The **Tourist Office** (📞 04 50 75 04 26; [www.evian-tourisme.com](http://www.evian-tourisme.com); place de la Port d'Allinges; ☀️ 9am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon

### WORTH A TRIP

#### YVOIRE

Petite fortified village Yvoire dozes on the southern shore of Lake Geneva, 16km west of Thonon-les-Bains. Still accessed through 14th-century **Porte de Rovorée** (though sadly no longer beneath a portcullis), the historic core is jam-packed with medieval treasures. Amid beautifully weather-worn façades and spires is the privately owned 14th-century **Château d'Yvoire**.

Across the street, in the château's old *potager* (veggie garden), the walled **Jardin des Cinq Sens** (Garden of Five Senses; 📞 04 50 72 88 80; [www.jardin5sens.net](http://www.jardin5sens.net); rue du Lac; adult/child €12/7; ☀️ 10am-6.30pm mid-Apr–early Oct) is designed to be experienced through sight, touch, sound, scent and (within reason!) taste. There's a maze, kids' activities, and more than 1300 plant species.

Don't leave without sampling a sweet or savoury crêpe with hams, cheeses and smoked salmon expertly folded within at **Crêperie d'Yvoire** (📞 04 50 72 80 78; 1 rue de l'Église; galettes from €5; ☀️ noon-9pm Feb-Nov).

## ANNECY DAY TRIP: TO THE SNOW!

Hankering for a snowy day trip? Annecy is less than an hour from three ski resorts. Perched on the northwest side of the Chaîne des Aravis, **La Clusaz** ([www.laclusaz.com](http://www.laclusaz.com); one-day lift pass adult/child €39.80/30.80; ☺ Dec-Apr) gathers reliable snow to pad out its 125km of pistes, served by 49 lifts. Topping out at 2600m, the resort is best for intermediate and experienced skiers, with just a few green and black runs for beginners and pros.

Six kilometres north, **Le Grand Bornand** (☎ 04 50 02 78 00; [www.legrandbornand.com](http://www.legrandbornand.com); one-day pass adult/child €38.50/30.80; ☺ Dec-Apr) has a 24-lift ski area, between 1000m and 2100m elevation, comprising more than a dozen each of green, blue and red pistes (with just a few black runs for advanced skiers) plus almost 70km of cross-country trails.

Best for beginners is Semnoz (p530), elevation 1700m, which is less than 30 minutes' drive from Annecy. The piste and lift network are limited, but there are lift tickets for just two hours (adult/child €9.20/7.40) if you only want a taste of the snow. In summer there's luge, biking and hiking.

In ski season Lihsa offers bus transfers from Annecy to La Clusaz (€8, one hour, six to 10 daily) and Le Grand Bornand (€8, 1¼ hours, six to 10 daily). Local buses reach Semnoz from Annecy (€1.50, one hour, six daily) but timetables vary depending on season; ask at Annecy's tourist office (p527).

& 3-6pm Sun May-Sep, closed Sun Oct-Apr; 🚰) is near the lake.

### **i** Getting There & Away

Évian is about an hour's drive northeast of Geneva. Direct trains reach Thonon-les-Bains (€2.70, eight minutes, frequent). For Annecy (€18, two hours, hourly), change trains in Annemasse.

**Transalis** ([www.transalis.fr](http://www.transalis.fr)) runs buses between Thonon-les-Bains and Geneva from Monday to Saturday (T71, €8, 1¼ hours, frequent).

## Annecy

POP 125,694 / ELEV 447M

Nestled by the northwestern shore of its namesake lake, Annecy is the jewel of the Haute-Savoie. From its crowning Château d'Annecy down to its gurgling canals, Annecy's Vieille Ville (Old Town) is infused with antique charm. Made great by the medieval Counts of Geneva and augmented by the Dukes of Savoy, Annecy still has numerous 16th- and 17th-century buildings, now painted in shades of peach and rose and housing restaurants, bakeries and boutiques. Canals trickle through town, earning Annecy its reputation as an Alpine Venice.

Lac d'Annecy, speckled with swans and rowing boats, is said to have the cleanest waters in Europe, and Annecy's outdoorsy residents revel in all this nature. They row the lake, zip through town on rollerblades and bicycles, and, in winter, drive to nearby ski areas like La Clusaz. After a few lungfuls

of mountain air, you might feel compelled to join them.

### **👁** Sights

The free leaflet *Promenades en Ville* (Town Walks), available from the tourist office (p527), details four 1½-to-two-hour walks around Annecy. Each stroll is themed: canals, the lake, the old town, and Annecy's lesser-known side.

#### Vieille Ville

AREA

It's a pleasure simply to wander aimlessly around Annecy's medieval Old Town, where emerald-green canals flow beneath stone bridges and pastel-painted 16th- and 17th-century buildings bask in sunlight. This jumble of narrow pedestrian-only streets and pretty canals gave Annecy its nickname 'Venice of the Alps'.

#### Château d'Annecy

CASTLE

(☎ 04 50 33 87 34; [www.musees.annecy.fr](http://www.musees.annecy.fr); place du Château; adult/child €5.50/3; ☺ 10.30am-6pm daily Jun-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Mon Oct-May) With commanding views across the ochre rooftops of the Vieille Ville (Old Town) to the Massif des Bauges, the Château d'Annecy is at once imposing and elegant, a marriage between medieval defensive and decorative architectural styles. Residence of the counts of Geneva during the 13th and 14th centuries, a military barracks in the 1940s, and classified as a historical monument in the 1950s, today it's filled with regional art, from medieval sculpture and Savoyard furniture

## Anney



## Anney

## Sights

- 1 Château d'Annecy..... B3
- 2 Palais de l'Isle ..... C3
- 3 Vieille Ville ..... B2

## Activities, Courses &amp; Tours

- 4 Annecy Plongée..... D3
- 5 Compagnie des Bateaux..... C3
- 6 Cyclable..... C3
- 7 Roll'n Cy..... C3
- 8 Takamaka..... A3

## Sleeping

- 9 Hôtel du Château ..... B3
- 10 Hôtel du Palais de l'Isle..... C3

- 11 Le Boutik ..... C3
- 12 Splendid Hôtel..... C2

## Eating

- 13 Food Market ..... B3
- 14 Kamouraska ..... B3
- 15 La Ciboulette ..... B1
- 16 La Cuisine des Amis ..... C2
- 17 La Piscine..... B2

## Drinking &amp; Nightlife

- 18 Beer O'Clock ..... A3
- 19 Captain Pub ..... B3
- 20 Folie Royale ..... A2
- 21 La Cave..... B2

to Alpine landscape painting and contemporary art.

A dual-entry ticket grants access to both the Château and the Palais de l'Isle for €7.20 (or, for under-25s, €4.20); buy it at either sight.

## Palais de l'Isle

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 56 49 40 37; [www.musees.annecy.fr](http://www.musees.annecy.fr); 3 passage de l'Île; adult/child €3.80/2; ☀ 10.30am-6pm daily Jul-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Mon Oct-Jun) Sitting on a triangular islet surrounded by the Canal du Thiou, the Palais de l'Isle

has been a lordly residence, a courthouse, a mint and a prison, according to records dating back to the 14th century. Chambers within this stocky stone building now house permanent exhibits on local history, from medieval coins to the industrial 19th century, plus occasional temporary art exhibits.

A combination ticket grants entry to the Palais and Château d'Annecy (p523) for €7.20 (or €4.20 for under-25s); buy it at either venue.



## Activities

### Sunbathing & Swimming

When the sun's out, the beaches fringing the lake beckon. Some are patrolled in July and August, including **Plage d'Albigny** (av du Petit Port) **FREE** and **Plage des Marquisats** (rue des Marquisats) **FREE**, when they can become very crowded.

### Cycling & Blading

Biking and blading are big, with 46km of cycling track encircling the lake (aside from a 3km gap on the eastern shore between Menthon and Perroix, awaiting construction). Another gentle path, once a railway grade, leads all the way to Albertville, 44km to the southeast. There are several bike rental operators in town, including **Cyclable** (☎04 50 51 51 50; www.velo-annecy.fr; 8 place aux Bois; half day from €16; ☀10am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Mar-Sep, 10am-7pm Jul & Aug).

**Roll'n Cy** (☎06 28 34 66 34; www.roll-n-cy.org; ☀8pm Fri Mar-mid-Dec) **FREE** runs weekly rollerblading group rides through town, an unconventional way to meet some locals.

### Water Sports

Between May and mid-September, you can glide across the lake on a stand-up paddle board; several companies in Sévrier, including **Stand Up Annecy** (☎06 70 54 31 24; www.stand-up-annecy.com; 477 promenade des Seines, Sévrier; 1hr/half-day €12/35; ☀sunrise-sunset), rent equipment. Reach them by biking 4km south of town on the bike path. Alternatively, the safety-conscious diving pros at **Annecy Plongée** (☎04 50 45 40 97; www.annecyplongee.com; 6 rue des Marquisats; ☀9am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat) can help you take the plunge on a dive into the lake's pristine waters.

### Adventure Sports

The tourist office (p527) has listings of mountain biking, canyoning, ballooning and other outdoor sport operators in and

around Annecy. **Takamaka** (☎04 50 45 60 61; https://annecy.takamaka.fr; 23 rue du Faubourg Ste-Claire; ☀9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) rents a range of bikes, snowshoes and via-ferrata equipment, as well as organising tons of fun trips, including tandem paragliding (€95), rafting (from €50), dog-sledding (from €60) and mountain biking (from €49).



## Tours

### Compagnie des Bateaux

BOATING

(☎04 50 51 08 40; www.annecy-croisieres.com; 2 place aux Bois; 1hr lake cruises adult/child €15.50/11.50; ☀Feb-mid-Dec) The Boat Company runs lake cruises with commentary and, from mid-April to late September, two-hour trips to villages around the lake. For the romantically inclined there are also cruises aboard the 'floating restaurant' MS *Libellule* (menus €57.80 to €93).



## Sleeping

### Annecy Hostel

HOSTEL €

(☎09 53 12 02 90; www.annecyhostel.fr; 32 av de Loverchy; dm from €22, d €100; @☎) Bright dorm rooms (mixed-sex and women-only)

## WORTH A TRIP

### BIRD'S EYE LAKE VIEW

#### Château de Menthon-St-Bernard

(☎07 81 74 39 72; www.chateau-de-menthon.com; allée du Château, Menthon-St-Bernard; guided tours adult/child €9.50/5; ☀noon-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Fri-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep-early Nov) Twenty-three generations of the De Menthon family have lived within 1000-year-old Château de Menthon-St-Bernard. The birthplace of St Bernard in 1008 – and supposedly one of the inspirations for Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* castle – the château clings to a forested hillside, 12km south of Annecy. Tours of the medieval interior take in tapestry-adorned *salons* and a magnificent library, stacked with more than 12,000 volumes dating to before the Revolution. But it's the sparkling Lac d'Annecy panorama that leaves many visitors speechless.

Bus 61 (€1.50, 25 minutes, departs hourly, Monday to Saturday) from Annecy's bus station will get you to the village if you don't have a car.



elicit contented sighs from travellers rocking up at this old-school hostel. Beyond backpacker must-haves like shared kitchens, lockers and clean bathrooms, further perks include a TV lounge and a back garden that's perfect for socialising – with table tennis, a pool table and a bar serving local and imported beers between 3pm and 11pm.

### Hôtel du Château

HOTEL €€

(☎04 50 45 27 66; www.annecy-hotel.com; 16 rampe du Château; s/d/tr/q €69/99/119/129; 📞📺) Just across the square from the château's imposing gatehouse, this family-run hotel has a panoramic breakfast terrace and 16 neat rooms with rustic pine furniture and a sunny colour scheme. Four have lovely lake views.

### Splendid Hôtel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎04 50 45 20 00; www.hotel-annecy-lac.fr; 4 quai Eustache Chappuis; d from €150; 📞📺) The aptly named Splendid's 58 rooms have a contemporary feel, with grey and cream walls, orange accents and polished wooden floors, as well as modern trimmings like coffee makers. Cushioned headboards and Rococo-style trimmings add decadence to the pricier executive rooms. Whether you need an extra bed or stroller rental, the friendly staff can oblige.

### Hôtel du Palais de l'Isle

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 50 45 86 87; www.palaisannecy.com; 13 rue Perrière; s/d from €149/159; 📞📺) In a warren-like 18th-century building in the centre of the old town, this hotel leans towards nostalgia with parchment-effect wallpaper and regal maroon hues, but keeps things up to date where it matters: tastefully modern bathrooms, minibars and a sleek lounge-bar. Rooms have views of the *palais*, the château or the old town's rooftops.

### Le Boutik

DESIGN HOTEL €€€

(☎04 50 44 04 00; www.leboutikhotel.com; 2 rue des Marquissats; d €190-250; 📞) Each of Le Boutik's rooms has its own theme, ranging from loosely literary (the haughty 'Oscar Wilde' and book-lined 'Grey') to travel (like the brick-and-suitcase homage, 'New York'). Find the main entrance on rue de la Providence, above a boutique selling (of course) designer homewares.

## Eating

### Food Market

MARKET €

(cnr rues Ste-Claire & de la République; ☉7am-1pm Sun, Tue & Fri) Snaking along rue Ste-Claire,

this open-air food market reels you in with the scent of garlic-fried frogs' legs and Savoyard cheeses. Honey, homemade gingerbread and mind-boggling quantities of *saucisson sec* will tempt self-caterers, plus there's grab-and-go food such as steaming sausages and tureens of *choucroute garnie* (dressed cabbage stew).

### La Piscine

DELI €

(☎06 51 85 52 49; 8 passage de la Cathédrale; mains €6-16; ☉9am-6pm Tue-Sat; 📞) 🍷 With its light-bulb 'Sandwiches' sign hanging in the window, you could easily mistake the Piscine for a kebab stand. But it's not that at all – it's a zero-waste, gourmet breakfast and lunch spot, with all sorts of reasonably priced organic goodies (juices, veggie sandwiches, goat cheese *tourte*, kefir) from the culinary whizzes at next-door Kamouraska.

### ★ Kamouraska

FRENCH €€

(☎09 50 78 82 96; 6 passage de la Cathédrale; small plates €15-21; ☉noon-2pm & 6.30-10pm Thu-Sat, 6.30-10pm Wed) Named after a village in Québec, offbeat Kamouraska is a bit more fun-loving than the other gastronomic restaurants in town. Case in point: it's the only one with an organ and a single communal marble table (seating 13). Former painter Jérôme Bigot's creative small dishes are the order of the day: we recommend splitting all five and pairing with a bottle of natural wine. Reserve.

### La Cuisine des Amis

MOROCCAN, FRENCH €€

(☎04 50 10 10 80; www.lacuisinedesamisannecy.fr; 9 rue du Pâquier; mains €15.50-24, lunch menu €14.90; ☉noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm Jun-Sep, closed dinner Sun & Mon Oct-May) If your group is torn about where to dine, the Moroccan and French dishes served in this airy *salon* setting will please all palates. The menu is evenly split between cheesy Savoyard specialities and Moroccan classics like couscous royale and *tajine* of lamb and figs. The lunchtime dish of the day is a steal at €9.90.

### La Ciboulette

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎04 50 45 74 57; www.laciboulette-annecy.com; Cour du Pré Carré, 10 rue Vaugelas; lunch menu €39, dinner menus €58-81; ☉noon-1pm & 7.30-8.45pm Tue-Sat) With 30 years in business and a Michelin star, there's no mistaking La Ciboulette's *haute-cuisine* credentials. Chef Georges Paccard prepares seasonally driven combinations like turbot with Provence asparagus, and nut-crumbed veal with

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

## WINE &amp; CHOCOLATE

**La Cave** (☎ 04 50 66 41 90; www.barlacave.fr; passage des Échoppes; ☺ 6pm-1am daily, noon-2pm Tue & Sat) No mystery as to what alleyway La Cave is all about: lining the wall behind the vintage wooden bar are row after row of empty wine glasses, just waiting to be filled. With some 400 bottles, you could spend entirely way too much time here. Don't overlook the delectable small plates (€7-18), served with generous chunks of country bread.

**Folie Royale** (☎ 04 50 52 28 58; 13 rue Royale; ☺ 10am-6.30pm Tue-Sat, from 1.30pm Mon) This handsome *salon de thé* has a master chocolatier staining his apron out back, as he hand-dips squares of ganache into chocolate, dices nougat and rolls marzipan into dainty logs. There are over 30 teas and tisanes with which to wash down his creations, or you can mainline: the hot chocolate is thick, rich and lip-smacking.

mushroom and potato ravioli. A voluminous wine menu, best perused in the flowery courtyard, rounds out an elegant package.

**Yoann Conte**GASTRONOMY **ccc**

(☎ 04 50 09 97 49; www.yoann-conte.com; 13 vieille rte des Pensières, Veyrier-du-Lac; menus €126-340; ☺ noon-1pm & 7-8.30pm Wed-Sun, plus 7-8.30pm Tue in summer) Virtuoso chef Yoann Conte nods to regional cuisine with smoked *fêra* (white fish from Lake Léman) and cornflour *farfalle* (butterfly pasta) with morels, while Corsican citrus and Greek olive oils widen the balance of flavours. For sensory immersion in this polished, double Michelin-starred restaurant, the 'Conte Vents et Marées' - a 12-element 'winds and seas' menu - aims to tell a story through food.

**Drinking & Nightlife****Beer O'Clock**

BAR

(☎ 04 50 65 83 78; www.beeroclock.fr; 18 rue du Faubourg Ste-Claire; ☺ 5pm-1am Sun-Fri, from 4pm Sat; ☺) This laid-back, high-tech establishment serves beer like petrol stations sell gasoline: you only pay for what you pump. After buying credit on a computerised magnetic card, you can drink as much or as little of the 12 brews on offer as you like - a fantastic way to compare and savour lots of microbrews side by side.

**Captain Pub**

PUB

(☎ 04 50 45 79 80; www.captain-pub.fr; 11 rue du Pont Morens; ☺ 11am-2.30am Wed-Sun; ☺) It's best not to examine too closely this convivial boozier's Irish pub credentials. But after a genuine welcome and finding a seat in the warren of convivial nooks, it's impossible not to feel at home. Huddle up for a dozen beers on tap and scores of whiskies and cocktails like 'Blue Champagne'; you

can enjoy premium views from canalside outdoor tables.

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 50 45 00 33; www.lac-anneccy.com; 1 rue Jean Jaurès, courtyard of Centre Bonlieu; ☺ 9am-12.30pm & 1.45-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus Sun Apr-early Oct)

**i Getting There & Around****BICYCLE**

Bikes can be hired from **Vélonécycy** (☎ 04 50 51 38 90; www.velonecy.com; place de la Gare; ☺ 9am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat), situated at the train station. A day's hire including helmet is €21, or €46 for an electric bike. Staff can supply you with a bike-path map. Deposit of €250/800 required for a regular/e-bike. In July and August reserve two or three days ahead.

**BUS**

The ticket office for the **bus station** (Gare Routière; rue de l'Industrie) is inside the train station.

**Transalis** (☎ 04 50 51 08 51; www.transalis.fr) line T72 runs frequently from Anancy to Geneva (€10.50, 1¼ hours) and Geneva airport (€14.50, 1½ hours). Altbis (www.altibus.com) also runs buses to Geneva airport for the same price.

Altbis runs from Anancy to villages around Lac d'Anancy, including Veyrier-du-Lac (30 minutes, frequent), Menthon-St-Bernard (25 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday) and Talloires (30 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday). Tickets cost €1.50 each way. Other destinations include the ski resorts of La Clusaz (€8, one hour, eight to 12 daily) and Le Grand Bornand (€8, 1¼ hours, eight to 12 daily).

Direct buses to Lyon-Saint-Exupéry airport (€15, 1½ hours, from four daily) can be booked through BlaBlaBus (www.ouibus.com).

**TRAIN**

Services from Anney's **train station** (place de la Gare) include the following:

**Chambéry** €11.10, one hour, hourly

**Chamonix** €25.60, 2½ hours, 13 daily

**Lyon** €28.50, two hours, hourly

**Paris Gare de Lyon** €88–110, from four hours, three direct

**Chambéry**

POP 58,919 / ELEV 270M

Huddled between Chartreuse and Massif des Bauges regional parks, the attractive town of Chambéry is often forgotten by visitors to the French Alps. Chambéry was Savoy's capital from the 13th century until 1563, when the Dukes relocated to Turin. Past centuries have enriched the town, 12km south of Lac du Bourget, with elaborate *hôtels particuliers* (grand townhouses), a medieval château and a one-of-a-kind trompe l'oeil-decorated cathedral.

**Sights****★ Ville Ancienne**

AREA

Chambéry's medieval Old Town reveals its beauty gradually. Rush through its lanes and you risk missing hidden alleys, trompe l'oeil murals and well-preserved 14th- to 18th-century *hôtels particuliers* (townhouses). Streets worth wandering include tiny **rue du Sénat de Savoie**, cobbled **rue Juiverie** and boutique-dotted **rue de la Métropole**. To uncover lesser-known corners, enquire about walking tours at **Hôtel de Cordon** (☎04 79 70 15 94; 71 rue St Réal; ☉10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Wed, Fri & Sat Sep-Jun) **FREE**; usually at 2.30pm daily (May to September) and on weekends the rest of the year (€6, French only).

**Fontaine des Éléphants**

FOUNTAIN

(place des Éléphants) With its four carved elephants, this 17.6m-high fountain looks like the model for an old Indian postage stamp. It was sculpted in 1838 in honour of Général de Boigne (1751–1830), who made his fortune in India and was honoured posthumously with this monument for bestowing some of his wealth on the town. Locally, the elephants – whose front halves sprout from the statue – are lovingly referred to as the *quatre sans cul* (the rear-less four).

**Château des Ducs de Savoie**

CASTLE

(☎04 79 33 42 47; place du Château; ☉1.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 10.30am-6pm Sat & Sun) Chambéry's

château has acquired a wealth of styles since its founding in the 11th century. Once home to the counts and dukes of Savoy, the stately stronghold has housed the Savoie *département* administration since 1860. For this reason, it's not open to the public. You can only visit one exhibition room inside the first gate; to see the courtyard, **Tour Trésorerie** (Treasury Tower) and the **chapel**, built to house the Turin Shroud, take the town tour at the Hôtel de Cordon (p528).

**Cathédrale St-François de Sales**

CATHEDRAL

(☎04 79 33 25 00; 6 rue Métropole; ☉8.45am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.15am-noon & 3-8pm Sun) All is not as it seems inside Chambéry's 15th-century Franciscan cathedral, decorated with 6000 sq metres of trompe l'oeil painting. The largest such feature in any building in Europe, the decorations – created by 19th-century artists Sevesi and Vicario – deceive the eyes into seeing Gothic vaults, an ornate carved ceiling and a mystical labyrinth that leads believers to Jerusalem.

**Musée des Beaux-Arts**

GALLERY

(☎04 79 33 75 03; www.chambery.fr/musees; place du Palais de Justice; special exhibitions adult/child €5.50/2.50; ☉10am-6pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** Occupying a former corn exchange, Chambéry's grand fine-arts museum exhibits mostly 14th- to 18th-century Italian works. There's a particular emphasis on Florentine and Sieneese paintings from the Renaissance, including pieces by Caravaggio, Titian and Ghirlandaio; exhibitions are laid out in the light-flooded upper floor of this elegant 19th-century gallery.

Also worth a look are the many dramatic landscapes of Chambéry and the Alps painted between 1799 and 1975.

**Musée des Charmettes**

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Maison de Jean-Jacques Rousseau; ☎04 79 33 39 44; www.chambery.fr/musees; 890 chemin des Charmettes; audioguides €1; ☉10am-6pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** Geneva-born philosopher, composer and writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a key figure of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, lived the happiest years of his life in this serene country house between 1736 and 1742. It's laden with original features, like 18th-century wallpaper and fainting couches. Even those with little interest in the life of Rousseau might find their interest piqued by stories of his 'instruction' under Madame de Warens, who took the much-younger philosopher as her lover here.

It's a steep 2km southeast of central Chambéry.

## Sleeping

### Inter-Hôtel des Princes

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 79 33 45 36; www.hoteldesprinces.com; 4 rue de Boigne; d €115-139, tr/q €179/259;                                                             

**AIR**

**Chambéry Savoie Mont Blanc Airport** (📞 04 79 54 49 54; www.chambery-airport.com; off D1201, Viviers-du-Lac; 📶), 10km north of Chambéry at the southern tip of Lac du Bourget, has seasonal flights (mainly December to April) to Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Stockholm and several British regional airports. Transport from the airport is limited to taxis, rental cars and weekend shuttles that run directly to Méri-bel (€41.20, 3½ hours), Val d'Isère (€41.20, four hours), and other resorts in ski season.

**TRAIN**

Direct services from Chambéry's **train station** (Gare de Chambéry-Challes-les-Eaux; place de la Gare) include the following:

**Annecy** €11.10, one hour, hourly

**Geneva** €18.90, 1¼ hours, five daily

**Grenoble** €12.70, one hour, frequent

**Lyon** €19.70, 1½ hours, hourly

**Paris Gare de Lyon** from €62, three hours, four direct

**Around Chambéry**

Chambéry is wedged between two protected nature parks brimming with mellow hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing adventures.

**Parc Naturel Régional de Chartreuse** PARK  
(📞 04 76 88 75 20; www.parc-chartreuse.net)

Limestone promontories, dense forests and a powerful liqueur are the signature features of this 767-sq-km regional park. The 1300km of marked walking trails are a major incentive to visit, but the namesake liqueur is an even bigger draw. The **Caves de la**

**Chartreuse** (📞 04 76 05 81 77; www.chartreuse.fr; 10 bd Edgar-Kofler, Voiron; ☀️ 10am-6.30pm daily mid-Jun-mid-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) **FREE** introduce the history of monk-made Chartreuse liqueur (including tastings; note it's closed until 2022); 24km east is the **Musée de la Grande Chartreuse** (📞 04 76 88 60 45; www.musee-grande-chartreuse.fr; La Correrie, St-Pierre-de-Chartreuse; adult/child €8.50/3.90; ☀️ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-6.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, closed Nov-Mar), delving into the monks' secretive lives.

It's simplest to have private transport to reach and explore the park.

**Parc Naturel Régional du Massif des Bauges** PARK

(📞 04 79 54 86 40; www.parc-des-bauges.com) Less toured than other regional natural parks in the French Alps, the Massif des Bauges' jigsaw of peaks and meadows is invigorating terrain for walkers and mountain bikers. The park makes an easy day-trip from Annecy or Chambéry, but for immersion in its 900 sq km, there are numerous farmstays; ask at the park's main **tourist office** (📞 04 79 54 84 28; www.lesbauges.com; av Denis Therme, Le Châtellard; ☀️ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Sep-Jun; 📶), 36km northeast of Chambéry.

It's most convenient to explore the park with a car, as bus services are very limited.

The villages of École, Doucy-en-Bauges and Ste-Reine are all starting points for walking trails, along which you might spot chamois, the park's emblem. Also within the park are **Semnoz** (📞 04 50 01 20 30; www.semnoz.fr; Viuz-la-Chiésaz; 5hr pass adult/child

**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE****CHARTREUSE: THE MONASTIC LIQUEUR**

Either acid green or radioactive yellow, Chartreuse may be the brightest, most shockingly hued herbal elixir of the cocktail and digestif world. Mixologists sing its praises and in ski resorts it adds a splash of Alpine fire to hot chocolate (known as 'Green Chaud'). Its surge in global popularity might have something to do with it being hailed as 'the only liqueur so good they named a colour after it' in Quentin Tarantino's 2007 thriller *Death Proof*. It certainly isn't because the Carthusian monks who make it have been brashly broadcasting its wonders, for this is a liqueur shrouded in secrecy and silence.

The production of Chartreuse began in 1737 and, at first, it was intended as a medicine. The green version is produced by macerating 130 hard-to-find mountain herbs, roots and plants in alcohol and leaving the mixture to age in oak casks.

Today, Chartreuse's exact ingredients remain a closely guarded secret, and word has it only two monks know the recipe. Perhaps closest to the original is the Elixir Végétal (69% alcohol), sold as a tonic, but potent, spicy, chlorophyll-rich Chartreuse Green (55% alcohol) and milder, sweeter Chartreuse Yellow (40% alcohol) are much better known. You can find out more in the Parc Naturel Régional de Chartreuse (p530).



€13.40/10.70, 2hr €9.20/7.40; ☀9am-5pm Dec-Apr), a ski retreat ideal for families (30 minutes' drive from Annecy), and Chambéry's favourite weekend retreat for snow-lovers, **Savoie Grand Évard** ([www.savoiegrandevard.com](http://www.savoiegrandevard.com); per day cross-country ski pass adult/child €9.50/6, downhill €20/16; ☀late Dec-mid-Mar).

Irregular buses link Chambéry and park villages like Le Châtelard and École; browse bus schedules on [www.lesbauges.com](http://www.lesbauges.com).

## Les Trois Vallées

This is the big one you've heard all about: vast, fast and by most measures, the largest ski area in the world. It's impossible to tire of all this terrain: depending on how it's reckoned, there are more than 600km of pistes and 200 lifts linking three connected valleys. Among these are wealthy and ever-so-British **Méribel** (elevation 1450m), founded by Scotsman Colonel Peter Lindsay in 1938; playground of the super-rich **Courchevel** (1850m), which is a fave of the Moët-at-five brigade and ultra-wealthy Russians; and **Val Thorens**, Europe's highest ski village at 2300m.

Smaller Alpine villages – such as **Le Pratz** (Courchevel; 1300m), *très anglais* **La Tania** (Courchevel; 1400m), **Les Allues** (Méribel; 1100m) and **St-Martin de Belleville** (Val Thorens; 1450m) – all are linked by speedy lifts to higher-elevation slopes.



## Activities

### Winter

Les Trois Vallées is blessed with some of the world's best **skiing** terrain. The pistes here are vast and varied enough to satisfy even the most demanding skiers. The season is also among the longest in France, running from early December to late April (or early May in Val Thorens). Save time queuing by buying your pass online at [www.les3vallees.com](http://www.les3vallees.com). You'll pay €63/312 for a one-/six-day pass for Les Trois Vallées, and less if you're only skiing one valley (€56).

Sunny, relaxed Méribel is intermediate heaven, with 150km of cruisy (mostly blue and red) runs, more than 40 ski lifts, two slalom stadiums, an Albertville Olympic run, two **snow parks** with jumps, pipes and rails, and plenty of activities for kids. Packed with Brits and *seasonnaires* (seasonal workers), it's also famous for après-ski partying.

With a wide plateau of cruisy green and blue runs, tree-fringed Courchevel is

paradise for beginners. Courchevel 1850 is the highest of the valley's hub villages (where you can practically ski down into a designer boutique). Courchevel's 150km of well-groomed pistes, served by 58 lifts, include a few stomach-churning black *couloirs* (steep gullies). The 2km-long floodlit **toboggan run** through the forest, illuminated from 5pm to 7.30pm, is a fun après-ski alternative.

Watched over by glacier-licked peaks, Val Thorens, purpose-built in the 1960s, is the highest valley of the three and enjoys the longest season. Largely tree-less and exposed, most skiing is above 2000m – on blue-sky days, the terrain feels vast and open, but clouds seem to descend in an instant. There's excellent off-piste terrain, a **snow park** and Europe's longest **toboggan run** (one run, with sledge and helmet, costs €15.50 and takes 45 minutes), a drop of 700m over its 6km.

Off-piste skiers seeking guidance should head for the local Bureau des Guides. The one in **Méribel** (☎06 43 89 72 91; [www.guides-meribel.com](http://www.guides-meribel.com); Rte de la Chaudanne; trips from €65; ☀3-7pm Sun-Fri) is in the Parc Olympique complex.

### La Tyrolienne

ADVENTURE SPORTS

(Val Thorens; €55; ☀Dec-Apr) Accessible only to skiers, this is billed as the world's highest zip line. That's not actually true, but it sure does feel like the top of the world. From the Bouchet chair lift, you can fly 1300m in one minute and 45 seconds at speeds of up to 100km/h, dangling more than 200m above the ice.

### Aquamotion

WATER SPORTS

(☎09 71 00 73 00; [www.aquamotion-courchevel.com](http://www.aquamotion-courchevel.com); 1297 rte des Eaux Vives, Courchevel 1650; pool adult/child €23/13, spa €37; ☀10am-8.30pm Tue-Sun, to 10pm Mon Dec-Apr) No, the Starship *Enterprise* hasn't landed in Courchevel – it's a state-of-the-art aquatic complex, with mountain views visible from the waters of the 25m pool. Loll around by the wave-making machines, hop onto the 45m slide, or stump up for the wellness centre, complete with saunas, spas, mineral pools and massage. Other distractions include a gym and climbing wall.

### Summer

Summer (mid-June to August) sprinkles wildflowers over the pastures of Les Trois Vallées and transforms the mountains into a playground for **hiking**, **paragliding** and **via ferrata** fixed-cable routes – for the last,

## **B** BUDGET BRIDES-LES-BAINS

Linked directly to Méribel by the 25-minute **Télécabine de l'Olympe** (☎8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun), the little spa town of Brides-les-Bains is a great-value alternative to staying in the resorts. Simple and spotlessly clean rooms fill former convent **Hôtel Savoy** (☎04 79 55 20 55; www.savoy-hotel-brides.com; place de l'Église; d incl breakfast €90-102; ☎late Dec–Oct; ♿♿♿), one of several decent midrangers in town. Two-hundred metres west of the town centre is **Le Bis 'Trop' Savoyard** (☎06 82 52 20 27; www.lebistrop.com; rue Aristide Briand; mains €15-27.50; ☎6pm-2am; ♿), where Alpine specialities get reverent treatment, including chicken gratinated (nay, drowned) in Reblochon cheese. There's a small après-ski scene, too: the busy **Amélie Bar** (☎04 79 55 30 15; www.hotel-amelie.com; rue Emile Machet; ☎3-11pm Dec-Apr, Jul & Aug) is conveniently located just down the steps from the lift.

there is one at Levassaux (near Les Menuires) and another at Le Cochet (St-Martin de Belleville). Scenic walks include a four-hour return hike to **Refuge du Saut** (2126m), a steep climb for magnificent valley views, and family-friendly two-hour **Circuit des Lacs** from Val Thorens.

The resorts are criss-crossed by hundreds of kilometres of circuits and downhill runs for **mountain bikers** – Val Thorens alone has 120km of trails. IGN biking maps and details on bike rental outlets (there's at least one in each station) are available at tourist offices. Note that many hotels and restaurants are shut in the summer.

The local Bureau des Guides (p531) can assist with summer activities.

### **S** Sleeping

Tourist offices run accommodation services in **Méribel** (☎04 79 00 50 00; http://reservation.meribel.net; rte du Centre, Méribel), **Courchevel** (☎04 79 08 00 29; http://booking.courchevel.com; rue du Rocher, Courchevel 1850) and **Val Thorens** (☎04 79 00 01 06; http://book.valthorens.com; Grand Rue, Maison de Val Thorens). The best options for midrange ski-to-your-door accommodation are weekly studio rentals. Hotels are much cheaper in Moûtiers (connected by bus) and Brides-les-Bains, linked by road or bubble lift.

### **M** Méribel

#### **Le Roc**

HOTEL **cc**

(☎La Taverne 04 79 00 36 18; www.lataverne.meribel.com; rte du Centre, Méribel; week/weekend d €115/160, tr €195/220; ☎Dec-Apr & Jun-Aug; ♿) For the cheapest beds in central Méribel, this is the place to come. The 14 smallish rooms (12 twins, two triples) are situated directly over the late-opening and lively **La Taverne**

**bar** (rte du Centre, Méribel; ☎8am-1.30am; ♿), so they're not recommended for families or light sleepers. Reception is in the bar.

#### **La Croix Jean-Claude**

HOTEL **cc**

(☎04 79 08 61 05; rte de la Resse, Les Allues; tw incl breakfast €162-232; ☎Jun-Apr; ♿) Down the hill in sleepy Les Allues, La Croix Jean-Claude is one of the oldest hotels in Meribel valley. Sixteen homely, floral-trimmed rooms, 13 of which are twins, show some signs of age, but the excellent **restaurant** downstairs (menus €22-39) more than makes up for it. There's quick access to Méribel's slopes via the Olympe bubble lift or a free shuttle.

### **C** Courchevel

#### **Fahrenheit 7**

HOTEL **ccc**

(☎04 86 15 44 44; www.fahrenheitseven.com; Résidence les Cimes Blanches, 76 rue du Marquis, Courchevel 1650; d/f incl breakfast from €260/450; ☎Dec-Apr; ♿♿) Young, relatively affordable and refreshingly unpretentious, Fahrenheit 7 stands out in the Courchevel crowd. Based in up-and-coming Courchevel 1650 (Moriond), this ski-in, ski-out hotel features retro design, balconies in most rooms and several urban-cool bars and restaurants, including **La Rotisserie** (mains €20-30), with a sunny terrace right off the slopes. There are also 20 family-style suites here.

### **V** Val Thorens

#### **Fahrenheit 7**

HOTEL **ccc**

(☎04 79 00 04 04; www.fahrenheitseven.com; Place de la Lombarde, Val Thorens; d/q incl breakfast from €350/530; ☎Dec-Apr; ♿♿) Like its sister in Courchevel, the ski-in, ski-out Fahrenheit 7 is the younger, trendier alternative to the other hotels in town. Great terrace

and cocktail bars overlooking the slopes and snow-clad peaks.

## Eating & Drinking

### Méribel

#### Arctic Juice & Cafe

CAFE €

(www.arcticjuicecafe.com; route de la Montée, Méribel; mains €8-14; ☺ 8.30am-4.30pm Dec-Apr; ☎ ☎) This great little Alpine chain will set you up with breakfast smoothies and falafel sandwiches to go, plus quinoa protein bowls and veggie burgers for post-piste refueling. Organic coffee and revitalising juices too.

#### La Fromagerie

FRENCH, SWISS €€

(☎ 04 79 08 55 48; Galerie des Cimes, Méribel; mains €21-30; ☺ 7-10pm Dec-Apr, Jul & Aug) The pungent cheese aroma here will tell you instantly if this restaurant and cheesemonger is for you. It's the ultimate primer on Alpine cheese: a choice of *raclettes* (sweet and creamy Savoyard style or a fruitier Swiss variety), various fondue recipes or goat's cheese piled on toast.

#### ★ Jack's Bar

BAR

(☎ 04 79 00 44 26; www.jacksbarmeribel.com; rte de la Chaudanne, Méribel; ☺ 8am-11pm Dec-Apr; ☎) Jack's Bar plays it cool, but it's the slickest après-ski operator in town, with live music from 5pm to 7pm from Monday to Friday. All-day food (€13-27) includes truffle-oil-drizzled pizzas, vegetarian mezza and dirty fries, while the cocktails include quality winter warmers (amaretto and hot cranberry hits the spot). Happy hour is from 4pm.

#### ★ Le Rond Point

BAR

(☎ 04 79 00 37 51; www.lerondpointmeribel.com; off rte du Plateau, Méribel; ☺ 9am-7pm Dec-Apr; ☎) It would be an omission to leave Méribel without skiing straight up to the terrace of the 'Ronnie', shuffling to the bar in ski boots, and ordering the house speciality, toffee vodka, perhaps sloshed into *chocolat chaud*. Snow-kissed fir trees provide the view until live music lights up the stage (most days 4.30pm to 7pm).

Meals and snacks are served from 11.30am until around 6.30pm.

### Courchevel

Courchevel 1850 may have eight Michelin-starred restaurants, but head to Courchevel

1650 (Moriond) for a trendier, more casual dining scene.

#### Le Farçon

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 04 79 08 80 34; www.lefarcon.fr; Immeuble Le Kalinka, La Tania; lunch/dinner menus from €42/68; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm daily mid-Nov-Apr, closed Mon mid-Jun-mid-Sep) Ski all the way down to La Tania for the carefully crafted menus of Michelin-starred chef Julien Marchet, which contain delights such as asparagus with apple sorbet, suckling pig with a Béarnaise reduction and Reblochon pie. There's a walk-in wine cellar too. Reservations are always a good idea (enquire 48 hours in advance).

#### Copiña

COCKTAIL BAR

(rue du Marquis, Courchevel 1650; ☺ 11am-1.30am) Spanish tapas (€8-14) and craft cocktails have turned this into one of Courchevel's favourite lunch terraces – although you might find it so inviting that you don't make it back out onto the slopes. Cocktails are only €8 from 8pm to 10pm, making for lively evenings as well. There's a sister bar in Méribel.

### Val Thorens

#### Belleville Diner

BISTRO €

(☎ 04 79 41 18 25; www.belleville-diner.com; Galerie Pécelet, Val Thorens; mains €5.50-14; ☺ 8am-11pm) Hidden away in the shopping centre is this attractive bistro that wouldn't look out of place in Paris. Don't be confused by the name – it looks nothing like a diner – but it does serve breakfast until 4pm (pancakes, French toast, omelettes). After that it's a very chill après scene, where you can relax on a couch with a glass of wine and audible conversation.

#### La Folie Douce

BAR

(☎ 04 79 00 04 27; www.lafoliedouce.com; Piste Plein Sud, Val Thorens; ☺ 9.30am-5pm Dec-Apr; ☎) There's no escaping La Folie Douce. These piste-side après-ski bars are notorious for building nightclub atmosphere in broad daylight. Around 2pm, follow the gleeful whoops below the top of Plein Sud lift, plant a bottle of rosé in the snow, sway with cyber-costumed dancers, stomp boots to the rhythms of the resident DJ, and emerge dazed, wondering how it's only 5pm.

There's also a good restaurant, **La Fruitière**, on-site.

## **i** LAST CALL

Free shuttles run through each resort; however, they do not run between the valleys. If you miss the last lift back to the valley where you're based, you'll need to take a taxi to get home.

### Cafe Snesco

BAR

(Grande Rue, Val Thorens; ☎ 4pm-1am Sun-Fri, from noon Sat) Serving pints of *fadol* (draught beer), this Danish dive is Val Thorens' most popular choice to rehydrate once the lifts close.

## **i** Information

**Courchevel 1850 Tourist Office** (☎ 04 79 08 00 29; www.courchevel.com; rue du Rocher, Courchevel 1850; ☎ 9am-7pm Dec-Apr, Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year; 📞) Courchevel's main tourist office. Has other offices in Le Praz and La Tania.

**Méribel Tourist Office** (☎ 04 79 08 60 01; www.meribel.net; place Maurice Front, Méribel; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Dec-Apr, shorter hours May-Nov; 📞) Has the low-down on winter and summer activities.

**Val Thorens Tourist Office** (☎ 04 79 00 08 08; www.valthorens.com; Grand Rue, Maison de Val Thorens; ☎ 8.45am-7pm Dec-Apr, Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) Has plenty of information in English.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### BUS

In winter, Altibus (04 79 68 32 96; www.altibus.com) links all three Les Trois Vallées resorts with the following airports:

**Chambéry** adult €41.20, 2½ to four hours, Saturday and Sunday

**Geneva** adult €65, 3½ hours, daily

**Lyon–St-Exupéry** adult €59, 3¼ to four hours, Friday to Sunday

For all airport buses, you must reserve 48 hours ahead.

From Moûtiers (the nearest rail station), Transdev Savoie (www.transdevsavoie.com) runs buses to Val Thorens, Méribel and Courchevel (lines T3, T4 and T5, respectively). All three cost €13.50, one-way, and run at least three times per day in winter. Services drop to one daily on weekdays outside winter, and most services disappear altogether in high summer.

### TRAIN

Six kilometres north of Brides-les-Bains is the nearest railhead, Moûtiers (Moûtiers-Salins-Brides-les-Bains).

**Chambéry** €15.20, 1¼ to two hours, 10 daily

**Paris Gare de Lyon** from €81.30, 4½ to six hours, eight daily; via Lyon or Chambéry

On weekends from mid-December to early April, Eurostar (www.eurostar.com) operates direct overnight and day trains from London to Moûtiers (from €110, 7½ hours).

## Val d'Isère

Wild off-piste skiing and beginner-friendly slopes, Michelin-starred gastronomy and farmhouse cooking, soothing spas and unbridled nightlife...all are gathered in twinkly Val d'Isère, 32km southeast of Bourg St-Maurice. Val d'Isère's ability to be simultaneously chic and traditional, fast-paced and relaxed, has propelled it to stardom as the resort of choice for skiers and boarders with cash to splash. Val d'Isère has all the enchantment of an Alpine village but with world-class leisure facilities and swanky hotels. There are three villages along the main road, each separated by about 2km: Daille (to the northwest), Val d'Isère (the centre), and Le Fournet (to the east).

The combined terrain of Val d'Isère and the lakeside *commune* of **Tignes** form the enormous Espace Killy ski area, named after Jean-Claude Killy, who grew up in Val d'Isère and won three slalom and downhill golds at the 1968 Winter Olympics in Grenoble. Popular with Brits, Danes and Swedes, the resort is accessible only by a sinuous access road clinging to the heights of the upper Tarentaise Valley.

## **i** Activities

### Winter

Val d'Isère and Tignes together form **Espace Killy** (www.espacekilly.com; adult 1-/6-day pass €61/304, child €49/244), a giant for its scale – altitudes between 1550m and 3456m, 300km of pistes – and for the length of its season (from late November until very early May). It's easy to leave behind queuing bottlenecks, even in peak season, and there's a great mix of beginner, intermediate and advanced skiing as well as miles of glorious, easily accessible off-piste. The piste gradings may feel on the hard side.

The many ski schools include well-regarded **Top Ski** (☎ 07 82 85 88 89, 04 79 06 14 80; www.topski.fr; Immeuble Les Andes, av Olympique, Val Village; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Dec-Apr) and the **ESF** (☎ La Daille 04 79 06 99 99, Val Village 04 79 06 02 34; www.esfvaldisere.com; place des

## **i** WINTER SPORTS IN A WARMING WORLD

Rising temperatures are already a reality in the Alps: glaciers are retreating at an ever-increasing speed and what was once predictable snowfall is sometimes turning into rain at lower-elevation resorts. But that doesn't mean you have to cancel your trip – those epic powder days still happen. Just keep the following in mind:

- ▶ Before you buy your ski pass, make sure that it includes access to terrain at higher elevations. For example, in Les Portes du Soleil even if it's raining in Morzine (1000m), it may still be snowing up in Avoriaz (1800m).
- ▶ Reliable snow during Christmas has become less likely – hedge your bets and plan your trip for later in the season.
- ▶ Don't be discouraged by thin snow cover. The big resorts do an impressive job making snow and maintaining their pistes, so you can still carve turns even when the conditions off-piste are not ideal.

Dolomites, Val Village; ☀ 8.30am-7pm Dec-Apr).

**Ski touring** in the area is fabulous, especially in Parc National de la Vanoise (p537).

At 2500m, the **snow park** is on the back of Belvedere mountain. It has rails, jumps and a boardercross course – everything a freestyle rider could ask for. Other winter options range from ice climbing to mushing, and ice skating to winter paragliding. For children's activities, head to the **Village des Enfants** (☎ 04 79 40 09 81; www.village-des-enfants.fr; Rond Point des Pistes, Val Village; child 3-13yr 1/6 half-days €32/172; ☀ 10am-6pm Sun-Fri mid-Dec-Apr, Jul & Aug; 📶).

Three free chairlifts on the lower slopes let novices find their feet without having to purchase a lift ticket: the village chairlift, Savonette and Les Lanches. Under-fives and over-75s ski for free.

### **Centre Aquasportif**

SPA

(☎ 04 79 04 26 01; www.centre-aquasportif.com; rte de la Balme, Val Village; adult/child from €13.60/10.90; ☀ 10am-9pm Thu-Tue, to 10pm Wed Dec-Apr, 11am-9pm Jul & Aug) Situated next to the Téléphérique Olympique, this glass-and-stone complex is great for a post-slope unwind. Besides pools with jets and bubble beds, it offers first-class sports facilities and a spa area with saunas, steam rooms and whirlpools.

### **Summer**

Espace Killy (p534) is one of only two places in France (the other is Les Deux Alpes) that still has **summer skiing** (between mid-June and mid-July): here it's on the Grande Motte and Pissailas glaciers, near Tignes and Val d'Isère, respectively. A day's lift pass costs €28.50.

The valleys and trails that wend their way from Val d'Isère into the nearby Parc National de la Vanoise are a hiker's dream. If you fancy more of a challenge, you can play (safely) among the cliffs at La Daille's two **via ferrata** fixed-cable routes; both have a beginner-level section followed by a tougher section only for the experienced. For canyoning, mountaineering or rock climbing with a guide, contact the **Bureau des Guides** (☎ 03 77 08 09 76; www.guides-montagne-valdisere.com; Galerie des Cimes, 137 av Olympique, Val Village; ☀ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-7.30pm Sat & Sun).

**Mountain biking** (Vélo Tout Terrain, or VTT) is big in Val (but forbidden within the national park), with an assortment of downhill, endurance and cross-country circuits. Bikes can be rented at local sport shops. Three lifts are open to downhill cyclists (€10 per day) as well as hikers (free).

The summer season runs from late June to the first weekend in September. Stop by the tourist office (p537) for details on family-friendly activities, including pony rides.

### **Sleeping**

#### ★ **Les Cinq Frères**

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 79 06 00 03; www.les5freres.com; rue Nicolas Bazile, Val Village; d/f incl breakfast from €340/400; ☀ Dec-Apr & mid-Jun-Aug; 📶) This family hotel has been going strong since 1936. Named for the five sons of its founder, rooms offer unpolished luxury – distressed wood, old sleds, a mix of Baroque and ultramodern design flourishes – plus a lovely lounge area and a playroom for kids.

#### **Hôtel Le Kern**

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 79 06 06 06; www.hotelkern-valdisere.com; Le Chef Lieu, Val Village; tw/f €230/350;



☺ Nov-May; ☺) Val's budget option, Le Kern comes with a good dose of antique charm: a wooden-beamed dining room and vintage furniture add to the cosy, yesteryear Alpine ambiance. Younger kids will enjoy the loft suite.

### Hôtel Avancher

SPA HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 79 06 02 00; www.hotel-lavancher.com; rte du Prariond, Val Village; d/f incl breakfast from €315/500; ☺ Dec-Apr & Jun-Sep; ☺) The welcome is always warm and attentive at the Avancher. Its rooms are bright and contemporary, with sleek bathrooms, good sound-proofing and plenty of natural light. There's a lounge with board games, and a ski/mountain-bike workshop, but it's the luxury touches that make this a top address: a top-class restaurant, steamy *hammam* and outdoor rooftop sauna.



### Eating

#### Boulangerie Chevallot

CAFE €

(Les Clarines; ☎ 04 79 06 29 36; ave Olympique, Val Village; mains €5.10-6.70; ☺ 6.30am-7.30pm) For a simple but delicious French meal, grab a seat at this bijou bakery and cafe on the main street: thick slices of quiche, *beaufort torte* (a type of savoury pie), croque monsieur and all manner of delectable pastries and hot drinks are available.

#### Le Barillon

FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 79 41 13 92; cnr rues de la Daille & des Étroits, La Daille; mains €19-29; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Dec-Apr & mid-Jun-Aug) Inside the quaintest stone cottage you've ever seen, ample Savoyard dishes are hauled onto tables by enormously

friendly staff. At this family-run restaurant, no corners are cut in preparing the *raclette*, a full half-moon of cheese, but there's duck confit and cured salmon to tempt you away from the classics.

#### Le Garage

BRASSERIE €€

(☎ 06 23 78 65 80; www.facebook.com/legaragevaldisere; ave Olympique, Val Village; mains €15.50-23; ☺ 8am-midnight; ☺) Come to this former mechanic's shop turned hip hangout for a lively atmosphere and all manner of brasserie-style ski fare: pizzas, tapas, salads and filling breakfasts, plus craft beer on tap and big games on the big screen. Left-luggage room and public showers (€5) too.

#### Restaurant L'Avancher

FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 79 06 02 00; www.avancher.com; rte du Prariond, Val Village; mains €22-31; ☺ noon-3pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sun Dec-Apr, Jul & Aug) Even if you aren't staying at the chic Hôtel Avancher, it's worth booking a table at its classy restaurant. The upmarket bistro meals range from seared Iberico pork with braised endives to the full range of Savoie specialities.

#### ★ L'Atelier d'Edmond

GASTRONOMY, FRENCH €€€

(☎ 04 79 00 00 82; www.atelier-edmond.com; rue du Fornet, Le Fornet; menus €125-185; ☺ 7-9.30pm Tue, noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Sun mid-Dec-Apr) Candlelight bathes stone walls, low beams and family heirlooms in this gorgeous double-Michelin-starred restaurant, where locally sourced ingredients are imaginatively transformed into dishes such as pork and snail rissoles, smoked pigeon with cacao

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### FARM TALK

Part of Val d'Isère's charm is that it's a real village with year-round residents. Claudine is one of them and she runs **La Fermette de Claudine** (☎ 04 79 06 13 89; www.lafermettedeclaudine.com; Val Village; ☺ 7am-7.30pm Nov-Apr, Jul & Aug) – walk in the door of this *fromagerie*-cum-delicatessen and you'll be enveloped by the heady odours of Alpine cheeses and artisanal sausages. Other delectables include yoghurt and small-batch Génépi (an Alpine herbal liqueur made with various species of Artemisia, aka wormwood). You'll find it 100m from the tourist office, across the roundabout.

Sensational, hardcore dairy goodness – including eight fondues and a five-cheese *raclette* – is served up at **L'Étable d'Alain** (☎ 04 79 06 13 02; www.lafermedeladroit.fr; rue des Barmettes; mains €27-38; ☺ 7-10pm Mon, noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun Dec-Apr); book two or three days ahead for dinner and, to find it, head 1km from central Val d'Isère, towards the Col de l'Iseran. The adjacent family dairy farm, **La Ferme de l'Adroit** (☎ 04 79 06 13 02; www.lafermedeladroit.com; rue des Barmettes; ☺ open house from 8:30am, milking at 5.30pm), is open to visitors throughout the day; check ahead to make sure it's visiting season.

nibs, and oysters every which way. The beautifully plated desserts belong in an art gallery. Call ahead to secure one of the Atelier's limited seats.

Find it 2km east of Val Village, across from the Téléphérique du Fornet ski lift.



## Drinking & Nightlife

### ★ La Folie Douce

BAR

(☎04 79 06 21 08; www.lafoliedouce.com; La Daille; ☀9am-5pm mid-Dec-mid-Apr) Why wait until you're back down in the village to party? From 2.30pm every day, DJs, singers, choreographed dancers and live bands fuel a riotous après-ski bash on this outdoor terrace at the top of the La Daille cable car. Ibiza in the snow!

Inside there's a self-service canteen with everything from *diots* (sausages) and lemon meringue pie to bottles of wine, and next door you'll find Savoyard restaurant **La Fruitière** (☎04 79 06 07 17; www.lafoliedouce.com; La Daille; mains €18-29; ☀noon-3pm Dec-Apr; ☎).

### ★ Cocorico

BAR

(☎04 79 24 60 04; www.cocoricovaldisere.com; chemin du Charvet, Val Village; ☀2-8pm Dec-Apr) The indie-rock alternative to après-ski stalwart La Folie Douce (p537) is Cocorico. The large outdoor deck, strung with fairy lights, stages excellent bands before morphing into a packed dance floor when DJs start up around 6pm. It's only a short stumble back to the main road in Val d'Isère.

### La Cave sur le Comptoir

WINE BAR

(☎04 79 22 27 81; www.facebook.com/lacavesurlecomptoir; av Olympique, Val Village; ☀5pm-1am Dec-Apr) This intimate, wood-eaved den is the sophisticate's choice for après-ski. Hunker down between book-lined walls and be served top-notch wines by the glass with generous taster plates of cheese or charcuterie (or half and half, €17).



## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 79 06 06 60; www.valdisere.com; place Jacques Mouffler, Val Village; ☀8.30am-7.30pm Sun-Fri, to 8pm Sat Dec-Apr & Jun-Aug; ☎)



## Getting There & Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Advance reservations are essential during school holiday periods and can be made online or by phone.

**Chambéry airport** During ski season, Altibus (www.altibus.com) offers direct buses (one-way €41.20, 2½ hours, one daily Saturday and Sunday).

**Geneva airport** Altibus has direct bus services (one-way/return €65/109, four hours, daily from early December to mid-April). Another option is booking a transfer (return €69, 3½ hours) through Ben's Bus (www.bensbus.co.uk), which also serves Grenoble airport (return €71, 3¾ hours).

**Lyon-St-Exupéry airport** There are seasonal Altibus services (one-way/return €59/99, 3½ hours, at least one daily Friday, Saturday and Sunday) from December through April.

### BUS

During the ski season and in summer, free shuttles link the different villages in Val d'Isère. The *train rouge* (actually a bus) goes from La Daille through Val Village to Le Fornet; it runs every five minutes during the day and every 25 minutes between 8pm and 2.40am.

Ski-season buses linking Val d'Isère with Tignes (€6.90, 30 minutes, three to six daily) run from December to April.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The passes at **Col de l'Iseran** (2764m), on the D902 southeast to Bonneval-sur-Arc, and **Col du Petit-St-Bernard** (2188m), northeast of Bourg St-Maurice towards the Aosta valley in Italy, are blocked by snow for all but the summer months.

### TRAIN

Bourg St-Maurice, the nearest railhead, is 32km northwest of Val d'Isère and has train connections to destinations all over France.

From mid-December to early April on weekends, Eurostar (www.eurostar.com) operates direct daytime and overnight services between Bourg St-Maurice and London (from €134, 7½ to nine hours).

From December through April, the Belle Savoie Express (www.vente-bellesavoieexpress.fr) bus regularly links Bourg St-Maurice with Val d'Isère (line T14, €13.50, from one hour) and Tignes (line T15, €13.50, from 1½ hours).

## Parc National de la Vanoise

Rippling between the Tarentaise and Maurienne Valleys is Parc National de la Vanoise. Designated France's first national park in 1963, the 529-sq-km park has more than 100 peaks surpassing 3000m. At its highest points, this is a desolate landscape of glaciers and lichen-spattered rock; at lower altitudes, Alpine meadows and spruce forests

## **i** WINTER ROAD WARNING

In winter the D1006 from Modane to Lanslebourg is cleared of snow, but east of here the D902 is unsalted. We don't recommend driving on to Bonneval-sur-Arc unless you're equipped with winter tyres or snow chains.

flourish. Marmots, chamois and France's largest colony of *bouquetins* (Alpine ibexes) – around 1800 – graze freely beneath the larch trees while 125 bird species wheel overhead. Amplifying the drama are historic fortifications like stocky **Fort Victor-Emmanuel** and **Fort Marie Thérèse**.

Along the southern edge of the park (west to east), **Termignon-la-Vanoise**, **Lanslebourg-Mont-Cenis** and **Bonneval-sur-Arc** are good bases. The former two have more shops and restaurants, while quaint Bonneval has a middle-of-nowhere charm.

In winter, the seasonal closure of the Col de l'Iseran blocks direct road access from Val d'Isère, thereby protecting the sizeable Val Cenis ski area from crowds.



## Activities

### Winter

Termignon, Lanslebourg-Mont-Cenis and other Vanoise villages are jumping-off points to the **Val Cenis ski station** ([www.valcenis.ski](http://www.valcenis.ski)), home to 125km of mostly easy and intermediate (blue and red) pistes between 1500m and 2800m. Mostly families, beginners and locals arrive to pound these pistes – after all, high-octane mountain thrills and nightlife are close by in Val d'Isère and Les Trois Vallées. Still, there are enough challenging runs here to entertain skiers and boarders who prioritise scenic pistes and country towns over thumping après-ski. Lift passes are good value at €39/195 for one/six days.

### Summer

With 400km of marked trails, the park is hiker's heaven, although heavy snow can make walking trails inaccessible for all but a fraction of the year – usually mid-June to late September. Speak to a tourist office, especially if you're planning a hike at the start or end of the season. The **Grand Tour de Haute Maurienne** ([www.haute-maurienne-vanoise.com](http://www.haute-maurienne-vanoise.com)), a 10-day hike around the upper reaches of the valley, takes in

national-park highlights. The GR5 and GR55 cross it, and other trails snake east into Italy's Grand Paradiso National Park.



## Sleeping & Eating

### Auberge d'Oul

B&B €

(☎ 04 79 05 87 99; [www.auberge-oul.com](http://www.auberge-oul.com); Bonneval-sur-Arc; dm €27-29, d/tr/q €72/100/130; ☺ mid-Jun–mid-Sep & mid-Dec–Apr) Smack on the village square, this flowery-balconied, slate-walled *gîte* (self-catering cottage) has a simple seven-person dorm and two plain but cosy *chambres d'hôte* (guest rooms) on the 2nd floor. The half-board option (per person €16) offers great-value mountain meals, from classic fondues to herbed lamb rack.

### ★ La Cabane

FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 79 05 34 60; Bonneval-sur-Arc; mains €14-26; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm ski season, shorter hours Jul & Aug) Juicy *diots* in white wine are most popular at this welcoming wood-walled den, but the range of Savoyard cheese dishes is highly worthwhile. Try *moelleux de revard* (baked, spruce-wrapped cheese), or the sweet but strangely refreshing *chevrotine* (hot goat's cheese encrusted with honey and walnut, served with apple slices and rosemary-dusted potatoes). Reservations recommended.

## **i** Information

The tourist offices in **Lanslebourg** (☎ 04 79 05 99 06; [www.haute-maurienne-vanoise.com](http://www.haute-maurienne-vanoise.com); 89 rue du Mont-Cenis, Lanslebourg; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-6.30pm mid-Dec–Mar, Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) and **Bonneval-sur-Arc** (☎ 04 79 05 95 95; [www.bonneval-sur-arc.com](http://www.bonneval-sur-arc.com); Bonneval-sur-Arc; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-6.30pm late Dec–Mar, to 6pm Apr & late Jun–Aug) stock practical information on walking, limited skiing (cross-country and downhill) and other activities in and around the park. Termignon-la-Vanoise, 6km west of Lanslebourg, houses the national park's small information centre, the **Maison de la Vanoise** (☎ 04 79 08 71 49; [www.vanoise-parcnational.fr](http://www.vanoise-parcnational.fr); place de la Vanoise, Termignon; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-6pm late Jun–early Sep & late Dec–Mar, shorter hours rest of year; ☺).

## **i** Getting There & Away

Trains serving the Arc River valley leave from Chambéry and run as far as Modane (€18.50, 1½ hours, almost hourly), 23km southwest of Lanslebourg. Travelling between Moûtiers (Les Trois Vallées) and Modane (€28.70, three hours,

five daily) requires backtracking and changing trains in Chambéry.

From Modane, Transdev Savoie ([www.transdevsavoie.com](http://www.transdevsavoie.com)) runs two daily buses to/from Termignon (€7.80, 30 minutes), Val Cénis-Lanslebourg (€11.50, one hour) and Bonneval-sur-Arc (€11.50, 1½ hours).

## DAUPHINÉ

Named for the dolphin (*dauphin*) that graced the coat of arms of its prior rulers, the historic region of Dauphiné encompasses the territories south and southwest of Savoie, stretching from the Rhône River in the west to the Italian border in the east. It roughly corresponds to the *départements* of Isère, Drôme and Hautes-Alpes.

Mountain-backed Grenoble is Dauphiné's cultural centre and largest city. Barely a few kilometres southwest extends Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors, scarred with gorges and high plateaus. East of here is rugged, glacier-carved Parc National des Écrins, with sharktoothed summits like the Barre des Écrins (4102m) and La Meije (3984m) forming a heart-stopping backdrop for skiers at Les Deux Alpes and Alpe d'Huez.

Standing sentinel over lesser-loved winter sports area Serre Chevalier is Briançon, an underrated fortress town connected to Italy by a hair-raising mountain road.

## Grenoble

POP 161,044 / ELEV 215M

Haloed by mountains, France's self-styled 'Capital of the Alps' unites urban pleasures and breathtaking nature. Every road leading out of Grenoble brushes a different regional park. The Isère River slices through the city, girding the clifftop Bastille and a ravishing set of riverside museums. On the opposite bank, Grenoble fizzles: a historic quarter lined with cafes and shops, art galleries and an efficient tram system zipping between neighbourhoods both glamorous and gritty.

Though it's surrounded by land preserved for nature, Grenoble is an engine of industry. High-tech businesses have carved out niches here, fuelled by the university's reputation for maths and computer sciences. Students (more than 45,000) and culturally engaged locals stimulate an arts scene and nightlife that are the envy of the French Alps.

## Sights

### ★ Musée de Grenoble

MUSEUM

(📍04 76 63 44 44; [www.museedegrenoble.fr](http://www.museedegrenoble.fr); 5 place de Lavalette; adult/child €10/free; 🕒10am-6.30pm Wed-Mon) For lovers of art history, this museum is an uplifting place to get lost for half a day. There's an even spread of artistic eras on display: an antiquities wing with statuettes from ancient Egypt and Greece, and mostly European art from medieval religious paintings to an impressive assembly of 20th-century luminaries like Bonnard, Ernst, Léger, Magritte, Miró, Modigliani and Soutine.

### ★ Musée Archéologique

MUSEUM

(📍04 76 44 78 68; [www.musee-archeologique-grenoble.fr](http://www.musee-archeologique-grenoble.fr); place Saint-Laurent; 🕒10am-6pm Wed-Sun) **FREE** This highly impressive museum unveils the secrets of a 12th-century church and cloister using light effects, a haunting choral soundtrack and an informative audioguide. Interactive, self-guided visits allow you to explore parts of the time-worn sanctuary at your own pace, from images projected on its lofty walls to 4th-century amphora burials in the basement.

### Fort de la Bastille

FORTRESS

([www.bastille-grenoble.com](http://www.bastille-grenoble.com)) **FREE** After a fun ride in the *téléphérique* (p542), or a steep, hour-long climb from the Musée Archéologique, the reward is a magnificent mountain panorama from Grenoble's stocky fortress, built during the first half of the 19th century to strengthen the city against Alpine rival the Duchy of Savoy. On the viewing platform known as the **Belvédère Vauban**, panels (in French and English) indicate what you're looking at. On clear days you can see not only the peaks of the Vercors but also the snowy hump of Mont Blanc.

The fort complex has its own tourist office (p544), the Musée des Troupes de Montagne, zip lines, a via ferrata and a couple of places to eat. A number of walking and jogging trails, including the GR9, start here or pass by.

### Musée des Troupes de Montagne

MUSEUM

(French Alpine Troops Museum; 📍04 76 00 92 25; [www.museedestroupesdemontagne.fr](http://www.museedestroupesdemontagne.fr); Fort de la Bastille; adult/child €3/free; 🕒9.30am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep, from 11am rest of year, closed Jan) Though the subject is niche, this museum exploring France's elite Alpine regiments, which date to 1888, is riveting. An audioguide (in French, English, German or





## Grenoble

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Musée de Grenoble..... F1

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Cathédrale Notre Dame..... F2  
 3 Musée Dauphinois..... D1  
 4 Musée de la Résistance et de la  
 Déportation de l'Isère..... G4

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bureau des Guides et  
 Accompagnateurs de  
 Grenoble..... (see 6)  
 5 Club Alpin Français..... A3  
 6 Maison de la Montagne..... E3  
 7 Téléphérique Grenoble-Bastille..... D2

### 📍 Sleeping

- 8 Hôtel de l'Europe..... D3  
 9 Le Grand Hôtel..... E3

### 📍 Eating

- 10 Au Clair de Lune..... G2  
 11 Halles Ste-Claire..... E3  
 12 La Cuisine des Tontons..... F3  
 13 La Tête à l'Envers..... F2  
 14 L'Impertinence..... E4

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 15 Kai-Iwi..... E2  
 16 Le 365..... F2  
 17 Le Zinc..... F3  
 18 Les BerThom..... F2

Italian) enlivens displays of military gear, tales of WWII resistance, and brings you right up to present-day mountain troops.

### Musée Dauphinois

MUSEUM

(☎04 57 58 89 01; www.musee-dauphinois.fr; 30 rue Maurice Gignoux; ☀10am-6pm Wed-Fri & Mon, to 7pm Sat & Sun) **FREE** This ever-evolving museum unleashes a century of regional history on visitors. Suits of armour are back-lit in brightly coloured rooms, and 3D family trees and highland traditions are re-imagined as cutting-edge modern art. The museum, occupying a 17th-century convent, has permanent exhibitions on skiing and rural lifestyles, but installations constantly change. You're sure to find something interesting in this impressive collection.

### Cathédrale Notre Dame

CATHEDRAL

(www.cathedraledegrenoble.fr; place Notre Dame; ☀10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-6pm Sun) The rose-brick rib vaults of Grenoble's elegant cathedral rise from the site of a 4th-century church. Its present form dates to the 1200s, though its interior Gothic styling was added in later centuries.

### Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère

MUSEUM

(☎04 76 42 38 53; www.resistance-en-isere.fr; 14 rue Hébert; ☀9am-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, from 1.30pm Tue, from 10am Sat & Sun) **FREE** This thoughtfully curated exhibition presents the history of Grenoble's vigorous resistance to Italian and then German forces during WWII, with plenty of translation into English and German. Mournfully lit, the permanent exhibition features emotive displays on the region's Resistance fighters and the

fates of the thousand local Jews sent to Nazi camps.

### Le Magasin

MUSEUM

(Centre National d'Art Contemporain; ☎04 76 21 95 84; www.magasin-cnac.org; 155 cours Berriat; ☀1-7pm Tue-Fri, 2-9pm Sat & Sun) **FREE** A cavernous glass-and-steel warehouse built by Gustave Eiffel is now a centre of contemporary art, with many of the temporary exhibitions designed specifically for this space. It's situated about 2km west of the centre; to get there, take tram A to the Berriat-Le Magasin stop.



### Activities

In town, the Bastille is the centre of outdoors activities, from hiking to zip lines. You can even scale its cliffs on the Maison de la Montagne's challenging via ferrata – rent the equipment at **Adrenaline Pro** (☎04 76 43 72 60; www.adrenaline-ski-shop.com; 24 place Paul Vallier; via ferrata rental half/full day €14/16; ☀10am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Tue-Sat, 2.30-7.30pm Mon), but be aware this is not a route for first timers.

### Maison de la Montagne

OUTDOORS

(☎04 57 04 27 00; www.grenoble-montagne.com; 14 rue de la République; ☀9.30am-12.30pm & 1-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sat) This city-run centre provides information on all the surrounding outdoor action – including off-piste skiing, rock and ice climbing, hiking, biking, canyoning, paragliding and caving – plus weather and avalanche bulletins, and help planning overnight stays in the mountains. It has topo maps on sale and a library of guidebooks to consult.

Also here is the **Bureau des Guides** (☎04 38 37 01 71; www.guide-grenoble.com; 14 rue de

## GRENOBLE PASS

The Grenoble Pass (24/48/72 hours €19/33/48), sold at the tourist office (p544), can save you money if you plan on visiting multiple ticketed sites in and around town. It includes free entry to major sights like the Musée de Grenoble and the *téléphérique*, free public transport, as well as discounts on other attractions. Learn more at [www.grenoblepass.com](http://www.grenoblepass.com).

la République, Maison de la Montagne; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 1-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sat); contact them for guided trips of all levels.

**Téléphérique Grenoble-Bastille** CABLE CAR  
(☎ 04 76 44 33 65; [www.bastille-grenoble.fr](http://www.bastille-grenoble.fr); quai Stéphane Jay; adult/child one-way €5.80/3.30, return €8.60/4.70; ☎ 9.15am-midnight Tue-Sun, 11am-7pm or later Mon Jun-Sep, shorter hours Oct-Mar, closed Jan) Hop into a clear-panelled spherical pod for dreamy views of Grenoble's red roofs and magnificent mountains on this cable-car ride up to the Bastille. *Les bulles* ('the bubbles'), as they're known, have been floating along the 610m cable since 1934, making them the world's first urban cable-car system for sightseers.

**Acrobastille** ADVENTURE SPORTS  
(☎ 06 84 34 53 78; [www.acrobastille.fr](http://www.acrobastille.fr); Fort de la Bastille; adult/child from €22/15; ☎ Mar-Nov) Head to the Bastille (p539) for family-friendly fun: two 300m-long zip lines (kids aged 11 and over), a high-ropes course, Spéléobox (a caving simulator with 120m of dark tunnels), Mission Bastille (a puzzle-packed labyrinth worthy of Indiana Jones) and other activities. Weather conditions can alter opening hours.

**Yes We Canyon** ADVENTURE SPORTS  
(☎ 04 38 12 84 87; [www.yes-we-canyon.com](http://www.yes-we-canyon.com); trips €43-120) Rope up and get your fun on with guided canyoning, via ferrata and rock climbing trips.

**Club Alpin Français** OUTDOORS  
(☎ 04 76 87 03 73; [www.cafgrenoble.com](http://www.cafgrenoble.com); 32 av Félix Viallet; ☎ 3-5pm Tue, 5-7pm Mon & Wed-Fri) Runs outings and mountain day trips: details are posted in its front window and on its website, and purchase of an €8 'Discovery Card' is good for one trip a year. This branch runs most of the *refuges* in the Isère *département*.

## Festivals & Events

**Les Détours de Babel** MUSIC  
([www.detoursdebabel.fr](http://www.detoursdebabel.fr); ☎ late Mar-mid-Apr) This impressive three-week festival of jazz and world music has a mix of big names (ticketed) and free concerts. Expect a programme that leaps from avant-garde orchestral music to Balkan brass bands, via Francophone soul and psychedelic rock.

**Cabaret Frappé** MUSIC  
([www.cabaret-frappe.com](http://www.cabaret-frappe.com); Jardin de Ville; ☎ mid-Jul) **FREE** This much-loved free festival brings a week of fresh-air concerts (from rock and pop to electronica) to the Jardin de Ville.

## Sleeping

Many of Grenoble's hotels cater to business travellers, meaning prices drop considerably on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

**★ Le Hüb** HOSTEL, APARTMENTS €  
(☎ 09 70 72 08 86; [www.lehub-priviledges.com](http://www.lehub-priviledges.com); 25 av Doyen Louis Weil; dm/apt from €25/80;     ) Modern and design driven, the Hüb has both hostel and apartment-style options (from studios to four bedrooms). A spacious cafe and patio and convenient location behind the train station make it popular with both business travellers and backpackers. Hostel beds (pods) are private and comfortable; the only drawback is that the shared bathroom is one floor down. Apartments have kitchenettes.

**Le Grand Hôtel** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 04 76 51 22 59; [www.grand-hotel-grenoble.fr](http://www.grand-hotel-grenoble.fr); 5 rue de la République; d/ste from €140/217;    ) Like the service, rooms at Le Grand Hôtel are refined and sleek. Rooms are attired with high-quality bed sheets, spotless bathrooms and modern-art chairs, and triple-glazed windows ensure a peaceful night despite the central location. A contemporary, businessy feel prevails but a few design throwbacks, like original mosaic tiles on the main stairs, hark back to decades past.

**Hôtel de l'Europe** HISTORIC HOTEL €€  
(☎ 04 76 46 16 94; [www.hoteleurope.fr](http://www.hoteleurope.fr); 22 place Grenette; d/f from €97/114;    ) With more than two centuries of history behind it, dead-central Hôtel de l'Europe lays claim to being Grenoble's oldest hotel. Though venerable, its 39 crisp white rooms are modern, brightened by flashes of magenta and crimson, and most have wrought-iron balconies.

It's worth saying *oui* to the breakfast buffet (€10) of mostly local produce.

### Splendid Hôtel

HOTEL €€

(☎04 76 46 33 12; www.splendid-hotel.com; 22 rue Thiers; s €106, d €80-130, tr & studio €135; 📞📺📺) 🍃 Family-run Splendid offers a more personal touch than most of Grenoble's business-focussed hotels. Its 45 rooms are individually designed (and a matter of preference, depending on your taste for fuchsia), some with hydromassage showers. More minimalist are the studios, which are self-contained with kitchenettes and desk spaces.

Enclosed parking costs €6.90 per night; air-con is €10.

## Eating

As the one-time capital of Dauphiné, Grenoble is the place to sample *gratin dauphinois*. The original recipe calls for finely sliced potatoes oven-baked in milk, cream and butter, with a sprinkling of salt, pepper and garlic. A pinch of nutmeg or cayenne is widespread, depending on the chef's taste, though further alterations would be frowned on (and adding cheese is heresy).

### Halles Ste-Claire

MARKET €

(place Ste-Claire; ☀7am-1pm Tue-Sun, 3-7pm Fri & Sat) Built in 1874, this covered market is crammed with local cheeses, wine, deli fare and more.

### L'Impertinence

CAFE €

(☎04 28 70 58 05; www.limpertinence-grenoble.fr; 32 rue Saint-Jacques; mains €6-10; ☀8am-6.30pm Mon-Wed, to 10.30pm Thu & Fri, 10am-4pm Sun; 📞) Looking for a casual, healthy lunch? We've got a winner for you! Marie and Clothilde's two-floor cafe serves thick slices of house-made quiches, copious mixed salads and warming gratins and soup in winter. Breakfast with yoga and pilates classes twice a week; brunch on Sundays (€24).

### La Tête à l'Envers

FRENCH €€

(☎04 76 51 13 42; 12 rue Chenoise; menu €26; ☀7.30pm-1am Tue-Sat, plus noon-2pm Thu & Fri.) Tipping French cuisine upside down (sometimes literally), little La Tête à l'Envers has an ever-changing menu that presents seasonal ingredients in unexpected contexts (spicy desserts, fruity mains) – occasionally you'll be asked to guess what you're eating. Book ahead.

### Au Clair de Lune

VEGETARIAN, FRENCH €€

(☎04 76 24 61 17; 54 rue Très Cloîtres; lunch main/dinner menus from €13/22; ☀noon-1.30pm Mon-Wed, noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm Thu-Sat; 📞) 🍃 This tiny restaurant is freshening the palates of cheese-fatigued *grenoblois* with its vegetarian-leaning menu, from stuffed cabbage to creamy spinach risotto. It's not entirely meatless, but the emphasis is green in all senses: vegan pastries, organic ingredients and a menu that shifts with the seasons. Book ahead, even for lunch.

### La Cuisine des Tontons

FRENCH €€

(☎04 76 25 25 00; 9 rue Bayard; lunch menu €15, dinner menus €22-30; ☀noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat) Reserve ahead for the generous *menus* at this whimsically decorated bistro – decked out in homage to the 1963 French caper flick *Les Tontons Flingeurs*. Carnivores will be rapt over its six different versions of *tartare*, from classic to Roquefort, and specials like five-spiced duck and rosemary lamb.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Depending on where you go, you'll find nightlife both raucous and refined. Students power a bar scene that's big on happy hours and quick-acting cocktails, but sophisticated wine and beer joints are easy to find, too. Rue Auguste Gaché and around place Notre-Dame are good places to start. Also look around place aux Herbes, place Claveyson and place St-André (they're close to each other, a block south of the river).

### Le 365

COCKTAIL BAR

(☎04 76 51 73 18; www.facebook.com/bar.le.365; 3 rue Bayard; ☀6pm-2am Wed-Sat) Good-humoured mixologists preside over a fabulous cocktail list at this chic and ever-so-slightly risqué bar. Sip one of myriad mojito varieties and marvel at the nipple tassels on the wall.

### Le Zinc

WINE BAR

(☎04 76 03 07 44; www.lezincbar.com; 5 rue Auguste Gaché; ☀6-10pm Mon, to midnight Tue & Wed, to 1am Thu-Sat) Evoking an old-timey train station, complete with looming clock and retro tiled floor, Le Zinc is a favourite among local wine lovers. The owners are especially passionate about local, organic varieties.

### Les BerThom

BEER HALL

(☎04 76 01 81 17; www.lesberthom.com; 1 rue Saint-Hugues; ☀5pm-1am Mon-Wed, to 2am

Thu-Sat, to midnight Sun) Ten or more beers on tap, an industrial feel, and a mixed crowd of students and seasoned hop-heads: lively Les BerThom is beer heaven.

### Kai-Iwi

CAFE

(www.facebook.com/kaiiwicafegrenoble; 5 rue des Clercs; ☺9am-7pm Wed-Sat, to 3pm Sun; ☺) This welcoming coffee joint might just brew the best cup in Grenoble. The decor is pure New Zealand kitsch, and food follows the same theme (try the whopping 'All Blacks breakfast'). NZ beer, cider and sauvignon blanc also feature.

### La Belle Électrique

LIVE MUSIC

(☎04 69 98 00 38; www.la-belle-electrique.com; 12 Esplanade Andry Farcy; ☺bar 10am-1am Wed-Fri, from 4pm Sat; ☺) A gorgeous wood-and-glass structure, this is the top concert venue in town and a nice place for a drink to boot. Check the schedule online; great acoustics.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 76 42 41 41; www.grenoble-tourisme.com; 14 rue de la République; ☺10am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours Sep-Jun; ☺)

**Bastille Tourist Office** (☎04 76 89 46 45; Fort de la Bastille; ☺noon-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug, hours vary Wed, Sat & Sun rest of year)

## i Getting There & Away

### AIR

Some 45km northwest of the city by road. **Grenoble Isère Airport** (☎04 76 65 48 48; www.grenoble-airport.com; St-Étienne-de-St-Geoirs) handles flights to and from multiple UK destinations, plus Poland, Ireland, Sweden and the Netherlands. Ben's Bus (www.bensbus.co.uk) runs winter shuttles from the airport direct to numerous ski resorts, including Les Deux Alpes (€33.50).

### BUS

**Eurolines** (www.eurolines.com; 11 place de la Gare; ☺9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri), which runs international buses, has a desk at the Grenoble **bus station** (11 place de la Gare).

**Transaltitude** (www.transaltitude.fr) has buses to numerous ski stations during the winter, including Alpe d'Huez and Les Deux Alpes (€15.50, 1½ hours). Buses are most frequent on weekends. If you're based in Grenoble, look into the company's Skiligne offer: a same-day return bus ticket *and* ski pass costs a mere €29 to €45, depending on the resort. Reservations are a must.

**Transisère** (www.transisere.fr) can get you to Bourg d'Oisans (bus 3000; €8.40, 1½ to two hours, at least three daily).

**Transdev Dauphiné** (www.transdevdauphine.com) has services to Briançon via La Grave (€20.70, 2½ hours, two daily). It's faster than the train.

### TRAIN

The **train station** (1 place de la Gare) is about 1km west of the centre and is linked to the centre by tram lines A and B.

Grenoble has direct rail links to major towns around the Rhône-Alpes (and beyond). Destinations include:

**Anecy** €21.60, 1¾ hours, hourly

**Chambéry** €12.70, 45 minutes, frequent

**Geneva** €29.10, 2¼ hours, 11 daily

**Lyon** €23.50, 1¼ hours, frequent

**Paris Gare de Lyon** €49, three hours, hourly

## i Getting Around

Grenoble is small enough that you can walk everywhere, but renting a bike from **Métrovélo** (www.metrovelo.fr; place de la Gare; per day €3; ☺7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-7pm Sat & Sun) at the train station can be a fun way to get around. City trams (€1.60) are also convenient.

## Around Grenoble

Grenoble is surrounded by three gorgeous natural parks: the limestone mesas of Vercors to the southwest, the glacial peaks of Écrins (p546) to the southeast, and the cliffs and forests of Chartreuse (p530) to the north. Rock climbing, wildlife watching, cross-country skiing, canyoning and mountain biking are just a few of the numerous ways to enjoy the region's spectacular natural setting.

## Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors

There's high drama almost immediately upon entering Parc Naturel Régional du Vercors. The roads dart around needlepoint bends, duck into tunnels burrowed through sheer cliffs, and emerge amid sleepy hamlets. Topping it all is the **Réserve Naturelle des Hauts-Plateaux**, at 170 sq km, mainland France's largest nature reserve.

In this 2062-sq-km mosaic of oak forests, highland plateaux and serrated peaks, rewards are rich for lovers of nature. Chamois perch on cliffs, 75 different types of orchid peep out from tree roots, and birds of prey soar above. There's also history pocketed in

the limestone: numerous caves were hide-outs for the French Resistance during WWII. Hikers can follow paths up formations like the **Grand Veymont** (2341m; 20km) or the **Pic St-Michel** (1919m; 8.5km); come winter, strap on snowshoes or cross-country skis to glide along groomed trails at **Autrans-Méaude** ([www.autrans-meaude.com](http://www.autrans-meaude.com)) and **Lans-en-Vercors** ([www.lansenvercors.com](http://www.lansenvercors.com)).

It's easy to dip into the park from Grenoble, just a few kilometres northeast. Approaching from the west, Pont-en-Royans makes a good base.

## Sights & Activities

### Grotte de la Luire

CAVE

( 04 75 48 25 83; [www.grottedelaluire.com](http://www.grottedelaluire.com); Le Passage, off D622, St-Agnan-en-Vercors; adult/child €9/6.50;  daily Jul & Aug, Wed-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep) Filled with karst springs and enormous, spectacularly lit chambers, the Grotte de la Luire was used as an emergency hospital during WWII. When it's open, up to five tours depart daily (11 in July and August); check the website for the exact hours.

### Gorges du Furon

CANYON

Both canyoning and walking are popular in the spectacular Gorges du Furon, carved through the Vercors limestone by the rushing Furon River. You'll see the gorges (in fact, pass through them) just before you reach Lans-en-Vercors, on the D531 from Grenoble.

### Les Accompagnateurs

#### Nature et Patrimoine

WALKING

( 06 35 95 23 08; [www.accompagnateur-vercors.com](http://www.accompagnateur-vercors.com)) Leaving from the tourist offices of Villard de Lans (p545) or Lans-en-Vercors, these excursions in the Vercors park are conducted by knowledgeable guides. In spring, summer and autumn they offer half-day (adult/child €18/12) and day walks (€28/21) among Alpine wildflowers and wildlife, while half-day snowshoeing tours (€22/17) are available in winter.

## Sleeping

### Au Gai Soleil de Mont-Aiguille

HOTEL €

( 04 76 34 41 71; [www.hotelgaisoleil.com](http://www.hotelgaisoleil.com); La Richardière, Chichillianne; d €69-77; ) At the foot of striking Mont Aiguille, this simple inn has fabulous views, superb access to local hiking routes, a rustic country restaurant, a spa and two massage rooms for treating weary muscles at trail's end (spa access €15).




### À la Crécia

B&amp;B €

( 04 76 95 46 98; [www.gite-en-vercors.com](http://www.gite-en-vercors.com); 436 chemin des Cléments, Les Cléments, Lans-en-Vercors; s/d/tr/q €58/69/89/109)  Renovated by Véronique and Pascal, this 16th-century farm has been endowed with five wood-panelled guest rooms and eco-conscious additions like solar panels. Kids will adore the on-site menagerie of sheep and pigs; and optional dinners, served in a rustic dining room, assemble farm-fresh produce like local cheeses and homemade cakes (*menus* from €19).

It's 2km south of Lans-en-Vercors' tourist office.

## Information

**Tourist Office** ( 04 76 95 10 38; [www.villarddelans.com](http://www.villarddelans.com); 62 place Pierre Chabert, Villard de Lans;  9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Sep-Jun; )

## Getting There & Away

Buses 5100 and 5110 (€5.60), run by Transisère ([www.transisere.fr](http://www.transisere.fr)), link Grenoble with Lans-en-Vercors (45 minutes, nine daily) and Villard de Lans (1¼ hours, four to seven daily). The trip, which passes through the Gorges du Furon, is quite beautiful.

## Bourg d'Oisans

POP 3278 / ELEV 720M

There's a towering mountain or glacier-gouged valley in almost every direction out of Bourg d'Oisans. This agreeable village of slate-grey houses, set beneath the Grandes Rousses massif, is a good base for hikes into Parc National des Écrins or day-trips to a number of ski resorts, including Alpe d'Huez and Les Deux Alpes – that is, if you aren't deterred by the steep, serpentine roads to the resorts.

But Bourg's true passion is cycling. This valley village is a great starting point for numerous downhill trails in the national park, as well as the legendary 21-bend access road to Alpe d'Huez, an iconic section of the Tour de France route.

For information on the area, check out [www.oisans.com](http://www.oisans.com) and [www.bikes-oisans.com](http://www.bikes-oisans.com), which have details on trails, maps and bike hire. For details on activities such as kayaking on the Drac's turquoise waters, rock climbing, via-ferrata routes and paragliding, contact the tourist office (p546).



## Musée des Minéraux et de la Faune des Alpes

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 76 80 27 54; [www.musee-bourgeoisans.fr](http://www.musee-bourgeoisans.fr); place de l'Église; adult/child €5.20/2.40; ☺ 2-6pm Sat & Sun Oct-Dec, 2-6pm Wed-Mon school holidays) Glittering cases of minerals and natural history displays are given a lift by great lighting and original presentation at this diverting museum. After being dazzled by crystals mined from these very mountains, bone up on regional flora and fauna like ibex and chamois.

## Cycles et Sports

CYCLING

(☎ 04 76 79 16 79; [www.huezbikehire.com](http://www.huezbikehire.com); rue du Général de Gaulle; ☺ 8.30am-7pm daily May-Sep, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) For those mad enough to tackle the remorseless climb up Alpe d'Huez (21 bends, an ascent of nearly 1220m, and an average incline of 7.9%) this boutique operation hires out high-end road bikes for between €40 and €90 per day. They also rent mountain bikes and electric bikes.

## ★ Hôtel des Alpes

HOTEL €

(☎ 04 76 80 00 16; [www.hoteldesalpesoisans.com](http://www.hoteldesalpesoisans.com); 21 rue Général de Gaulle; d €60-80; ☺) Well-heated, wooden-floored rooms are packed into this slender building in the centre of town. Standard rooms are plain but pleasingly large, while deluxe rooms have designer bathrooms, writing desks and a royal colour scheme of cream and maroon. Even cosier is the dinky spa (€8.50, by reservation), with a Jacuzzi and sauna to soothe cycle-sore muscles. The breakfast buffet costs €9.

## Ferme Noémie

B&amp;B €

(☎ 04 76 79 01 72; [www.fermenoemie.com](http://www.fermenoemie.com); chemin Pierre Polycarpe, Les Sables; campsites €15.50-28, apt €65-120; ☺ campground late Apr-Oct; ☑) Five kilometres north of Bourg d'Oisans, run by British couple Melanie and Jeremy Smith, Ferme Noémie has barn-conversion apartments with four to six beds and old-fashioned campsites. There's wi-fi at reception, washing machines on site (€4) and an option for breakfast croissants delivered right to your tent. Prices depend on seasonal demand.

## La Muzelle

FRENCH €

(☎ 04 76 79 58 02; 43 av de la République; lunch/dinner menu €15/24, pizzas €9.80-13.30; ☺ noon-2pm & 6.30-10.30pm) A cut above the rest of Bourg d'Oisans' restaurants, La Muzelle fills its menu with perfectly seared tuna, beefy mains from burgers to steaks, and a good

selection of pizzas. If you've been burning serious calories on the slopes or cycle trails, consider restoring the balance with a bacon-stuffed baked Camembert. The setting's simple but service is sunny.

## Information

**Maison du Parc** (☎ 04 76 80 00 51; [www.ecrins-parcnational.fr](http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr); 120 rue Gambetta; ☺ 10am-noon & 3-6pm daily Jul & Aug, 9am-11am & 1.30-4pm Mon Tue, Th & Fri, 9am-11am Wed Sep-Jun)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 76 80 03 25; [www.bourgeoisans.com](http://www.bourgeoisans.com); 31 quai Girard; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun, 9am-7pm Jul & Aug; ☑)

## Getting There & Away

From December to April, Transisère ([www.transisere.fr](http://www.transisere.fr)) bus line 3020 runs from Grenoble's bus station (€5.60, one hour) through Bourg d'Oisans to Alpe d'Huez (€3.20, 45 minutes) between two and four times daily. Line 3030 from Grenoble also reaches Bourg d'Oisans en route to Les Deux Alpes (€3.20, one hour) three to nine times per day.

During the same period, LER bus (p551) line 35 runs two to three times daily to/from Bourg, on the way between Grenoble (€6.50, one hour) and Briançon (€15.90, 1¼ hours).

## Parc National des Écrins

France's second-largest national park, Parc National des Écrins ([www.ecrins-parcnational.fr](http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr)) stretches between the towns of Bourg d'Oisans, Briançon and Gap. Glacial action and the thrashing Durance and Drac rivers carved out this 918 sq km expanse of mountains and moraines. Over 100 peaks, topping out at the Barre des Écrins (4102m), rise above more than 40 glaciers, beech forests, waterfalls and flower-sprinkled alpine meadows. Stomping ground for hikers and mountaineers between mid-June and mid-September, the park has roughly 700km of trails, some following footpaths used by shepherds and smugglers for centuries.

Approaching from the north of the park, Bourg d'Oisans is a good jumping-off point – following the D530 here to Venosc and Bérard will put you in the heart of the action. Briançon and Gap (respectively, east and south of the park) are also suitable places to gather info and picnic supplies before lacing up your hiking boots and strapping on your crampons.

## C'EST GRAVE

One creaking, sunset-coloured cable car, no pistes and over 2000 vertical metres of extreme terrain in the shadow of La Meije (3983m). That pretty much sums up **La Grave** ([www.la-grave.com](http://www.la-grave.com); adult/student €51/38), where you may find yourself rappelling down a couloir just to reach your run. Free-riders come from far and wide to tackle the wild steeps here, a maze of cliffs, seracs and heart-in-your-throat no-fall zones. Most access the area from tiny La Grave, a charming village 29km east of Bourg d'Oisans, though it's also possible to ski over from the top of Les Deux Alpes. Although a guide is not required, you'd be crazy to go without one: contact the Bureau des Guides ([www.guidelagrade.com](http://www.guidelagrade.com)) in La Grave or Les Deux Alpes (p549), and make sure you come equipped with avalanche gear, a climbing harness and – need we say it? – mad skills.

For the full experience, check out the legendary **Derby de la Meije** ([www.derbydelameije.com](http://www.derbydelameije.com)), an anything-goes, 1000-person costumed race down the mountain held every April. The rules are simple: the fastest time to the bottom wins.

Among the park's walking paths are options long and short, to suit all levels of fitness. Popular (and unchallenging) half-day hikes include the **Lac du Lauzon** circuit (three hours) or the stream-side path to **La Cabane de Jas Lacroix** (three hours). Families might consider an hour-long ramble around the **Tombeau du Poète** (Poet's Tomb) or the easy 90-minute walk to **Dormillouse** village. For a longer trail, the medium-difficulty **Grande Cabane** trail (five hours) reaches outstanding views of a glacial valley, and the tough **Col des Tourettes** (6½ hours) rewards hikers with a craggy mountain pass speckled with chamois.

The national park's free mobile app (Rando Écrins) is very handy for planning hikes around the park, including maps, trail recommendations (you can filter by length or difficulty) and info on flora and fauna. Find more info on <http://rando.ecrins-parcnational.fr>. Trail info can be downloaded for offline use.

Less of the park is accessible in winter but visitors can ply a number of walking, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing trails. Experience is recommended, as is a guide; get in touch with a Maison du Parc.

### Information

There are several tourist offices in towns around the national park and seven Maisons du Parc providing park-specific info, including Maison du Parc (p546) in Bourg d'Oisans.

### Getting There & Away

**Rando Écrins** (☎04 92 50 25 05; <http://rando.ecrins-parcnational.fr/en/pages/transport>) has details of bus services designed to take hikers from Gap, Briançon and Bourg d'Oisans

into the park during summer. Reserve 36 hours in advance. Ask locally if driving in winter, as mountain passes may close due to snow.

## Les Deux Alpes

POP 1905 / ELEV 1650M

Les Deux Alpes has come a long way since sleepy rural towns Venosc and Mont-de-Lans merged to create this gigantic mountain playground. France's second-oldest winter sports resort has grown from a single tow-rope lift into a 400-hectare ski area served by 43 lifts. And a new gondola, set to open between 2021 and 2023, will link the resort to cross-valley neighbour Alpe d'Huez in a mere 12 minutes.

Testament to the tourism explosion of the 1970s and '80s, Les Deux Alpes ([www.les2alpes.com](http://www.les2alpes.com)) is clogged with functional architecture and Lego-like blocks. But good beginner ski areas, lots of intermediate terrain, plus access to the extreme skiing in La Grave (p547) have all given Les Deux Alpes a loyal following. In summer, pistes metamorphose into mountain bike trails...or you can continue skiing or hiking up high on the glacier.

### Sights & Activities

Contact the Bureau des Guides (p549) for off-piste skiing, ice climbing and snowshoeing in winter, and via-ferrata expeditions, canyoning, glacier walks and mountain biking in summer.

### Winter

Les Deux Alpes' winter season runs from December to April. The main **skiing** domain lies below (ie west of) the summit of **La**

**Meije**, one of the highest peaks in the Parc National des Écrins. Lots of lifts (per day/six days adult €52/262, child €42/210) come right into the village, and five beginners' lifts, great for kids, are free. Terrain here is primarily blue and some long cruisers descend all the way to the base from the Jandri Express 2 gondola, which tops out at 3200m.

Other winter options include ice skating, careening around on an ice bumper car (for kids) and going on a *motoneige* (snowmobile) expedition; the tourist office has details.

### Summer

Thanks to the **Glacier des Deux-Alpes** (2900m to 3600m), Les Deux Alpes is one of only two places in France where you can **ski** on a glacier in summer – the other is Espace Killy (p534), above Val d'Isère and Tignes. When it's clear, the 360-degree panorama takes in much of southeastern France, including Mont Blanc, the Massif Central and Mont Ventoux. The season runs from late June to early August. Note that a ski day skews earlier than in winter, with lifts between 7am and 1pm – exact timings depend on the weather. A day pass, valid for skiing and the **snow park** (and for other activities in the afternoon), costs €41.70/33.40 for an adult/child.

You can combine morning skiing with **mountain biking** on scores of nail-biting descents and cross-country trails up to an elevation of 3200m. A day pass to six bike-accessible lifts (also valid for hikers) costs €26.50/21 per adult/child. Many ski shops rent out Alp-ready mountain bikes in the summer.

Les Deux Alpes also offers numerous **hiking trails** and plenty of opportunities for **paragliding** as well as ice skating, swimming, summer luge, tennis etc.

## Sleeping & Eating

### People Hostel

HOSTEL €

(☎04 58 17 42 96; www.thepeoplehostel.com; 1 rte de Champamé; dm/d/f from €35/130/178;  ) For modern budget accommodation, you can't do any better than the massive People Hostel. Pine-clad dorms come with decent mattresses, bathrooms, privacy curtains and small lockers, but don't include towels (€5); downstairs there's a large restaurant and bar, ski lockers and rental shop, and a kitchen (€5 access fee) and movie room. Half-board and ski picnics also available.

### ★Hotel Côte Brune

HOTEL €€

(☎04 76 80 54 89; www.hotel-cotebrune.fr; 6 rue des Côtes Brunnes; s/d/tr/q from €145/194/291/336; ) You can ski in and out of this hotel, which has a luxurious ochre-toned spa and sprawling slopeside terrace bar. The 18 rooms have cheerful Alpine accents like faux-fur cushions, distressed wooden furniture and cherry-red throws, and the south-facing ones have balconies. Three rooms can sleep a family of four.

### Le Raisin d'Ours

FRENCH €€

(☎04 76 79 29 56; 98 av de la Muzelle; mains €18-31, lunch menu €16; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm) This rustic restaurant serves upmarket Alpine cuisine – pork knuckle in Munster cheese, roasted Camembert with calvados – along with well-executed Italian pasta dishes and seafood. It's accompanied by wines from around France and a satisfying roster of desserts like *fromage blanc aux myrtilles* (soft cheese with forest bilberries), and a magnificent apple tart. The mood is relaxed, the service attentive.



## Drinking & Nightlife

### ★Polar Bear

PUB


(www.thepolarbearpub.com; 104 av de la Muzelle; ☺12.30pm-1.30am) Follow the totemic wooden polar bears into this snug chalet-style boozery. A hanging brazier keeps punters toasty, as do the Irish coffees and *vin chaud* (mulled wine). There's a range of European beers (including Guinness on tap), regular live music and 'shot skis' (if you must). Arrive early: this place gets packed.

### Smithy's Tavern

BAR

(☎04 76 11 36 79; www.smithystavern.com; 7 rue du Cairou; ☺bar 6pm-late, restaurant 6-11pm; ) At the bottom of the Venosc lift is this rocking, English-owned pub, one of the premier (and longest-running) party spots in town. The low, timbered ceiling and battle-scarred bar oversee themed and fancy-dress nights, live music (usually Wednesdays) and the latest happy hours around (between midnight and 2am on Mondays, and 10pm to midnight on Tuesdays and Thursdays).

## Information

Maison des Deux Alpes is home to the **Tourist Office** (☎04 76 79 22 00; www.les2alpes.com; 4 place des Deux Alpes; ☺8.30am-6.30pm late Nov-late Apr & mid-Jun-Aug, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri low season; ) **ESF** (☎04 76 79 21 21;

www.esf2alpes.com; 4 place des Deux Alpes; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm mid-Dec-mid-Apr, shorter hours early Dec & late Apr) and **Bureau des Guides** (☎ 04 76 11 36 29; www.guides2alpes.com; 4 place des Deux Alpes; ☎ 3.30-6.30pm).

If you're planning to ski the La Grave area or stay nearby, contact the **tourist office** (☎ 04 76 79 90 05; www.lagrave-lameije.com; D1091, La Grave; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm daily mid-Dec-Apr & Jun-Sep, 9am-noon Mon-Fri May, Oct-mid-Dec; 📍) 23km east of Les Deux Alpes.

## **i** Getting There & Away

By road, Les Deux Alpes is 67km southeast of Grenoble and 19km southeast of Bourg d'Oisans.

Ben's Bus (www.bensbus.co.uk) runs shuttles from Grenoble airport (€38.50, 1½ to 2¼ hours); BlaBlaBus (www.ouibus.com) runs shuttles from Lyon-Saint-Exupéry airport (€31, 3¾ hours) and Lyon's bus station (€24, 3¾ hours).

In season, Transalitude (www.transalitude.fr) runs direct buses from Grenoble's bus station (€15.50, 1¼ hours). If you're based in Grenoble, even better is Transalitude's Skiligne offer: only €45 for a same-day return bus ticket *and* ski pass. Reservations essential.

## Alpe d'Huez

ELEV 1860M

With high altitudes, reliable snow and 250km of pistes, Alpe d'Huez's enormous popularity is no mystery. Officially Alpe d'Huez Grand Domaine (www.alpedhuez.com), this vast ski area encompasses over a half-dozen base villages, including Auris-en-Oisans, Huez-en-Oisans, Oz-en-Oisans, Vaujany and Villard Reculas. Experts will enjoy one of the world's longest black runs as well as plenty of challenging skiing around Pic Blanc (3330m). And the new gondola, set to open between 2021 and 2023, will link the resort to cross-valley neighbour Les Deux Alpes, providing access to even more terrain.

Ski season lasts from early December to late April, when the sun on its south-facing slopes begins melting the snow in earnest. Some of the ski lifts feel like they haven't been updated since the 1968 Winter Olympics, but it's hard to find fault with this crowd-pleasing resort.

Summer brings a mix of hikers and mountain bikers – and, often, the Tour de France. Alpe d'Huez is (in)famous for its incredibly steep, 14km access road, whose 21

hairpin curves are a regular highlight of the annual cycling race.

## **+** Activities

For adventure activities such as ice climbing, mountaineering, via ferrata and off-piste skiing, contact the **Bureau des Guides** (☎ 04 76 80 42 55; www.guidesalpedhuez.com; place Paganon, Maison de l'Alpe; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm).

## Winter

Alpe d'Huez's terrain, between 1250m and 3330m, has something for all abilities, though its plethora of red runs will keep more advanced skiers particularly happy. The main ski area, around the **Marmottes I** and **Bergers** lifts, is ideal for beginners. Sheltered, tree-lined **Vaujany 1250** is worth considering in bad weather. Intermediate boarders and skiers should head to **Dôme des Rousses**.

The **Pic Blanc** (3330m), Alpe d'Huez's highest point, commands magical panoramas that reach across one-fifth of France. Accessible winter and summer via the Tronçon and Pic Blanc cable cars, it's possible to descend more than two vertical kilometres from this awesome eyrie.

Then there's Europe's longest black run, the breathtakingly sheer 16km **La Sarenne**, also accessed from the Pic Blanc car.

Ski passes cost €54.50/275 for one/six days. Saturday lift tickets are a mere €32.90 if you buy them online at least four days ahead.

## Summer

In summer, marked **hiking trails** lead up and across the slopes to views of jewel-like lakes such as **Lac Blanc**, **Lac de la Fare** and **Lac du Milieu**. The **Col du Lac Blanc** and **Face des Rousses** walks both take an hour to reach views of the lakes. For a longer, medium-difficulty hike, try the four-hour **Les Alpes** route for an eyeful of the Vallée de la Romanche.

For **mountain-biking** enthusiasts, the area is downhill heaven. Alpe d'Huez, and surrounding villages like Bourg d'Oisans, access more than 250km of trails to rattle and roll down, and three bike parks. In summer, lifts to the trails operate from late June to late August, and a one-day lift pass costs €17.50 (€14.50 for kids) for both pedestrians and cyclists.

## **i** Information

Information hub **Maison de l'Alpe** (place Paganon; ☎ 8.45am-7pm Dec-Apr, Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year; 📶) sells ski passes and houses the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 04 76 11 44 44; www.alpedhuez.com; place Paganon; ☎ 8.45am-7pm Dec-Apr, Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-Nov, May & Jun; 📶), **accommodation reservation centre** (☎ 04 76 11 59 90; www.reservation.alpedhuez.com; place Paganon, La Maison de l'Alpe) and **ESF** (☎ 04 76 80 31 69; www.esf-alpedhuez.com; place Paganon, La Maison de l'Alpe).

## **i** Getting There & Away

Alpe d'Huez is 64km southeast of Grenoble. From late December to March, Transalitude (www.transalitude.fr) buses link Alpe d'Huez with Grenoble's train and bus stations (€15.50, 1½ hours, three to eight daily). If you're based in Grenoble, Transalitude's Skiligne offer gets you a same-day return bus ticket and ski pass for only €45. Reservations essential.

## Briançon

POP 11,625 / ELEV 1326M

It's a rare pleasure to retreat to a hilltop citadel after a day of epic hiking or skiing. Briançon, surrounded by mountains and capped with a fairy-tale fortress, manages equal doses of culture and outdoor pursuits. Technically France's highest city – although the elevation of 1326m is nothing to get excited about – it flies under the mass tourism radar because of its inconvenient road access compared to other Alpine resorts – despite being only 15 zigzagging kilometres from Italy.

Briançon is the northwestern gateway town to Parc National des Écrins, with fabulous hiking. Also here is the Serre Chevalier ski area, with one access point less than 2km from its crowning Cité Vauban, the star-shaped fortified old town.

## **👁** Sights

Surrounded by mighty starburst-shaped ramparts, Briançon's hilltop old town (the Cité Vauban or Vieille Ville) looks much as it did centuries ago, its winding cobbled lanes lined with Italianate, pastel-painted townhouses. The steep main street, the **Grande Rue** – also known as the **Grande Gargouille** (Great Gargoyle) because of its gushing rivulet – was laid out in 1345. You can walk all the way around the interior of

Vauban's upper ramparts, enjoying spectacular views, by following the streets marked as the **chemin de Ronde**.

## Vauban Fortifications

HISTORIC SITE

Situated at the confluence of five river valleys, Briançon was highly vulnerable to attack by France's Alpine arch-rival of the 17th century, the Duchy of Savoy. After an especially damaging raid in 1692, vast effort was expended on constructing hilltop fortresses to defend the remote town, under the instructions of master military planner Vauban. These marvels of engineering, along with a dozen other Vauban sites in France, were given Unesco World Heritage status in 2008.

Perched atop a rocky crag high above the Cité Vauban, the **Fort du Château** (1326m) can be visited on foot from late April to November. Across the 55m-high **Pont d'Asfeld** (erected 1731), a graceful stone bridge over the Durance River, **Fort des Trois Têtes** (1435m) can be seen on a walking tour in the warm season. The **Fort des Salettes** (1400m) is accessible on foot or on guided snowshoe tours; ask at the **Service du Patrimoine** (☎ 04 92 20 29 49; www.ville-briancon.fr; Porte de Pignerol, Cité Vauban; tours adult/child €6.50/4.80; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun, Mon-Sat Jul & Aug), inside the Cité Vauban's main gate.

## **🏃** Activities

### Serre Chevalier

SKIING

(www.serre-chevalier.com; one-day pass adult/child €51.50/35.30; ☎ Dec-Apr) The Serre Chevalier ski area links four main villages and 250km of pistes along the Serre Chevalier Valley between Briançon and Le Monétier-les-Bains, 15km northwest. To get to the slopes (and warm-season trails) directly from Briançon, take the **Télécabine du Prorel** lift, located by the river 1.8km from the Cité Vauban. Alternatively, regular shuttles (€2) link the four base areas.

### Bureau des Guides et Accompagnateurs de Briançon

OUTDOORS

(☎ 04 92 20 15 73; www.guides-briancon.com; 24 rue Centrale; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 3-7pm Sat, 10am-1pm Sun summer, 5-7pm rest of year) Organises off-piste outings, snowshoeing and ice climbing in winter; and trekking, mountain climbing, mountaineering, via-ferrata climbs, glacier traverses, mountain biking and canyoning in summer.



## Sleeping

### Hotel Edelweiss

HOTEL €

(☎04 92 21 02 94; www.hotel-edelweiss-briancon.fr; 32 av de la République; d/q €89/101;  ) An excellent bet, the 20 spacious rooms, some in a building from 1890, are simply decorated with pine-clad walls, faux leather furnishings and espresso machines. There's an old-timey lounge where you can curl up with a book, and the helpful owners can arrange everything from ski passes to babysitters. It's 400m downhill from the Cité Vauban.

### Hôtel de la Chaussée

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 92 21 10 37; www.hotel-de-la-chaussee.com; 4 rue Centrale, Ste-Catherine; s/d/q €97/122/183;  ) The Bonnaffoux family has run this place with charm and efficiency for five generations – since 1892, in fact. Rooms fulfil every Alpine chalet fantasy: wooden shutters, soft lighting and furnishings that wouldn't look out of place in a doll's house.

## Eating

### ★ Pâtisserie Turin

DESSERTS, ITALIAN €

(☎04 92 21 14 00; www.patisserieturin.com; 25 Grande Rue, Cité Vauban; snacks from €3, mains €8-14; ☺8am-6.30pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, to 6pm Sun) It's hard to overstate how seriously this all-Italian baker and chocolate-maker takes the craft. Order a *caffè marocchino* (espresso with milk foam and cocoa powder) in the adjoining tea room and deliberate between raspberry gateaux, nougats, chocolate Florentines and macarons. It's also great for lunch: the pasta dishes and charcuterie and bruschetta plates are quite popular.

### Allo Raclette

FRENCH €

(☎07 69 00 56 49; www.alloraclette.fr; mains €10-18) Don't feel like going out tonight? This clever place delivers 11 different varieties of cheese fondue, raclette and *tartiflette* (potatoes, cheese and bacon baked in a casserole) right to your door, along with all the necessary cooking equipment (return the next day) and a local bottle of wine. Charcuterie (€6.90) and cornichons (€3) are extra. Orders should be placed before 7pm.

### ★ Au Plaisir Ambré

FRENCH €€

(☎04 92 52 63 46; www.auplaisirambre.com; 26 Grande Rue; menus €30-59; ☺noon-1pm by reservation & 7-9pm Fri-Tue) At this refined old-town restaurant, the leisurely pace of service is essential, if only to let your taste buds catch up with chef Michaël Chassigneux's innovative creations. Pan-fried mullet surfs on celery

foam, juicy scallops swim in coffee emulsion, and local lamb is stirred into Madras-style curry, served with quintessentially French potato millefeuille...and somehow it all works beautifully.

## Information

There's a **tourist office** (☎04 92 21 08 50; www.ville-briancon.fr; Maison des Templiers, 1 place du Temple, Cité Vauban; ☺9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun; ) inside the Cité Vauban, chock-full of free maps and pamphlets on regional attractions. Room availability information is posted on the door. There's also a **tourist office** (☎04 92 21 08 50; www.serre-chevalier.com; rue Centrale, Ste-Catherine; ☺9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun) in the lower town.

For info on Parc National des Écrins, stop by the **Maison du Parc** (☎04 92 21 42 15; www.ecrins-parcnational.fr; place du Médecin Général Blanchard; ☺10.30am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun) at the bottom of the Cité Vauban's Grande Rue.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

The bus station is next to the train station. **LER** (Lignes Express Régionales; ☎08 21 20 22 03; www.info-ler.fr) bus 35, run by the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur *région*, links Briançon with Grenoble (€20.70, 2¾ hours, one to three daily) via Bourg d'Oisans.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The Col de Montgenèvre (1854m), linking Briançon with neighbouring Italy, is kept open year-round, as is the Col du Lautaret (2058m) between Briançon and Grenoble. Chains for both are recommended after a storm, and they may even close in particularly bad weather.

### TRAIN

The **train station** (av du Général de Gaulle), terminus of a rail spur that heads northeast from Gap, is 1.5km southwest of the Cité Vauban and less than 1km south of the lower, modern town (Ste-Catherine). It is linked to the rest of town by infrequent local TUB bus 3. Destinations include the following:

**Gap** €15.70, 1¼ hours, six direct

**Grenoble** €34.30, 4½ hours, one daily

**Marseille** €47.70, 4½ hours, three direct

**Paris (Austerlitz)** from €68, 12 hours, one night train

**Paris (Gare de Lyon)** from €83.60, 7½ to nine hours, four daily

To Grenoble, the bus is much faster than the train. The fastest way to get to Paris is to take a

bus to the Italian town of Oulx (€7.50, one hour, four daily from December to mid-April) – reserve 36 hours ahead on 04 92 50 25 05 or via <https://zou.maregionsud.fr> – and then a TGV to Paris' Gare de Lyon (from €69, 4¾ hours, three daily).

## THE JURA MOUNTAINS

Brooding landscapes and inspiring hikes define the sparsely populated Jura Mountains. Extending along the Franco-Swiss border from Lake Geneva northeast to Belfort, these sub-alpine mountains lent their name to the Jurassic period in geology, when they formed. Rising highest is **Crêt de la Neige** (1720m), in the southwest of the Parc Naturel Régional du Haut-Jura.

In summer, *fruitières* (dairies) and vineyards unbolt their doors to sell prized regional produce like Comté cheese and unmistakable *vin jaune* to a mostly French influx of hikers and bikers. Winter has traditionally attracted cross-country skiers to Les Rousses and Métabief, though warming temperatures have made snow scarce in recent years. France's toughest cross-country ski race, the **Transjurassienne** ([www.transjurassienne.com](http://www.transjurassienne.com); ☺ 2nd weekend in Feb), has occasionally been cancelled in recent years due to global warming and heavy rainfall.

Cultural sights, mostly overlooked by foreign tourists, provide opportunities to catch your breath and include: the citadels of Belfort and Besançon, modernist architecture in Arc-et-Senans and Ronchamp, and legacies of home-grown luminaries like Victor Hugo and biologist Louis Pasteur.

## Besançon

POP 115,934 / ELEV 250M

Capped with a citadel and folded into a bend in the Doubs River, Besançon is a pleasant surprise. Unshowy and laid-back, the capital of the Doubs *département* nonetheless offers a broad spectrum of culture: 18th-century townhouses, many now housing hotels and restaurants; active contemporary-arts and local-music scenes; and monuments to notable local figures like Victor Hugo.

In Gallo-Roman times, Besançon (then Vesontio) was an important stop on the trade routes linking Italy, the Alps and the Rhine, and some striking remains of this period survive.

## Sights & Activities

For a lovely stroll, you can walk paths along either bank of the Doubs River, where it encircles the old city. For an alternative view, 1¼-hour **river cruises** (☎ 06 64 48 66 80; [www.vedettesdebesancon.com](http://www.vedettesdebesancon.com); Pont de la République; adult/child €13/10; ☺ Apr-Oct) ply the water.

### ★ Citadelle de Besançon

CITADEL

(☎ 03 81 87 83 17; [www.citadelle.com](http://www.citadelle.com); 99 rue des Fusillés de la Résistance; adult/child €10.90/8.80; ☺ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year, closed Jan; 📍) Dominating the city from Mt St-Etienne, more than 100 vertical metres above the old town, the 17th-century Citadelle de Besançon – designed by Vauban for Louis XIV – commands sweeping views of the city and the serpentine Doubs River. Along with 11 other similarly impressive military architectural sites, the 12-hectare Citadelle was recognised as a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2008.

English and German booklets are available at the entrance, including pamphlets aimed at kids. Entry includes audioguides (in French, English and German).

For an introduction to the citadel's architecture, head to **St-Etienne Chapel**, where a 15-minute multimedia presentation illuminates Besançon's history. The **chemin de Rond** lets you walk along 600m of the citadel's outer ramparts.

The **Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation** is one of France's most in-depth and comprehensive WWII museums. Each room has an information sheet in English but the 20 rooms of evocative photos, documents and artefacts are best visited with a free audioguide. Some of the photographs are unsuitable for young children. During WWII, the Germans imprisoned British civilians in the citadel, and German firing squads executed about 100 resistance fighters here. Nearby, the three-floor **Musée Comtois** presents local life in centuries past, including food, religion and a colourful puppet theatre.

Kids are sure to be fascinated by the **Insectarium**, with creepy-crawlies such as tarantulas, scorpions and stick insects; the small **Aquarium**, where you can admire goldfish and koi; the ho-hum **Noctarium**, where a few nocturnal rodents like dormice and voles snuffle around; a six-room **biodiversity exhibition**; and a **zoo**.

There's a restaurant, a snack bar and vending machines around the site.

If you don't fancy the uphill trudge, take Ginko bus 27 (€1.40) from the city centre or Parking Rodia, which runs from April to mid-October (find schedules on [www.ginko.voyage](http://www.ginko.voyage)).

### ★ Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie

MUSEUM

(☎ 03 81 87 80 67; [www.mbaa.besancon.fr](http://www.mbaa.besancon.fr); 1 place de la Révolution; joint ticket with Musée du Temps adult/child €8/4; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) France's oldest public art collection, founded in 1694, is famous for its local Gallo-Roman archaeology; its Cabinet des Dessins, with some 6000 drawings, including masterpieces by Dürer, Delacroix and Rodin; and a wide range of 15th- to 20th-century paintings, with standouts by Cranach, Titian, Goya and Bonnard. It's all magnificently displayed in a former corn exchange.

### ★ Musée du Temps

MUSEUM

(☎ 03 81 87 81 50; [www.mdt.besancon.fr](http://www.mdt.besancon.fr); 96 Grande Rue; joint ticket Musée des Beaux-Arts adult/child €8/4; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Mar) Literal and figurative interpretations of time are woven together at the Musée du Temps, which places allegorical paintings about the passage of time next to 18th-century wall clocks and early astronomical equipment. The result is beautifully thought-provoking, and the philosophical questions it raises are best pondered while gazing out from the **tower**, which houses a Foucault's pendulum.

### Porte Noire

RUINS

(Black Gate; square Castan) Erected in AD 175 in honour of Marcus Aurelius, this 16.5m-high Roman triumphal arch stands very near the columns of a Roman theatre and the vestiges

of an aqueduct (all still visible), which were discovered in the late 19th-century.

### Cathédrale St-Jean

CATHEDRAL

(☎ 03 81 83 34 62; [www.cathedrale-besancon.fr](http://www.cathedrale-besancon.fr); 10ter rue de la Convention; ☀ 9am-7pm, to 6.30pm winter) The earliest parts of Besançon's cathedral date to 1127. Though heavily modified in ensuing centuries, following a 13th-century fire and the collapse of its bell tower in 1724, Romanesque capitals still sit atop its interior columns. On the wall hangs *La Vierge aux Saints* (1512), painted by Italian Renaissance virtuoso Fra Bartolomeo; flick the switch to illuminate it. The cathedral's best-known treasure is its **astronomical clock** (☎ 03 81 81 12 76; [www.horloge-astronomique-besancon.fr](http://www.horloge-astronomique-besancon.fr); rue du Chapitre; adult/child €3.50/free; ☀ guided tours hourly 9.50-11.50am & 1.50-3.50pm Wed-Mon Apr-Sep, Thu-Mon Oct-Mar).



### Sleeping

#### ★ Hôtel de Paris

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎ 03 81 81 36 56; [www.besanconhoteldeparis.com](http://www.besanconhoteldeparis.com); 33 rue des Granges; s/d/ste from €74/92/182; ☎ ☎) Sleep in the same 18th-century coaching inn as renowned novelists George Sand and Colette. Rococo styling and ornate wallpaper add antique glamour to otherwise modern rooms, while the dining hall – a wonder of stained glass and flowing drapes – couldn't be a more chic place to start the day (breakfast €13).

#### L'Annexe

APARTMENT €€

(☎ 06 09 48 78 86; [www.lannexe-apparthotel.com](http://www.lannexe-apparthotel.com); 11 rue du Chapitre; apt €105-245; ☎ ☎) These classy apartments are within the handsome walls of a converted 18th-century townhouse – once used by canons from the nearby cathedral. Apartments sleep between two and six people, and they're equipped with full

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### HOT BOX, JÉSUS & CHRISTMAS TREE LIQUEUR

It's hot, it's soft and it's packed in a box. Vacherin du Haut Doubs is a cheese made with *lait cru* (unpasteurised milk), which derives its unique grassy taste from the spruce bark in which it's wrapped. Connoisseurs poke a hole in the soft-rinded cheese and sprinkle in some chopped garlic and white wine, before baking it for half an hour to create a *boîte chaude* (hot box), best served with boiled potatoes. Just as rich is *le jésus de Morteau* – a small, fat Morteau sausage, smoked with pinewood sawdust in a traditional *tuyé* (mountain hut).

Another standout of the Doubs *département* is *liqueur de sapin* (fir-tree liqueur) produced in Mouthé, 15km southwest of Métabief. *Glace au sirop de sapin* (fir-tree ice cream) also comes from this area. Sampling either is rather like ingesting a Christmas tree.

## Besançon



kitchen, excellent beds and modern fittings like coffee makers and washing machines. Minimum two-night stay.

## Eating

### Marché Beaux-Arts

**MARKET** ☞  
 (☎03 81 62 04 18; [www.facebook.com/marche.beauxarts](http://www.facebook.com/marche.beauxarts); place de la Révolution; snacks from €4; ☀7am-7pm Tue-Sat, 8am-1pm Sun) This covered food market showcases cheese, charcuterie, fruit and veg from around the Jura. It's a bustling, workaday place where locals do their shopping, lined with butchers, fishmongers and deli produce like dried

mushrooms. If you aren't self-catering, you can grab Vietnamese spring rolls, wedges of cheese and organic ciders to go.

### Öst

VEGETARIAN, CAFE ☞

(☎03 81 50 80 94; [www.facebook.com/ostcafebesancon](http://www.facebook.com/ostcafebesancon); 23 quai Veil Picard; mains €7.50-14; ☀9am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat & Sun; ☞☞) Organic brunches, vegan platters, and kiwi and chia smoothies are the order of the day at riverside Öst. The mostly veggie menu has colourful salads, filled bagels and a daily soup. On sunny days tables are set outside; otherwise there's an upbeat '80s soundtrack within.

## Besançon

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Citadelle de Besançon.....D5
- 2 Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie.....B2
- 3 Musée du Temps.....C3

### 📍 Sights

- 4 Cathédrale St-Jean.....D4
- Horloge Astronomique.....(see 4)
- 5 Porte Noire.....D4

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 6 Vedettes de Besançon.....C2

### 📍 Sleeping

- 7 Hôtel de Paris.....C2
- 8 L'Annexe.....D4

### 📍 Eating

- 9 Le Poker d'As.....C2
- 10 Les Tables d'Antan.....C3
- 11 Marché Beaux-Arts.....B2
- 12 Ôst.....A2

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 13 Green Man.....B3

### 📍 Entertainment

- 14 Les Passagers du Zinc.....A2

### Les Tables d'Antan

FRENCH €

(☎03 81 83 04 42; [www.lestablesdantan.fr](http://www.lestablesdantan.fr); 18 rue Bersot; mains €13-17; ☺ noon-2pm Wed-Sat, 7-9pm Mon-Sat; 🍴) Thoughtful service adds finesse to Les Tables d'Antan's rustic cuisine, served beneath dangling farm tools and cartwheels. Potato or pasta *gratins* emerge steaming from the oven, salads assemble generous quantities of Morteau sausage, bleu de Gex cheese and other regional produce, but the *crumbles salés* (savory crumbles) are the menu's high point, loaded with smoked trout, duck confit or ratatouille.

### Le Poker d'As

FRENCH €€

(☎03 81 81 42 49; cnr rues d'Alsace & du Clos St-Amour; menus €26-42; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat) With its thoughtful blend of traditional and creative French fare – turbot on a bed of chorizo and tomato, chicken with morels and *vin jaune*, and confit lemon tart – the family kitchen at the 'Poker Ace' has a winning hand.

### 📍 Drinking & Entertainment

Students keep Besançon's live-music scene fizzing, while merry-makers from all walks of life fill the pubs around the northern end of the Grande Rue (eg along tiny rue Claude Pouillet) and, across the river, in the more diverse and gritty Battant quarter.

### Green Man

WINE BAR

(☎03 81 50 99 59; [www.facebook.com/Thegreenmanbar](http://www.facebook.com/Thegreenmanbar); 21 rue Pasteur; ☺ 7am-midnight Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat) Formerly trading heavily on an Irish pub theme, these days the Green Man is a genteel, convivial place for coffee or an aperitif, decorated with musical instruments and folksy touches like mounted antlers and sometimes vibrating with live

folk or rock. A cheerful scrum forms at the bar, where classy local wines are served by the glass.

### Les Passagers du Zinc

LIVE MUSIC

(☎03 81 81 54 70; [www.facebook.com/LesPassagersDuZinc](http://www.facebook.com/LesPassagersDuZinc); 5 rue Vignier; from €5) Behind an anonymous, black-shuttered shopfront lies one of Besançon's best venues for live music. Opening only when a gig's on (usually between 9pm and midnight on Thursday and Friday – it could be punk, psychedelic rock, synth-pop or electro), it has battered leather sofas and a suitably grungy vibe.

## 📍 Information

**Tourist Office** (☎03 81 80 92 55; [www.besancon-tourisme.com](http://www.besancon-tourisme.com); 52 Grande Rue, Hôtel de Ville; ☺ 10am-6pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun; 📞)

## 📍 Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

**VéloCité** ([www.velocite.besancon.fr](http://www.velocite.besancon.fr); per hr/day €1/4) Besançon's credit-card-operated automatic bike-rental system has 30 pick-up and drop-off sites across the city. You first need to buy a short-term subscription ticket online or at a bike station (€1), after which you're charged by the hour. If your trip is under 30 minutes, it's free.

### TRAIN

The train station, **Gare Besançon-Viotte** (2 av de la Paix), is 800m north (up the hill) from northern edge of the city centre. A TGV station is located 12km north of town; you'll need to change trains here for high-speed connections (eg to Paris).

Services include the following:  
**Arbois** €10, 40 minutes, hourly



## WORTH A TRIP

## SALTY SIGHTS

The Jura has salt to thank for its early wealth. The focal point of sleepy **Arc-et-Senans**, 35km southwest of Besançon, is an 18th-century former saltworks. The **Saline Royale** (Royal Saltworks; ☎03 81 54 45 45; www.salineroyale.com; Grande Rue; adult/child €10.50/5.50; ☀9am-7pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Sep-Jun) was conceived as an 'ideal city' by creator Claude-Nicolas Ledoux. A masterpiece of early industrial-age design with columns, neoclassical archways and elegant outbuildings, the saltworks has been preserved as a monument to industrial France and now houses museums, a cafe and three-star **guest rooms** (☎03 81 54 45 17; www.salineroyale.com; Saline Royale, Grande Rue; s/d/tr €84/113/135; ☀Mar-Oct; 📺📶).

Fifteen kilometres southeast of Arc-et-Senans lies **Salins-les-Bains**. The town owes its name and fortune to salt water, which fuelled a medieval salt trade and spa industry. The salt museum at the **Grande Saline** (☎03 84 73 10 92; www.salinesdesalins.com; place des Salines; museum adult/child €4/free, with tour €8/4; ☀9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) exhibits salt pans and pumps, and hour-long guided tours in French delve into salt-processing history (between two and 12 times daily, depending on season). English-language tours are at 12.15pm between July and August.

**Arc-et-Senans** €5, 25 minutes, frequent

**Belfort** €16, 1¼ hours, hourly

**Dijon** €16, one hour, frequent

**Geneva** from €45, three to 5½ hours, seven daily

**Paris Gare de Lyon** from €35, 2½ hours, 12 daily

## South of Besançon

Southwest of Besançon is the home of nutty Comté cheese and the delightful **Route des Vins du Jura** (www.jura-vins.com) wine trail through 80km of chardonnay, savagnin and pinot noir vineyards, time-worn stone villages and darkly wooded slopes. It's also strongly identified with scientific pioneer Louis Pasteur, who was born in Dole, raised in Arbois and worked in Besançon. South-east of the latter, chateau life kicks in.

## Arbois

POP 3336

*Vin jaune* is the prime source of pride for the town of Arbois, 40km southeast of Besançon. An astonishing number of the honey-coloured stone houses lining the banks of the Cuisance River house restaurants and wineries. Arbois is prettiest in summer but at all times of year you'll see locals passing through to haul crates of *vin jaune* into their cars.

The 2.5km-long **Chemin des Vignes** walking trail and the 8km-long **Circuit**

**des Vignes** mountain-bike route meander through the vines. Both trails (marked with orange signs) begin at the top of the steps next to Arbois' Château Pécauld; a booklet with details is available at the tourist office (p557).

The Maison de Louis Pasteur (p559), part of the Route Pasteur, is also in town.

High above Arbois, 3km southeast, is tiny **Pupillin**, a cute yellow-brick village famous for its wine production. Some 10 different caves (wine cellars) are open to visitors.

## Musée de la Vigne et du Vin du Jura

MUSEUM

(☎03 84 66 40 45; www.arbois.fr; rue des Fossés; adult/child €3.50/free; ☀10am-noon & 2-6pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Sep-Jun) The history behind the Jura's prized *vin jaune* is told at this understated museum, between the turrets of the golden-hued Château Pécauld. Methods of viticulture are explained in detail between these 13th-century walls, including a short video presentation.

## La Percée du Vin Jaune

WINE

(www.percee-du-vin-jaune.com; entry & 10 tasting tickets €20; ☀early Feb) The festival of the 'Opening of the Yellow Wine' cracks open the vintage produced six years and three months earlier. Villages take turns holding the two-day celebration, during which the Jura's nectar of the gods is blessed and rated. *Vin jaune* aficionados enjoy street tastings, cooking competitions, cellar visits and auctions.

★ **Closerie les Capucines** B&B €€  
 (☎07 70 09 07 37; www.closerielescapucines.com; 7 rue de Bourgogne; d/f from €155/275; ☺Feb-Dec; @☎☎) A 17th-century stone convent has been lovingly transformed into this boutique B&B, with five rooms remarkable for their pared-down elegance, tree-shaded garden by the river, plunge pool and sauna.

**Edouard Hirsinger** DESSERTS €  
 (☎03 84 66 06 97; www.chocolat-hirsinger.com; place de la Liberté; ☺8am-7.30pm Fri-Tue) Browse displays of ornate éclairs, coffee-almond 'Opéra' cake, and ginger ganache enveloped in the darkest chocolate. The choice of expertly made chocolates, tarts and liqueur-drenched desserts is enormous. Frankly, they had us at 'absinthe marzipan'.

## i Information

Arbois' **tourist office** (☎03 84 66 55 50; www.coeurdujura-tourisme.com; 17 rue de l'Hôtel de Ville; ☺9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Jul-Sep, shorter hours Oct-Jun; ☎) is located on the southern side of the main bridge over La Cuisance, opposite the church.

## i Getting There & Away

Trains run to Arbois from Besançon (€10, 40 to 50 minutes, hourly) on their way to Poligny (€5, 10 minutes).

## Poligny

POP 4047

Tucked behind limestone cliffs, picturesque Poligny, 60km southwest of Besançon, is the soul and centre of the Jura's Comté cheese

industry. Dozens of *fruitières* are open to the public, where visitors can sample batons of firm, golden Comté, which is produced in greater quantities than any other French *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) cheese.

Learn how 450L of milk is transformed into a 40kg wheel of tangy Comté cheese and have a nibble at the **Maison du Comté** (☎03 84 37 78 40; www.maison-du-comte.com; av de la Résistance; adult/child €5/3; ☺2-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-5pm Jul & Aug). Between two and nine guided tours leave per day, depending on the season.

Should wine be your Achilles' heel, **Caveau des Jacobins** (☎03 84 37 14 58; 1 rue Hyacinthe Friant; ☺10am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sat, plus 10am-noon Sun Jul & Aug) in a 13th-century Gothic convent – abandoned by the Jacobins (Dominicans) after the Revolution and nabbed by local winemakers in 1907 – makes for an unforgettable atmospheric place to sample the wines of Jura. Note that on our last visit the convent was closed for renovations; the shop had moved one street over to 100 Grande Rue.

Stop by the **tourist office** (☎03 84 37 24 21; www.poligny-tourisme.com; 20 place des Déportés; ☺9.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Jul-Sep, shorter hours Oct-Jun) for details on other cheesemakers and wineries in the region.

## i Getting There & Away

Poligny's train station is about 15 minutes' walk northwest of the centre. There are regular trains to Besançon (€10, one hour, eight to 12 daily), Arbois (€5, 10 minutes, eight to 12 daily) and Lons-le-Saunier (€5, 20 minutes, hourly).

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

#### LIQUID GOLD

Legend has it that *vin jaune* (literally, 'yellow wine') was invented when a winemaker came across a forgotten barrel, six years and three months after he'd filled it, and discovered that its contents had been miraculously transformed into gold-coloured wine.

A long, uninterrupted fermentation process gives Jura's signature wine its unique characteristics. Savagnin grapes are harvested late and their sugar-saturated juice left to ferment for a minimum of six years and three months in oak barrels. A thin layer of yeast forms over the wine, preventing too much oxidation; there are no top-ups to compensate for wine that evaporates (known as *la part des anges*, 'the angels' share'). In the end, 100L of grape juice ferments down to just 62L of *vin jaune* (lucky angels!), which is then bottled in a special 0.62L bottle called a *clavelin*.

*Vin jaune* is renowned for ageing extremely well, with prime vintages keeping for more than a century. A 1774 vintage was bought for a cool 46,000 Swiss francs when auctioned off by Christie's in 2012...many locals insist that it should have fetched a higher price.

## REPUBLIC OF SAUGEAIS

A perfect example of the *département* of Doubs' ironic sense of humour is its self-declared micronation, 12km northeast of Pontarlier.

The République du Saugeais began as a prank on an administrative official in 1947. Locals enjoyed the joke so much that there are still road signs marking the border of this so-called republic, though their novelty bank notes and postage stamps are a rarity these days.

While you're here, make time for the **Abbaye de Montbenoît** (📍 tourist office 03 81 38 10 32; 4 rue du val Saugeais, Montbenoît; €5; 🕒 tours 10am-5.30pm Jul & Aug, by arrangement with tourist office Sep-Jun), whose Renaissance-style tower – emblazoned with a horseback knight – instantly impresses. Tours, run by the adjoining tourist office, lead inside the 800-year-old abbey. Explore the double-columned **cloisters** and admire a 12th-century **church**, whose wooden stalls bear ornate carvings. Sculpted in the 16th century, several of the decorations 'warn' monks against the temptations of women (look out for a humiliated Aristotle, being ridden like a pony).

## Baume-les-Messieurs

POP 162

Along the descent into Baume-les-Messieurs, the road corkscrews down into a basin of water-streaked cliffs. Mossy boulders, clifftop woodlands and waterfalls provide a spectacular natural backdrop to this village of honey-coloured stone, most famous for its Benedictine abbey. It's 18km southwest of Poligny.

### Grottes de Baume

CAVE

(Baume Caves; 📍 03 84 48 23 02; www.baumelesmessieurs.fr; adult/child €9/5.50, incl Abbaye Impériale €13/6; 🕒 tours 10.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm, 6pm or 7pm Apr-mid-Oct) The 30-million-year-old Grottes de Baume are secreted away in the cliffs 2km south of Baume-les-Messieurs. On guided tours, visitors can weave their way along 450m of passageways, with stalactites dangling above and limestone crags looming from the shadows. Allow an hour for the tour, bring a sweater, and listen out for the flutter of resident bats.

### Abbaye Impériale

MONASTERY

(Imperial Abbey; 📍 03 84 44 99 28; www.baumelesmessieurs.fr; adult/child €8/5, incl Grottes de Baume €13/6; 🕒 tours 10am-noon & 2-6pm Apr-Sep) Baume-les-Messieurs' abandoned Benedictine Abbaye Impériale has an exquisite polychrome Flemish altarpiece dating from the 16th century (the time when the abbey, which grew from a simple 7th-century monastic cell, was at its apogee).

### Cascade des Tufs

WATERFALL

Near the Grottes de Baume, the Tufs waterfall sloshes dramatically over limestone

boulders into the Dard River. There are picturesque walking trails nearby.

### Le Grand Jardin

B&B €

(📍 03 84 44 68 37; www.legrandjardin.fr; 6 place Guillaume de Poupet; s/d/tr/q from €68/76/102/124; 🕒 closed Tue & Wed Sep-Jun; 📍) Opposite the abbey are three sunny, wood-floored rooms in a 16th-century house, backed by carefully tended gardens.

French and Franc-Comtoise dishes, such as rabbit stuffed with Morteau sausage and char (a type of fish) with absinthe, are prepared with a personal touch in the **restaurant** (menus €22 to €40).

## 📍 Getting There & Away

It's easiest to reach Baume-les-Messieurs, 18km southwest of Poligny, with your own wheels.

## Parc Naturel Régional du Haut-Jura

Sprawled along the France-Switzerland border, just west of Lac Léman (Lake Geneva), the 1780-sq-km Haut-Jura Regional Park entices hikers and skiers to its pine-furred wilds. Dozens of villages, in the *départements* of Ain, Doubs and Jura, are dotted around the park. **Les Rousses** is best for cross-country skiers, while **Lajoux** and **Mijoux** are good starting points for walking and mountain-biking. The park's most superb feature is the **Grandes Traversées du Jura** trail network (www.gtj.asso.fr/en), a series of long-distance routes that can be done on foot, mountain bike, road bike or horse in summer (roughly 400km) and cross-country

skis or snowshoes in winter (175km; snow permitting). Bike and cross-country-ski rental is available in most main towns.

Activity in Parc Naturel Régional du Haut-Jura hinges on summer rambles and winter sports; expect whisper-quiet villages during the shoulder seasons.

The **Col de la Faucille** (1323m; open year-round) has incredible views across Lake Geneva to the snowy Alps beyond. It's a serpentine 13km east of Lajoux and 25km north of Geneva Airport – and the **CERN lab** (☎022 767 84 84; www.cern.ch; Meyrin; ☺guided tours in English 11am & 1pm Mon-Sat) **FREE**, whose tours provide a can't-miss opportunity to geek out over particle physics and antimatter.

### ★ La Mainaz

CHALET €€€

(☎04 50 41 31 10; www.la-mainaz.com; Col de la Faucille, Gex; d/q from €279/379; ♿ ♿ ♿) Every imaginable luxury is available at La Mainaz: chic chalet-style rooms with coffee machines, ultramodern anthracite-walled bathrooms, and a high-gastronomy **restaurant** (menus €77 to €110). But it's the panoramic views of Lake Geneva and Mont

Blanc that make the soul soar. Skis affixed to the bedroom walls wrench you out of your reverie, reminding you to head out on the mountain.

It's 20km south of Les Rousses (direction Geneva).

### ★ Les Louvières

INTERNATIONAL €€€

(☎03 84 42 09 24; www.leslouvieres.com; Pratz; 2-/3-course menus €41/49; ☺noon-2pm Wed-Sun, 7.30-9pm Wed-Sat; ♿) The 'wolf's lair' is both elegant and creatively modern, with gorgeous Jura views and delicious, *gastronomique* cuisine. Chef Philippe Vaufrey is fond of adding Thai spice, ginger and mango to accent local produce like burbot (a freshwater fish), beef and rich pâtés. Reserve ahead by phone. Find the lair between Pratz and Moirans, 1.8km along a one-lane road off the D470.

### i Information

Part-museum, part-tourist office, the **Maison du Parc du Haut-Jura** (☎03 84 34 12 30; www.parc-haut-jura.fr; 29 Quai le Village, Lajoux; adult/child €5/3.50; ☺9am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 9am-1pm Sat) is a good place to

## ROUTE PASTEUR

The Route Pasteur (www.terredelouispasteur.fr) meanders through picturesque wine and dairy country while tracking landmarks in the life of pioneering biochemist Louis Pasteur (1822–95), who developed the first rabies vaccine and, of course, pasteurisation. Driving the route end to end takes 90 minutes, but allow a day for museums, strolls and lunch.

Begin in the handsome medieval city of **Dole**, Pasteur's birthplace and former capital of Franche-Comté (50km southwest of Besançon along the A36). A scenic stroll along the Canal des Tanneurs brings you to Pasteur's childhood home, which now houses the **Musée Pasteur** (La Maison Natale de Pasteur; ☎03 84 72 20 61; www.amisdepasteur.fr; 43 rue Pasteur; adult/child €5.30/3.20; ☺9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm May-Sep, 2-6pm Feb-Apr & Oct), an atmospheric museum where you can see Pasteur's cot and first drawings, and play games based around his life and work. Only 100m west you can ponder Pasteur's legacy over lunch at **Restaurant Grain de Sel** (☎03 84 71 97 36; www.restaurant-grain-desel.fr; 67 rue Pasteur; lunch menus from €18, dinner menus €25-55; ☺noon-1.30pm Thu-Tue, 7-9pm Thu-Sat & Mon), whose ever-evolving menus make daring use of seasonal produce.

From here, the route wends southeast through Franche-Comté to **Molain**, and there are a few short detours worth your while: at **Mont Poupet** (851m), a walking trail marks where Pasteur performed experiments to prove that bacteria were air-borne. **Marnoz** is the village of origin of Pasteur's mother's family, and **Aiglepierre** is where he went to school.

The highlight (and a possible finishing point) is the major wine-producing town of Arbois (p556), 12km shy of Molain, where Louis Pasteur's family settled in 1827. His laboratory and workshops can be seen at the **Maison de Louis Pasteur** (☎03 84 66 11 72; www.terredelouispasteur.fr; 83 rue de Courcelles; adult/child €6.80/4.20; ☺9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm May-Sep, 2-6pm late Feb-Apr & Oct), still decorated with original 19th-century fixtures and fittings.

## DON'T MISS

## RONCHAMP

**Chapelle de Notre-Dame du Haut** (☎ 03 84 20 65 13; www.collinenotredameduhaut.com; 13 rue de la Chapelle, Ronchamp; adult/child €8/4; ☀ 9am-7pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Apr; 📍) Bringing to mind a ship's sail or a lighthouse summoning the faithful, modernist Chapelle Notre-Dame (1955) roosts hilltop above the small town of Ronchamp, 20km west of Belfort. Visionary architect Le Corbusier was initially reluctant to design the sanctuary; views of the Jura Mountains from this age-old Marian pilgrimage site changed his mind.

Stepping inside the concrete chapel instantly cuts off the outside world, while rough interior walls and sombre lighting make the stained-glass windows seem all the more jewel-like.

get maps and advice on exploring the park. The museum section is largely in French and child oriented. It's in Lajoux, 19km east of the park's largest town, St-Claude.

The go-to source for information on culture, activities and accommodation in the park is the **Tourist Office** (☎ 03 84 60 02 55; www.lesrousses.com; 495 rue Pasteur, Les Rousses; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm mid-Jun-Aug, hours vary rest of year). There are also summer-only tourist offices in Bois-d'Amont and Lamoura villages, and an office in Prémaman which is open in summer and school holidays.

### **i** Getting There & Away

Public transport is scant in the High Jura. In winter, some villages are connected by a free *navette* (shuttle bus) service; get timetables at the tourist office.

## Belfort

POP 47,656

Unsung but uncommonly attractive, Belfort's historic centre is a checker-board of brick towers and ochre and rose-pink houses. Looming above the skyline astride the Vauban-built citadel is a monumental lion, the symbol of the town. This sphinx-like statue honours Belfort's 103 days of tenacious resistance to the Prussian siege of 1870-71, thanks to which it managed to remain French and escape being annexed to Prussia.

Belfort makes a convenient stopover on the way from Alsace to Burgundy or the Alps.

★ **Lion du Belfort** MONUMENT  
(allée du Souvenir Français; adult/child €1/free; ☀ viewing platform 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm) Belfort's icon is a monumental lion statue that sits astride the citadel, scowling down on the town. Created by Frédéric Auguste

Bartholdi, best known for designing the Statue of Liberty, the red sandstone lion – almost 11m high – represents the spirit of the French army's resistance during the Siege of Belfort in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71).

**Musée de l'Aventure Peugeot** MUSEUM  
(☎ 03 81 99 42 03; www.museepeugeot.com; Carrefour de l'Europe, Sochaux; adult/child €9/5; ☀ 10am-6pm) Nineteenth-century industry is paid homage in aptly vintage style, within this museum 14km south of Belfort. Before Peugeot was a household name, the company was a family business. Not just motor cars but pepper mills, corsets, razor blades, washing machines, and more, all bore the Peugeot name. The museum, crammed with classic cars, may be brand HQ, but it's an enjoyable ride through history.

Reserve ahead for a weekday tour of the ultramodern Peugeot factory, one of Europe's largest car plants (adult/child €22/15; no children younger than 12).

★ **Les Eurockéennes** MUSIC  
(www.eurockeenes.fr; ☀ 1st weekend Jul) This huge, three-day open-air alternative rock festival with a varied, international lineup of electronic, metal, pop, jazz and indie artists, plus camping, will set you back only €134.

**Hôtel Vauban** HOTEL €  
(☎ 03 84 21 59 37; www.hotel-vauban.com; 4 rue du Magasin; s/d/tr €75/80/93; 📞) Hosts Guy and Marie have turned Hôtel Vauban into a home away from home for travellers passing through. More than 200 whimsical oil paintings by local artists cover its walls. The mid-sized rooms are made bright and welcoming with flashes of lime green, wall decals and fuzzy rugs, and there's a lovely flower garden out back. Add breakfast for €9.



## Aux Trois Maillets

BRASSERIE **cc**

(☎ 03 84 28 06 01; [www.auxtroismaillets.fr](http://www.auxtroismaillets.fr); 3 place d'Armes; mains €17-29; ☀ 10am-3pm & 6-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat & Sun) More distinguished than the average brasserie, the 'Three Mallets' serves up exemplary omelettes, platters of Haut-Doubs ham and sausage, and steaks cooked to perfection.

## **i** Information

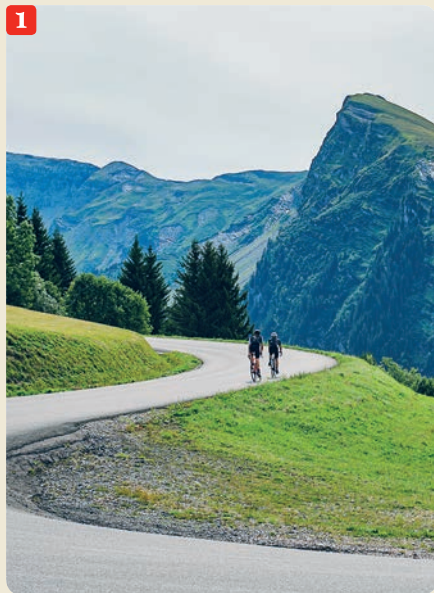
The **Tourist Office** (☎ 03 84 55 90 90; [www.belfort-tourisme.com](http://www.belfort-tourisme.com); 2bis rue Clémenceau; ☀ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat, 2-5.30pm Mon) has city, cycling and hiking maps.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Belfort's **train station** (6 av Wilson) has direct links to Besançon (€16, 1¼ hours, hourly), and direct and indirect TGVs and TERs to Paris-Gare de Lyon (from €51, three to 4½ hours, hourly).

Belfort-Montbéliard TGV station, 10km south-east of the city centre, is a stop on the LGV Rhin-Rhône service linking Marseille (from €60, 4½ hours) with Mulhouse (from €7, 20 minutes), from where there are direct trains to Basel (Switzerland).

1



JUSTIN PAE/GETTY IMAGES ©

1. Cycling from Morzine (1000m) to Avoriaz (1800m), Portes du Soleil (p520) 2. Lake Annecy (p523) 3. Parc National des Écrins (p546) 4. Les Gets (p520), Les Portes du Soleil



3



RPI/MONTAGNE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

2

## Mountain Highs

You're tearing down the Alps on your mountain bike, a deep blue sky overhead; you're hiking through flowery pastures tinkling with cowbells; you're slaloming on a glacier while it slowly slithers down the flanks of Mont Blanc – everywhere the scenery makes you feel glad to be alive!

### Downhill Skiing

Glide to off-piste heaven on the legendary Vallée Blanche (p512), zigzag like a pro down black pistes in Val d'Isère (p534), or take your pick of almost 650km of runs in Les Portes du Soleil (p520).

### Magical Views

Take in breathtaking panoramas of shimmering Mont Blanc from the Aiguille du Midi (p510) or contemplate the ethereal loveliness of the Grand Balcon Sud trail (p513). Lake Annecy spreads out like a mirror before the fairest castle of them all: Château de Menthon-St-Bernard (p525).

### Sky High

The sky is blue, the mountain air brisk and pure – just the day to go paragliding or hang-gliding above glistening Lake Annecy (p525).

### Alpine Hiking

There's nothing quite like donning a backpack and hitting the trails in the Alps' national parks. The rugged wilderness of Parc National des Écrins (p546) and the snowcapped majesty of Parc National de la Vanoise (p537) will leave you awestruck.

### On the Edge

For an adrenaline buzz, few adventures beat racing down Morzine's heart-pumping mountain-bike route, La Noire de Morzine (p520). Not enough of a challenge? Hook up with a guide in Chamonix (p510) and scale ice or sheer granite, go off-grid on a ski tour, or try for an alpine summit.

SAMUEL BORGES PHOTOGRAPHY / SHUTTERSTOCK ©



4



ANTB/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

1.36 million

### MAIN CITY

Clermont-Ferrand

### BEST GOURMET HOTEL

Origines par Adrien Descouls (p576)

### BEST DAY HIKE

Chemin des Chèvres (p577)

### BEST QUAIN VILLAGE

Salers (p582)



### WHEN TO GO

**Jan & Feb** Snowshoe at Lac de Guéry, ramble Lac Pavin or catch Clermont's film festival.

**May & Jun** Hike through spring splendour in Parc des Volcans d'Auvergne or Gorges de l'Allier.

**Jul–Sep** Tour cheese farms and raft the Allier, then dress up for Le Puy-en-Velay's carnival.

Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe (p586)

BORIS STROJAKO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©





# Auvergne

**E**xplosive history slumbers beneath the Auvergne's silent mountains and peaceful farmland: ancient volcanoes left behind chains of cinder cones and mirror lakes, overlooked by the razor peaks of the Massif Central. Two green lungs of protected land define the Auvergne: westerly, mountainous Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne and, to its east, Parc Naturel Régional du Livradois-Forez, its picturesque villages lost amid woodland and farms. Cultural splendour is strung in between: retro-glamorous Vichy, colourful Pays d'Issoire, and dreamy villages along the Allier River. East of here, petrified lava plumes tower over pilgrimage town Le Puy-en-Velay. Compared to neighbouring regions like the dramatic Rhône-Alps, the Auvergne feels friendlier and smaller scale.

## INCLUDES

Clermont-Ferrand ...	567	Salers .....	582
Vichy .....	572	Parc Naturel	
Puy de Dôme .....	577	Régional	
Le Mont-Dore		Livradois-Forez .....	583
& La Bourboule. ....	578	Le Puy-en-Velay .....	585
Besse-et-		Haut-Lignon .....	590
St-Anastaise .....	580		





## Auvergne Highlights

- 1 Puy de Dôme** (p577)  
 Surveying volcanic landscapes from the Panoramic train or on a guided crater walk.
- 2 Massif du Sancy** (p579)  
 Hiking mountainous trails from Le Mont-Dore and Lac de Guéry.
- 3 Gorges de l'Allier** (p590)  
 Road-tripping between precipitous villages.
- 4 Sacred Le Puy-en-Velay** (p586)  
 Enduring the steep climb to cave chapels and lofty statues.
- 5 Cheese trails** (p575)  
 Buying cheese right at the source in St-Nectaire and Ambert.
- 6 Clermont-Ferrand** (p567)  
 Getting lost in a maze of lava-stone buildings.
- 7 Thiers** (p584)  
 Watching artisans at work in France's quaint knife-making capital.
- 8 La Chaise-Dieu** (p585)  
 Craning your neck at Gothic splendour before retreating to an oddball rural hotel.
- 9 Vichy** (p572)  
 Sliding into thermal waters after exploring sweet shops and belle-époque buildings.
- 10 Plateau de Gergovie** (p571)  
 Reliving epic battles at a state-of-the-art museum on a wind-scoured plateau.

## CLERMONT-FERRAND

POP 143,886 / ELEV 358M

The Auvergne's largest city is energetic and enterprising, with a glamorously Gothic style. Its fountains, steeples and 18th-century town houses are all hewn from black volcanic stone, along with the twin-spired cathedral at Clermont-Ferrand's cobbled heart. As the birthplace of the Michelin automotive empire, the city is equal parts industry and culture.

As its double-barrelled name suggests, Clermont-Ferrand is a fusion of two earlier towns. The Old Town, anchored by the cathedral, was formerly Clermont. To the east is Montferrand, with a quieter and wonderfully intact medieval town, as well as the best museums.

With an ample spread of gastronomy and accommodation, Clermont-Ferrand is a lively base for day trips to volcanic sites and quaint towns such as Riom and Royat.

### Sights

#### ★ **Cathédrale Notre-Dame de l'Assomption**

CATHEDRAL

(place de la Victoire; ☉ 7.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-noon & 3-7.30pm Sun) Clermont-Ferrand's centrepiece is its double-spired Gothic cathedral, constructed across the 13th and 19th centuries. From snarling gargoyles to ornate tracery, it was carved entirely from black rock sourced from nearby Volvic. Inside, see the **jacquemart clock** (1527), with the god Mars and hairy-legged Faunus beating the hours, and intricate **rose windows**, restored in the early 20th century. Stand on the western stairs for a view of Puy de Dôme straight down rue des Gras.

#### **Basilique Notre Dame du Port**

CHURCH

(rue du Port; ☉ 8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon & 3-8pm Sun) The city's second-most intriguing edifice has all the key elements of a Romanesque church: bulky structure, semicircular arches and a broad headpiece. Floral and geometric patterns of jet-black volcanic rock are smoothly set in its peachy sandstone, and these distinctive decorations strengthened the case for granting it Unesco World Heritage status in 1998. The exterior neoclassical columns, terracotta tiles and medieval reliefs are best admired from the *belvédère* (panoramic view); follow signs from rue Couronne.

#### ★ **L'Aventure Michelin**

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 73 98 60 60; <https://laventure.michelin.com>; 32 rue du Clos Four; adult/child €9.50/5.50, audioguide €2; ☉ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Dec & Feb-Jun, 10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug; 📍 🚶 A, B to Stade M Michelin) The transportation powerhouse (and brand behind Michelin stars) originated in Clermont-Ferrand. Founded in 1889, Michelin is a source of pride to clermontois, and its brand HQ has an outstanding interactive museum. Rove through French industrial history via classic cars, aviation innovations and lively audiovisuals, with plenty for kids to touch, watch and spin. Some displays are niche (want to compare a 1919 cord tyre with the 1923 model?), but there are explanations in French and English throughout. Great gift shop, too.

#### **Musée d'Art Roger Quilliot**

GALLERY

(MARQ; ☎ 04 43 76 25 25; place Louis-Deteix, Montferrand; adult/child €5/free; ☉ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-noon & 1-2pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 A to Musée d'Art) Housed in an Ursuline convent 3km northeast of central Clermont, the city's premier gallery has old bones but sleek modern curation. Taking design cues from NYC's Guggenheim, its white spiral staircase travels between centuries of European art. Head upstairs for 17th-century European masterworks or explore the ground floor's medieval art, with mournful Marys dating back to the 7th century. Temporary exhibitions invite contemporary art in among these classics.

### Sleeping

#### ★ **5 Chambres en Ville**

B&B €€

(☎ 07 81 16 60 95; [www.5-chambresenville.com](http://www.5-chambresenville.com); 8 rue Neyron; r €90-120; 📍 🚶 📶) This classy B&B offers five uniquely styled rooms, each flooded with natural light and featuring an ample

### CLERMONT PASS

Planning to visit L'Aventure Michelin, ride the Panoramique des Dômes (p578) and tour one of the town's art or natural-history museums? Save money with the **Clermont Pass** (48/72 hours €18.50/26), which grants access to all three and throws in a guided city tour and other discounts, including the Royaltonic spa. It's available at the tourist office.

## Clermont-Ferrand



bed dressed in high-quality linens. The more expensive pair on the top floor offer romantic features, like a recessed bathtub. Enquire ahead if you need to add a fold-out bed for a third guest. A communal breakfast of patisseries brings together all guests.

**Hôtel Littéraire Alexandre Vialatte** HOTEL €€ (☎04 73 91 92 06; [www.hotelvialatte.com](http://www.hotelvialatte.com); 16 place Delille; s/d/tr incl breakfast from €94/116/137; 📍🚶🚰) The city's best breakfast view is from this tasteful contemporary hotel (the spread – included in rates – is a delectable array of regional cheese, honey and sheep's-milk yogurt). It's under the Best Western

Plus brand but has a distinct style, with rooms named after literary figures and quotations adorning headboards. Rooms aren't huge, but they're tastefully outfitted in volcanic ash-grey and white.

**Hôtel Le Lion**

HOTEL €€

(☎04 73 17 60 80; [www.hotel-le-lion-clermont.fr](http://www.hotel-le-lion-clermont.fr); 16 place de Jaude; s/d/ste/f from €83/93/113/133; 📍🚶🚰) Well located for nightlife on lively place de Jaude, Le Lion punches above its price tag. There's a royal-blue colour scheme and royal treatment to match. Staff make guests feel very much at home – easy enough in the comfy, design-conscious rooms. The

## Clermont-Ferrand

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale Notre-Dame de l'Assomption..... C2

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Basilique Notre Dame du Port..... D1

### 🏠 Sleeping

- 3 5 Chambres en Ville..... D2  
4 Hôtel Le Lion..... A3  
5 Hôtel Littéraire Alexandre Vialatte..... D2

### 🍴 Eating

- 6 Avenue..... C3  
7 La Table au Plafond..... C3  
8 L'AOC..... B2  
9 Marché St-Pierre..... B2  
10 Myrtille..... B2

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 11 101 Club..... C2  
12 LAG Café..... A3  
13 Le Comptoir Viking..... A3  
14 Les Goûters de Justine..... C2  
15 Oh! My Cup..... B2

downstairs brasserie is great for a drink and it's open daily with *service continu* (rare in Clermont).

## 🍴 Eating

Brasseries and bars fill place de la Victoire (south of the cathedral), and restaurants hide in lanes leading from this central square. Cheap eats abound near place de Jaude and around rue St-Dominique. For a smorgasbord of Auvergnat produce like cheeses, *pâte de fruits* (fruit jelly), liqueurs and veggies, go to **Marché St-Pierre** (Covered Market; [www.marche-saint-pierre.com](http://www.marche-saint-pierre.com); place St-Pierre; ☀️ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat). In Montferrand, head to rue Jules Guesde.

### L'AOC

FRENCH €

(☎️ 04 73 19 12 12; [www.restaurant-aoc-clermont.fr](http://www.restaurant-aoc-clermont.fr); 4 rue des Petits Gras; lunch/dinner mains from €10/14; ☀️ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat) Local ingredients, regional recipes and presentation with panache. That's the ethos of L'AOC, a worthy address for its warm service and generous portions. Choose from the chalkboard menu (they'll talk you through it): perhaps home-cured gravlax, Salers beef or a risotto heavy with regional cheese and forest mushrooms. Groan happily, pop a button, then say yes to thick chocolate mousse.

### Myrtille

CAFE €

(☎️ 04 73 39 09 97; [www.cafemyrtille.com](http://www.cafemyrtille.com); 4 petite rue St-Pierre; menus €14.50, mains from €11; ☀️ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat; ☎️) A casual spot specialising in nourishing vegetarian lunches, Myrtille whips up seasonal soups and set menus. Stop by for a glass of wine or a tea, perhaps with one of the small but toothsome range of cakes, including vegan choc-banana and gluten-free lemon and poppy seed. It's a rare palate-cleanser among Clermont's cheesy, meat-heavy menus, with friendly service too.

### ★ Le Duguesclin

FRENCH €€

(☎️ 04 73 25 76 69; <https://colombierx.wixsite.com/le-duguesclin-resto>; 3 place des Cordeliers, Montferrand; lunch/dinner menus from €27/37; ☀️ noon-2pm Mon-Wed, noon-2pm & 7.30-9pm Thu-Sat; ☎️ A to Musee d'Art) Tucked inside a 14th-century salon in medieval Montferrand, this intimate restaurant is something special. A loyal local following arrives for creations like rabbit terrine, arctic char with toasted pistachios, and chocolate ganache with fruit tartare, often lingering for regional after-dinner cheeses. Always reserve ahead. Vegetarian option available.

### Avenue

MEDITERRANEAN €€

(☎️ 04 73 90 44 64; [www.restaurant-avenue.fr](http://www.restaurant-avenue.fr); 10 rue Massillon; lunch menus €14-27, mains €19-26; ☀️ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-9pm Sat) Avenue's ever-changing menu focuses on local market produce, lovingly plated with barely a pink peppercorn out of place. Tempting combinations range from beef cheeks in a sauce of morel mushrooms, Iberico pork with crispy olive polenta, and green-tea panna cotta. There's always a well-priced *menu* (€16) for weekday lunches.

### La Table au Plafond

FRENCH, TAPAS €€

(☎️ 09 83 01 57 15; [www.latableauplafond.wixsite.com/contactez-nous](http://www.latableauplafond.wixsite.com/contactez-nous); 7 place de la Victoire; tapas from €4.50, share plate for 2/4 people €18/34; ☀️ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Chefs here seem to have enormous fun designing tapas-style nibbles like black-sesame chicken nuggets, salmon ceviche and chips with beetroot salt. Sharer plates of cheese and cured meats are beautifully assembled, too. And yes – look up to see a table on the ceiling, after which this free-spirited restaurant is named.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Clermont-Ferrand has the Auvergne's biggest choice of nightlife and live-music venues like warehousey **La Cooperative de**

## CLERMONT'S SWEET CAFE SCENE

Clermont-Ferrand is dotted with relaxing spots to sip coffee and munch home-baked goodies. **Les Goûters de Justine** (☎ 04 73 92 26 53; <https://les-gouters-de-justine.business.site>; 11bis rue Blaise Pascal; ☺ 1.30-7pm Wed-Sat) has a nostalgic atmosphere, with antique furniture, stone vaults and a twinkly-eyed proprietress. It's ideal for lingering over *chocolat chaud à l'ancienne* (old-style hot chocolate), homemade cakes and gossip.

West of the cathedral, quaint **Oh! My Cup** (☎ 04 73 14 24 13; [www.ohmycup.fr](http://www.ohmycup.fr); 4 rue Terrasse; ☺ 10.30am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, to 7pm Sat, 11.30am-6pm Sun) has a rainbow of teas and a table laden with freshly baked cakes. Reserve ahead for the utterly French brunch (11.30am to 2pm Saturday and Sunday).

For a more contemporary atmosphere, **LAG Café** ([www.facebook.com/lagcoffee](http://www.facebook.com/lagcoffee); 58 rue Lamartine; ☺ 9am-5pm Tue, 11am-5.30pm Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat) offers quality macchiatos and flat whites in a spare, minimalist setting. Meanwhile, fruity infusions and teas are left to steep while customers eye up banana cake and apple-cinnamon muffins...

**Mai** (☎ ticket sales 04 73 14 48 08; [www.lacoope.org](http://www.lacoope.org); rue Serge Gainsbourg; ☺ ticket office 5-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 7.45-9.30pm before performances; 🚗 A to 1er Mai). For listings, browse Oukonva (<https://oukonva.fr>).

**Le Comptoir Viking** PUB (☎ 04 73 35 68 05; [www.lecomptoirviking.fr](http://www.lecomptoirviking.fr); 38 rue Lamartine; ☺ 5pm-1am Tue-Sat) While there are no longboats or horned helmets, this wood-walled rock bar is one of the friendliest in town. There's an energising hard-rock soundtrack, occasional sports screenings, bar games, and a drinks menu that's heavy on draught beers and rum shots.

**101 Club** CLUB ([www.oneoneclub.com](http://www.oneoneclub.com); 3 rue du Coche; ☺ midnight-5.30am Thu-Sat) This club near place de Jaude is hallowed ground for Clermont music fans: it was a new-wave and alt-rock haunt in the '80s, became a rock club in the '90s, and today hosts electro nights with funk, synth and techno played on the decks, often by resident DJ Syrob. Concerts charge entry (from €8), but club nights are often free.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 73 98 65 00; [www.clermontauvergnetourisme.com](http://www.clermontauvergnetourisme.com); place de la Victoire; ☺ 1-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sat & Sun; 🚗) Opposite the cathedral, this flash tourist office has city maps and staff who can offer good suggestions on walking routes, day trips and must-sees. Adjacent art exhibitions liven the place up, too.

## Getting There & Around

### AIR

**Clermont-Ferrand Auvergne Airport** ([www.clermont-aeroport.com](http://www.clermont-aeroport.com); Aulnat), 7km east of the city centre by road, off the D769, has limited domestic and international departures.

**T2C** ([www.t2c.fr](http://www.t2c.fr); single ticket/24hr pass/carnet of 10 €1.60/5.10/14.40) bus 20 travels to/from the airport several times daily (30 to 40 minutes). A taxi to/from the town centre costs €20 (or €25 at night).

### BICYCLE

**C.vélo** (☎ 04 73 92 65 08; [www.c-velo.fr](http://www.c-velo.fr); per day/week €2/7, first 30min free, then per 30min €2) Find more than 50 self-service bike-hire stations around town, including at the train station and place de Jaude.

### CAR

There are several town-centre car parks (including by Clermont's cathedral), but there's cheaper parking around Montferrand.

### TRAIN & BUS

Clermont-Ferrand is the region's main hub for **rail** ([www.garesetconnexions.sncf](http://www.garesetconnexions.sncf); 40 av de l'Union Soviétique) and **bus** (Gare Routière; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat 04 73 93 13 61; Parking Salins-Gambetta). There are direct trains several times daily to/from Lyon (from €37, 2½ to 3½ hours), Paris Bercy (from €36, 3½ to five hours), Volvic (€5.10, 30 minutes), Vichy (€11.40, 30 minutes) and elsewhere. Direct buses reach Le Mont-Dore (from €12.20, 1½ hours) and Le Puy-en-Velay (from €26, 2½ to three hours).



## AROUND CLERMONT-FERRAND

### Plateau de Gergovie

Perched in a staggering location overlooking the Gergovie Plateau, 15km by road from Clermont-Ferrand, is the **Musée de Gergovie** (☎04 73 60 16 93; <https://musee-gergovie.fr>; Plateau de Gergovie, La Roche-Blanche; adult/child €8/5; ☀11am-6pm Tue-Sun late Feb-Jun & Sep-Dec, to 7pm Jul & Aug). The state-of-the-art museum brings to life an epic clash between Romans and Gauls in 52 BCE. With a combination of swish audiovisuals and archaeological displays, the museum recreates the uprising by Vercingétorix of the Arveni (a Gallic tribe) and the military response by Julius Caesar. The Battle of Gergovia was a victory for Vercingétorix, with Caesar beating a hasty retreat. At a later battle, however, Vercingétorix was forced to surrender and was eventually executed. Vercingétorix is still a folk hero in the Auvergne, honoured with a statue in Clermont-Ferrand's Place de Jaude.

### Royat

A spa town since Roman times, Royat still benefits from its toasty hot natural springs. Year-round, **Royatonic** (☎04 73 29 58 90; [www.royatonic.com](http://www.royatonic.com); 5 av Auguste Rouzaud; 2½hr/1-day pass €20/34; ☀10am-8pm Mon-Thu & Sat, to 9.30pm Fri, to 6.30pm Sun) plunges guests into soothing 37°C waters in a setting styled to evoke the Auvergne's volcanoes. There are outdoor pools, saunas and private massage rooms – the signature treatment is a suitably volcanic hot-stone massage. T2C (p570) bus 5 makes this an easy day trip from Clermont-Ferrand.

### Riom

POP 19,180

Between the brawny Chaîne des Puys and the wide-open Limagne plain lies Riom, a handsome medieval market town. Riom steadily acquired *hôtels particuliers* (private mansions) during the Renaissance and into the 18th century, many of them fashioned from inky volcanic rock. The town's spiritual significance, architectural riches and fine gastronomy belie its small size.

#### WORTH A TRIP

#### ECO-TOURISM IN VOLVIC

Travellers may be surprised to find that a town associated with plastic bottles of water has a peaceful eco-resort.

**Volvic Organic Resort** (☎06 22 96 20 99, 06 68 45 35 23; [www.volvic-organic.fr](http://www.volvic-organic.fr); rue du Pont Jany; d/f €130/155; ☎) ☀

☀ has eight lodges in a peaceful, leafy setting. Capped with grassy roofs, each is designed for minimal environmental impact and maximum energy efficiency. They sleep up to four and feature kitchenette, lounge area and terrace. Nearby are cycling and walking trails to explore, including the GR441, which winds past the hilltop **Château de Tournoël** (☎04 73 33 53 06; [www.tournoel.com](http://www.tournoel.com); rue des Remparts; adult/child €9/5; ☀10.15am-5.10pm Jul & Aug). Trains reach Volvic station (3km west of the centre) from Clermont-Ferrand (€5.10, 30 minutes, four to six daily).

#### 👁 Sights

Pilgrims have long processed into Riom to venerate the relics of locally born St Amable; step inside his namesake **basilica** (rue St-Amable; ☀9am-6pm), a mix of Romanesque style and Gothic flourishes. It's also worth peering into the shadowy late-14th-century **Église Notre Dame du Marthuret** (rue du Commerce; ☀9am-6pm) to see Riom's treasured *Vierge noire* (Black Madonna icon) and a revered sculpture depicting the Virgin and child with a fluttering bird.

#### ★ Musée Mandet

GALLERY

(☎04 73 38 18 53; [www.rlv.eu](http://www.rlv.eu); 14 rue de l'Hôtel de Ville; adult/child €3/free, Wed free; ☀10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun, to 6pm Jul & Aug) Dating back to 1866, the Musée Mandet's splendid collection of art is arranged across two atmospheric *hôtels particuliers*. Exploring these beautifully restored buildings is part of the charm, while the art on display is impressively broad in scope: Ancient Greek artefacts, medieval religious sculptures, Dutch masters, 19th-century French paintings and cutting-edge modern installations each have their own space.

#### Tour de l'Horloge

TOWER

(5 rue de l'Horloge; adult/child €1/free, Wed free; ☀10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm daily Jul & Aug) Climb 128 stairs to the top of Riom's

## DON'T MISS

## THE PERFECT TRUFFADE

Cheese lovers mustn't miss the Auvergne's delectable *truffade*. Potatoes are rubbed with garlic (and sometimes duck fat) before being slathered with melted cheese, usually cows' milk *Tomme fraîche de Cantal*. Charcuterie (cured ham and salami) often accompanies a *truffade*, with a side salad drizzled in tangy vinaigrette, to cut through the fatty flavours. For our money, one of the best is served 2.5km south of Riom at friendly **En Attendant Louise** (☎06 07 97 23 75; www.enattendantlouise.fr; 9 Grande Rue, Ménérol; mains from €11.50, lunch menus from €13.50; ☺ noon-1.30pm, evening by reservation). This lunch spot is popular with a local crowd, so it's worth calling ahead to reserve, if you can.

most striking landmark, a Renaissance belfry, for panoramic views of volcanic-stone houses and rolling farmland. Breaking up the ascent are a few displays on the town's history and development.

## Sleeping & Eating

### **Hôtel Pacifique**

HOTEL €

(☎04 73 38 15 65; www.hotel-lepacifique-riom.com; 52 av de Paris; s/d/tr/q €59/67/85/98; 📶🚰) This welcoming place offers excellent value with its no-frills rooms, made bright with splashes of colour, and common areas decorated with velvet armchairs and relics of Auvergne's past.

### ★ **Le Flamboyant**

FRENCH €€

(☎04 73 63 07 97; www.restaurant-le-flamboyant.com; 21bis rue de l'Horloge; lunch/dinner menus from €24/39; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue & Thu-Sat, noon-2pm Wed & Sun) Near Riom's clock tower, chef Hervé Klein accents local ingredients with flavours from around the globe. Reserve at least a week ahead to sample *menus* featuring Alba-truffle ravioli, turbot with artichoke ragout, and limoncello-saturated cake.

### **BHV 2.0**

BISTRO €€

(☎04 73 33 92 18; www.bhv-riom.fr; 44 bd Desaix; lunch/dinner menus from €15/28; ☺ 10am-11pm Tue-Sat) Upscale regional dishes make happy pairings with the wine offered at oenophile bistro BHV 2.0. Perhaps seared tuna on a creamy risotto, *pot-au-feu* (slow-cooked

beef stew) or local cheeses will tickle your taste buds...in between glasses of Côtes d'Auvergne wine.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 73 38 59 45; www.terravolcana.com; 27 place de la Fédération; ☺ 9.30am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, to 6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm Sun, shorter hours Nov-Mar)

## **i** Getting There & Away

Riom is 14km north of Clermont-Ferrand and connected to the city by frequent trains (€3.70, 10 minutes). There are also direct trains from Vichy (€9, 20 minutes, at least hourly), 40km northeast. The train station, Riom-Châtel-Guyon, is 1km southeast of the tourist office.

## VICHY

POP 24,166

Cradled in a bend in the Allier River, the spa town of Vichy has long been defined by water. During its belle-époque heyday, visitors flocked to sip its reputedly healing waters and plunge into thermal springs. Vichy has kept its reputation as a health retreat, helped along by the internationally known cosmetic brand named for the town.

Also wearing the town's name with pride are signature sweets *pastilles de Vichy*, still available in the old-fashioned confectionery shops around town. Similarly nostalgic are 19th-century landscaped gardens and art deco buildings.

The town is also inextricably linked to France's WWII history. Vichy was the French state's seat of power, from where the authoritarian government collaborated with Nazi Germany. For his role in signing this dirty deal, head of state Marshal Philippe Pétain was tried for treason in 1945 and spent his final years in prison.

## **i** Sights & Activities

### **Parc des Sources**

GARDENS

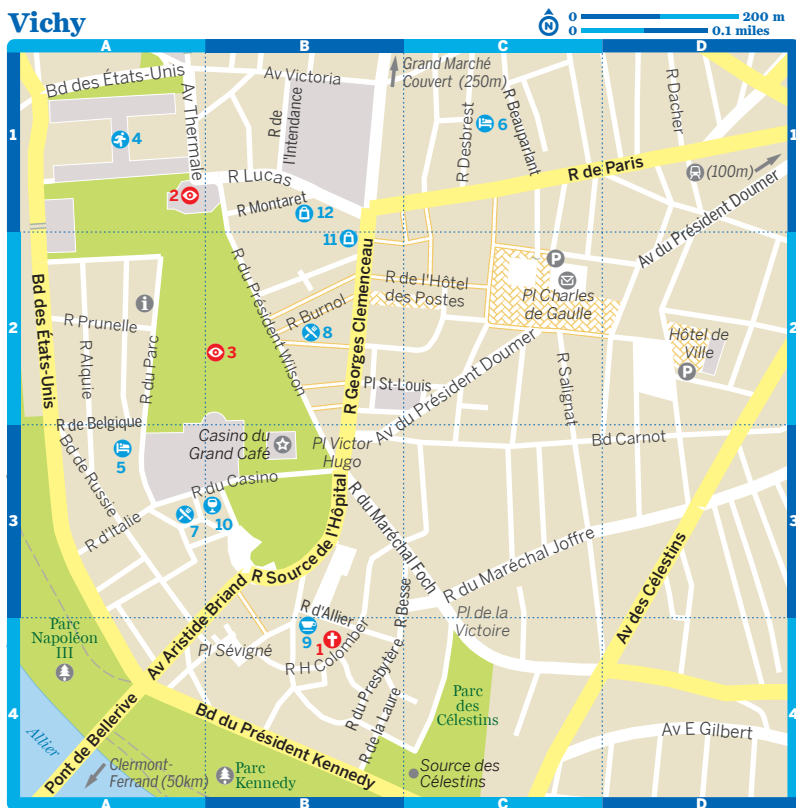
Vichy's centrepiece is the huge Parc des Sources, the town's oldest park. Dating to the mid-18th century, the park is lined with chestnut and plane trees and encircled by 700m of wrought-iron-canopied colonnade, added in the 19th century.

### **Hall des Sources**

SPRING

(Parc des Sources; ☺ 6.15am-7pm) **FREE** Curious about Vichy's reputedly healing water? Bring a bottle and step inside the Hall des

## Vichy



AUVERGNE VICHY

## Vichy

## 📍 Sights

- 1 Église St-Blaise.....B4  
 2 Hall des Sources.....A1  
 3 Parc des Sources.....B2

## 🚶 Activities, Courses &amp; Tours

- 4 Thermes des Dômes.....A1

## 🛏 Sleeping

- 5 Aletti Palace Hôtel.....A3  
 6 Citotel Arverna.....C1

## 🍴 Eating

- 7 Brasserie du Casino.....A3  
 8 La Table d'Antoine.....B2

## 🍷 Drinking &amp; Nightlife

- 9 Keck's Nature Shop.....B4  
 10 Le 8.....B3

## 🛍 Shopping

- 11 Aux Marocains.....B2  
 12 Vichy-Prunelle.....B1

Sources, a resplendent late-19th-century atrium. Swig a mouthful of the naturally fizzy, saline spring water for yourself and take a look at the source of the spring, which is also inside. Follow signs for 'public'; the 'curistes' entrance is for prescription-holders only.

## Église St-Blaise

CHURCH

(rue d'Allier; ☎ 8am-7pm) Two contrasting churches combine at Église St-Blaise: the

concrete outer shell of a 1931 art-deco church, resembling something of a Soviet space rocket, and at the rear a reconstructed 15th-century chapel guarding Vichy's reportedly miracle-working *Vierge noire*.

## Thermes des Dômes

SPA

(☎ 04 70 97 39 59; www.thermes-de-vichy.fr; 132 bd des États-Unis; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat Feb-Dec) The thermal 'cures' unfolding beneath this

## DON'T MISS

## VICHY'S SWEET TREATS

In their traditional blue-checked tins, octagonal *pastilles de Vichy* are a favourite gift or souvenir, sold by numerous confectioners. Dating to 1825, the *pastilles* were originally made with bicarbonate of soda to soothe digestive troubles. Hype grew when Eugénie, wife of Napoléon III, developed a passion for these moreish sweets. Salts extracted from Vichy mineral water were soon included in the recipe, mixed with sugar and flavoured with mint, lemon or aniseed. Other signature sweeties are *carreaux de Vichy*, layers of almond paste and fruit jelly pressed into colourful cubes.

**Aux Marocains** (☎ 04 70 98 30 33; www.auxmarocains.com; 33 rue Georges Clemenceau; ☎ 3-7pm Mon, 9.45am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Tue-Fri, 9.45am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Sat, 10.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Sun) is a 19th-century boutique whose shelves are heavy with *marrons glacés* (candied chestnuts), nougat and fruit-studded *pâte d'amande* (marzipan). Don't leave without a box of 'Alma', pralines with a meringue coating. Another sugary trove is **Vichy-Prunelle** (☎ 04 70 98 20 02; www.vichy-prunelle.com; 36 rue Montaret; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Sun), selling a mouth-watering assortment of delights such as house speciality *délices de prunelle*, squares of pistachio marzipan and candied fruit, plus homemade *guimauves* (marshmallows) in flavours from blackcurrant to vanilla.

grand Byzantine-style dome are often intensive, multiday affairs with meal plans, exercise and hydrotherapy programs. But more casual spa fans can opt for a session in hot tubs and saunas (€15), or perhaps a 25-minute massage treatment (€56).

 **Sleeping**
**Citotel Arverna**

HOTEL €

(☎ 04 70 31 31 19; www.arverna-hotels-vichy.com; 12 rue Desbrest; d/f from €70/130; 📶 🚰 🚿) This amiable place boasts a charming lounge room and a mini-library to relax in, when you aren't snoozing in one of its 23 contemporary, pastel-drenched rooms, some with balconies and all with plenty of natural light.

**Aletti Palace Hôtel**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 70 30 20 20; www.hotel-aletti.fr; 3 place Joseph Aletti; s/d/f from €99/119/165; 📶 🚰 🚿) If you're looking for mod cons, Aletti isn't the place. But there's creaky, old-world glamour in abundance. Get comfy in the bar, where stained-glass windows cast soft light over leather sofas, or plunge into the heated outdoor pool (summer only). Luxury feels somewhat faded in the rooms, but they're large, with classy marble bathrooms and views towards Parc des Sources.

 **Eating**
**Grand Marché Couvert**

MARKET €

(Covered Market; ☎ 04 70 30 55 75; www.legrandmarchecouvert-vichy.fr; place PV Léger; ☎ 7am-1pm Tue-Thu & Sun, 7am-1pm & 4-7pm Fri & Sat)

Browse a showcase of regional produce at this food market 500m northwest of Vichy's train station. The 6800-sq-metre market hall has stalls piled high with fruit, veg, meat and wonderfully whiffy local cheeses, ready-to-eat offerings like pastries, and foodie souvenirs (perhaps gentian liqueur or a local *grandmère's* berry jam).

**Brasserie du Casino**

BRASSERIE €€

(☎ 04 70 98 23 06; www.brasserie-du-casino.fr; 4 rue du Casino; mains €12-18, lunch/dinner menus from €24/43; ☎ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Thu-Mon) All glossy mirrors, mosaic-tile flooring and art deco glamour, this time-trapped haunt in an 1897 building has a wall of photos featuring the actors and *chanteurs* who've stopped by from the opera house. The food is substantial (Charolais beef in red wine, confit duck, cherry *parfait glacé*) and the feel unmistakably French.

★ **La Table d'Antoine**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 04 70 98 99 71; www.latabledantoinie.com; 8 rue Burnol; mains €27-39, lunch menus €29, dinner menus €43-74; ☎ 12.15-1pm & 7.30-8.30pm Tue-Sun) Abstract portraits and high-backed chairs create a boutique feel at this temple to French fine dining. Choose from flavour pairings like scallops with vanilla sweet potatoes or pork tenderloin with citrus endives. Desserts are just as inventive, like strawberries cooked in balsamic vinegar with a hint of local sweets *pastilles de Vichy*. Tasting *menus* are worth every cent. Reserve well ahead.



## Drinking & Nightlife

### ★ **Keck's Nature Shop**

CAFE

(☎04 70 59 32 19; www.keckscafe.com; cnr rue d'Allier & rue Porte de France; ☺9.30am-8.30pm Tue & Wed, to 9pm Thu & Sat, to 10pm Fri, 1-9pm Sun) This Canadian-run cafe draws inspiration from far and wide in its hot-chocolate menu. The 'Frambiosuisse', raspberry-tinged hot chocolate served with Gruyère cheese, is as decadent as it sounds, though we're also partial to the ginger-infused 'Confucius'. Coffees, teas and an interesting range of deli goods on sale, too.

### Le 8

WINE BAR

(☎04 43 03 46 31; 8 rue du Casino; ☺6.30pm-midnight Thu-Mon) An intimate wine bar, pouring local and pan-European wines by the glass, with plates of nibbles like charcuterie and cheese in accompaniment. A sultry date spot or a snug perch for people-watching.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 70 98 71 94; www.vichy-destinations.fr; 19 rue du Parc; ☺9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2.30-7pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-noon & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 3-6pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 9.30am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat Jan-Mar & Oct-Dec) Get a map and spa tips from the uber-friendly tourist office next to Parc des Sources.

### DON'T MISS

#### AUVERGNE'S CHEESE TRAILS

Among countless dairy delights produced in the Auvergne's fragrant pastures are five Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP) cheeses. From mild to intense, these are: semi-hard, cheddar-like Cantal; rich, semi-soft St-Nectaire; nutty, hard Salers; creamy blue Fournal d'Ambert; and powerfully pungent Bleu d'Auvergne.

The **Routes des Fromages** (www.fromages-aop-auvergne.com) plot out almost 40 regional cheese producers. You can tramp across fields to buy wedges of cheese at farmhouse dairies, bring your kids to watch early-morning milkings, or join a tasting tour. Cheese trails are best explored during summer, when many producers open their doors to tourists. The website has maps and listings. The most tourist-friendly cheese experiences are in Ambert and St-Nectaire.

## i Getting There & Away

Destinations reached by direct train include the following.

DESTINATION	COST (€)	DURATION	FREQUENCY
<b>Clermont-Ferrand</b>	11.40	35min	half-hourly
<b>Lyon Part-Dieu</b>	30.20	2hr	4-6 per day
<b>Paris Gare de Lyon</b>	36	3-4½hr	up to 7 per day
<b>Riom</b>	6-9	25min	every 1-2hr

There are more Paris services if you change trains in Lyon Part-Dieu.

## PAYS D'ISSOIRE

Nestled between two regional natural parks, the Pays d'Issoire is a sleepy strip of the Auvergne with gloriously colourful views. There's an almost Mediterranean feel to the region's coral-roofed villages and vine-cloaked meadows.

At its heart is main town Issoire, a convenient base for day trips to the Vallée des Saints, a geological marvel of ochre-and-red fairy chimneys, and fortified villages such as Montpeyroux and Usson.

## i Sights & Activities

### Abbatiale St-Austremoine

CHURCH

(place St-Paul, Issoire; ☺8am-8pm) Issoire is home to the Auvergne's most extravagantly decorated Romanesque church. The exterior of this 12th-century edifice is festooned with geometric patterns in white-and-black lava stone, dappled across great ornamental arches. Twelve signs of the zodiac in stone relief have been beautifully restored. Inside, blood-red columns are crowned with scenes from Christ's life.

Ask at the tourist office (p576) about guided tours of the church in July and August.

### Donjon de Montpeyroux

HISTORIC BUILDING

(☎04 73 96 62 68; www.montpeyroux63.com; rue de la Grande Charreyre, Montpeyroux; adult/child €2.50/free; ☺10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun May, Jun & Sep, to 7pm daily Jul & Aug, reduced hours Oct & Apr) This castle keep is the stocky centrepiece of the medieval walled town of Montpeyroux, 12km north of Issoire. Montpeyroux' fortifications were built as a place to retreat to during fires and attacks.



## CHAÎNE DES PUYs: WORLD-HERITAGE HIKING

Relax, there hasn't been a volcanic rumble in millennia! But volcanoes that gouged and scorched the land have left behind dramatic terrain for hikers and cyclists.

In the northernmost part of the region, the 80-odd lava domes and cinder cones of the **Chaîne des Puy**s – a Unesco World Heritage Site since 2018 – were created by volcanic blasts 10,000 years ago. For rolling views, the top of Puy de Pariou (1209m) is a 2½-hour return hike from the Goules car park north of Orcines village.

The Chaîne des Puy's volcanic hills are young whippersnappers compared to the craggy **Massif du Sancy**. Its apex, 1886m-high Puy de Sancy, is a bracing full-day return hike from Le Mont-Dore. Further south, the **Monts du Cantal** are the remains of Europe's largest stratovolcano, some 10 million years old. The short climb to Puy Mary is popular, but pick up a hiking map in Murat for innumerable quiet trails.

Visitors can climb the 33m-high tower, built in the 12th century, for a vantage point over the village's labyrinth of sandstone lanes.

### Usson

VILLAGE

Designed as an impregnable citadel, the village of Usson (population 286) roosts atop a volcanic plume 8km east of Issoire. The daughter of Henry II and Catherine de Médicis, Marguerite de Valois (known as *la reine Margot*), was imprisoned here by her brother, but after her release she remained in Usson to restore its castle and assemble a court of advisers. The fortified stone-and-slate village still feels frozen in time, and enjoys a peerless panorama of the Chaîne des Puy

### Vallée des Saints

WALKING

Natural stone chimneys frame this 6km walking circuit in the village of Boudes, a 17km drive southwest of Issoire. Red-clay cliffs and 30m-high rocky turrets bring to mind a national park in a US desert. Park in the lot next to the tourist-information kiosk, off the D48 as you enter the village, where you'll find trail maps. Allow 1½ hours.

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ Origines par Adrien Descoux

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 73 71 71 71; <https://restaurant-origines.fr>; rue du Clos de la Chau, Le Broc; d €110-140; ☺ restaurant noon-1.30pm & 7-9.15pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun; 📍 🚶 🚲) Five kilometres south of Issoire is a memorable boutique hotel with a Michelin-starred kitchen. The industrial exterior is an eyebrow-raising contrast to the tumbledown houses and labyrinthine lanes of Le Broc village (population 679). Inside, ultra-modern rooms are flooded with natural light and enjoy panoramic views of the plateau. Other perks: walk-in showers,

huge beds, and gourmet flourishes around the hotel.

Book well ahead for the sublime **restaurant** (lunch/dinner *menus* from €32/58), where molecular gastronomy meets traditional regional ingredients. Seasonal variations dictate the menu, but expect artful presentation and some surprises, perhaps *amuse-bouches* (appetisers) of tuna tataki or pig's trotter; sea bass with bone-marrow sauce, and exquisite *trompe l'oeil* desserts. Oh, and *naturellement* the cheese selection is second to none.

### ★ Le Bistrot Zen

FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 73 96 95 36; [www.lebistrotzen.com](http://www.lebistrotzen.com); rue de la Grande Charreyre, Montpeyroux; lunch/dinner menus from €23/32; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Wed-Sun Mar-Oct, shorter hours rest of year, closed Jan) Conveying a medieval ambience with its stone archways and low ceilings, this snug bistro in Montpeyroux takes comforting French recipes and gives them a new spin, like poached egg with chestnuts, spiced local duck with sweet potato, and artfully arranged desserts. Worth reserving.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 73 89 15 90; [www.issoire-tourisme.com](http://www.issoire-tourisme.com); 9 place St-Paul, Issoire; ☺ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm, longer hours Jul & Aug)

## Getting There & Around

Direct trains serve Issoire from Clermont-Ferrand (€8.20, 40 minutes, every one to two hours). Direct daily SNCF buses travel to/from Le Puy-en-Velay (€20.20, two hours), with more options if you travel to Brioude for an onward connection. Occasional buses travel between Issoire and Montpeyroux (line 20); find schedules on [www.auvergne-mobilite.fr](http://www.auvergne-mobilite.fr). Issoire's

tourist office can hook you up with bike rentals in neighbouring villages.

## PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL DES VOLCANS D'Auvergne

The Auvergne's most exhilarating views are among the volcanic cones, snow-lashed peaks and crater lakes of its Parc des Volcans ([www.pardesvolcans.fr](http://www.pardesvolcans.fr)). One of France's largest regional natural parks, at 3897 sq km, this photogenic section of the Massif Central mountains is a geological jigsaw of granite plateaus and glacier-sculpted valleys, puckerred by dozens of sleeping volcanoes.

There are numerous places to hike, bike and (snowfall permitting) cross-country ski. Quick to the rescue of tired leg muscles are thermal spas, some with Roman origins. Farm-style cooking is another draw, especially when St-Nectaire and Salers cheeses are on the menu.

## Puy de Dôme

Puy de Dôme (1465m) is the best-known of the Auvergne's dormant volcanoes. Part of the Unesco-listed Chaîne des Puys, a 40km string of lava domes now carpeted in green, it is a regional icon and spiritual lightning rod. Whether you visit in sunshine or mid-winter, when the hills are kissed by snow, Puy de Dôme is a focal point for walkers and photographers. Nearby, a volcano-themed amusement park and excavated volcanic sight amp up the geological wonder.

For bird's-eye views, consider booking a hang-gliding adventure with **Aero Parapente** (☎06 61 24 11 45; [www.aeroparapente.fr](http://www.aeroparapente.fr); 1-/2-flight package €80/150; ☀ Feb-Oct).

### ★ Volcan de Lempdéty

VOLCANO

(☎04 73 62 23 25; [www.auvergne-volcan.com](http://www.auvergne-volcan.com); adult/child on foot €11.50/9.50, by train €15.70/12.70; ☀ 9.30am-6pm Apr-Sep, longer hours Jul & Aug, shorter hours Oct) For a close encounter with the Auvergne's geological history, walk the scorched soil at this mined volcanic site off the D941. In summer, at weekends and during school holidays, a motorised 'train' chugs for 3km through the scarlet dust, weaving past boulders flung out of the belly of this ancient volcano. Year-round the site is visitable on guided walks. Lempdéty's geological forces are further explained in a short 'dynamic 3D' film (available in multiple languages) – expect bumps and jolts. Allow 2¾ hours.

### Vulcania

AMUSEMENT PARK

(☎04 73 19 70 00; [www.vulcania.com](http://www.vulcania.com); 2 rte de Mazayes, St-Ours-les Roches; adult/child €28.50/20.50; ☀ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, closed Mon & Tue Apr, Sep & Oct; 🚫) The Auvergne's long-extinct volcanoes are brought back to life in spectacular style at Vulcania theme park, 15km west of Clermont-Ferrand off the D941. Combining a family-friendly museum with indoor and outdoor play areas, highlights include 12-minute 'dynamic 3D' film *Awakening of the Auvergne Giants*, depicting volcanic eruptions complete with air blasts and water spray, and the Cité des Enfants (Kids' City), with activities specially geared to three- to seven-year-olds.

### **i** WALKING PUY DE DÔME

There are bracing hikes to the top of Puy de Dôme; you can trek both ways or buy a one-way ticket for the Panoramique des Dômes (p578) train. (Note: it's harder on the knees walking down than uphill.) The steep, 6km **Chemin des Muletiers** is believed to have once been trodden by pilgrims heading to the temple of Mercury at the top. It takes roughly 1½ hours if you start from the lower Panoramique station, or half that if you begin at **Col de Ceyssat Parking** (D68) **FREE**. A longer traverse with spectacular views is the north-facing **Chemin des Chèvres**, a steady climb that reaches the summit via a steady, anticlockwise trail. Allow two to 2½ hours for the ascent.

Stock up on picnic supplies in Clermont-Ferrand or Orcines, which has bakeries and a convenience store. Otherwise, reserve a table at **Resto d'Épicure** (☎04 73 87 43 02; [lerestodepicure@panoramiquedesdomes.fr](mailto:lerestodepicure@panoramiquedesdomes.fr); menus from €27.50; ☀ noon-2pm late Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct, noon-2pm & 7-9pm Jul & Aug, noon-2pm Wed-Sun Nov & Dec) on the summit of Puy de Dôme.

★ **Panoramique des Dômes** RAIL  
 (☎04 73 87 43 05; www.panoramiquedesdomes.fr; Orcines; adult/child one-way €12.10/7.30, return €14.70/8.70; ☀9am-7pm Apr-Jun & Sep, to 9pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-Mar) Rattling up a railway track astride Puy de Dôme, this pleasure train (inaugurated in 1907) hoists visitors to the 1465m summit. On clear days there are sublime views along the 15-minute journey: the pouting cinder cones of the Chaîne des Puys melt into the verdant Limagne plain. Departures are two or three times per hour (or hourly in winter).

In poor weather such as wind or snow, it's worth calling ahead to check trains are running. At the top, take a look at the **Temple de Mercure** (☀mid-Mar-Dec) FREE, the ruin of a 1st-century Gallo-Roman temple with a small visitor centre explaining the region's Roman history.

### **i** Getting There & Away

It's a 13km drive west from Clermont-Ferrand to the Puy de Dôme (follow signs for Orcines). In July and August (and during school holidays) a **shuttle bus** (☎04 73 26 81 11; www.puy-de-dome.fr; one-way €1.60) runs twice daily between Clermont-Ferrand's SNCF station via place de Jaude to the Panoramique train station and Vulcania.

## Orcival

POP 243 / ELEV 870M

Dinky Orcival is best known for its formidable 12th-century **Basilique Notre-Dame** (place de la Basilique; ☀8.30am-6pm Oct-Mar, to 7.30pm Apr-Sep). Relics of the Virgin Mary drew pilgrims to Orcival centuries before the basilica was built, but it was a 12th-century icon, the Virgin of Orcival, that cemented the village's status as a pilgrimage site. The statue continues to be the focus of veneration each Ascension Day (the 40th day after Easter Sunday).

Opposite the basilica is Orcival's **tourist office** (☎04 73 65 89 77; www.auvergnevolcansancy.com; place de la Basilique; ☀9am-1pm & 2-6pm May-Sep, shorter hours rest of year; 📞), where you can borrow a tablet for a self-guided tour (French and English). With versions for adults and kids, the tour illuminates easily-overlooked architectural features of the basilica. Consider grabbing some walking maps from the tourist office, too. This romantic village of stone houses is

an access point to verdant (and often precipitous) walking trails.

For an intimate encounter with the landscape, take an excursion with **Aluna Voyages** (☎06 78 40 36 79; www.aluna-voyages.com; 📞). In the company of expert forager and food writer Christophe Anglade, you'll pick berries, edible flowers and mushrooms, then whip up a meal with your findings (one/three days from €45/370, April to October).

For a feast without the exertion, **Auberge Le Cantou** (☎04 73 65 82 07; www.aubergelecan.com; Le Bourg; menus from €16; ☀noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) serves great-value *menus* with regional favourites like *aligot* (smooth potato mash with garlic and cheese) and stuffed cabbage. There are also plain but comfy rooms (from €67) in which to sleep off the damage of long hikes and liberal servings of wine.

Orcival is 25km southwest of Clermont-Ferrand and 15km north of Le Mont-Dore. You'll need your own wheels.

## Col de Guéry

Lost in the mists south of Orcival is the Col de Guéry. If you can brave the serpentine route to this mountain pass – winter tyres are essential if there's snow – you'll have pristine hiking and snowshoeing territory at your feet. Here gleams **Lac de Guéry**, the highest lake in the Auvergne at 1268m, filled with trout and perch.

Even if you aren't sticking around, it's worth stopping to admire the **Roches Tuilière et Sanadoire** (📍) – slumbering volcanoes sculpted by glacial movement millennia ago. It's an easy stop if you're driving between Orcival and Le Mont-Dore.

Should the scenic solitude tempt you to stay, **Auberge du Lac de Guéry** (☎04 73 65 02 76; www.auberge-lac-guery.fr; d/f/ste from €98/155/185; ☀Feb-mid-Oct; 📞📞), on the lake's southern edge, is a welcoming and comfortable inn with a mouth-watering menu and unbeatable access to hiking, fishing and cross-country skiing.

## Le Mont-Dore & La Bourboule

POP 3067 / ELEV 1050M

Barely 5km apart, these mountain towns are steeped in 19th-century elegance. Both Le Mont-Dore and La Bourboule have domed

bathhouses that continue to draw *curistes*, spa-goers seeking to boost their health through immersion in mineral-rich waters. Nestled in a narrow valley some 40km southwest of Clermont-Ferrand, their proximity to towering peaks like Puy de Sancy (1886m) beckons to hikers.

Snowfall once brought troupes of downhill skiers to Le Mont-Dore's family-friendly slopes. Sadly, the warm winter of 2019–20 chimed the end for Le Mont-Dore's already financially precarious ski resort, though winter sports like snowshoeing and cross-country skiing endure.

## Sights & Activities

For easy, family-friendly walks, La Bourboule's **Parc Fenestre** is a good starting point.

**Thermes du Mont-Dore** HISTORIC BUILDING  
(☎04 73 65 05 10; www.chainethermale.fr/le-mont-dore; 1 place du Panthéon; ☺ tours 2pm, 3pm & 4pm Mon-Fri mid-Apr–mid-Oct, spa by appointment Mon-Sat Apr-early Nov) Book ahead for a spa treatment (from €50) beneath these grand neo-Byzantine domes. French speakers can join 45-minute guided tours (adult/child €4/3) to admire gold-leaf-dappled tile work and sip the reputedly healing water – brace yourself for a warmish, metallic-flavoured mouthful.

**Puy de Sancy** HIKING  
(Station du Mont-Dore; one-way/return adult €7.70/10.20, child €5.70/7.60; ☺ 9am–6pm Jul & Aug, 9am–noon & 1.30–5pm late Dec–Jun, Sep & Oct) From the upper station of the Téléphérique du Sancy cable car (1780m) it's a mere 860 steps along a maintained trail and staircase to reach Puy de Sancy's often snow-streaked summit, where fabulous views unfold over the Monts du Cantal.

**Funiculaire du Capucin** FUNICULAR  
(☎04 73 65 01 25; rue René Cassin, Le Mont-Dore; one-way/return adult €6/7.50, child €5/6; ☺ 10am–12.10pm & 2–5.40pm Wed–Sun May–Sep, to 6.40pm daily Jul & Aug) Built in 1898, France's oldest funicular railway (and a listed historic monument) sets off every 20 minutes, crawling at 1m per second to the plateau of Les Capucins (1245m). Various trails lead off the plateau, including an easy 2km walk to volcanic dome Pic du Capucin (1468m), following part of the long-distance GR30, and a steep 1km downhill back to town.

## Sleeping

Widen your search to La Bourboule's hotels and guesthouses if Le Mont-Dore is all booked up.

**Camping Domaine de la Grande Cascade** CAMPGROUND €  
(☎04 73 65 06 23; www.camping-grandecascade.com; rte de Besse, Le Mont-Dore; 2-person sites €14.80, per additional person €4.50; ☺ mid-Apr–early Nov; ☎) Picturesque camping at the nexus of super walking trails, which range from seven-hour epics to rambles to a *grande cascade* ('great waterfall'). At 1250m elevation, it's prone to chilly breezes, but you can warm up in the Jacuzzi (€2). Tent sites are offered from June to mid-September, along with basic huts (from €26.80). Chalets (€390 per week) are available throughout.

**Auberge de Jeunesse HI Le Mont-Dore** HOSTEL €  
(☎04 73 65 03 53; www.hifrance.org; 100 rte du Sancy, Le Mont-Dore; r for 1/2/3 persons incl breakfast & without bathroom €25.80/41.60/62.40; ☺ Apr–mid-Nov; ☎) Often brimming with hikers and cyclists, this well-equipped budget bolthole has all the essentials: kitchen, laundry, bike storage, not to mention verdant views. It's right below the Puy de Sancy cable car, 3.5km south of town.

**★ Grand Hôtel** HOTEL €€  
(☎04 73 65 02 64; www.hotel-mont-dore.com; 2 rue Meynadier; d/tr/q from €80/90/100; ☺ mid-Dec–mid-Nov; ☎) The romantic ambience of this turreted 1850 hotel is amply delivered within its rooms, which have a sharp modern design and comfortable wrought-iron beds. The best have balconies looking towards the mountains. Meanwhile, time spent in the spa (€6) is the perfect balm for calf muscles that ache from exertion up in the mountains.

## Eating

For a smorgasbord of produce, sample dried sausage and local liqueurs at **La Petite Boutique du Bougnat** (1 & 4 rue Montlosier, Le Mont-Dore; ☺ 9am–12.30pm & 2.30–7pm).

**Chez Pépé Jean** FRENCH €  
(☎04 73 22 16 44; 3 place Charles de Gaulle, Le Mont-Dore; mains €12–20; ☺ noon–2pm & 7–9pm Fri–Tue, noon–2pm Wed) This friendly spot styles itself as *bistrotvergnat* – the simplicity of a bistro with a cosiness (and cheese selection)

that is unmistakably Auvergnat. Top of the menu is the 'St Nectiflette', a variation on alpine potato bake *tartiflette* but with generous St-Nectaire cheese, and the herbal house aperitifs shouldn't be missed. Its *crème brûlée aux myrtilles* is the best we've tried.

★ **La Golmotte** FRENCH €€  
(☎ 04 73 65 05 77; www.aubergelagolmotte.com; rte D996, Le Barbier; menus €20-40; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm Mon & Thu-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun; ♿) Reserve ahead for a satisfying regional feast at this farm-style inn, 3km along the road to Lac de Guéry. Regional classics like cheesy *truffade* and *pounti* (a prune-studded savoury cake) are offered beneath its wooden rafters, as are refined recipes like scallops in orange butter and seared steak with tangy blue-cheese sauce. Rooms available, too (singles/doubles including breakfast €52/65).

**Le Comptoir Cyrano** FRENCH €€  
(☎ 04 73 81 02 25; https://lecomptoircyrano.com; 37 bd Georges Clemenceau, La Bourboule; lunch/dinner menus from €16/20; ☀ noon-2pm daily, 7-9.30pm Fri-Sun & school holidays) Dine within a palatial salon without dropping your monocle over the bill. Service at Le Comptoir Cyrano is charming and terribly French, while meals range from mountain specialties such as four-cheese fondue and duck smothered in Cantal to wine-stewed lamb and salads laden with regional cheeses and meats.

## 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

**Café de Paris** CAFE  
(Chez Mimi; ☎ 04 73 65 01 77; 8 rue Jean-Moulin; ☀ 10am-8pm Fri-Wed) Authentically retro with its mosaic floor, faded jazz posters and chipped stained glass, this Parisian-style throwback gets busy. Locals gossip over espresso and *vin chaud* at the counter, tap their toes to sultry *chansons*, and settle in for unadorned dishes like omelettes, crêpes and salads.

**Le Galapagos** CAFE  
(☎ 04 73 81 02 63; 257 bd Georges Clemenceau, La Bourboule; ☀ noon-10pm) With ornamental tiles and a sunny colour scheme, Le Galapagos evokes an Andalusian courtyard on a summer's day. Just as likely to lift your spirits are the respectable wine list, selection of European beers and cocktails, and all-day crêpe service (from €2.50).

## 📍 Information

**La Bourboule Tourist Office** (☎ 04 73 65 57 71; www.sancy.com; 15 place de la République; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun) In the magnificent columned Hôtel de Ville.

**Le Mont-Dore Tourist Office** (☎ 04 73 65 20 21; www.sancy.com; av de la Libération; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun, longer hours Jul & Aug; ♿)

## 🚗 Getting There & Away

Daily direct SNCF buses connect Clermont-Ferrand with La Bourboule (€11.40, 80 minutes), continuing on to Le Mont-Dore (€15.20, 1½ hours). There are more connections if you change in Laqueuille (four daily).

## Besse-et-St-Anastaise

POP 1504 / ELEV 1040M

In the midst of the mountainous Sancy region, Besse-et-St-Anastaise has a lost-in-time atmosphere. This former medieval market town has 6m-high defensive walls and numerous Gothic and Renaissance features, most notably an octagonal 16th-century **bel-fry** (place du Petit Mèze).

**Auberge de la Petite Ferme** B&B €€  
(☎ 04 73 79 51 39; www.auberge-petite-ferme.com; Le Faux; d €55-125, f €105-175; ♿) Fling open your shutters to reveal rolling pastures from one of 32 snug rooms (most with a balcony) at this converted farmhouse, 800m from Besse's historic centre on the road to Lac Pavin. The breakfast buffet (€11.50) is replete with patisserie, yogurt and local honey, while the snug on-site restaurant serves myriad melty cheese dishes (from €14).

### DON'T MISS

#### CRATER LAKE

Five kilometres southwest of Besse-et-St-Anastaise, off the D978, the extraordinarily beautiful **Lac Pavin** is enclosed by a steep wall of pine trees. Now a mirror-still circular lake, 93m at its deepest, the original crater was blasted out of the earth by a volcano nearly seven millennia ago. The easy walking trail around the shore, partly boardwalked, takes less than an hour. Winter, when the lake has a frosty halo, is even more beautiful (but walk carefully).



**Mato-Coulis**

PIZZA €

(☎04 73 79 50 86; rue Notre-Dame; pizzas €8.50-13, steaks from €21.50; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm; ♿) Besse's best pizzeria layers regional flavours onto authentic bases and bakes them in a wood-fired oven; try the 'Bessarde' with Bleu d'Auvergne cheese or the 'Bougnat' with local ham. Helmed by a farmer of Salers cattle, it's no surprise that Mato-Coulis also prepares sublime steaks. A kid-sized menu is available, too.

**i Getting There & Away**

Besse can be reached by infrequent local coaches between Clermont-Ferrand and Riom-ès-Montagnes (line 108; www.puy-de-dome.fr), but you're better off with your own vehicle. It's a winding 30km drive southeast of Le Mont-Dore, 35km west of Issoire, or 45km south of Clermont-Ferrand.

**Monts du Cantal**

Three million years ago Europe's broadest stratovolcano, almost 80km in diameter, blew its top and left behind the sawtooth peaks of the Monts du Cantal. Rising highest in this southerly part of the Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne are **Puy Mary** (1787m), **Plomb du Cantal** (1858m) and **Puy de Peyre Arse** (1806m).

Meadows and farmland have long since carpeted over the Monts du Cantal, but the region hasn't been fully tamed. More sparsely populated than other parts of the Auvergne, and with a remote feel, the Monts du Cantal are most easily accessed from **Murat**, 15km east, or with an overnight stop in Diènné or Lavignère.

**👁 Sights & Activities**

For peerless views, embark on the leg-stiffening walk up to **Rocher de Bonnevie**. From the town centre, the **Chemin de Bonnevie** route is about 3.8km; follow the signposts and allow two hours.

Afterwards, dawdle through Murat's daydream of an old town. It's worth stepping inside the taxidermy trove **Maison de la Faune** (☎04 71 20 00 52; www.murat.fr; rue Porte de la Garde; adult/child €5/3.50; ☺ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 3-6pm Sun Jul, Aug & school holidays, shorter hours rest of year; ♿), where natural-history displays are hidden away in the chambers of a dramatically turreted 16th-century town house.

**🍽 Sleeping & Eating**

Budget rooms are available at **Aux Globe-trotters** (☎04 71 20 07 22; www.hotel-murat-cantal.com; 22 av du Dr Louis Mallet; s/d/f €53/59/90), but travellers with their own wheels can pick from atmospheric lodgings beyond Murat.

**Alta Terra**

GUESTHOUSE €€

(☎04 71 20 83 03; www.altaterra-cantal.com; Pradel, Lavignère; d €75-120; ♿) Antique skis and wooden eaves give a chalet feel to these family-run *chambres d'hôtes*, 15km northwest of Murat. Slide into the outdoor Nordic hot tub or soothe your muscles in the *hammam* (steam bath) and sauna. Ask about cots and beds for kids. Reserve ahead for dinner (€22 to €27), where regional flavours can be tailored for vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free diners.

**★ Instants d'Absolu****Ecologie & Spa**

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 71 20 83 09; www.ecologie-france.com; Lac du Pêcher, Chavagnac; d €145-240, ste €166-240; ☺ mid-Apr-mid-Nov & mid-Dec-mid-Mar; ♿) This 300-year-old lakeside farm, in the peaceful wilds 12km north of Murat, was remodelled with sustainability in mind – carpets from recycled fibres, ecologically sound paintwork and meticulous recycling. So with a clear conscience, slide into an outdoor hot tub, stretch out in the sauna, or flop onto a bed in one of 12 individually designed rooms (deliberately TV-free).

**Chez Laurette**

CRÊPES €

(☎04 71 20 01 31; www.creperiechezlaurette.fr; 28 rue du Bon Secours; galettes €7-9; ☺ noon-1.30pm Mon-Wed, noon-1.30pm & 6.45-8.30pm Thu-Sat; ♿) We can't think of a cosier spot to wolf down a *galette* (buckwheat crêpe) laden with goat's cheese or regional ham. Post-hike appetites suit heftier fare like coarse *andouillette* sausage or confit duck wrapped into a steaming pancake. Bonus: it serves the town's emblematic dessert, *cornets de Murat*, pastry cones crammed with cream and fruit.

**i Information**

**Murat Tourist Office** (☎04 71 20 09 47; www.hautesterrestourisme.fr; place de l'Hôtel de Ville; ☺ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun) Walking-trail maps and advice on Nordic skiing.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

## WHAT'S THE BEEF IN SALERS?

Ask a local what to eat during your travels in the Auvergne and the answers will likely be cheese (first and foremost), followed by Salers beef. Renowned for its rich, gamey flavour, Salers beef is seared with reverence across the Auvergne. About 5km north of Salers, housed in a 17th-century barn, the **Maison de la Salers** (☎04 71 40 54 00; www.maisondelasalers.fr; Le Fau, St-Bonnet-de-Salers; adult/child €7/4.50; ☀10am-noon & 2-6pm Feb-Oct & school holidays) is a museum dedicated to the long-horned cattle, their meat, and the cheese made from their milk, known as *tradition Salers*. To immerse yourself even more deeply in the Auvergne's agrarian culture, time your trip for the **Transhumance** (www.salers-tourisme.fr; ☀late May). During this one-day festival, farmers drive hundreds of bell-jingling, long-horned cattle through the village of St-Paul-de-Salers (3km east of Salers).

### **i** Getting There & Away

Direct trains connect Murat with Clermont-Ferrand (€22.20, 1¼ hours, four daily) and Issoire (€16.10, one hour, four daily). Change trains in Arvant for additional services, as well as routes to other parts of the Auvergne, including Le Puy-en-Velay and Langeac (Gorges de l'Allier).

## Salers

POP 329 / ELEV 950M

Huddled against the western edge of the Monts du Cantal, Salers has prized gastronomy and dreamy architecture. The town centre glimmers darkly with lava-stone towers and 16th-century town houses, and it's an excellent base for rambles up **Puy Violent** (1592m) and **Puy Mary** (1787m). Waiting to reward your exertions are Salers beef and the local Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP) cheese.

Salers' picturesque central square, **place Tyssandier d'Escous**, is named for the 19th-century agronomist who developed the Salers breed of cattle. Pick up a free map from the **tourist office** (☎04 71 40 58 08; www.salers-tourisme.fr; place Tyssandier d'Escous; ☀9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Jun-Sep, 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) for a walking tour of historic buildings.

Main-square crêperies are the safest bets during low season (November through March), when many restaurants close.

### La Maison de Barrouze

GUESTHOUSE €€

(☎04 71 40 78 08; av de Barrouze; d from €65; 🍷) With rough-hewn rooms stacked within a grand old town house, La Maison de Barrouze has charisma bouncing off every stone wall and exposed timber beam. The hospitality is beyond compare, as is the included

breakfast of homemade produce such as jams, yogurt and fresh-baked cakes.

### La Diligence

FRENCH €€

(☎04 71 40 75 39; www.ladiligencesalers.com; rue du Beffroi; menus €19-37; ☀noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Apr-Oct) Loosen your belt for generous servings of regional delicacies such as pork with lentils and *coufidou* (beef marinated in wine) at this restaurant in the historic centre. Our pick: Salers beef served with cheesy potato dish *truffade*.

### **i** Getting There & Away

Salers lies 40km west of Murat off the D680 (21km west of the Pas de Peyrol). You'll need your own vehicle. Winter weather closes the Pas de Peyrol from November to May. If you're driving from the eastern part of Parc des Volcans d'Auvergne, you will need to detour via Riom-ès-Montagnes. Winter tyres recommended.

## Murol & Lac Chambon

Bisected by a gargling river and enclosed by forests, the stone village of Murol snoozes beneath the magnificent 12th-century **Château de Murol** (☎04 73 88 82 50; www.murolchateau.com; adult/child €9/4.50; ☀10am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 6pm Feb, Mar & Oct-mid-Nov, 2-5pm late Nov-Jan; 🍷). Its battles now past, the only siege these days is the summer rush to **Lac Chambon** (📍), a playground for families 1.5km west of Murol. Walking the pleasant trail around the shore, with its easy boardwalks and educational placards, takes an hour.

### Camping les Bombes

CAMPGROUND €

(☎04 73 88 64 03; www.camping-les-bombes.com; Chemin de Pétary, Chambon-sur-Lac; tent sites €19.40, extra adult/child €6.10/5.10;

☺ May–mid-Sep; 📄 📄) Just 15 minutes' walk west from Lac Chambon's indigo waters is this efficiently run campground, with a choice of verdant tent sites and wooden chalets (from €466 per week). Mini-golf, table tennis, a heated outdoor pool and green space create a lively summer retreat, and there are regular activities for kids, from treasure hunts to singalongs.

### Aux 500 Diabes

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 73 88 81 71; www.500diabes.com; Moneaux, Chambon-des-Neiges; d from €115; 📄 📄 📄) 🍴 Designed for minimum impact on its fragile mountain setting, this far-flung eco-lodge off the D636 has fresh, contemporary rooms. Some feel economical in size, but they're tastefully decorated with earth tones and charcoal bathrooms, and most have windows that survey deer grazing the highland meadows. Rates include breakfast.

The adjoining restaurant's menu is a showcase of French classics, including regional cheese dishes *truffade* and *aligot*, great steaks, and char *meunière*. Desserts balance tried-and-trusted recipes (profiteroles, wine-drenched prunes...) with elegant, contemporary presentation.

## Information

**Murrol Tourist Office** (☎ 04 73 88 62 62; www.sancy.com; rue de Jassaguet, Murrol; ☺ 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat May–Sep, plus

9am–noon Sun Apr, Jul & Aug, closed Oct–Mar except school holidays; 📄)

**Lac Chambon Tourist Office** (☎ 04 73 78 65 10; www.sancy.com; Plage Chambon, Chambon-sur-Lac; ☺ 10am–1pm & 2–6.30pm Jul & Aug; 📄) Summer only.

## Getting There & Away

Private transport is easiest. The closest major transport links to Murrol run through Le Mont-Dore, a 19km drive west. In winter main roads are kept clear, but it's worth paying attention to snow forecasts if you're taking the lonely, winding road to Chambon-des-Neiges.

## PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL LIVRAUDOIS-FOREZ

Formerly a centre of logging and agriculture, the Livradois-Forez is now 3200 sq km of protected land (www.vacances-livradois-forez.com). Its conifer forests, meadows and moors extend between the plains of Limagne and the Monts du Forez. Their greenery is interrupted by elegantly ramshackle villages, some of them (like La Chaise-Dieu) guarding remarkable cultural riches.

But it's the artisans of Livradois-Forez who have truly made a name for their towns. Thiers remains proud of its centuries of knife-making, and countless dairies employ

### WORTH A TRIP

#### CHEESE & CAVES: ST-NECTAIRE

One of the Auvergne's most celebrated and crowd-pleasing cheeses is creamy, semi-soft St-Nectaire. Its namesake town, 5km east of Murrol, has enough dairy products (and other diversions) for an interesting day trip.

Buy St-Nectaire cheese straight from the source at the **Maison du Fromage** (☎ 04 73 88 57 96; rte de Murrol, St-Nectaire-le-Haut; tours adult/child €6.90/4.90; ☺ 10am–noon & 2–6pm). Stick around to learn the secrets of how it's made on a 35-minute guided tour of the cellars, complete with a swoony video presentation, before fine-tuning your taste buds with a cheese sampling.

Appetite sated, don a hard hat for a 45-minute tour of St-Nectaire's Roman baths. Deep inside the **Grottes du Cornadore** (☎ 04 73 88 57 97; St-Nectaire-le-Haut; adult/child €7.90/5.90; ☺ 11am–noon & 2–6pm, closed Nov–mid-Feb), caves that glimmer with damp limestone, run mineral-rich 22°C waters that were used as a spa more than 2000 years ago.

More remnants of spa history surge forth at **Fontaines Pétrifiantes** (☎ 04 73 88 50 80; www.fontaines-petrifiantes.fr; 1 av du Roux, St-Nectaire-le-Bas; adult/child €6.50/3.50; ☺ 9.30am–noon & 2–7pm mid-May–mid-Sep, to 6pm rest of year), where the Papon family have been using natural hot springs to make art since 1821. Calcium-heavy water lashing against an object gradually causes a mineral build-up; using a 14m-high waterfall, the Papons let artistic moulds get drenched until mineral sculptures take shape.

traditional methods to churn out cheeses such as smooth blue Fourme d'Ambert and distinctive *fromage aux artisons*.

## Thiers

POP 11,847

France is as proud of its artisans as its artists, and nowhere is that more clear than in the knife-making town of Thiers. Blades have been fashioned here for six centuries, in the early days by harnessing the power of the Duroille River. Thiers still sharpens around 70% of French knives, and more than 100 knife producers still operate in town.

In Thiers' historic centre, narrow stone lanes are strung with weather-beaten workshop signs and every imaginable type of blade glints from their windows.

Follow in the footsteps of Thiers' master knife-makers by crafting your own blade under their tutelage. Established in 1919, **Robert David Coutellerie** (☎04 73 80 07 77; www.robert-david.com; 94 av des États Unis; adult/child €30/15; ☺10am, 2pm & 4pm Mon-Sat by reservation; 🍴) offers knife classes a few kilometres west of town; reserve ahead.

### ★ Musée de la Coutellerie

MUSEUM

(☎04 73 80 58 86; 23 & 58 rue de la Coutellerie; adult/child €5.90/2.90, combined ticket with Vallée des Rouets €7.20/3.10; ☺10am-noon & 2-6pm Feb-Dec, closed Mon Oct-May; 🍴) Split across two buildings, this museum gives an enter-

taining account of cutlery-making history. In number 23, a kid-friendly sound-and-light show evokes the dazzling, deafening conditions of a medieval workshop. Continue down the street to number 58 to see sparks fly in a knife-making demonstration on centuries-old equipment. Demos are in French only, but written information is available in other languages on request. In summer, pair a trip to the museum with visiting open-air **Vallée des Rouets** (Valley of the Waterwheels; adult/child €4.20/free; ☺noon-6pm Jun & Sep, to 7pm Jul & Aug), 4km northeast of Thiers.

### ★ Le Relais Délys

B&B €€

(☎04 73 53 76 65; https://lerelaisdelys.fr; 14 place du Poids de Ville, St-Rémy-sur-Duroille; d €87; 🍴) A full belly and a comfortable night's sleep await at this five-room guesthouse 10 minutes' drive northeast of Thiers. Well-soundproofed rooms have fine linens, rain showers and views of the church, whose clanking bells act as your alarm clock. Evening meals at the restaurant linger in memory thanks to intimate service and mouth-watering dishes: slow-cooked deer, profiteroles and delicious regional wines.

### Le Coin des Hasards

CRÊPES €

(☎04 73 51 97 80; www.facebook.com/creperie-lecoindeshasards; 3 rue du Pirou; mains €10-14; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Sun; 🍴) Friendly and casual, this *galette* specialist lavishes its creations with air-dried beef, Breton sau-

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

### UNIQUE SLEEPS

Rural hotels in the Livradois-Forez offer a compelling combination: remote locations, historic buildings and resident ghosts. **Hôtel le Prieuré** (☎04 73 95 03 91; www.leprieure-hotel-restaurant.com; Le Bourg, Chaumont-le-Bourg; d/tr/q from €62/84/88; 🍴🚰🚰) conjures just a tinge of horror-movie atmosphere. Less than half an hour's drive from Ambert or La Chaise-Dieu, this former Benedictine abbey dates to the 10th century and has spooky corridors lined with old photographs, which lead to clean and simple rooms with wrought-iron bed frames and tasteful crimson curtains. Rooms overlook tranquil pastures; downstairs is an excellent restaurant serving rustic Auvergnat fare. We were assured that the house ghost is friendly, if mischievous.

Spectral sightings have also taken place at **Le Clos Saint François** (☎04 71 01 23 95; www.leclosstfrancois.com; Le Bourg, Beaune-sur-Arzon; s/d/tr/f incl breakfast from €55/70/95/120; ☺Apr-Nov; 🍴) 🌿, 14km east of La Chaise-Dieu. And it's an excellent place to haunt: there are four ample rooms, each decorated with antiques, housed in a restored late-17th-century convent (ask to see the chapel). Breakfast is a fine spread of homemade jams and organic produce. Reserve ahead for generous evening meals (€25) of local, seasonal produce, cooked up by effusive owner Karine and served with apéritif, wine, cheese, coffee and all the trimmings.

sage and regional cheeses. Get a table down in the cellar for a cosy ambience.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 73 80 65 65; www.thiers-tourisme.fr; 1 place du Pirou; ☺10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat May, Jun & Sep, to 7pm daily Jul & Aug)

## **i** Getting There & Away

Direct trains and SNCF buses reach Thiers from Clermont-Ferrand (€9.90, 45 minutes, six daily) and Vichy (€9.20, 45 minutes, two daily). Thiers train station is a 1km walk north of the tourist office.

## La Chaise-Dieu

POP 620 / ELEV 1082M

Amid meadows, farmland and sleepy villages rises La Chaise-Dieu (literally 'the seat of God'), whose abbey-church is a treasury of art.

Pope Clement VI commissioned a palatial church to shelter his tomb and the resulting **Église Abbatiale de St-Robert** (☎04 71 00 05 55; www.abbaye-chaise-dieu.com; rue de la Gare, La Chaise-Dieu; church free, galleries adult/child €7/5; ☺10.15am-noon & 2-6pm Jun-Sep, from 9am Mar-May & Oct, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Nov-Apr), completed in 1352, is an imposing sight. Two square towers crown its Gothic façade, behind which a cavernous interior is framed by 18m-high rib vaults.

Inside, don't miss the celebrated *Danse Macabre* frescoes. These mysterious artworks depict different members of 15th-century society variously attempting to flee or bargain with Death, who is represented by dancing skeletons. The message of this anonymous fresco is chillingly clear: no one escapes the Grim Reaper.

Also inside the church is a massive 17th-century **organ**, a focal point of the town's **Sacred Music Festival** (Festival de la Chaise-Dieu; www.chaise-dieu.com; events from €10; ☺late Aug), whose concerts draw visitors from across France. Adjoining rooms display 14 beautifully restored **tapestries** in vaulted chambers.

Behind the church is **Salle de l'Echo** – an architectural oddity that allows people on opposite sides of the chamber to hear each other talking, without being overheard by those in between. Whisper into a corner while a friend listens on the opposite side.

## WORTH A TRIP

### BLUE CHEESE DETOUR: AMBERT

Fourme d'Ambert, recognisable by its tall, cylindrical shape, is one of the Auvergne's five Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP) cheeses. The best way to pay homage to this *fromage* is at the **Maison de la Fourme d'Ambert** (☎04 73 82 49 23; www.maison-fourme-ambert.fr; 29 rue des Chazeaux; adult/child €6/4.50; ☺10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sat Apr-Oct, daily Jul & Aug), in a 14th-century building in the cheese's town of origin. Join a 45-minute tour about Fourme d'Ambert's history and manufacture – it's one of France's oldest cheeses – then enjoy a three-cheese tasting (€4). Book ahead for tours in English and culinary workshops, from butter-churning to patisserie (from €15). Ambert is an easy day trip by car from Thiers (50km), Issoire (60km) or La Chaise-Dieu (30km).

SNCF buses run once or twice each weekday between La Chaise-Dieu and Le Puy-en-Velay (€10.10, 1¼ hours).

## LE PUY-EN-VELAY

POP 18,995 / ELEV 630M

With two volcanic pillars looming craggily above its rooftops, it would be impossible to mistake Le Puy-en-Velay for anywhere else in France. Topped with a 10th-century church and a vermilion statue of the Virgin Mary, these stone pinnacles tower hundreds of feet high, like two sacred rockets in the middle of blast-off.

Since the Middle Ages, Le Puy has been the starting point of the Via Podiensis, the oldest French route of the Way of St James. Le Puy's cathedral, a focal point for pilgrims, is also perched on a volcanic hill in the core of the alluring old town.

Le Puy is the proud home of two of the Auvergne's great gastronomic boasts: lentils grown in volcanic soil – gilded with Appellation d'Origine Protégée designation – and verveine du Velay, an aromatic green liqueur. Le Puy was also a historic centre for lace-making; the craft remains greatly admired and fuels a modest souvenir trade.



## Le Puy-en-Velay


 Sights

The Pass'Espace **museum pass** grants access to four of Le Puy's major sights for €12.50, including the **Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe**, Notre Dame de France, the Forteresse de Polignac and the Musée Crozatier.

Buy it at any of the sights or from the tourist office.

★ **Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe** CHURCH  
 ☎ 04 71 09 50 03; [www.rochersaintmichel.fr](http://www.rochersaintmichel.fr);  
 adult/child €5/3.50; ☀ 9am-6.30pm May-Sep, shorter hours Oct-mid-Nov, early-mid-Apr & school

## Le Puy-en-Velay

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe.....B1

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Cathédrale Notre Dame .....B4  
3 Le Camino .....C4  
4 Notre Dame de France Statue .....C3

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 5 Auberge de Jeunesse .....C4  
6 Camping Bouthezard .....A1  
7 Hôtel Le Régina .....D5  
8 L'Epicurium .....C5

### 🍴 Eating

- 9 Chez Mon Pote .....A5  
10 Entrez les Artistes .....A5  
11 Fromagerie Coulaud .....A5  
12 L'Âme des Poètes .....B4  
13 Maison Marion .....B5  
14 Restaurant Tournayre .....B5

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 15 La Distillerie .....B5

### 🛒 Shopping

- 16 Espace Pagès Maison Verveine du Velay .....B5

holidays) Le Puy's oldest chapel, first established in the 10th century and rebuilt several times since, teeters atop an 85m-high volcanic plug, reached by climbing 268 craggy stairs. Stepping through its polychrome doorway into the cave-like interior is a near-mystical experience: the chapel follows the natural contours of the rock, and the unusual carvings and 12th-century frescoes create an other-worldly atmosphere. A virtual tour experience makes the views accessible to those who can't make the climb. It's off rue du Rocher.

### ★ Musée Crozatier

MUSEUM

(☎04 71 06 62 40; www.musee.patrimoine.lepuyenvelay.fr; 2 rue Antoine Martin; adult/child €6/free; ☎11am-6pm Wed-Mon) This resplendent museum weaves together art, design and history across its immaculate spaces. Every room is beautifully arranged, from grand stairwells to modern-art furniture. Most interesting to visitors are the galleries of local crafts, including ceramics and lace so intricate that you could squint at it for hours.

### Notre Dame de France Statue

MONUMENT

(adult/child €4/2; ☎9am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm mid-Mar-Apr, 10am-5pm Feb-mid-Mar & Oct-mid-Nov, 2-5pm Sun late Nov-Jan) Rising 23m tall, this crimson Notre Dame de France (Virgin Mary) statue has been standing guard over Le Puy since 1860. She stands on the Rocher Corneille, a 757m-high volcanic pillar; you can share her view by ascending the spiral stairs inside the statue before climbing a ladder right into her haloed head.

### Cathédrale Notre Dame

CATHEDRAL

(☎04 71 09 79 77; www.cathedraledupuy.org; rue de la Manécanterie; ☎6.30am-7pm) A checkerboard of grey and white stone in the heart of Le Puy's old town, the cathedral is a

monumental starting point for many pilgrims embarking on the French Way of St James route. An exquisite blend of architectural styles, the cathedral's entryway is framed by Romanesque arches. Inside are medieval frescoes, Baroque statues, an organ dating to 1689 and one of the Auvergne's most famous *Virgines noires*.

### Forteresse St Vidal

CASTLE

(☎09 81 43 68 00; https://saintvidal.com; St-Vidal; adult/child €6/4; ☎10am-7pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Apr-Jun, guided tours only Sep-Mar) Within the stocky walls of this medieval castle, suits of armour, taxidermied animals and glinting weapons hark back to days of old. The displays are good fun for kids, while the 16th-century castle's mighty towers and attractive gardens are rewarding for all ages. Check the website for the full schedule of guided tours. It's 7km northwest of Le Puy-en-Velay.

### Forteresse de Polignac

CASTLE

(☎04 71 04 06 04; www.forteressedepolignac.fr; adult/child €5/3.50; ☎9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 1.30-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, to 5pm early Nov, 1.30-5pm Feb & Mar) Perched atop a crown of volcanic stone 5km northwest of Le Puy is a late-11th-century castle affording spectacular views. The focal point is a 32m-high rectangular keep, but there's plenty to explore: a ruined chapel, deep wells, prison cells and defensive walls dotted with lookout towers. Wander at leisure or check the online schedule for summer guided tours.

## 🌟 Festivals & Events

### ★ Fête du Roi de l'Oiseau

STREET CARNIVAL

(www.roideloiseau.com; ☎3rd weekend Sep) This Renaissance-themed street party dates back

## HISTORIC HIKES AROUND LE PUY

The oldest and most frequented French route of the Way of St James (Camino de Santiago) pilgrimage begins in Le Puy-en-Velay. Established in 950–51, the **Via Podiensis** stretches for 736km from Le Puy to St-Jean-Pied-de-Port via Figeac, Cahors and Moissac. The modern-day GR65 roughly follows the Via Podiensis route.

Inside a 16th-century building in Le Puy, a museum-gallery exposes the route's fascinating history. **Le Camino** (Musée de St-Jacques de Compostelle; ☎04 71 09 06 00; www.lecamino.org; 2 rue de la Manécanterie; adult/child €4/2; 🕒2-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep-mid-Oct, 11am-7.30pm Jul & Aug) is as interesting for armchair travellers as committed walkers about to undertake the multi-week trek. Plenty of organisations can help plan a walk along this storied route: contact Le Puy's tourist office or, in Toulouse, the **Association de Coopération Interrégionale: Les Chemins de St-Jacques de Compostelle** (☎05 62 27 00 05; www.chemins-compostelle.com; ☎phone line 2-5pm Mon, 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Thu, 9am-1pm & 2-4pm Fri). For a useful English-language website, see www.csj.org.uk.

Also beginning in Le Puy is the **Robert Louis Stevenson Trail** (GR70), a 252km route that traces the *Treasure Island* author's walks through the Cévennes. The entire route takes 10 to 12 days, but there's no need to commit to a long-haul hike. For a flavour of the trail, perhaps a view-laden day walk between Le Puy and photogenic Monastier-sur-Gazeille, **La Malle Postale** (☎04 71 04 21 79; www.lamallepostale.com) can transport your luggage or arrange a shuttle between mid-April and mid-October; advance bookings essential.

to a competition first recorded in 1524. Le Puy's most skilled archer, the first to shoot a straw bird from a high tower, was rewarded with year-long tax exemption, dining with nobles, and the title of *roi de l'oiseau* (bird king). The present-day festival resurrects 16th-century costumes, food and music (and an archery contest).

### Sleeping

#### L'Epicurium

B&amp;B €

(☎04 43 07 27 11; www.l-epicurium.com; 5 rue du Bessat; d €64-69, ste €72-99; 🕒reception 5.30-7pm; 📶) This gastronomy-obsessed guesthouse has six spacious lodgings renovated with minimalist flair: ceilings are high, tones are neutral, and period features include wooden beams and chimney places. Creaky floors are also part of the old-world charm. Breakfast involves a toothsome range of homemade jams, and you can reserve a three-course meal (€18) or a picnic box (€10). Call ahead with your arrival time.

#### Camping Bouthezard

CAMPGROUND €

(☎04 71 09 55 09; www.aquadis-loisirs.com/camping-de-bouthezard; chemin de Bouthezard; pitch per 2 adults from €15.40; 🕒Apr-Oct; 📶🚰) Le Puy's campground enjoys an attractive berth beside the Borne River, overlooked by the towering Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguille across the road. Facilities include washing machines, badminton and table tennis,

and the option for croissant delivery in the mornings. There's wi-fi in the reception area.

#### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎04 71 05 52 40; www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/le-puy-en-velay.html; 9 rue Jules Vallès; dm €14.70; 🕒reception afternoon only; 📶🚰) Bright and clean, this hostel offers great value for its prime position below the cathedral. Dorms sleep three to nine; there are facilities for disabled travellers; and there are washing machines to blitz the trail dust from your clothes. Simple breakfasts of cereals, bread and orange juice cost €4.50 per head, and the on-site parking is free.

#### Hôtel Le Régina

HOTEL €€

(☎04 71 09 14 71; www.hotelrestregina.com; 34 bd Maréchal Fayolle; d €78-115, ste €120-135; 📶🚰🚰) Travel photography and colourful themes, from Marilyn Monroe to New York City, liven up the suites and pricier doubles here. Standard rooms are rather more ordinary (and occasionally worn), but Le Régina is conveniently located five minutes' walk from Le Puy's train station and it's competently staffed. Ask for a room on the *côté calme* (quiet side).

### Eating

Dubbed 'vegetarian caviar' by locals, the *lentille verte du Puy* (green Puy lentil; www.lentillevertedupuy.com) is an eponymous

superfood, rich in protein, vitamin B and iron. Another local must-eat is the *pavé de Pannessac*; **Maison Marion** (place du Martouret; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Tue-Sat) serves these meringue sandwiches of chocolate- or verveine-liqueur-flavoured cream.

### ★ Entrez les Artistes

FRENCH €

(☎ 04 71 09 71 78; 29 rue Pannessac; menus €14-25; ☎ noon-2pm Tue & Wed, noon-2pm & 7-9pm Thu-Sat) Chef Pascale Suc pours heart, soul and lovingly selected local ingredients into the meals at this small, simple restaurant. The atmosphere is jolly, Le Puy lentils are seasoned to perfection, portions are ample, from steaks to homemade *mousse au chocolat*, and there's a healthy wine cellar awash with fine French drops. Vegetarian (and other) diets can be catered to with notice.

### Fromagerie Coulaud

CHEESE €

(24 rue Grenouillit; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Tue-Sat) An essential stop for hyper-local Auvergnat cheese, this periwinkle-blue *crémier* has been running since 1925 and its produce is mercifully unchanged since then. Antique milk jugs and farming tools bedeck the interior alongside dozens of cheeses from *bleu de Laqueuille* to goat- and sheep-milk varieties.

### L'Âme des Poètes

FRENCH €

(☎ 04 71 05 66 57; www.facebook.com/lamedespoetes43; 16 rue Séguret; mains €11-17; ☎ noon-2pm Mon, Tue & Sun, noon-2pm & 7-9pm Thu-Sat; 🍲) Vegetarian proteins and organic fruits are the bedrock of the menu at L'Âme des Poètes, where chef Corinne Moreau is evangelical about nutrition. The house speciality, lentil lasagne with fennel, deserves top billing, though veggie burgers and

seasonally changing options (couscous, tofu bolognese...) are also adroitly prepared. In warm weather, book ahead for dinner on the rose-fringed deck.

### Chez Mon Pote

BISTRO €

(☎ 04 71 09 67 43; 17 rue Grenouillit; mains from €13; ☎ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) Likeably rustic, this friendly bistro sits next to the market. Occasional spicy dishes cut through familiar staples like steak, stew and *oeufs en meurette* (wine-poached eggs). And the desserts? *Formidable*.

### ★ Restaurant Tournayre

FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 71 09 58 94; www.restaurant-tournayre.com; 12 rue Chênebouterie; menus lunch €30, dinner €45-65; ☎ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) One of Le Puy's best addresses for food and form. Its atmospheric setting, within a 12th- to 16th-century *hôtel particulier*, sets the tone, but the food will dominate conversation. Duck with orange and pan-fried fish on vegetable velouté features on the lunchtime *menu du marché*. Come evening, elaborate *menus* include pollack with chestnut cream and pigeon roulade.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 71 09 38 41; www.lepuyenvelay-tourisme.fr; 2 place du Clauzel; ☎ 8.30am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 8.30am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5.30pm Sat, shorter hours Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 8.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-noon Sun Oct-Mar; 📞)

## i Getting There & Away

SNCF bus and train links operate between Le Puy and Clermont-Ferrand (€26.20, 2½

## DON'T MISS

### LE PUY'S GREEN FAIRY

Sip free samples of Le Puy's famous green liqueur at the **Espace Pagès Maison Verveine du Velay** (☎ 04 71 02 46 80; www.verveine.com; 29 place du Breuil; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sat Oct-Dec & Jan-Mar, 10am-1pm & 2-7pm daily Jul & Aug). First concocted in 1859 as a digestive tonic, verveine is a top-secret mix of 32 plants and herbs. At this tasting room and boutique, let your taste buds decide between the 55%-proof original, honeyed yellow verveine, a Cognac-strengthened 'Extra' variety, or refreshing citrus-scented 'Petite Verte'. Afterwards, continue through the arcade to **La Distillerie** (☎ 04 71 04 91 12; www.brasserie-la-distillerie.fr; 11 rue Porte Aiguère; ☎ 9am-late Mon-Sat). This tucked-away gastropub, where brass tureens and retro furniture establish a pleasingly antique ambience, mixes verveine into cocktails. Alternatively, there are more than 40 beers to pick from, and a full menu of generously cheese-laden tartines, burgers and *truffades*.

## ROAD TRIP: GORGES DE L'ALLIER

Roads that meander along the bends of the Allier River, weathered stone villages, imposing abbeys... The scenery and history of the Gorges de l'Allier beg to be experienced on a lazy drive. Or you can pick a village and stay awhile for rambles and rafting – why hurry?

Begin in **Saugues**, 43km west of Le Puy-en-Velay. Regionally, the town is best known for the Bête du Gévaudan (Beast of Gévaudan), an 18th-century lupine legend blamed for dozens of bloodcurdling attacks; today he's remembered in a kid-friendly **museum** (☎ 04 71 77 64 22; www.musee-bete-gevaudan.com; rue de la Tour; adult/child €5.50/3.50; ☺ 10am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 2.30-6.30pm late Jun & early Sep).

Follow D585 for 20km north until **St-Arcons-d'Allier**, then turn south along D48 to **St-Julien-des-Chazes**, where a weathered chapel is set against sheer basalt cliffs. Back in St-Arcons, luxuriate in the peaceful surrounds a little longer by booking a B&B room at **Le Moulin Ferme-Auberge** (☎ 04 71 74 03 09; www.lemoulin-dursapt.com; dm/d/tr/q €27.50/80/95/105) 🏠, a converted 15th-century mill.

Leave St-Arcons on the northbound D585 and after 5km you'll reach **Langeac**, the best place in the gorges to seize some oars. Talk to **Tonic Adventure** (☎ 04 71 77 25 64; www.tonic-aventure.fr; Base l'Île d'Amour (riverside); ☺ Apr–mid-Oct) about canoe rental (€50 for two days), or (if you time it right) consider hopping aboard the scenic **Train des Gorges de l'Allier** (☎ 04 71 77 70 17; www.train-gorges-allier.com; place Aristide Briand; return adult €15-29, child €11-17; ☺ Jul & Aug). The family-friendly **campsite** (☎ 04 71 77 05 01; www.campinglangeac.com; rue du Pradeau; tent sites per day €15, chalets per week €510; ☺ Apr-Oct; 🏠 🚻 🚰), complete with pool (summer only), offers an enticing riverside setting to stay the night.

Fourteen kilometres further northwest along D585 is **Lavoûte-Chilhac**, with a photogenic bridge and huddle of stone houses. A 4km detour east on D4 leads to the fortified hilltop town of **Chilhac**; follow signs around town for a ramble to its basalt cliffs.

Taking D41 out of Chilhac, follow the northbound turn along N102 until you see signs for **Lavaudieu** (15km in all), whose centrepiece is a majestic Benedictine abbey.

Drive northwest along D20, then meander west on D588 to architecturally rich **Brioude**. Its highlight is the Auvergne's largest Romanesque church, the **Basilique de St-Julien** (rue de Notre Dame; ☺ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 5.30pm Sep-Jun), a wonder of peachy stone and volcanic rock decoration. Four kilometres south of here you can sleep as peacefully as a monk in **Vieille-Brioude**, home to **Ermitage St-Vincent** (☎ 06 80 67 17 45; www.ermitage-saintvincent.fr; 9 place de l'Église; d/tr/q/f from €70/90/110/130; 🏠 🚻 🚰), a converted presbytery next to the village church.

hours, some direct and some via St-Étienne or St-Georges d'Aurac). Trains to Lyon require a change in St-Étienne (€26.20, 2¼ to 3½ hours, five to 10 daily).

Connections to Paris transit via Clermont-Ferrand or St-Étienne (€65 to €115, 4½ to 6½ hours, more than six daily).

## HAUT-LIGNON

Skirted by Le Testavoivre (1436m) and Mont Mézenc (1753m), the Haut-Lignon plateau is nicknamed 'La Montagne Protestante' on account of its historic Protestant majority.

This lonely landscape is remembered for remarkable WWII resistance. Residents of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon saved thousands of Jews from Nazi death camps by hiding them

in barns and attics. Le Chambon's villagers used their reputation as a simple farming community to evade scrutiny. The landscape, with its remote farms and dense evergreen forests, also worked to the villagers' advantage. Evocative displays and audiovisual presentations at **Lieu de Mémoire** (☎ 04 71 56 56 65; www.memoireduchambon.com; 23 rte du Mazet; adult/child €5/3; ☺ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 2-6pm Wed-Sat Mar, Apr, Oct & Nov) paint a vivid picture of this extraordinarily resilient wartime community.

Sculpted by ancient glaciers and volcanoes, the Haut-Lignon is scenic hiking terrain. From Chieze (12km west of Le Chambon), an ascent of **Pic du Lizieux** (1388m) reaches sweeping views; allow 1½ to two hours. Find routes on www.office-tourisme-haut-lignon.com.



★ **Le Bourbon**

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 04 71 59 06 54; [www.logishotels.com](http://www.logishotels.com); place de la Victoire, Yssingeaux; menus €50) In the hands of chef Rémy Michelas, local produce takes deliciously inventive forms: coffee mousse flecked with cured ham, seared liver swimming in vegetable consommé, or perhaps slow-roasted lamb with polenta. The *menus* assemble creative flavour combinations and well-judged cheese and wine pairings. A worthy detour for foodies exploring off the beaten track.

Above the restaurant are small but pleasant **rooms** with trim tiled bathrooms (doubles €84).

**Restaurant Régis et Jacques Marcon**

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 04 71 59 93 72; [www.regismarcon.fr](http://www.regismarcon.fr); Larsiallas, St-Bonnet-le-Froid; menus €170-230, mains from

€78; ☺ noon-1pm & 7.30-9pm Thu-Sun, 7.30-9pm Mon Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) This acclaimed restaurant offers experiences as much as meals. Each *menu* is a poetic homage to local produce, with mushrooms taking a prominent role (perhaps boletus zabaglione or a white-truffle risotto). Expect incredible *amuse-bouches*, exquisite desserts and pristine service. Reservations are essential, and far in advance. Luxurious double rooms start at €390 per night.

**i Getting There & Away**

Le Chambon-sur-Lignon is a 45km drive east of Le Puy-en-Velay along D15. The region is thin on public-transport links, aside from infrequent local buses connecting Le Chambon-sur-Lignon with Yssingeaux (line 40) – find schedules on [www.hauteloire.fr](http://www.hauteloire.fr).

## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

1.322 million

### DÉPARTEMENTS

Haute-Vienne,  
Creuse, Corrèze,  
Dordogne, Lot

### BEST CANOE RIDE

Brantôme to Bor-  
deilles (p608)

### BEST TOPIARY GARDEN

Jardins de Mar-  
queyssac (p615)

### MOST MOVING WWII SITE

Oradour-sur-Glane  
(p601)



### WHEN TO GO

**May & Jun** Take to  
the rivers and ram-  
parts before crowds  
get too thick.

**Jul & Aug** Sup on the  
bounty of local pro-  
duce at Dordogne's  
excellent restaurants  
and summertime  
night markets.

**Dec–Feb** Browse  
markets selling  
Périgord black  
truffles.





## Dordogne, Limousin & Lot

**T**he Dordogne, Limousin and Lot regions are the heart and soul of la belle France, lands of dense oak forests, winding rivers, emerald-green fields and famously rich country cooking. Market stalls overflow with local pâtés, truffles, walnuts, cheeses and fine wines, including the original rich-red Malbecs of Cahors. Having your own wheels is almost essential for exploring the region's countless turreted châteaux and magical hilltop villages, but train services can get you to the famed porcelain city of Limoges, the Roman remnants at Périgieux, the classic medieval town of Sarlat and the cliff-backed village of Les Eyzies, access point for some of Europe's most spectacular prehistoric cave paintings.

### INCLUDES

Limousin . . . . .	595	Sarlat-la-Canéda . . . .	617
Limoges . . . . .	595	The Vézère Valley . . .	621
The Dordogne . . . . .	603	Upper	
Périgieux . . . . .	604	Dordogne Valley . . . .	625
Bergerac . . . . .	608	The Lot Valley . . . . .	628
Monpazier . . . . .	612	Cahors . . . . .	628
Beynac, Castelnau		Figeac . . . . .	634
& Around . . . . .	615		





## Dordogne, Limousin & Lot Highlights

### 1 Vézère Valley (p623)

Descending into caves painted and scratched by prehistoric artists.

### 2 Dordogne Valley castles (p615)

Wandering the ramparts of quintessential medieval fortresses at Beynac and Castelnaud.

### 3 Pont Valentré (p628)

Sipping a rich red Malbec while

gazing at Cahors' triple-towered bridge.

### 4 Sarlat-la-Canéda (p617)

Exploring the Dordogne's best-preserved medieval town.

### 5 Rocamadour (p626)

Treading endless steps in the tradition of centuries of cliff-climbing pilgrims.

### 6 River cruising (p617)

Plying local waterways in flat-bottomed *gabarre* boats from La Roque Gageac.

### 7 Musée Gallo-Romain

**Vesunna** (p604) Strolling an excavated 1st-century Roman *domus* in Périgueux.

**8 Limoges** (p597) Shopping for top-quality porcelain at the city's renowned factory outlets.

## LIMOUSIN

Beyond the 'porcelain city' of Limoges, Limousin is mostly an undulating expanse of pastures, hills and little-visited villages – it's possibly the most overlooked area of south-western France. Though no longer an official *région*, it retains a strong cultural identity in the *départements* of Haute-Vienne, Creuse and Corrèze.

### Limoges

POP 150,500

If you're driving across France, Limoges makes a sensible halfway stop that offers far more than the rich porcelain heritage to which its name is inextricably linked. Site of the Roman city of Augustoritum, it was a medieval pilgrimage site and, despite losing its main cathedral (during the French Revolution) and ballooning into a sprawling industrial metropolis (through the 19th and 20th centuries), the city retains a relatively compact historic centre, with two partly medieval quarters full of narrow alleys and picturesque half-timbered buildings.


#### Sights

#### Château Quarter

Limoges' bustling commercial heart long ago lost the castle that gave it its name, and the once great cathedral-abbey of St Martial was torn down in the French Revolution. Where the latter once stood is now the architecturally gruesome place de la République. However, all around it there's oodles of charm in the smaller medieval alleys and 19th-century shopping streets.

#### ★ Musée National Adrien Dubouché

MUSEUM

( 05 55 33 08 50; www.musee-adriendubouche.fr; 8bis place Winston Churchill; adult/child €7/free; ☉10am-12.30pm & 2-5.45pm Wed-Mon) This grand urban palace, purpose built as a museum (1896-1900), holds one of France's most outstanding ceramics collections. Enter through the magic door in the rear modern section, peruse the fascinating explanations of firing techniques, then admire the evolution of pottery from Ancient Greek amphorae to 21st-century 3D-printed porcelain. Don't miss the face-plates glazed by Picasso (case 104) and the features on contemporary porcelain developments.

#### ★ Église St-Michel des Lions

CHURCH

(rue Adrien Dubouché; ☉9am-6pm) Named for the severely eroded granite lions guarding its door, this 14th- to 16th-century church contains an ornately carved triple shrine-altar dating from 1889. This holds holy relics of both St Loup and Limoges' first bishop, St Martial...or at least what fragments could be rescued after 1791, when the city's St Martial cathedral was destroyed by revolutionaries.

The church sits at the top of old Limoges, its 70m spire topped with a green-copper ball that's visible from afar.

#### Rue de la Boucherie

HISTORIC SITE

Wander one of Limoges' most picturesque half-timbered streets, originally named in the Middle Ages for its butchers' shops but now dotted with sweet little bistros and small stores. Where the road bends, the tiny 1475 **Chapelle St-Aurélien** is crammed full of colourful statuary and dedicated to the patron saint of butchers.

#### Pavillon du Verdurier

ARCHITECTURE

(place St-Pierre) **FREE** Iridescent glazed tiles give a very colourful exterior to this unusual octagonal building dating from 1919. It hosts occasional exhibitions.

#### Église St-Pierre du Queyroix

CHURCH


(place St-Pierre; ☉9am-6pm) Beneath a characteristic Limousin spired belfry, this atmospherically half-lit church features late-Gothic vaulting and some fine biblical-narrative stained glass.

#### Cité Quarter

A small but delightful warren of half-timbered medieval lanes and garden stairways leads up steeply from the riverside and the ancient Pont St-Étienne stone bridge to la Cité, a quarter that radiates from Limoges' massive cathedral.

#### ★ Musée des Beaux Arts

GALLERY

( 05 55 45 98 10; www.museeal.fr; 1 place de l'Évêché; adult/child €5/free; ☉9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar, closed some mornings Sun) The city's wonderful art museum is mostly inside the beautifully restored 18th-century bishops' palace. Get an overview of the town's history through Roman artefacts and medieval treasures, or contemplate the excellent fine-art collection, which ranges from 14th-century Italian masterpieces to entire rooms dedicated to Renoir and Suzanne Valadon. The upper





## Limoges

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale St-Étienne ..... F4
- 2 Église St-Michel des Lions ..... C3
- 3 Musée des Beaux Arts ..... F4
- 4 Musée National Adrien Dubouché ..... B2

### 📍 Sights

- 5 CMA-Limoges ..... G4
- 6 Église St-Pierre du Queyroix ..... E2
- 7 Jardin de l'Évêché ..... G4
- 8 Musée de la Résistance ..... F3
- 9 Pavillon du Verdurier ..... D3
- 10 Rue de la Boucherie ..... C4
- 11 Rue du Pont du St-Étienne ..... G3

### 🏠 Sleeping

- 12 Hôtel de Paris ..... E1

- 13 Ibis Limoges Centre ..... C2
- 14 Résidence d'Artistes ..... G3

### 🍴 Eating

- 15 Be Bop ..... D4
- 16 Chez Alphonse ..... C3
- 17 Halles Centrales ..... C3
- 18 La Table du Couvent ..... A3
- 19 L'Amphitryon ..... C4
- 20 Redon ..... C2

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 21 Bacchus ..... C2
- 22 Brasserie Michard ..... C1
- 23 Le Consulat ..... D3
- 24 Le Duc Étienne ..... C4
- 25 Le Petit Jourdan ..... G3

storey's display of Limoges enamelwork is the pride of the museum.

### ★ Cathédrale St-Étienne

CHURCH

([www.cathedrale-limoges.fr](http://www.cathedrale-limoges.fr); place St-Étienne; ☀ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) Dominating the Cité, Limoges' gigantic cathedral features a Gothic nave soaring over 23m high, a 13th-century apse housing three ornate tombs, and a particularly magnificent *jubé* (carved rood screen) beneath the organ. That's in the mainly 19th-century western end, onto which the partly Romanesque tower seems to have been tacked almost as an afterthought.

The flamboyant-style Portail St-Jean (north portal) is the cathedral's most elaborate feature. The building's looming bulk is attractively softened with floodlights at dusk and by day through the beautiful setting of the **Jardin de l'Évêché** **FREE**, a public garden and herbarium leading to an esplanade with views down across the river. In the garden's northeastern corner, the vaulted basement of a former monastery hosts occasional free art shows. Next door, **CMA-Limoges** (Cité des Métiers et des Arts; ☎ 05 55 32 57 84; [www.cma-limoges.com](http://www.cma-limoges.com); adult/child €4.50/1.50; ☀ 2.30-7pm daily Jun-mid-Sep, Wed, Sat & Sun only May & late Sep) has seasonal craft exhibitions.

### Rue du Pont du St-Étienne

STREET

This very pretty lane descends steeply past many medieval houses, reaching the River Vienne at Limoges' oldest surviving stone bridge. That would be one of the city's most charming spots were the experience not marred by traffic on the busy riverside road.

### Musée de la Résistance

MUSEUM

(☎ 05 55 45 84 44; <http://resistance-massif-central.fr>; 7 rue Neuve-St-Étienne; adult/child €4/free, audioguide €2; ☀ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Wed-Sat & Mon rest of year) In an 18th-century former convent building, this engrossing museum explores the story of WWII resistance against Nazi occupation through archive film, photography, wartime memorabilia and, most dramatically, a German plane shot down by the patriots.

### Porcelaine Royal Limoges

FACTORY

(☎ 05 55 33 28 74; [www.royal-limoges.fr](http://www.royal-limoges.fr); rue Victor Duruy; ☀ shop 10am-6pm Mon-Sat; 📄) Dating from 1797, Royal Limoges is one of the city's oldest porcelain factories. Entered from the showroom, a sparse but appealing **museum section** ([www.museedescaasseaux.com](http://www.museedescaasseaux.com); adult/child €4.50/free; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat) has a computer simulation of the creation process and some enlightening sepia photos around the 1900 **Four des Casseaux**, a now rare two-storey brick kiln that would once have fired 15,000 plates using 13 tonnes of coal.

It's set back from the river 800m north-east of the cathedral, entered beside the big McDonald's. Free parking opposite.

### 🏠 Sleeping

Many of central Limoges' hotels are chain-operated affairs clustered near the train station or 8km north in the faceless ZI Nord area at junction 29 of the A20, a lengthy ride on bus 10 to Le Serpollet from place Jourdan. At weekends, prices drop as low as €35.

**Ibis Limoges Centre**

**HOTEL €**  
 (☎) 05 55 79 03 30; www.accorhotels.com; 6 bd Victor Hugo; d from €73; (♿) Behind a classic stone façade, this tidy central address has unfussy but newly renovated rooms, with the 'comfort' versions offering coffee maker.

**★ Hôtel de Paris**

**HOTEL €**  
 (☎) 05 55 77 56 96; www.hoteldeparis-limoges.com; 5 cours Vergniaud; s/d/tr/q from €75/79/105/115; (♿) This early-19th-century coaching inn was lovingly restored in 2019, rediscovering antique ceilings and Irish granite pillars while adding full modern conveniences, including multiple power points and a lift. Many upper rooms survey the station tower, which glows beautifully across the park in the light of sunset. Parking outside costs €1.50 all day and is free on Sundays.

**Résidence d'Artistes**

**B&B €**  
 (☎) 06 79 28 71 70, 05 55 10 18 95; www.la-residence-dartistes-limoges.com; 3 rue du Paradis; d €80) Though it's only 300m northwest of the cathedral, this very welcoming garden B&B feels like a real oasis. The three guest rooms have a slightly 1970s-retro feel and display art from the cohabiting gallery, Obia.

Walk up rue Porte Panet/bd des Petits Carmes and the B&B sits at the sharp-angled fork with rue du Paradis – not quite where shown on its website.

**✂ Eating**

For the full-flavoured local dining experience, head to the bistros in and around the **Halles Centrales** (place de la Motte; ☺ 7am-2pm Tue & Wed, to 3pm Thu-Sun), Limoges' beautifully restored wrought-iron market hall. Inexpensive places for multicultural cuisine are plentiful in the lanes off place Denis Dussoubs. In the Cité Quarter, picturesque rue Haute Cité has a small selection of decent options (crêperie, Indian, Irish pub and gastronomic indulgence).

**Be Bop**

**BISTRO €**  
 (☎) 09 81 29 42 65; 17 rue Haute-Vienne; lunch menus €12-16, tapas €4.50-10; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Sat) Merrily decorated with old radios and musical instruments, this upbeat student magnet serves small-plate tapas with a French twist and morphs into an informal wine bar at night.

**★ La Table du Couvent**

**FRENCH €€**  
 (☎) 05 55 32 30 66; www.latableducouvent.com; 15 rue Neuve des Carmes; lunch/dinner/Sun menus €16.50/25/42; ☺ 7-10pm Tue, noon-2pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sat, noon-2pm Sun) In the antique remains of a Gothic-vaulted former Carmelite convent, an open kitchen serves up masterful cuts of Limousin beef, many dishes priced by weight of the meat. A whole stuffed calf tries not to judge: vegetarians, despair.

**LIMOGES CHINA**

Extremely hard yet often translucent, *porcelaine* (porcelain) is a high-quality white ceramic made from kaolin, quartz and feldspar and requiring intense firing temperatures (1100 to 1400 degrees Celsius) that are higher than those needed for most other pottery. For centuries it was imported at huge expense from China, hence its popular alternative name. The secret of its manufacture began to reach Europe through Dominican monks in the 1560s, but only in the 18th century did production get started, first in Saxony and then in France, partly thanks to the 1768 discovery of kaolin near St-Yrieix-la-Perche, 40km south of Limoges. The Vienne valley had been producing *émail* (enamel and pottery glaze) since at least the 12th century, but the new porcelain industry transformed its fortunes. By 1852 the city had 38 factories producing three million items a year, and in 1925 the Paris International Exhibition confidently touted Limoges as the 'world porcelain capital'. Despite the globalisation of the later 20th century, the city still has many factories producing top-notch work (see www.routes-porcelaine-limoges-hautevienne.com).

Top stops for pottery fans are Porcelaine Royal Limoges (p597) and the superb Adrien Dubouché porcelain museum (p595). For factory tours, contact **Bernardaud** (☎) 05 55 10 55 91; www.bernardaud.fr; 27 av Albert Thomas; tours adult/child €7/free; ☺ 9.45-11.15am & 1.30-4.15pm Mon-Sat Jun-Sep, to 2.30pm Sat only Oct-May), 1km northwest of the centre. If you're just driving through Limoges, an easy quick stop is the showroom of **Haviland** (Le Pavillon de la Porcelaine; ☎) 05 55 30 21 86; www.haviland.fr; 3 av du Président Kennedy; ☺ 10.30am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat; ☑ 15 to Magré) **FREE**, 3km south of the city and close to exit 36 of the A20 (ZI Ponteix). Its free museum includes celebrity china designs by Dalí and Kandinsky, and part of the 1000-piece dinner service that the company made in 1879 for US president Rutherford Hayes.

## **i** LIMOGES TO PÉRIGUEUX

Driving from Limoges to Périgueux, the most direct road is the busy N21 via **Châlus**, the town where Richard the Lionheart was fatally wounded; **Thiviers**, famed for foie gras; and Sorges (p610), whose tourist office is a great first stop for learning about truffles.

A fine alternative, however, is to start by heading west to deeply moving Oradour-sur-Glane (p601). Then visit 'glove-city' **St-Junien**, named for the demon-defeating saint whose fabulously carved sarcophagus remains the centrepiece of the splendid church in St-Junien's old town. The cafe-bar opposite the church serves cheap yet surprisingly impressive lunches. Continue southwest to **Rochechouart**, an appealing village whose fortifications are only fully apparent when seen from the pretty stream-side lane along its southern flank (follow signs to the lonely Roc du Bœuf cafe). Rochechouart's main castle hosts a fine art gallery, the **Musée Départemental d'Art Contemporain** (☎ 05 55 03 77 77; www.musee-rochechouart.com; place du Château; adult/child €4.60/free, 1st Sun of month free; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Wed-Mon, closed mid-Dec-Feb), with a notable collection of works by Austrian Dadaist Raoul Hausmann. Drive 42km southwest through the protected lands of the Périgord-Limousin natural park (www.pnr-perigord-limousin.fr) to partly fortified **Nontron**, famed for its quality knives. Périgueux is another 50km via beautiful Brantôme (p607).

### ★ **Les Tables de Bistrot**

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 55 37 59 59; 7 rue du Grand Theil; mains €13-30, menus €21-41; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-10.15pm or later; ☎ ☎ ☎) This brilliantly transformed old barn comes complete with a 1940s bus turned *épicerie* (specialist grocer) and real live cows in stalls behind a glass divide. Hearty country fare includes cassoulet and mushroom-cream veal, plus salads, pastas and ratatouille. Side dishes come in skillets, facilitating sharing, but you'll need wheels: it's 5km north of Limoges, 1.3km off the A20 via exits 30 or 31.

### **Chez Alphonse**

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 55 34 34 14; www.chezalphonse.fr; 5 place de la Motte; mains €13-30; ☀ noon-2pm & 7.30-10.30pm Mon-Wed, to 11.30pm Thu-Sat) Gingham tablecloths, laughing locals and blackboards stuffed with regional dishes: what more could you want from a classic Limoges bistro? For a meat- and offal-free main course, the *morue à la Limousine* (cod and potatoes baked in garlic cream sauce) is both delicious and generous.

### **L'Amphitryon**

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 55 33 36 39; www.amphitryon-limoges.fr; 26 rue de la Boucherie; menus lunch €23-28, dinner €28-80; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7.45-9.30pm Tue-Sat) L'Amphitryon serves classically rich French cuisine created by head chef Olivier Polla in a tastefully gentrified medieval timbered building in the heart of old Limoges.

### **Redon**

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 05 55 79 37 50; www.restaurant-philipperedon.fr; 14 rue Adrien Dubouché; lunch/dinner menus €22/58, mains €22-28; ☀ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat)

Philippe Redon's moodily lit restaurant creates some of the region's most refined food, incorporating fresh local produce from truffles to pigeon to Limousin beef. It's a gastronomic beacon on an otherwise downmarket (if steadily gentrifying) minor dining street.



### **Drinking & Nightlife**

The large student crowd keeps Limoges' nightspots ticking, notably around the lower end of rue Charles Michels.

### ★ **Bacchus**

WINE BAR

(☎ 05 55 79 23 83; 3 rue des Filles Notre Dame; ☀ 6.30pm-1am Tue-Sat) This convivial little wine bar offers 200 varieties by the bottle and more than 20 by the glass. Some glasses are just taster-sized (60mL), allowing affordable sips of rare vintages. High stool tables spill out for views of very photogenic place Fontaine des Barres and its medieval façades.

### **Le Duc Étienne**

BAR

(place St-Aurélien; ☀ 11am-2am Mon-Sat, 6pm-2am Sun) Antique-style pub whose late-night drinkers spill onto the photogenic terrace in front of Église St-Aurélien.

### **Brasserie Michard**

MICROBREWERY

(☎ 05 55 79 37 98; www.bieres-michard.com; 8 place Denis Dussoubs; ☀ 4pm-1am Tue-Sat) A hot-air balloon appears to be escaping through the ceiling of this quirkily cavernous, ever-lively microbrewery. Sample four draught beers (around €3 each) or try the stronger abbey-style ale by the bottle. Soak it up with *flammekeueche* (Alsatian pizza) from €7.10.

**Le Consulat**

(www.facebook.com/leconsulatcourdu temple; cour du Temple; ☎2.30-6.30pm Wed-Sat) Mellow 1920s music and a buzz of gentle chatter accompany the clinking of cups filled from antique pots at this other-worldly 'tea club' (€1, membership). Find it tucked away between rue du Temple and rue du Consulat on a magical courtyard that's completely enclosed by 16th-century half-timbered mansion façades.

**Le Petit Jourdan**

(www.facebook.com/lepetitjourdan; 39 rue du Pont du St-Étienne; ☎10pm-2am Wed-Sat, plus 2nd Tue of month) Marvellously grungy late-night bar in a candlelit medieval building with heavy beams, scarlet walls, Ramones posters and gratuitous Halloween monsters. Occasional indie-rock concerts squeeze in somehow. Local ales by the bottle, Grimbergen on draught.

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎05 55 34 46 87; www.limoges-tourisme.com; 12 bd de Fleurus; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat, plus 10am-1pm Sun May-Sep; 📶)

**i Getting There & Away****AIR**

**Limoges Airport** (LIG; ☎05 55 43 30 30; www.aeroportlimoges.com) is 10km west of the city, just off the N141 Limoges-Bordeaux highway. Ryanair connects to five UK airports, Châlair (www.chalair.eu) serves Paris Orly, Lyon, Bastia and Ajaccio (Corsica). Airport **taxis** (☎05 55 38 38 38; www.taxis87.com) to central Limoges charge €25/35 by day/after 7pm or Sunday. Bus 26 takes 15 minutes to place Churchill two or three times daily.

**BUS**

Limoges' main bus station, marked 'CIEL' on timetables, is across the tracks from the train station. **Flixbus** (www.flixbus.fr) has buses to Paris (4¼ to six hours, five daily), Nantes (5½ hours) via Poitiers (2½ hours) at 11.50am, and Toulouse (3¾ hours, two or three daily). **Blablabus** (www.ouibus.com) also has daily Paris and Toulouse services. Regional **RRTHV** (☎05 55 10 31 00; www.rrthv.com; place des Charentes) buses (€2 within Nouvelle Aquitaine) include the R7 to Tulle via Uzerche (seven to 10 daily), the R18 to Angoulême (two hours, six daily) and the R9 to Felletin via Aubusson. The latter starts from the helpfully central place Churchill bus stand.

**TRAIN**

Beautiful Gare des Bénédictins is on the Paris-Cahors and Bordeaux-Montluçon lines.

**Bordeaux** €36.10, three hours, five direct daily.

**TEAHOUSE**

**Paris** €61, three hours, nine daily.

**Périgueux** €18, one hour, 10 daily.

**Toulouse** €49, 3½ hours, three daily.

**CAR**

The most central free parking is an unpaved lot on rue Henri Martin, around 800m northeast of the cathedral.

**i Getting Around**

**STCL** (www.stcl.fr) bus and trolleybus rides cost €1.60. Route 10 to Le Serpollet picks up almost every 10 minutes (except Sundays) at central stops Opéra and place Jourdan, passes the train station and continues to a terminus near the ZI Nord motel strip.

**Around Limoges****Solignac**

POP 1602

The loveable riverside village of Solignac throws a picturesque horseshoe of medieval houses around a giant abbey founded by St Éloi in 631 CE. Inside the 12th-century **abbey church** (12 rue de l'Abbaye; ☎9am-6pm), massive arches spanning 14m somehow manage to hold aloft several large ceiling domes without the technological advantages of Gothic vaulting. Carved capitals depict humanoid figures, while a miraculously preserved series of 15th-century wooden choir stalls features a menagerie of fantastical animals along with comic touches like a monk mooning the world.

To enjoy the village from its loveliest angle, descend to the **Pont Roman**, a 12th-century stone bridge used by pilgrims on the Vézelay to Santiago de Compostela route. At this point there's also a restored mill house and a cosily unpretentious cafe-restaurant, **Le Quatre** (☎05 87 41 70 65; www.facebook.com/restolequatre; place de la Briance; 2-/3-course meal €12/14; ☎9am-3pm Tue-Thu, 9am-3pm & 7-10pm Fri, 7-10pm Sat, 11am-3pm Sun), in a renovated stone house with terrace seating.

**Oradour-sur-Glane**

POP 2470

Few WWII sites in Western Europe are as emotionally powerful as the ruins of Oradour-sur-Glane, France's martyr village, preserved much as it was found after the Nazi atrocities that ravaged it. Prepare to be moved.



## History

On the afternoon of 10 June 1944, German lorries belonging to the SS 'Das Reich' Division surrounded this small but prosperous town and ordered the population onto the market square. The men were divided into groups and forced into barns, where they were machine-gunned before the structures were set alight. Several hundred women and children were herded into the church, which was also set on fire. In total 642 people, including 193 children, were killed. Only one woman and five men who were in the town that day survived the massacre.

Rather than repairing the wrecked town, it was left as a time capsule, with a new Oradour built directly beside the remnants.

## Sights



### Martyr Village

HISTORIC SITE

**FREE** The crumbling shells of Oradour's blackened buildings scream voicelessly of the horrors witnessed in 1944. The site is made all the more moving by the rusting hulks of 1930s automobiles, the fading paintwork of prewar businesses and the tram tracks to nowhere (they once linked Oradour to Limoges). Entrance is via the Centre de la Mémoire or, in January, through the **cemetery** (rue Guy Pauchou), beneath which there's an underground memorial full of moving salvaged exhibits (school inkwells, rusty bikes etc).

### Centre de la Mémoire

MUSEUM

( 05 55 43 04 30; [www.oradour.org](http://www.oradour.org); D3, Oradour-sur-Glane; adult/child €7.80/5.20;  9am-3pm or later, closed mid-Dec-Jan) At the entrance to the


ruins, this professionally conceived subterranean centre provides historical background to the Oradour massacre and includes an unmissable 12-minute film giving blow-by-blow accounts of what happened. There are English subtitles, but they miss much of the detail; consider renting an audioguide.

## Getting There & Away

Bus LR12 (€2, 35 minutes) leaves Limoges' bus station at 7.55am and 12.35pm (it also picks up at the place Jourdan and Opéra stops). Return buses from Oradour leave at 12.35pm and 5.35pm. There's no service on Sunday.

## St-Léonard-de-Noblat

POP 4660

St-Léonard-de-Noblat is an ancient pilgrimage centre now famed for its *massepan* (almond macaroons). The town's remarkably complete historic core of partly half-timbered shop-houses radiates from the Unesco-listed **Collégiale St-Léonard** ( 9am-7pm). This superb medieval church pushes Romanesque architecture to its soaring limits and features a six-level tower that's visible from kilometres away. It honours the 6th-century hermit-saint whose prayers were thought to have given Frankish king Clovis a male heir.

On St-Léonard's old lanes you'll find several bakery-pâtisseries, some cheap *chambres d'hotes*, a decent beer bar and a quirky, if rarely open, *brocante* (secondhand market) cafe.

The town is 20km east of Limoges towards Aubusson. There's free parking on the main road beside the tourist office, which has a useful free guide-map. St-Léonard's train station,

## LIMOUSIN, LIMOUSINE

As a feminine-form adjective, the word 'Limousin' becomes *Limousine*, which to French ears is inextricably associated with the region's golden-brown beef cows. The Limousin(e) breed is so commercially important that today its genetic integrity is maintained through the **Pôle de Lanaud** (<https://limousinepark.com>), a breeding facility 8km south of Limoges where 4m-tall bull statues plus a park and restaurant survey a vast sweep of rolling landscape.

But why, in the English language, are 'limousines' cars? Several theories date back to the turn of the 20th century, when newfangled automobiles often mimicked horse-drawn carriages by seating the driver outside. Some say that the weatherproof cape worn by drivers of such vehicles resembled a Limousin farmer's cloak. By another theory, car designs with a front-jutting roof overhang were thought to look like Limousin carts. Most feasible as a derivation is that some top-quality early cars were designed by Limoges-born Charles Jeantaud (1843-1906). Jeantaud was also a very early champion of electric cars from 1880. Had that idea caught on more quickly, we might never have taken to using the term *chauffeur* for drivers: that comes from the French term *chauffer* (to heat), which applied to the manual stoking of steam engines in early non-electric limos.

1.5km downhill to the west, has eight weekday services from Limoges using a viaduct-rich line that continues to Ussel. Sections of that route are used by the occasional steam trains of the **Chemin de Fer Touristique Limousin-Périgord** ([www.trainvapeur.com](http://www.trainvapeur.com); Gare des Bénédictins; return adult/child €29/12).

## The Creuse

Roller-coasting across steep hills and agricultural valleys, the narrow, super-peaceful lanes of the central Creuse ([www.tourisme-creuse.com](http://www.tourisme-creuse.com)) are a delight for high-energy cycling or random driving. Although many of the *département's* small towns feel a little bedraggled, there are some gems to discover, such as **Moutier-d'Aahun** with its Cluniac abbey church and picture-perfect riverside setting, complete with ancient stone bridge. If driving from Limoges to tapestry town Aubusson, it's worth stopping en route at historic St-Léonard-de-Noblat (p601) and at **Bourgneuf**, which in the 1880s was one of the world's first towns to have street lighting powered by hydroelectricity.

## Aubusson

POP 3551

Tucked into a deep-cleft valley, the old-fashioned mill town of Aubusson makes a good base from which to explore the very pretty backroads of the Creuse, but it's best known for fine tapestries. Traditionally, Flanders rather than the Creuse was Europe's major centre for weavers, but when Marie de Hainaut married the Comte de Marche she brought with her to Aubusson some skilled craftsmen who found conditions ideal, and soon the town was booming as the only southern French tapestry centre. The town's fame was sealed in 1665 when it received a royal warrant from Louis XIV's superintendent Jean-Baptiste Colbert. The town's tapestry museum is world class.

## Sights & Activities

The art deco **Hôtel de Ville** holds occasional tapestry exhibitions, and there are several carpet and tapestry designers in town, with more in nearby Felletin.

### Cité Internationale de la Tapisserie

MUSEUM

( 05 55 83 08 30; [www.cite-tapisserie.fr](http://www.cite-tapisserie.fr); rue des Arts; adult/child €8/free;  9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon, closed Jan) In 2009 Aubusson



tapestries became Unesco heritage listed, and the upper section of this engaging, modern museum celebrates the town's weaving history. On the ground floor is a large, theatrically presented exhibition of local designs, both old and new.

### Tour de l'Horloge

WALKING

For a panorama across the town centre, climb the stairway beside the tourist office past the 'hanging gardens' to this windmill-like clock tower. A steep path onward descends to the old bridge, across which lies **Terrade**, Aubusson's most picturesque gaggle of tastefully gentrified medieval houses.

## Sleeping & Eating

For superb-value if unsophisticated meals in a grand old mansion, head to the very central **Hôtel de Colbert** ( 05 55 83 19 92; 57 Grand Rue; 2-/3-course menus €13/15;  noon-2pm Tue & Wed, noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Thu-Sun).

### ★ Les Maisons du Pont

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

( 05 55 67 72 22; [www.lesmaisonsdupont.com](http://www.lesmaisonsdupont.com); rue Assolant; d/tr from €85/120; ) Four of the old houses that form Aubusson's most photo-perfect knot of antique buildings have been brilliantly reworked with stylish, highly comfortable interiors while retaining elements of beam work. Each room has a kitchenette with dishwasher; rooms 1, 2, 4 and 5 look across the river towards the Tour de l'Horloge.

The hotel's two excellent dining options are widely considered Aubusson's best. Both have riverside terrace seating.

### Château de St-Maixant

CASTLE €

( 06 31 41 89 75; [www.chateau-saint-maixant.com](http://www.chateau-saint-maixant.com); Le Bourg, St-Maixant; s/d/ste €75/85/110;   ) This fabulous family B&B occupies an archetypal medieval fortress-tower 6km north of Aubusson, set in rural isolation and guarded by a troop of peacocks. From the billiard room, take either the mini-lift or the armour-decked stone stairs to comfortable en suite rooms or vast suites with assorted antique furniture.

## Information

Tucked away in a picturesque pedestrianised alley, the **tourist office** ( 05 55 66 32 12; [www.tourisme-creuse.com/aubusson-felletin](http://www.tourisme-creuse.com/aubusson-felletin); 63 rue Vieille;  10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, to 6pm daily Jul & Aug; ) is attached to a 16th-century building with a distinctive projecting corner turret. For €5 you can visit the old section, which recreates a 17th-century weaver's workshop,

## CHÂTEAU DE POMPADOUR

The liberally turreted **Château de Pompadour** (☎ 05 55 98 99 27; <https://chateau-pompadour.fr>; adult/child €9.50/7, with foaling nursery €14/9; ☀ 11am-6pm Apr-Oct, from 10am Jul-mid-Sep), 24km west of Uzerche, was famously given in 1745 by Louis XV to his favourite flame, Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson. She thereupon gained the title Marquise de Pompadour, and as nobility became eligible to be an 'official' royal mistress. At the Versailles court she was partly known for her novel approach to backcombing her coiffure, which would one day give rise to the popular 'Pompadour' hairdressing style.

The château was mostly rebuilt in the 19th century and now sports antique furnishings from the national collection. However, what makes the place a must for equine fanatics is that it's one of France's *haras nationaux* (national stud farms). You can visit the stables, and in summer (plus some other weekends) there are horse shows at 4.30pm (adult/child €7/5) along with guided visits to the **Domaine de Chignac** (adult/child €6/4, with horse ride €11/7; ☀ 11am early Jul-mid-Sep), the foaling nursery 2km north: buy tickets at the castle. Various combination options are available.

with original furniture and tools plus live demonstrations of the art.

### **i** Getting There & Away

The Gare Routière, across the river from central Aubusson, has one to three daily R9 buses to Limoges and a daily R17 bus to Clermont-Ferrand, with times varying by day (mostly around 8am, returning at 5.25am, two hours). Trains run twice each weekday to Guéret (for Limoges).

## Western Corrèze

The main cities of the mostly agricultural Corrèze *département* are bustling **Brive-la-Gaillard**, a useful regional transport hub, and **Tulle** ([www.tulle-en-correze.com](http://www.tulle-en-correze.com)), synonymous with a netting-style fabric and renowned as a centre for accordion making ([www.accordeons-maugein.com](http://www.accordeons-maugein.com)) but also infamous as the site of a WWII massacre. If you're travelling between Limoges and the Upper Dordogne, **Uzerche** makes an appealing yet easy stop just off the A20.

## Uzerche

POP 2870

One of Limousin's great little discoveries, the walled town of Uzerche (<https://visituzerche.jimdofree.com>) has a dramatic skyline of turreted medieval mansions rising up a ridge-spur above a loop of the glistening River Vézère. Start a visit from the south passing through the **Porte Bécharie**, a 14th-century city gate incorporated into a 16th-century castle-mansion whose spindly tower wears a witch's-hat spire. The lane rises to the **Abbatiale St-Pierre** (place de la

Lunade; ☀ 10.30am-5pm Sep-Jun, 9.30am-6pm Jul & Aug), an impressive Romanesque church with its own fortifications and a unique 11th-century crypt. Fine panoramas survey the river valley from the nearby Esplanade de la Lunade, which takes its name from a pagan summer-solstice festival now rejigged as a Christian procession.

**Hôtel Joyet de Maubec** (☎ 05 55 97 20 60; [www.hotel-joyet-maubec.com](http://www.hotel-joyet-maubec.com); place des Vignerons; d €95-160, ste €170-270; ♿ ♿ ♿), in the upper village, brings sleek, contemporary design to a 17th-century fortified mansion and has an excellent restaurant giving farm-fresh local produce a gourmet flourish.

### **i** Getting There & Away

Trains run around 10 times daily to Limoges (from €14.10, 40 minutes) and Brive-la-Gaillarde (€9, 30 minutes). However, the station is 2km north of town and from Limoges the equally frequent R7 bus bound for Tulle is not just cheaper (€2) but also stops more centrally.

## THE DORDOGNE

Few regions sum up the attractions of rural France better than the Dordogne – or Périgord, as it's still widely known locally. With its rich food, heady history, château-studded countryside and picturesque villages, the Dordogne has long been a favourite getaway not just for French families but also for countless Dutch and British émigrés. Its touristic epicentre is Sarlat plus the majestic stretch of river valley between Beynac and Domme. Some of France's finest prehistoric cave art fills caverns and rock shelters in the

nearby Vézère Valley. In this section we also include the Upper Dordogne Valley, even though it falls administratively within the Lot and Corrèze *départements*.

## Périgueux

POP 31,550

Périgueux is the Dordogne's biggest and busiest town, but at its heart it retains a thoroughly engrossing medieval core known as Puy St-Front. To the southwest that area merges seamlessly with La Cité, a settlement developed under the Romans as Vesunna and where you'll still find remnants of a 3rd-century city wall and amphitheatre, as well as a superb archaeological museum.

### 👁️ Sights

Before you explore, it's well worth hitting the tourist office and buying its great city-walk guide-map (€0.50).

### 👁️ Puy St-Front

Radiating from the Gothic cathedral, this fabulous tangle of cobblestone streets is dotted with medieval buildings and Renaissance mansions. Stroll along rue du Plantier, rue de la Sagesse, rue de la Miséricorde, rue Auberge (mostly stairs) and rue Limogeanne, where many fine structures are marked with descriptive plaques in French and English.

Don't be shy of going through the gateways into the **Galerie Daumesnil**, a series of linked pedestrian courtyards enclosed by 15th- to 17th-century town houses.

### ★ Cathédrale St-Front

CATHEDRAL

(place de la Clautre; ☀️ 8.30am-7pm) Best viewed from the nearby **Pont des Barris**, Périgueux' cathedral-church bubbles forth five creamy domes, each topped with Byzantine-style mini-towers. The design dates from an 1852 makeover by Paul Abadie (1812-84), later the architect of Paris' Sacré-Coeur, with which the cathedral shows many architectural similarities. However, much of the Romanesque bell tower still dates to the 12th century, as does part of the cloister.

### Maison du Pâtissier

HISTORIC BUILDING

(17 rue Éguillerie) This partly fortified mansion on the corner of place St Louis was built in the 14th century, then 'modernised' in 1518 with a turret-tower. Since 2020 the ground-floor room has hosted a seasonal **truffle**

**market** (☀️ 8.30am Sat Dec-mid-Feb), entered through an unusual carved corner doorway.

### MAAP

MUSEUM

(Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie du Périgord; ☎️ 05 53 06 40 70; www.perigueux-maap.fr; 22 cours Tourny; adult/child €6/4; ☀️ 10.30am-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 1-6pm Sat & Sun) In a grand, tailor-made building, the city museum has a rich if scattergun collection that swerves from pre-historic tools to 18th-century portraiture. Meanwhile, the cloister area displays medieval stonework from Cathédrale St-Front.

### 👁️ La Cité

The Roman town was focused on a massive temple to the local goddess Vesunna, of which a 24.5m-high tower, the **Tour de Vésone** (☀️ park 7.30am-9pm Apr-Sep, to 6.30pm Oct-Mar) **FREE**, still stands. In the Middle Ages, knights built grand mansions right onto the remnants of the Roman city wall. The now-ruined **Château Barrière** (rue Turenne; ☀️ 24hr) **FREE** is just one example, with several more visible overlooking the railway line.

### ★ Musée Gallo-Romain Vesunna

MUSEUM

(☎️ 05 53 53 00 92; www.perigueux-vesunna.fr; 20 rue du 26e Régiment d'Infanterie, Parc de Vésone; adult/child €6/4, audioguide €1; ☀️ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm or later Sep-Jun) This sleek museum designed by French superstar architect Jean Nouvel protects the site of a 1st-century Roman *domus* (town house) uncovered in 1959. Light floods in through the glass-walled structure, illuminating walkways that circumnavigate the excavated complex with its central fountain, supporting pillars and underfloor hypocaust system, interspersed with explanatory models and archaeological finds.

An audioguide (€1) helps with English explanations. A joint ticket with the MAAP city museum costs €9/6 per adult/child.

### Église St-Étienne de la Cité

CHURCH

(place de la Cité; ☀️ 8am-6pm) Built on the site of a Roman temple to Mars, this partly 11th-century church was once Périgueux' cathedral. Huguenot attacks in 1577 and 1652 left it with a time-battered look that it still wears today, though at the time of research considerable refurbishment was under way.

### Jardin des Arènes

PARK

(☀️ 7.30am-9pm Apr-Sep, to 6.30pm Oct-Mar) **FREE** These pleasant gardens both fill and enfold a fragmentary ring of ivy-draped ruins. With a

second take, you might realise that these were once part of a huge Roman amphitheatre, though it's harder to imagine gladiators fighting to the death beneath the fountain pool where kids now splash with carefree delight.

## Sleeping

Most options in Périgueux are either private apartment rentals or chain hotels. There are cheap, cheerless motels at Boulazac, around 4km east, though heavy traffic en route makes it feel much further. Bus B links Boulazac to the train station.

### La Petite Cour

B&amp;B €

(☎05 53 53 40 24; [www.lapetitecour.house](http://www.lapetitecour.house); 9 rue Roletrou; s/d from €67.50/75; 🏠) In a sturdy town house dating from 1900, two appealing B&B rooms have antique touches but modern conveniences. It's super handy for the old town, just a stone's throw from the MAAP city museum. No credit cards.

### L'Hôtel de la Beauronne

HOTEL €

(☎05 53 08 42 91; [www.hotel-beauronne.com](http://www.hotel-beauronne.com); 4 rte de Ribérac, Chancelade; s/d/tr/q €51/58/64/75; 🕒 reception to 9pm; 📞📺📺) A or e1 to Pont de Beauronne) This no-frills hotel, 5km west of Périgueux at the junction for Brantôme, has rooms that are bigger and better appointed than most cheapies, and with a touch more character than the chain motels.

### Bristol Hôtel

HOTEL €€

(☎05 53 08 75 90; [www.bristolfrance.com](http://www.bristolfrance.com); 37-39 rue Antoine Gadaud; r €80-190; 📞📺📺) Behind the 1970s-style boxy façade you'll find renovated, spacious rooms with all mod cons. Staff are friendly, and it's pretty central, with free parking.

### Ibis Périgueux Centre

HOTEL €€

(☎05 53 53 64 58; [www.ibis.com](http://www.ibis.com); 8 bd Georges Saumande; d from €89; 📞📺) The rooms are typical chain-hotel bed-boxes, but the location is unbeatable: right at the foot of the cathedral, facing the river and with public parking at the quayside below. The façade is attractively softened at night with coloured lighting and out the front there's the curiosity of the **Eschif de Creyssac**, a mini house-on-a-wall dating from 1347.

## Eating

Folks come from far and wide for Périgueux' bustling **markets** (place de la Clautre; 🕒 8am-1pm Wed & Sat), which fill several central squares twice weekly.

## ★ Café de la Place

BRASSERIE, CAFE €

(☎05 53 08 21 11; [www.cafedelaplace24.fr](http://www.cafedelaplace24.fr); 7 place du Marché au Bois; mains €8.70-22, lunch/dinner menus from €13/16; 🕒 restaurant noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm, bar 8am-2am) This is an absolute classic of a Gallic brasserie, with clattering cutlery, spinning fans, shiny brass fittings and a burnished wooden bar. The food is deliciously rich – try the *brandade de poisson* (fish-and-potato pie) – but the street-front terrace is also a fine place for people-watching while nursing a *petit café* or one of numerous draught-beer options.

### Izba

VEGETARIAN €

(☎05 53 09 37 51; [www.restaurant-izba.com](http://www.restaurant-izba.com); 19 rue Aubergerie; starter/main/menu €6/12/18; 🕒 12.15-2.30pm Mon-Fri) In one of Périgueux' most memorable medieval lanes, Izba is very rare hereabouts for offering at least one vegetarian lunch *menu*. The other two daily-changing choices are gluten free and/or organic.

### Au Phil des Saisons

CAFE €

(☎05 53 09 53 64; 3 place de l'ancien Hôtel de Ville; meals €7.50-16.50; 🕒 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) Create your own salads, or order wraps, waffles and homemade soup (€4) at this colourful, pay-at-the-counter cafe.

### Le St-Louis

FRENCH €€

(☎05 53 53 53 90; place St-Louis; lunch & dinner menus €20-30; 🕒 noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm daily Apr-Sep, closed Sun, Mon & Wed Oct-Mar) Le St-Louis is appealing for duck and foie gras, but also for snails, salads and even veggie burgers, eaten under the plane trees of a cosy market square or in an intimate bistro room that mixes bare stonework with wooden panelling.

## ★ L'Essentiel

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎05 53 35 15 15; [www.restaurant-perigueux.com](http://www.restaurant-perigueux.com); 8 rue de la Clarté; mains €31-45, lunch/dinner menus from €31/47; 🕒 noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-9.30pm Sat) A subtle decor of floral wallpaper and orange velour seats might make it feel as though you've entered a friend's living room, but this is in fact a top gourmet choice, complete with Michelin star. Quercy lamb, cockerel and local rare-breed pigs regularly feature, and there's a seasonal truffle-based menu (€115).

### Le Clos St-Front

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎05 53 46 78 58; [www.leclossaintfront.com](http://www.leclossaintfront.com); 12 rue St-Front; menus €29-72; 🕒 noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) Creative Périgordine cuisine is served on starched table linen within a quaint 16th-century stone





## Périgueux

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale St-Front..... F3

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Château Barrière..... A4  
 3 Église St-Étienne de la Cité..... B4  
 4 Galerie Daumesnil..... F2  
 5 Jardin des Arènes ..... A3  
 6 MAAP ..... F1  
 7 Maison du Pâtissier..... E2  
 8 Pont des Barris..... G3

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 9 Ibis Périgueux Centre ..... F3  
 10 La Petite Cour ..... F1

### 🍴 Eating

- 11 Au Phil des Saisons ..... E2  
 12 Café de la Place..... F2  
 13 Izba ..... E4  
 14 Le Clos St-Front..... F2  
 15 Le St-Louis..... E2  
 16 L'Essentiel..... F3  
 Truffle Market ..... (see 7)  
 17 Wednesday & Saturday Market..... E3

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 18 La Cantina..... G3  
 19 Le Chai Bordin..... E2  
 20 Le Graal..... D3  
 21 Le QG ..... F1  
 22 Silver Owl ..... F1

house or in the idyllically tree-shaded secret garden that is this restaurant's great trump card.



### Drinking

Périgueux has plenty of tempting watering holes. Youthful alehouse **Le Graal** (10 rue Condé; ☎ 5pm-1am Tue-Sat) has seven fine beers on tap. So does Café de la Place (p605), which, like **Le QG** ([www.leqg-perigueux.fr](http://www.leqg-perigueux.fr); 17 rue des Drapeaux; ☎ 4pm-late Wed-Sat), spills tables onto a very pretty old-town square. Several great little wine bars include the cosy **Chai Bordin** (☎ 09 81 89 40 65; [www.lechaibordin.com](http://www.lechaibordin.com); 8 rue de la Sagesse; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-8pm Tue-Thu, to 10pm Fri & Sat), while **Silver Owl** (25 rue St-Front; ☎ 6pm-1am Tue-Sat) is tops for cocktails and occasional live music. At scrappier **La Cantina** (2 rue Pierre Magne; ☎ 6-11pm Tue & Wed, to 2am Thu-Sat) your late-night €6 mojito comes with a great view of the cathedral across the river.

### 📍 Getting There & Away

#### BUS

From the train-station car park, bus L3 runs to Bergerac (€2, 1¼ hours) four or five times each weekday, picking up passengers at **place du 8 Mai** (bd Lakanal), 500m south of old Périgueux. Bus L1 runs to Angöleme (€2, 1½ hours) via Brantôme (40 minutes, four times daily on weekdays, three times on Saturday, twice on Sunday), picking up passengers at the Francheville-Monoprix stop.

**Flixbus** ([www.flixbus.fr](http://www.flixbus.fr)) offers two or three daily coaches to Bordeaux (1¼ hours) and to Lyon (six hours) via Clermont-Ferrand (four hours), but prebooking online is essential and the pick-up point is 6km south of town at

Créavallée Nord, near the A89 highway junction. Bus e7 from the Francheville-Hôtel stop gets you there in 12 minutes, but only six times daily and not at weekends.

#### TRAIN

The **train station** (rue Denis Papin) is in a grungy area 1km northwest of the old town. For Sarlat-la-Canéda (€16.70, three daily) you must change in Le Buisson (p614); waits can be long. Direct trains serve the following towns.

**Bordeaux** €23, 1½ hours, 16 daily.

**Brive-la-Gaillarde** €14.20, one hour, six daily.

**Les Eyziez** €8.70, 35 minutes, six daily.

**Limoges** €18, 1¼ hours, six daily.

### 📍 Getting Around

Péribus buses include a Navette looping round the centre from the back of the train station. At least 16 times daily except Sundays, Chancelade-bound bus A picks up at **Badinter** (rue du Président Wilson) and the front of the train station. Bicycle rental is available at **Véloc Café** (☎ 06 33 48 22 89; [www.facebook.com/www.unvelopourtous](http://www.facebook.com/www.unvelopourtous); fr; 7 av Daumesnil; bicycles per 4/8hr €20/30; ☎ 7.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun).

## Brantôme

POP 3759

Enchanting Brantôme's visual centrepiece is its impressive abbey, topped with an 11th-century Romanesque bell tower and sandwiched between a cliff face and a bend of the River Dronne. The rest of the town centre forms a river island linked with five bridges. The tagline 'Venice of the Périgord' goes a little far, but Brantôme is a pretty spot to while away an afternoon dining, strolling, or boating on the calm river.

## BRANTÔME TO BOURDEILLES

Overflowing with atmosphere, tiny **Bourdeilles** is little more than one arc of street curving around its castle, a mismatched 16th-century villa within powerfully machiolated ramparts. April to October, water levels permitting, the best way to arrive is by gliding 12km down the river from Brantôme. By kayak/two-person canoe you'll pay around €18/30 with Brantôme Canoë ([www.brantomecanoe.com](http://www.brantomecanoe.com)) or Allo Canoës ([www.allocanoes24.com](http://www.allocanoes24.com)), including bus transport back to Brantôme. Alternatively, start with the bus ride using Canoës Bourdeilles ([www.canoesbourdeilleloisirs.fr](http://www.canoesbourdeilleloisirs.fr)), then float back, enjoy the sunset from Bourdeilles' medieval bridge and have dinner at one of several excellent restaurants. Sleep riverside at **Hostellerie Les Griffons** (☎ 05 53 45 45 35; [www.griffons.fr](http://www.griffons.fr); d Apr/Sep/summer €100/115/135; ☺ Apr-Nov; 📶), a converted mill that simply drips character, with antique fireplaces, solid beams and a higgledy-piggledy layout.

## 📍 Sights & Activities

### Abbaye de Brantôme

LANDMARK

([www.perigord-dronne-belle.fr/abbaye-brantome-perigord](http://www.perigord-dronne-belle.fr/abbaye-brantome-perigord); bd Charlemagne) Photogenically viewed from across the river, Brantôme's iconic landmark combines a sizeable Gothic abbey church (free entrance) with a vast 18th-century monastic building that's now the town hall.

Entered through that building, the **Grottes de l'Abbaye** (adult/child €6.50/4.50; ☺ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm or later, closed Jan & Tue in winter) are a series of caves cut into the cliffside behind. Originally the hovels of 8th-century religious hermits, and later incorporated into the abbey, they're especially notable for a 15th-century carved frieze of the Last Judgment. The ticket also includes entrance to a small museum displaying paintings by Fernand Desmoulin...or maybe by spirits acting through him!

### Pont Coudé

BRIDGE

Brantôme's most attractive bridge is called Coudé (bent) for its turn at the southeastern end. It's a great spot for photos of the abbey and mill, and the starting point for popular **pleasure-boat rides** (☎ 05 53 04 74 71; [www.brantomecroisieres.com](http://www.brantomecroisieres.com); adult/child €8.50/6; ☺ Apr-Oct), available three to seven times daily in season.

## 🛏 Sleeping & Eating

Half a dozen hotels are clustered around Brantôme's north bridge. You'll find several tourist-oriented bistros and restaurants, both at the riverside and on the shopping street, rue Victor Hugo. Many close in winter. Market day is Friday.

### Villa Medicis

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 06 74 51 06 00; [www.medicisvilla.com](http://www.medicisvilla.com); 17 av Dr Devillard; d €81-95; 📶) Nadine and her dog offer

a very warm welcome at this spacious stone house in a garden lit with coloured lantern-lamps, five minutes' walk southeast of central Brantôme. Rooms have semi-antique furnishings, good new showers and the odd kitschy cat portrait. Coffee maker included.

### Au Fil du Temps

BISTRO €€

(☎ 05 53 05 75 27; [www.fildutemps.com](http://www.fildutemps.com); 1 chemin du Vert Galant; menus from €23; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Sun-Tue, Thu & Fri, 7.30-9.30pm Sat, closed mid-Dec-mid-Jan) With a tree-shaded terrace facing the abbey across the park and car park, Au Fil du Temps is a classic bistro specialising in traditional Périgordian roasted meats.

### Moulin de l'Abbaye

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 05 53 05 80 22; [www.moulinabbaye.com](http://www.moulinabbaye.com); 1 rte de Bourdeilles; menus €55-120; ☺ noon-1.40pm & 7.30-9.30pm Wed-Sun, closed Nov-Mar) Jean-Michel Bardet's Michelin-starred restaurant occupies a carefully converted mill with waterside seating beside the Pond Coudé. The building is also a luxurious hotel, though most of the 20 guest rooms are across the road in a similarly historic building.

## 📍 Getting There & Away

**Trans Périgord** ([www.transperigord.fr](http://www.transperigord.fr), €2) buses stop in Brantôme between Périgueux (40 minutes) and Angoulême (65 minutes) four times most days, twice on Sundays.

## Bergerac

POP 27,567

Rich vineyards and rolling fields surround Bergerac, which grew prosperous as the medieval bridging point across the wide Dordogne River. The town has retained a small but pretty core of half-timbered houses, now ringed by avenues of 19th-century

cream-stone buildings. Much play is given to dramatist and satirist Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac (1619–55), whose romantic exploits – and oversized nose – have inspired everyone from Molière to Steve Martin. Never mind that the legend was largely invented by 19th-century playwright Edmond Rostand and that Cyrano's connection with the town is tenuous at best – he's thought to have stayed here only a few nights, if at all.

## Sights & Activities

The prettiest parts of Bergerac's fine old town are place Pelissière and place de la Mirpe, with its tree-shaded square and half-timbered houses. Both are surveyed by jaunty statues of Cyrano de Bergerac. The tourist office within Quai Cyrano has good, free walking-tour maps.

### Musée du Tabac MUSEUM

(☎05 53 63 04 13; 10 rue de l'Ancien Pont; adult/child €4/free; ☺10am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Tue–Fri, 2–6pm Sat & Sun) Housed in the 17th-century Maison Peyrarède, this celebration of tobacco is the most appealing of Bergerac's three little city-centre museums, with displays spanning 3000 years of history and including a collection of ornate pipes.

### Quai Cyrano WINE

(www.vins-bergeracdurac.fr; quai Salvette; ☺bar 9am–1am Tue–Sat, 11am–11pm Sun & Mon) It combines a **tourist office** (☎05 53 57 03 11; www.pays-bergerac-tourisme.com; ☺10am–7pm; ☺), a historic monastery cloister and a river-facing balcony terrace, but the greatest attraction at the Quai Cyrano is the chance to

sample a selection of Bergerac wines (free), then relax in the suave wine-bar section with a glass of your choice (from €3) and perhaps a taster plate of local cheeses, charcuterie or foie gras (€8).

### Gabarres de Bergerac BOATING

(☎05 53 24 58 80; www.gabarres.fr; quai Salvette; adult/child €10/7; ☺Apr–Oct) Low-key 50-minute river cruises depart from the quay at 11am, 2pm, 3pm and 4pm, more often in midsummer.

## Sleeping

Three sweet little *chambres d'hôtes* occupy 16th-century cottages right on place de la Mirpe, Bergerac's prettiest medieval square: **Le Colombier de Cyrano et Roxane** (☎05 53 57 96 70; 17 place de la Mirpe; d from €89; ☺) and **La Bonbonnière** (☎06 23 56 23 99; www.labonbonniere.net; 15 place de la Mirpe; d from €70; ☺) on the south side, and **Relais de la Mirpe** (☎07 84 45 40 57; relaisdelamirpe@gmail.com; 18 place de la Mirpe; d/tr €70/100; ☺) opposite. Three contrastingly functional hotels line the west side of place Gambetta, where there's also a coin laundry.

### Le Clos d'Argenson B&B €€

(☎06 12 90 59 58; www.leclosdargenson.com; 99 rue Neuve d'Argenson; s €95–115, d €120–140; ☺☺) Discreet behind its 19th-century stone façade, this classy, high-ceilinged B&B offers four huge suites overlooking a garden where there's a decent-size swimming pool, an unexpected bonus given the very central location just 400m northeast of Bergerac's medieval core. No children.

## TOP MARKETS

Throughout the region local markets fill medieval cobbled streets and overflow with wintertime black truffles, walnuts, chestnuts, cheese, honey, and seasonal produce from asparagus to strawberries. Baskets and clothing also feature at some. **Summertime evening markets** are a special delight: bring your own plates and cutlery and dine at tables set up under the stars, often in a setting enlivened by music.

**Monday** Ste-Alvère, Villeréal (evening), Beaumont-du-Périgord (evening)

**Tuesday** Beaumont-du-Périgord, Brive-la-Gaillarde, Le Bugue

**Wednesday** Périgueux, Sarlat-la-Canéda, Bergerac, Martel, Cahors, Cadouin

**Thursday** Monpazier, Issigeac (evening), Eymet (evening)

**Friday** Brantôme, St-Pompon, Plazac (evening)

**Saturday** Périgueux, Sarlat-la-Canéda, Brive-la-Gaillarde, Bergerac, Beaumont-du-Périgord, Villefranche-du-Périgord, Martel, Cahors, Figeac, St-Pompon (evening)

**Sunday** Issigeac, St-Cyprien, Daglan, Rouffignac

## TRUFFLES: BLACK PEARLS OF PÉRIGORD

For some culinary connoisseurs, the Dordogne's star ingredient is the black Périgord truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*), a crusty subterranean fungal ball that retails at some €1000 per kilogram. It grows around the roots of certain oak or hazelnut trees in chalky soils but is notoriously capricious: a good truffle spot one year can be inexplicably bare the next. Thus, although farmers plant trees to encourage their growth, discovering the truffles remains a 'hunt' originally led by sniffer pigs, and since the 1960s more usually by truffle dogs.

Although cheaper white truffles appear between May and July, the 'black gold' season is strictly midwinter, and between December and late February there are specialist morning truffle markets. The classic is on Mondays at delightful **Ste-Alvère**, 35km south of Périgueux. Others include Thursdays at Ribérac, Fridays at Brantôme, Saturdays at Périgueux, Bergerac, Sarlat and Thivier, and Sundays at 'truffle-village' **Sorges**, 23km north of Périgueux on the Limoges road. Sorges' roadside tourist office sells truffles (sniff before you buy) and hosts a whole museum on the subject. Its free *Sentier des Truffières* guide sheet (available in English) gives context to a mixture of walking and driving routes through truffle woods on pleasant lanes and footpaths nearby. Just 1km east, Saleix was the hamlet where truffle oaks were first actively planted (in the 1830s). Here, with at least a day's advance booking, the delightful family-owned **Domaine Truffier de Saleix** (☎ 06 08 45 09 48; www.truffe-sorges.com; D68, Sorges; tours per person €20; ☺ by reservation) lets you truffle-hunt with their dogs, then return for a tasting of truffle butter (with wine). Out of season, they'll hide a truffle so that you can still see the dogs' skill.

### Château Les Farcies du Pech'

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 06 75 28 01 90; www.farciesdupech.com; Farcies Nord, Pécharmant; d €110; ☺ Apr-Oct; ☑ ☺) In the partly 16th-century farmhouse of a renowned Pécharmant winery, period and antique furniture give character to the large B&B rooms, and there's a communal salon and dining room to unwind in. Just across the yard, wine tastings are a must (www.vignoblesdubard.com). It's 2km northeast of the train station via rue Beaumarchais.

### ★ Château les Merles

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎ 05 53 63 13 42; www.lesmerles.com; Tuilières; d/ste €190/250, apt €350; ☑ ☺ ☺) Behind 17th-century cream stone, this very attractive little wine château 15km east of Bergerac has 14 guest rooms that counterpoint modish monochrome colour schemes with artfully chosen antiques. There's a whole series of delightful lounges, a ravishing restaurant (dinner menus from €29.50), and a bistro offering international flavours plus barista coffees. Did we mention the nine-hole golf course? Three of the seven self-contained villas come with their own pool.

## ✂ Eating

Bergerac has over 30 eateries, with as many again dotted about the surrounding wine country, including a Michelin-starred option at Monbazillac (p612). Market days are Wednesday and Saturday.

### L'Imparfait

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 53 57 47 92; www.imparfait.com; 8-10 rue des Fontaines; menus lunch from €29, dinner €39-49; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm) Heavy beams, 1930s jazz, a medieval fireplace and thick 12th-century walls give a warm, antique quality to this entrancing restaurant where tablecloths and *amuse-bouches* (appetisers) set the scene for rich, fairly traditional French food.

### Villa Laetitia

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 53 61 00 12; 21 rue de l'Ancien Pont; lunch/dinner menus €23/36; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) Behind an intimate cream-stone dining room in the medieval quarter, delicious local cuisine is prepared in a semi-open kitchen using farm-fresh ingredients.

### Le Bistrot du Presbytère

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 53 58 73 36; www.bistrot-presbytere-queyssac.fr; Queyssac; dinner menus €22-28; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun; ☑) Facing the Romanesque church in the hamlet of Queyssac, 10km east of Bergerac, this enticing village bistro is an ideal place to sample great-quality Périgordine food at decent prices, including a weekday lunch menu from just €14 with a glass of wine.

## 🍷 Drinking

### Couleur Campagne

CAFE

(www.facebook.com/couleurcampagnebergeracperigueux; 9 rue des Fontaines; ☺ 10am-6pm



Tue-Sat) Oozing with antique atmosphere, this *salon de thé* (tea house) is part curio shop, part cafe. As well as fine teas, delicious quiches and pies (€7.50 per piece) are served, ideal for those looking for somewhere to eat when all the restaurants are closed.

### Le Plus Que Parfait

BAR

(☎05 53 61 95 11; 12 rue des Fontaines; ☺9am-1pm Tue-Sat, 11am-11pm Sun & Mon) Spoofing the name of the nearby L'Imparfait (p610), this lively bar serves up a winning selection of Belgian brews, well-poured cocktails and the occasional live concert.

## Getting There & Around

### AIR

The **airport** (EGC; ☎05 53 22 25 25; www.bergerac.aeroport.fr), 4km southeast of Bergerac, has seasonal flights on Jet2, British Airways and Ryanair to 10 UK airports. Ryanair also flies to Charleroi, and Transavia connects to Rotterdam.

**Taxis** (☎05 53 23 32 32) cost about €15 to town. Six car-rental agencies include Buggs (www.buggscarhire.com).

### BUS & TRAIN

Bergerac bus stand/train station is 1km north of the Quay Cyrano. Trans Périgord bus 3 connects four times each weekday to Périgueux (€2, 1¼ hours). Six daily trains run to Bordeaux (€17.90, 1½ hours) and Sarlat (€13.50, one hour).

### CAR

Most parking (www.bergerac.fr/directory-categorie/stationnement) is metered till 7pm, but car park **Le Forail** (rue Junien Rabier), 400m east of the old city, is free.

## Around Bergerac

### Monbazillac

POP 870

Climbing the slopes south of Bergerac, Monbazillac is synonymous with the area's high-quality dessert wines...but drive around the surrounding vineyards and you'll discover a whole range of alternative viticultural styles.

## Sights & Activities

### Château de Monbazillac

WINERY

(☎05 53 63 65 00; www.chateau-monbazillac.com; D13, Monbazillac; tour & tasting adult/child €7.80/3.90; ☺10am-7pm daily Jun-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Oct-May, closed Jan) Primped with tiled conical turrets and stone machicolations,

this 16th-century château is the visual icon of sweet white Monbazillac wines. It's set on a ridge top 7km south of Bergerac, overlooking the city across a tableau of orderly vineyards. The place is a peaceful oasis in the low season, but in summer it often gets jam-packed with tour groups.

### Château de Bridoire

CASTLE

(☎06 30 39 38 22; www.chateaubridoire.com; Ribagnac; adult/child €9.50/6.50; ☺2-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-6pm Jul & Aug, closed Nov-Mar; 🏰) Don a knight's helmet, practise archery or play one of around 80 medieval games in this splendid multi-turreted castle that sets itself apart from the Dordogne competition through its focus on appealing to children of all ages. It's 4km southwest of Monbazillac, 9km south of Bergerac.

### ★Château Montdoyen

WINERY

(☎05 53 58 85 85; www.chateau-montdoyen.com; Le Puch, Monbazillac; ☺9am-6pm Jun-Sep, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-May) **FREE** This welcoming family-run vineyard 4km southwest of Monbazillac makes a range of wines with catchphrase names like État d'Esprit (€14.50), a beautifully balanced merlot-Malbec red that's barrel aged but not overly tannic.

### Château de la Jaubertie

WINERY

(☎05 53 58 32 11; www.chateau-jaubertie.com; Colombier; ☺10am-5pm Mon-Fri) Beside a 16th-century hunting lodge that once belonged to Henri IV, this refined winery produces sophisticated organic wines 4.4km southeast of Monbazillac. Tastings (€5) are

### WORTH A TRIP

#### BERGERAC WINE COUNTRY

The gently undulating vineyards around Bergerac contribute to a patchwork of several AOCs (Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée), sometimes overlapping geographically. Bergerac and Duras AOCs cover a very wide range of wine varieties. Pécharmant offers predominantly big-flavoured, oak-aged reds, while world-famous Monbazillac and lesser-known Rozette are all about honeyed sweet whites. To get a handle on the phenomenal range, start with an expert free tasting at Bergerac's delightful Quai Cyrano (p609), pick up its detailed wine map and brochure, and then hit the winery trail.

free if you buy at least one bottle. Its Mirabelle white is a superb marriage of semillon and sauvignon blanc.

## Eating

★ **La Tour des Vents** GASTRONOMY €€€  
(☎05 53 58 30 10; www.tourdesvents.com; Le Moulin de Malfourat, Monbazillac; menus €51-72; ☉7.30-9.15pm Wed-Sun; 🚶) Chef Damien Fagette's Michelin-starred restaurant is the Bergerac area's gourmet grail, overlooking a panoramic sweep of view from beside a disused windmill tower. To get the same view you could have lunch at the cohabiting bistro, where prices are far more modest.

## Issigeac

POP 767

Founded around a Benedictine abbey, atop what had once been a 4th-century Roman villa, this tiny oval of medieval village is a joy to explore at any time. However, it really comes into its own during the magnificent Sunday-morning market. It's 18km south of Bergerac on the D14. See www.pays-des-bastides.com for events.

## Sleeping & Eating

Tiny Issigeac has a surprisingly good selection of eateries, though most close in winter. The Sunday market is a must, and in summer there are musical night markets on Thursdays and Fridays.

## Passé et Présent

B&B €

(☎05 53 63 35 31; www.passe-et-present.com; 14 Grand Rue; d €62-70, ste €120; 🍷🍷) Antique-strewn old-world rooms compose this pretty town house right in Issigeac's centre. Take tea in the rose-filled courtyard.

## ★ Le Doyenné

FRENCH €

(☎05 53 27 06 10; www.ledoyenne.com/home; 38 rue de l'ancienne Poste; dishes €10-16, menus €20-23; ☉11am-4pm Sun-Tue, Thu & Sat, closed mid-Nov-mid-Mar) Issigeac's most inventive restaurant uses giant clocks and mirrors to bring an arty twist to a barn-like stone space within Issigeac's former ramparts. You can order delicious €10 panini-and-salad plates, but it's well worth opting for one of the beautifully presented *menus* full of plate-lickingly memorable flavour combinations.

The smoked-trout starter comes with yellow caviar and a frozen vodka shot. Upstairs are three stylish **B&B rooms** (from

€85), two with four-poster beds, all sharing a quirkily decorated lounge.

## Monpazier

POP 479

One of the Dordogne's best-preserved *bastides* (fortified towns), Monpazier has found a great balance between rural tranquillity, historic authenticity and artistic reconceptualisation with its pottery workshops, art galleries, not-quite mad hatter, coffee shop, microbrewery and glass-blowing studio. Founded in 1284 by a representative of Edward I (king of England and duke of Aquitaine), it retains a pair of stone gateway towers and an original square-grid layout in which certain alleys are barely shoulder width.

## Sights

### ★ Place des Cornières

SQUARE

(place Centrale) Monpazier's arcaded market square is surrounded by an ochre-hued collection of stone houses that reflect centuries of building and rebuilding. In the south-western corner is a timber-framed old market hall with a trio of original metal grain measures.

Thursday is market day, as it has been since the Middle Ages.

### Bastideum

MUSEUM

(☎05 53 57 12 12; www.bastideum.fr; 8 rue Galmot; adult/child €4.80/2.80; ☉10.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug) Housed in a 17th-century former convent, this small interpretative centre is a good stop for history buffs interested in reading up on *bastides* and, for family fun, playing one of two dozen 'medieval' games.

### Château de Biron

CHATEAU

(☎05 53 63 13 39; www.semitour.com; D53; adult/child €8.80/5.90; ☉10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm or later, 10am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, closed Jan) Looming formidably on a prominent hilltop 8km south of Monpazier, this much-filmed château is a glorious mishmash of styles, having been fiddled with by eight centuries of successive heirs. Walking round the photogenic hamlet outside gives a great sense of its scale, but paying for an entry ticket allows you inside to see regularly changing exhibitions of contemporary art along with some grand fireplaces and a double loggia staircase supposedly modelled on one at Versailles.

## VILLAGE DINING IN THE DORDOGNE

From renowned gourmet restaurants to authentic cafe fare, some of the Dordogne's lesser-known villages are worth the drive for their dining opportunities.

### Beaumont-du-Périgord

For great-value, down-home lunches packed with flavour and enough garlic to frighten a vampire, join overalled workers at the **Cafe les Arts'Cades** (2-/3-course menu €11.50/13.50; ☺ kitchen noon-2pm Mon-Sat, bar 7am-8pm Sat-Thu, to 1am Fri) with its chequer-board floors and no-nonsense bar-room vibe. It's within the stone arches of the market square in Beaumont, a historic *bastide* (fortified) village 13km west of Cadoiun, 15km east of Issigeac.

### Daglan & St-Pompont

In pleasant little Daglan village, 8km south of Castelnaud, **La Cantine** (☎ 05 53 30 34 54; www.fabricelchef.fr; lunch/dinner menu €15/27; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Mon, lunch only Oct-Mar except weekends) is a relaxed, bistro-style restaurant that hits the sweet spot between locally inspired quality ingredients and imaginative, full-flavoured creativity. Just 150m west in the former *bar-tabac*, **Le Petit Paris** (☎ 05 53 28 41 10; www.le-petit-paris.fr; menus from €33; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-8.45pm Tue-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun late Feb-mid-Nov) is a tad more upmarket but still affordable, with cuisine that's been awarded a Michelin *bib gourmand*. Another 6km southwest in St-Pompont, locals come from far and wide to **L'Envie des Mets** (☎ 05 53 28 26 53; www.facebook.com/2chefs passionnes; 2-/3-course menus €26/32; ☺ noon-2pm Tue & Wed, noon-2pm & 7-9pm Thu-Sat), a lovely wisteria-fronted restaurant run by a young couple of talented, inventive chefs.

### Ste-Alvère

Glowing with golden sandstone buildings, the 'truffle' village of Ste-Alvère is famed for its (very brief) Monday-morning truffle market (10am, December to February). Its tourist office (www.valdelouyre-et-caudeau.fr) has a fun truffle quiz (in French) and can suggest leisurely walks amid the nearby truffle oaks. Remarkably, this little place has two active bakeries and two excellent restaurants, notably **Dix** (☎ 05 53 61 78 83; www.dixdordogne.com; 10 rue du Pré St Jean; mains €18-41, lunch menu €21-25; ☺ noon-2pm Mon & Tue, noon-2pm & 7.30-9pm Thu & Fri, 7.30-9pm Sat & Sun), run by a youthful Anglo-French couple. Sit at rough wooden tables set with fresh-picked flowers and watch the show kitchen conjure up regularly changing menus that always include at least one veggie option. And yes, in season you can have truffle gratings on your meal (€8 extra). It's 14km northwest of Le Bugue.

### Trémolat

Much of old Trémolat belongs to the **Vieux Logis** (☎ 05 53 22 80 06; www.vieux-logis.com; r €210-395; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷), a luxuriously characterful four-star hotel where American writer Henry Miller once checked in for a night and ended up staying three weeks. A Relais & Châteaux pioneer since 1955, it centres on 16th-century priory buildings set in magnificently manicured gardens. Former tobacco-drying barns host its Michelin-starred restaurant, and across the road is a co-managed bistro. Trémolat is 9km west of Limeuil, 2km before the 'Cingle' viewpoint overlooking a U-shaped river bend. Around 1.5km south of the hotel, Trémolat train station is on the Bergerac-Sarlac line, one stop west of Le Buisson.

### Belvès

VILLAGE

Dramatically topping a hilltop 16km north-east of Monpazier, Belvès is an intriguing maze of yellow-gold historic houses and turret-towers with a sprinkling of cafes and restaurants. A small collection of subterranean cave dwellings can be visited by arrangement with the tourist office.

### Sleeping & Eating

#### **Chez Edell**

B&B €

(☎ 05 53 63 26 71; www.chezedell.com; 2 rue Notre Dame; d €60-65; 🍷) This super-clean family B&B is just 30 seconds' walk south from the central square. Two of the three rooms have fine views, while the third is bigger with a spacious bathroom and some subtle choices

of artwork. The raised, plant-decked patio is a great place for breakfast in summer.

### Hôtel Edward 1er

HOTEL €€

(☎05 53 22 44 00; www.hoteledward1er.com; 5 rue St-Pierre; tw €89-211, d €97-235; ☺Apr-Oct; 🍷🍷) Classically furnished rooms in this tower-topped mansion get larger and more luxurious the more you pay: top-of-the-line suites have a choice of Jacuzzi or Turkish bath, and views of surrounding hills. You might need to prebook for a table at the co-owned gastronomic restaurant, Eléonor, next door (*menus* €32 to €52).

### Cabanes Perchées

TREEHOUSE €€

(☎06 87 05 48 75; www.cabanes-perchees-dans-les-arbres.com; Rousille, Capdrot; treehouses without/with spa €160/220; 🍷) For something rather different, sleep 7m above the ground in one of six relatively luxurious treehouses, well spaced on a lonely wooded rise around 3km southeast of Monpazier. Each has a unique design and four come with mini-spa.

Dinner baskets (€25) can be hauled up to your perch for the full experience.

### Bistrot 2

BISTRO €€

(☎05 53 22 60 64; www.bistrot2.fr; Foirail Nord; lunch/dinner menus from €19.50/24.50; ☺noon-2pm & 6.30-8.15pm Sat-Thu, noon-2pm Sun, to 10pm summer, closed Jan & Feb) Great local French food (duck, foie gras, walnut tart) is beautifully presented on sheets of slate at a lovely wisteria-covered terrace facing the town's pair of gateway towers. Excellent *cabécou* (hot goat-cheese salad).



## Drinking & Nightlife

### ★ Bière de la Bastide

MICROBREWERY

(www.bierebastide.com; 14 rue St-André; 10am-10pm daily Easter-Oct, 10am-6pm Thu-Sat Nov-Easter) In a warehouse full of knick-knacks, this prize-winning microbrewery serves its own range of mod-British ales, including a bitter-hopped IPA, and 'Beaumont Saison' flavoured with coriander, heather honey and black pepper. There's live blues music on many Sunday afternoons.

### Écureuil Café

COFFEE

(place Centrale 25b; ☺9am-6pm, closed Fri Nov-Mar) The only barista coffee shop for kilometres, this caffeine paradise seats you at leather sofas, funky pedal-equipped bar stools or tables in the arched arcades. Sunday brunches are popular.

## Getting There & Away

Monpazier is 50km southwest of Sarlat and 50km southeast of Bergerac. There is no public transport. By car, a good day's drive loops northeast to Belvès (16km), northwest 13km to the Grottes Maxange, then southeast to Cadouin (8km), returning via Beaumont-du-Périgord (13km), which is 16km northwest of Monpazier.

## Cadouin & Le Buisson

Founded in 1115, Cadouin's **abbey** (☺church 8am-6pm) grew rich through pilgrims attracted by what they believed to be the holy shroud of Christ. This crusades-era relic was sealed in a chest that hung on chains high in the Romanesque church's painted apse. The chains remain and a copy of the cloth is displayed in a free museum section at the entry to the abbey's beautiful little 15th-century **cloister** (☎05 53 63 36 28; www.cloitre-cadouin.fr/en; adult/child €7.20/4.40; ☺10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun, 10am-5pm daily Jul & Aug, closed Jan). The latter is special for its characterful carvings; to interpret them, borrow a commentary booklet (free) or audioguide (€3). Housed in an adjacent part of the former abbey is the **Auberge de Jeunesse Cadouin** (☎05 53 73 28 78; www.hifrance.org; dm incl breakfast €17; ☺reception 8am-noon & 4-6pm, to 9pm summer, closed Dec & Jan; 🍷), the only youth hostel in this area. En suite duplex-style double rooms have glimpsed views of the cloister from tiny windows. Kitchen, laundry and bicycle rental are available. Cadouin also has a B&B above the central *épicerie* and four seasonal eateries.

You'll need a taxi (☎06 13 96 51 88) or your own wheels for the 8km ride between Cadouin and **Le Buisson**, a train station on both the Bordeaux-Bergerac-Sarlat and Périgueux-Agen lines. A 400m stroll west of Le Buisson station is **Planbuisson** (http://planbuisson.com; 18 rue Montaigne; ☺10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Sun), an intriguing garden with Zen spaces and walnut-shell paths between groves of bamboo of differing varieties. Some 2.2km southeast, the **Grottes de Maxange** (☎05 53 23 42 80; www.lesgrottesdemaxange.com; Le Buisson-de-Cadouin; adult/child €8.90/5.90; ☺hours vary, closed Nov-Mar) are a series of caves whose rich collection of stalactites is unusual for its 'eccentric' non-vertical-mineral formations.

## Beynac, Castelnau & Around

POP 3834

The W-shaped stretch of river between Beynac and Vitrac is the quintessence of Dordogne scenery. Within 15km lie four of the region's most memorable castles, several ultra-quiet stone villages pressed between river and cliffside, and an unmissable formal garden that surveys the whole scene.

### Sights

For much of the Hundred Years War, Beynac on the Dordogne's north bank was French controlled, glaring across at English-held castles Castelnau and Fayrac on the south side. Today the sites are besieged by visitors and film crews seeking magical movie sets.

### Beynac

Beynac village is a riverfront T-junction behind which a picturesque rough-stone stairway leads up the side of a 150m-high cliffside to the upper village and the striking castle that dominates it. The village lanes were immortalised in Lasse Hallström's feel-good movie *Chocolat* (2000), starring Johnny Depp and Juliette Binoche.

**Château de Beynac** CHATEAU  
(☎05 53 29 50 40; www.chateau-beynac.com; Beynac-et-Cazenac; adult/child €9.50/7; ☀10am-7pm) Visible from kilometres around, this 12th-century fortress towers gloriously above Beynac on its cliff-top perch. The views from its battlements are a big draw and the interior retains a sparse, medieval feel, with decor limited to carved fireplaces, wooden coffer-trunks and the odd tapestry, helping visitors to imagine how tough life once was even for wealthier knights.

### Castelnau-la-Chapelle

Staring up the valley towards its former military nemesis, Beynac, Castelnau's centrepiece is a medieval castle around whose bastions a little cascade of ancient houses descends steeply to the D57 bridge.

★ **Château de Castelnau** CASTLE  
(☎05 53 31 30 00; www.castelnau.com; adult/child €10.90/5.50; ☀9am-8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-7pm Apr-Jun & Sep, shorter hours rest of year) The massive ramparts and metre-thick walls of this medieval fortress rise through the trees

above a magically huddled hamlet. Climb via narrow stairways through thick walls to a superb series of rooms displaying a fine collection of ancient weaponry interspersed with video explanations of crossbow firing, armour forging, siege warfare and more. From the keep's upper terrace are fantastic views encompassing the Dordogne bend and Castelnau's arch-rival, the Château de Beynac, 4km to the north.

In summer, save €1 by arriving before 1pm. Check the website for timetables of armour wearing, trebuchet firings and other demonstrations. Evening mystery-game tours led by costumed actors are staged four days a week mid-July to August (prebook online). Organisation is very professional.

**Château et Jardins des Milandes** MUSEUM  
(☎05 53 59 31 21; www.milandes.com; adult/child €12/7.50; ☀10am-6pm or longer Apr-early Nov & holidays) This 15th-century château, 4km west of Castelnau, houses a spirited museum to its most famous former owner, the glamorous dancer, singer and music-hall star Josephine Baker (1906-75). She took Paris by storm in the 1920s with her risqué performances, worked bravely with the French Resistance in WWII and later became an activist in the US civil rights movement.

On display are original photos, memorabilia and a fantastic costume collection, and her songs play throughout. The beautiful formal gardens host free 30-minute bird-of-prey shows.

### East of Castelnau

★ **Jardins de Marqueyssac** GARDENS  
(☎05 53 31 36 36; www.marqueyssac.com; Vézac; adult/child €9.90/5; ☀9am-8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Feb-Jun & Sep-mid-Nov, 2-5pm mid-Nov-Jan) Facing Castelnau across the valley, these famous manicured gardens are an extraordinary festival of topiary, with over 150,000 hand-clipped box hedges stretching along a rocky bluff overlooking the Dordogne. Sign-posted paths lead to the gardens' breathtaking *belvédère* (viewpoint), with sight lines to four of the area's castles. On Thursday nights in July and August the entire place flickers with candlelight (adult/child €15/7.50, 7pm to midnight).

The **via ferrata** is a 45-minute adventure shimmying around a cliff face on ledges and ropes 200m above the river. In summer the experience is included in the garden admission



fee, but check [www.viaferrata-marqueyssac.com](http://www.viaferrata-marqueyssac.com) for available dates and times.

### La Roque Gageac

VILLAGE

The picturesque village of La Roque Gageac (population 440) is a ribbon of amber stone buildings built into the narrow space between a soaring cliff face and the meandering Dordogne. High above the rooftops, the cliff is incised with an inaccessible troglodyte fort, while at the riverside are jetties for *gabarre* (barge) cruises and canoe trips.

### Domme

VILLAGE

Founded in 1281, the fortified hilltop town of Domme commands sweeping views from its high esplanade. Henry Miller, who visited in 1939, said that seeing the Dordogne from here was 'something to be grateful for all one's life'. These days, however, the place gets overrun by summer tourists, and while it's certainly an attractive spot, the region has plenty of less commercialised *bastides* that feel more authentic.



## Activities

This particular stretch of the Dordogne is particularly magnificent seen from the water...or from the air in a balloon. Bike Bus and Liberty Cycle (p620) offer cycle-kayak combo options.

### Cycling

#### Bike Bus

CYCLING

(☎05 53 31 10 61; [www.bike-bus.com](http://www.bike-bus.com); D57, Rte de Daglan, Castelnau-la-Chapelle; adult bike rental per day/week from €15/45; ☀9am-7pm Apr-Oct) Bicycle rentals including electric, tandem and children's options. Book online. The hut-office is at the base of Castelnau village, but in peak season you can also order through [ouibike.net](http://ouibike.net) to have bikes delivered to nearby towns.

### Boating

A whole series of summer operators provide canoes and kayak rental. Most deals (€13 to €28) include transport to and/or from start and end points. Popular options include Vitrac-Beynac (16km, 3½ hours), Cénac-Beynac (12km, 2½ hours) and Castelnau-Beynac (4km, one hour). West to east, providers include the following.

**Butterfly** ([www.canoes-butterfly.fr](http://www.canoes-butterfly.fr)) Between Castelnau and Château Milandes.

**Couleurs Périgord** ([www.ladordogneen-canoes.com](http://www.ladordogneen-canoes.com)) At the Fayrac railway bridge,

Vézac, south of Beynac. Climbing and caving also offered.

**Canoë Dordogne** ([www.canoesdordogne.fr](http://www.canoesdordogne.fr)) At La Roque Gageac.

**Canoë Vacances** ([www.canoevacances.com](http://www.canoevacances.com)) Around 2km southeast of La Roque.

**Canoë Loisirs** ([www.destination-perigord-loisirs.com](http://www.destination-perigord-loisirs.com)) At Vitrac.

**Canoë Carsac** (<https://canoecarsac.com>) At Carsac, 8km beyond Vitrac.

If you'd prefer to sit and watch the scenery float by, there are *gabarre* cruises (p617) from Beynac and La Roque Gageac. Mid-summer the river can get pretty crowded.

### Hot-Air Balloon Rides

The romantic experience of floating over the Dordogne in a hot-air balloon costs around €200 per head.

**Montgolfière et Châteaux** ([www.montgolfiere-chateaux.fr](http://www.montgolfiere-chateaux.fr)) At Beynac.

**Périgord Dordogne Montgolfières** ([www.perigord-dordogne-montgolfieres.com](http://www.perigord-dordogne-montgolfieres.com)) At Castelnau.

**Montgolfières du Périgord** ([www.montgolfiere-du-perigord.com](http://www.montgolfiere-du-perigord.com)) Between La Roque and Domme.

Rides typically last about an hour (standing), but allow three to four hours total, including transport and preparation. Pre-book, but remember that departures are very much weather dependent.



## Sleeping & Eating

Simple, functional but good-value little hotels include the **Hotel Pontet** (☎05 53 29 50 06; [www.hostellerie-maleville.com](http://www.hostellerie-maleville.com); rue Balme, Beynac; d €56-74; ☹closed Jan; ♿♿) and **Auberge des Platanes** (☎05 53 29 51 58; [www.aubergedesplatanes.com](http://www.aubergedesplatanes.com); La Roque Gageac; d €47-90). Each village has somewhere to eat, but consider driving further afield for less tourist-centric options, such as those in Daglan (p613).

### Les Machicoulis

B&B €

(☎05 53 28 97 27; [www.lesmachicoulis.fr](http://www.lesmachicoulis.fr); d/tr/q €60/80/100; ☀noon-9.30pm mid-Mar-Oct; ♿) In a historic stone house that's part restaurant, with appealing tree-shaded street terrace, Les Machicoulis offers cosy B&B rooms right by the entrance path to the castle in the upper section of Castelnau hamlet. The

demi-pension deal (from €40 per head) is well worth considering.

### ★ La Tour de Cause

B&amp;B €€

(☎05 53 30 30 51; <https://latourdecause.com>; Pont de la Cause; d €100-123; ☺closed Dec-Feb; 📞📺📺) Oozing with gentrified country class, this impeccable B&B is a seductive five-room getaway around 2.5km south of Castelnaud. Hammocks are strung in the truffle oaks behind the pool, and shared social spaces including the extensive apéro-garden help guests to become 'family'.

Igor's a talented chef, so it's well worth signing up for his *table d'hôte* dinners (several weekly). Minimum stays of two to five nights apply at certain periods.

### Les Hauts de Gageac

B&amp;B €€

([www.leshautsdegageac.fr](http://www.leshautsdegageac.fr); La Roque Gageac; d €129-182; 📞📺📺) This luxurious B&B, raised peacefully above the tour-bus throngs of La Roque, is set in a garden with views and a soothing swimming pool. The three indulgent rooms come with fine linens, Nespresso coffee machine and a selection of teas.

### Domaine de Monrecour

CASTLE €€

(☎05 53 28 33 59; [www.monrecour.com](http://www.monrecour.com); St-Vincent-de-Cosse; d €101-242, q/apt from €144/167; 📞📺📺) In a rural spot 2km west of Beynac, this relaxed hotel's centrepiece is

a 19th-century mansion with château-style twin towers that were added in 1914 for extra effect. The mansion houses the 10 most memorable rooms, including the grandly wood-panelled Baron Suite; 21 others are across the sizeable outdoor pool in more understated stone annexe buildings. The bistro serves affordable lunches, while the dinner restaurant is a full-on gourmet experience that's liable to cost you more than your room.

### La Belle Étoile

FRENCH €€

(☎05 53 29 51 44; [www.belleetoile.fr](http://www.belleetoile.fr); D703, La Roque Gageac; menus €29-52; ☺12.30-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 7.30-9pm Wed, closed Nov-Mar) Sophisticated French food is the trademark of this river-facing hotel-restaurant in La Roque Gageac, whose vine-shaded upper terrace has fine views across the Dordogne.

### La Petite Tonnelle

FRENCH €€

(☎05 53 29 95 18; [www.la-petite-tonnelle.fr](http://www.la-petite-tonnelle.fr); Beynac-et-Cazenac; menus €20-45; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Fri-Tue) With a sunny terrace and a cosy stone-walled dining room built against the rock, this character-filled restaurant in the centre of Beynac village serves an array of seasonal, local specialities (truffles, duck, lamb). Between meals it doubles as a cafe that's ideal for a quick espresso.

## i Getting There & Away

Beynac is 12km southwest of Sarlat, and Castelnaud 15km southwest; there is no public transport. Various parking lots cost €3.50 per day April to October but are free in low season. You can use the same parking ticket in both upper and lower Beynac should you choose to drive rather than walk up to the castle area.

## DON'T MISS

### GABARRE CRUISES

A classic way to glide past the gorgeous scenery of the Dordogne River is aboard a *gabarre*, a 50-seater flat-bottomed wooden boat based on original designs that used to transport freight before the rise of railways and road haulage. From April to October *gabarres* cruise from several points along the river, including Bergerac, Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne and the quay at La Roque Gageac, where operators include **Gabarres Caminade** ([www.gabarrecaminade.fr](http://www.gabarrecaminade.fr)) and **Gabarres Norbert** ([www.gabarres.com](http://www.gabarres.com)). Standard trips last about an hour and typically cost €10/8 per adult/child; advance reservations are recommended.

**Gabarres de Beynac** ([www.gabarre-beynac.com](http://www.gabarre-beynac.com)) does slightly cheaper 50-minute trips departing from Beynac once or twice an hour, with kids cruising for free in the mornings.

## Sarlat-la-Canéda

POP 9303

The beautiful old-town heart of Sarlat-la-Canéda boasts some of the region's best-preserved medieval architecture and is an understandably popular base for exploring the Dordogne and Vézère Valleys. The town can get heavily congested with visitors in summer, but in March or October you'll still find locals outnumbering tourists at the famed Saturday market.

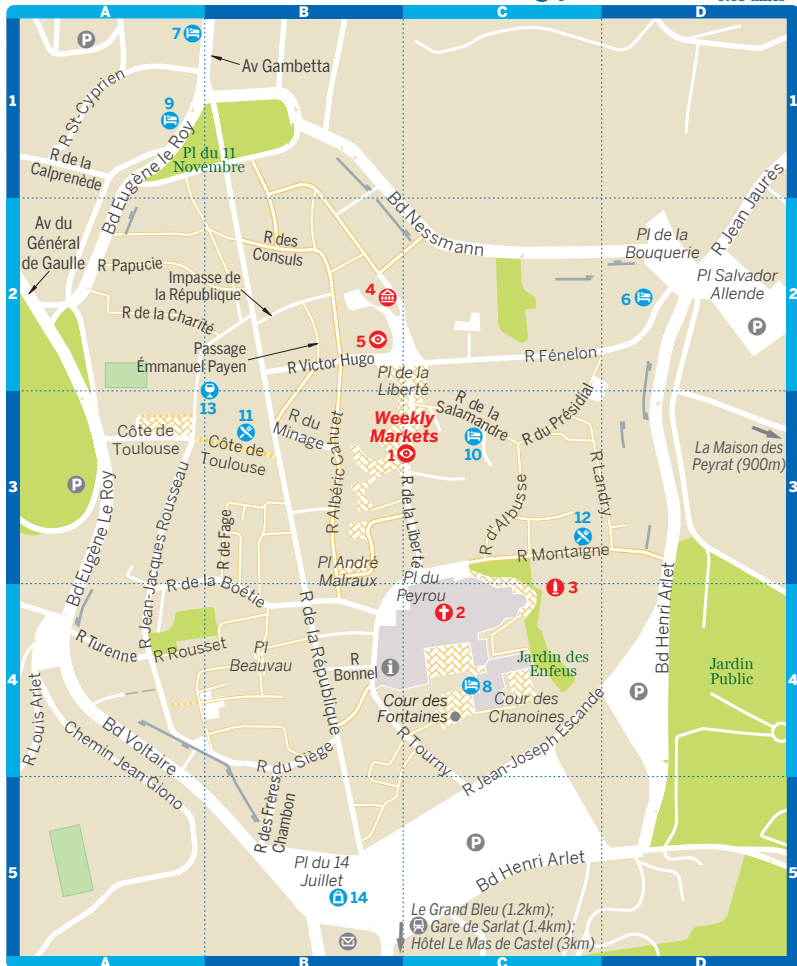
## 👁 Sights

Brilliantly complete and largely pedestrianised, Sarlat's compact medieval core is the town's main attraction. Thread your way between mostly 15th-century buildings of

## Sarlat-la-Canéda

0 100 m  
0 0.05 miles

DORDOGNE, LIMOUSIN &amp; LOT



## Sarlat-la-Canéda

📍 **Top Sights**

1 Weekly Markets..... C3

🏛️ **Sights**

2 Cathédrale St-Sacerdos..... C4

3 Lanterne des Morts..... C4

4 Manoir de Gisson..... B2

5 Marché Couvert..... B2

🛏️ **Sleeping**

6 Hôtel La Couleuvrine..... D2

7 Hôtel Les Remparts..... A1

8 Le Porche de Sarlat..... C4

9 Plaza Madeleine..... A1

10 Salamandre Apartments..... C3

🍴 **Eating**

11 Le Quatre Saisons..... B3

12 Samovar..... C3

🍷 **Drinking & Nightlife**

13 La Lune Poivre..... B2

🛒 **Shopping**

14 Night Market..... B5

Le Grand Bleu (1.2km);  
Gare de Sarlat (1.4km);  
Hôtel Le Mas de Castel (3km)

honey-coloured stone crammed into a picturesque tangle of alleys, tunnel ways and secret courtyards, emerging at the larger squares that front the sizeable **Cathédrale St-Sacerdos** (place du Peyrou; ☺ 9am-6pm) and the Renaissance **town hall**.

### ★ Weekly Markets

MARKET

(place de la Liberté; ☺ 8.30am-1pm Wed & Sat) Sarlat's Saturday market essentially fills the whole medieval centre, with a focus on place de la Liberté, facing the town hall. Produce and seasonal delicacies are at the fore, including a vast range of duck- and goose-based products. Wednesdays are smaller affairs. An atmospheric **night market** (place du 14 Juillet; ☺ 6-10pm Thu Jul & Aug) operates in summer.

### Marché Couvert

MARKET

(Covered Market; place de la Liberté; ☺ 8.30am-2pm daily mid-Apr–mid-Nov, closed Mon, Thu & Sun rest of year) **FREE** The town's covered market was ingeniously converted from a tall, golden-stone church by acclaimed architect Jean Nouvel, the most striking addition being vast grey doors and a panoramic elevator (€4, buy tickets at the tourist office) offering 360-degree views across Sarlat's countryside.

### Manoir de Gisson

HISTORIC BUILDING

(☎ 05 53 28 70 55; www.manoirdegisson.com; place des Oies; adult/child €6/3.50; ☺ 10am-5pm or later, closed Nov-Mar; 🚗) Buy tickets from the tourist office to look inside this grand, spire-turreted historic mansion, lavishly furnished in 17th-century bourgeois style. Or simply admire the architecture from the market square outside, whose traditional purpose is denoted by a trio of bronze goose statues. Live geese are still sold here in March during the Fest'Oie.

### Lanterne des Morts

TOWER

(Jardin des Enfeus) Shaped like a giant stone bullet, this 'Lantern of the Dead' behind the cathedral was built to honour the 1147 visit to Sarlat by St Bernard, one of the founders of the Cistercian order.

### 👁️ Out of Town

#### Château de Puymartin

CHATEAU

(☎ 05 53 59 29 97; www.chateau-puymartin.com; adult/student/child €9/6.50/4.50; ☺ 10.30am-6pm Apr-Sep, 2-5.30pm Oct–mid-Nov) This impressive turreted château, rebuilt around 1450, has a lavishly furnished interior consisting mostly of 19th-century furniture.

However, most visitors come to see the north tower, supposedly haunted by the ghost of the 'White Lady', imprisoned then entombed here for cheating on her unforgiving knight husband. It's hidden in forest on a hill 8km northwest of Sarlat towards Les Eyzies.

### 🛏 Sleeping

In summer, hotel rooms in central Sarlat are like gold dust and you'll need to book well in advance. If you're staying more than a couple of nights, renting an apartment makes a fine alternative, but do check details for cleaning fees and other supplements. Various options occupy brilliantly central historic stone buildings, from the functional but great-value **Salamandre Apartments** (☎ 06 43 80 51 61; www.facebook.com/armoiresdesarlat; 4 rue de la Salamandre; apt €65-95; 📶) with their studenty mishmash of styles to the luxurious high-quality indulgence of **Le Porche de Sarlat** (☎ 06 80 15 27 21; www.le-porche-de-sarlat.fr; 6 cour des Fontaines; apt €99-131; 📶 📶).

#### Hôtel La Couleuvrine

HOTEL €

(☎ 05 53 59 27 80; www.la-couleuvrine.com; 1 place de la Bouquerie; d €80-110, q €155; 📶) Visually impressive, this rambling historic hotel is built around a machicolated stone tower. The 26 rooms range from impressive heritage statements to cat-swinging impediments. Expect good-quality beds but limited lift access and fan cooling that struggles to cope on hot summer nights.

#### Hôtel Les Remparts

HOTEL €

(☎ 05 53 59 40 00; www.hotel-lesremparts-sarlat.com; 48 av Gambetta; d €57-70, tr/q €91/112; ☺ mid-Mar–mid-Nov; 📶 📶) Furniture is simple and bathrooms are a squeeze, but there's decent air-con and the prices are generally very reasonable at this bare-bones cheapie just a few paces north of the old town.

### ★ La Maison des Peyrat

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 53 59 00 32; www.maisondespeyrat.com; Le Lac de la Plane; d/tr/q from €72/112/130; ☺ Apr–mid-Nov) This beautifully renovated 14th- to 17th-century house was once a nuns' hospital and later an aristocratic hunting lodge. It's set in a garden just 800m east of Sarlat's inner ring road, with a large pool and easy parking. The 10 rooms vary greatly in size, but each is carefully described on the website and many come with exposed stone walls.

**Hôtel Le Mas de Castel**

HOTEL €€

(☎05 53 59 02 59; [www.hotel-lemasdec Castel.com](http://www.hotel-lemasdec Castel.com); rte du Sudalissant; d €85-100, q €105-135; ☺ Mar-Nov; 🏠 🍷) Like an oversized luxury B&B turned boutique motel, this 19-room get-away is 4km south of Sarlat in a semi-rural garden setting. It's peacefully low-key and a great escape if you don't mind driving to reach the nearest cafe. There's a hypermarket 1.7km away.

**Plaza Madeleine**

HOTEL €€

(☎05 53 59 10 41; [www.plaza-madeleine.com](http://www.plaza-madeleine.com); 1 place de la Petite Rigaudie; s/d/ste from €157/160/438; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This elegant hotel offers 41 spaciouly classy rooms blending modern boutique colours with subtle evocations of a bygone era. A pair of statues surveys the little pool, which is heated year-round.

 **Eating & Drinking**

Markets sell a smorgasbord of goose-based products, and an annual goose festival in early March is just one of many food-based festivals (see [www.sarlatadugout.fr](http://www.sarlatadugout.fr)).

The Hôtel La Couleuvrine (p619) has a reliable restaurant (lunch/dinner *menu* from €13/24) that is one of Sarlat's best to open daily and year-round. Many of Sarlat's other old-town restaurants are very much hit-and-miss, often seeming more concerned with packing in the punters than with high culinary standards. Consider driving out of town (p613) for something special.

A local dish to look out for is *pommes sarladaises* (potatoes cooked in garlic, parsley and duck fat).

**Samovar**

VEGETARIAN €

(☎0553312235; <https://resto-vegetarien-samovar.com>; 3 rue Montaigne; mains €10.50-13; ☺ 11am-11pm Wed-Sun, to 4pm Mon & Tue; 🍷) Samovar's hearty fresh salads, tangy meze platters and mostly vegetarian bruschettas are the ideal antidote to duck and foie-gras overload, and are served all day in a cosy little courtyard hideaway that buzzes merrily at night.

**Le Quatre Saisons**

FRENCH €

(☎06 53 59 02 59; 2 côte de Toulouse; menus €15-22; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm, closed Dec-mid-Feb) In an antique stone house that's up a stairway alley from the central visitor strip, Le Quatre Saisons offers pretty typical duck-for-tourist fare, but prices are reasonable and the most romantic tables have cross-town views.

 **Le Grand Bleu**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎05 53 31 08 48; [www.legrandbleu.eu](http://www.legrandbleu.eu); 43 av de la Gare; menus €58-130; ☺ 7.30-9.30pm Tue & Wed, 12.30-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Thu-Sat, 12.30-2pm Sun; 🍷) Chef Maxime Lebrun's creative cuisine has won a Michelin star, with elaborate *menus* using plenty of luxury ingredients from sturgeon to truffles to sweetbreads. It's near the train station, 1.5km south of the town centre.

**La Lune Poivre**

BAR

(☎06 81 58 88 30; 5 rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau; ☺ 6pm-2am Wed-Sat) Central Sarlat's most 'local' bar is a little rough-edged but serves a decent range of beers and has occasional live music.

 **Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎05 53 31 45 45; [www.sarlat-tourisme.com](http://www.sarlat-tourisme.com); 3 rue Tourny; ☺ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year; 🗺) Guided tours (adult/child €7/4) run mid-May to mid-October, at 10.30am daily in French and at 2pm Thursday in English.

 **Getting There & Around****BICYCLE**

Rent bicycles from **Liberty Cycle** (☎07 81 24 78 79; [www.liberty-cycle.com](http://www.liberty-cycle.com); D704; bike per day/week €22/100, electric bike €35/160; ☺ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct), 3km southeast of central Sarlat, 1km east of the train station. Summer bike-kayak combos cost adult/child €34/20.

**BUS**

At least daily (11.10am), bus 6 runs from the train station to Souillac on the Limoges-Cahors railway line, returning at 1.45pm.

**CAR**

Virtually all of the medieval centre is closed to traffic, which has to circle the town anticlockwise. Off this de facto ring road, place Salvador Allende has free parking November to March but costs €2 for (the maximum) three hours in season. On av Général de Gaulle, place 19 mars 1962 is free mid-September to mid-June. Some smaller car parks that are free year-round are shown in blue on the [www.sarlat.fr/stationnement parking map](http://www.sarlat.fr/stationnement parking map).

**TRAIN**

Sarlat train station, 1.7km south of the cathedral, is the eastern terminus of a dead-end line from Bordeaux (€28.70, 2½ hours, six daily) via Bergerac (€13.50, one hour). Change at Le Buisson (€7.50, 30 minutes) for Les Eyzies.





★ **Gouffre de Proumeyssac** CAVE  
 (☎05 53 07 27 47; www.gouffre-proumeyssac.com; Audrix, Le Bugue; adult/child €10.90/7.60, incl basket ride €19.40/13.10; ☉ hours vary, closed Jan) Highly impressive for its 'crystal cathedral' of stalactites, this 40m-high cavern comes to life in very professional 40-minute tours whose light shows beautifully illuminate geological formations, while a unique dangling basket (in which you can ride) descends through 'the devil's hole'. Non-French speakers will find it well worth spending €1 extra for the audioguide. Book ahead in summer. It's 3.5km south of Le Bugue.

**Domaine de Campagne** PARK  
 (D706; ☉ 10am-dusk, closed Dec-Feb) **FREE** The picture-perfect castle of Campagne, now an occasional exhibition space, is the centre-piece of a beautiful park full of mown lawns, trickling streams and splendid mature trees, including several giant sequoias. It's lovely for a quiet stroll and totally free to enter.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Au Bon Accueil** B&B €  
 (☎05 53 63 30 97; www.au-bon-accueil-limeuil.com; Limeuil; d €80; ☉ Apr-Nov; 🍷 🍷) Right at the heart of upper Limeuil, this trusty wisteria-fronted restaurant offers four B&B rooms in a nearby historic building, recently redecorated in moodily modernist fashion.

**Le Moulin du Porteil** B&B €€  
 (☎05 53 54 48 73; www.moulin-du-porteil.com; rte de Le Bugue, Campagne; d incl breakfast €80-100; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Jessica and Stéphane have created a perfect blend of comfortable, family-friendly B&B and well-priced yet artistically imaginative regional restaurant (lunch/dinner *menus* €18/26.50). It's between Campagne and Le Bugue, set in an expansive garden with adults' and kids' pools.

**Chez Julien** FRENCH €€  
 (Le Restaurant de l'Abbatiale; ☎05 53 63 21 08; Paunat; mains from €17; ☉ Thu-Sun) Impeccable traditional food – escargot, scrumptious scallops – created by a master chef and served in the idyllic setting of a presbytery with its terrace facing the grand old abbey church at Paunat (aka Paunac), a stone hamlet 6km northwest of Limeuil.

## Les Eyzies & Around

POP 1116

This cute if unashamedly tourist-centric little town (officially 'Les Eyzies-de-Tayac-Sireuil')

hugs an impressive V-shaped curl of overhanging cliffs, and makes the ideal starting point for visiting the main prehistoric cave sites of the Vézère Valley.

## Sights

Save money with various combo-ticket deals.

### LES EYZIES TOWN

Start a visit by staking your place in the queue at the Font-de-Gaume ticket booth (p623). Once you know the time slot for your cave visit, backtrack 800m down the D706 to the free car park, walk across a glass-sided footbridge and visit the free, modernist exhibition centre **PIP** (Pôle Internationale de la Préhistoire; www.pole-prehistoire.com; ☉ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-5.30pm Sat Sep-Jun, 9.30am-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug) **FREE**, where an excellent, succinct video introduces Cro-Magnon culture.

**Musée National de Préhistoire** MUSEUM  
 (☎05 53 06 45 65; www.musee-prehistoire-eyzies.fr; 1 rue du Musée; adult/child €6/free; ☉ 9.30am-5.45pm daily Jul & Aug, to 4.45pm Wed-Mon Sep-Jun) A full-sized mammoth welcomes visitors to this world-class collection of prehistoric-human cultural artefacts, Stone Age tools, weapons and jewellery, plus skeletons of animals that once roamed the Vézère. A collection of carved reliefs on the 1st floor includes a famous frieze of horses and a bison licking its flank. The building itself combines modernist design with a curious location partly cut into the cliff face.

Free entry for EU citizens under 25 years and for all on the first Sunday of each month.

**Abri Cro-Magnon** MUSEUM  
 (☎05 53 13 58 54; www.abri-cromagnon.com; 2 chemin de Cro-Magnon; adult/child €7/4; ☉ 10am-5pm or later Apr-Nov) The cave where the first Cro-Magnon remains were found back in 1863 now has a decent little museum with interactive displays.

### EAST OF LES EYZIES

Visitor numbers are extremely limited for the celebrated cave sites Font de Gaume (78 people per day) and Combarelles (42 per day). For either, tickets must be purchased in person the same day at the Fond de Gaume sales kiosk, 1km east of Les Eyzies. The kiosk opens at 9.30am, but in summer people often start queuing as early as 6am to be sure of getting in. Seats are provided outside the door, but they're not covered. It's one ticket

per adult/child present, so you cannot send one person to buy on others' behalf. However, you can buy tickets – if available – for both sites plus the Abri de Cap Blanc; all three together cost €24.50. EU citizens under 26 years can visit for free but must still queue for tickets.

The kiosk also deals with visits to other rarely open caves, including Abri de Laugierie-Haute (10am Monday), Abri du Poisson (noon Tuesday), Abri du Moustier (10am Thursday), Gisement de la Ferrassie (2.30pm Thursday) and Gisement de la Mi-coque (10am Tuesday), all in French.

No tickets? Then visit Font de Gaume virtually on <http://font-de-gaume.monuments-nationaux.fr>.

### ★ Grotte de Font de Gaume HISTORIC SITE

(☎05 53 06 86 00; [www.sites-les-eyzies.fr](http://www.sites-les-eyzies.fr); 4 av des Grottes; adult/child €11.50/free; 🗺️guided tours 9.30am–4pm Sun–Fri) This extraordinary series of caves contains the only original Cro-Magnon polychrome (as opposed to single-colour) paintings still open to the public. Dating back about 14,000 years, the more than 200 delicately engraved painted figures include bison, reindeer, horses and mammoths, though only about 25 are included in the 45-minute torch-lamp tours. Departures in English are usually at 11.15am (maybe 4pm too).

### Grotte des Combarelles HISTORIC SITE

([www.sites-les-eyzies.fr](http://www.sites-les-eyzies.fr); adult/child €10/free; 🗺️guided tours 9.30am–5.30pm Sun–Fri) This long, narrow cave is renowned for its animal engravings, notably mammoths, horses, reindeer and human figures plus a fantastic mountain lion that seems to leap from the rock face. Buy tickets at Font de Gaume, then drive 1.5km further east to the entrance, arriving 10 minutes before the time slot on your ticket.

### Abri de Cap Blanc HISTORIC SITE

(☎05 53 59 60 30; [www.sites-les-eyzies.fr](http://www.sites-les-eyzies.fr); adult/child €8/free; 🗺️guided tours 10am–4pm, to 4.30pm mid-May–mid-Sep) While most of the Vézère's caves contain engravings and paintings, this overhanging cliff face contains a handful of unusual large carvings in relief, shaped using simple flint tools some 14,000 years ago. The frieze of horses and bison is a fascinating complement to the caves, albeit on a smaller scale. It's 7.5km east of Les Eyzies. Tickets are available on-site or at the Font de Gaume ticket office.

## NORTH OF LES EYZIES

### ★ Grotte de Rouffignac

HISTORIC SITE

(☎05 53 05 41 71; [www.grottederouffignac.fr](http://www.grottederouffignac.fr); adult/child €7.90/5.20; 🕒9–11.30am & 2–6pm Jul & Aug, 10–11.30am & 2–5pm Apr–Jun, Sep & Oct, closed Nov–Mar) Hidden in woodland 18km north of Les Eyzies, this unusually large, wide cave system includes 8km of tunnels on three levels, of which visits cover around 1000m by electric train. Highlights include a rare frieze of 10 mammoths, and the 'Great Ceiling' with more than 65 figures from ibex to aurochs. You'll also see 17th-century graffiti and the dens of long-dead cave bears.

Buy tickets in person at the cave entrance on the day of your visit. In July and August arrive by 9am to get tickets for any time that day, but in other months afternoon tickets are only available after 2pm.

### 🚣 Activities

From April to September, canoe and kayak trips and rentals are available from **Ani-mation Vézère** ([www.vezere-canoe.com](http://www.vezere-canoe.com)) and **Canoës Vallée Vézère** ([www.canoesvalleevezere.com](http://www.canoesvalleevezere.com)), on opposite sides of the river bridge at the northern end of town.

### 🍴 Sleeping & Eating

#### Hôtel Le Cro-Magnon

HOTEL €

(☎05 53 06 97 06; [www.hotel-cromagnon.com](http://www.hotel-cromagnon.com); 54 av de la Préhistoire; d €70–90; 📶📶📶) Behind a pretty wisteria-clad façade, this old-world hotel has a beamed restaurant, comfy sitting areas and a tree-shaded garden but is most unusual for the upper corridors built straight into the rock face. Decent-sized rooms are comfortable if unsophisticated, with pastel decor in varying states of renovation.

A building on this site was once the ferryman's cottage in whose foundations was discovered the region's first Cro-Magnon artefacts. It's been a hotel since 1868. Its latest owners, Flemish-born Jan and Ruud, reopened the place in 2020 just before the Covid-19 virus shut down tourism across France, their unlucky adventure featuring on a Belgian reality TV show.

#### Hôtel des Glycines

HOTEL €€

(☎05 53 06 97 07; [www.les-glycines-dordogne.com](http://www.les-glycines-dordogne.com); 4 av de Laugierie; d from €145; 🕒Jan–mid-Nov; 📶📶📶) Les Eyzies' poshest pad has contemporary-meets-antique styling, a beautifully manicured park and both a gastronomic restaurant and a bistro, the latter

## **i** CAVE VISITS

The region's *grottes* (caves) can be called *gouffres* (chasms) when they're open from above or *abris* (shelters) when they're lengths of undercut cliff. *Abris* are often partly sealed by walls. Prehistoric art has been found in more than 80 known sites here, including some 25 that are open to the public. By far the most famous is Lascaux (p625). What you'll see there is a (remarkably good) copy; if you want originals, try one of the following.

- ➔ Font de Gaume (p623) or Combarelles (p623) – classic animal images as polychromatic paintings and incised scratchings, respectively. Note that both sites have very limited capacity and once you're inside the caves are lit only by the guide's torch.
- ➔ Grotte de Rouffignac (p623) – plentiful paintings plus a subterranean train ride.
- ➔ Gouffre de Padirac (p626) – visit by subterranean boat ride.
- ➔ Abri de Cap Blanc (p623) – prehistoric animal forms roughly sculpted in 3D.

Many other *abris* have been used as storage and/or protection sites for millennia, with some occupied well into the Middle Ages.

- ➔ **Maison Forte de Reignac** (☎ 05 53 50 69 54; www.maison-forte-reignac.com; adult/child €8.20/4; ☀ 10am-8pm Jul & Aug, reduced hours rest of year, closed Dec–mid-Feb) – a very photogenic fortified cliff mansion 8km northwest of Les Eyzies, complete with historic furnishings.
- ➔ **La Roque St-Christophe** (☎ 05 53 50 70 45; www.roque-st-christophe.com; Peyzac-le-Moustier; adult/child €9.50/5; ☀ 10am-5.30pm or later) – these ledge-terraces, 2km further upriver, are vastly longer than at Reignac but without walls or medieval decor.
- ➔ Abri Cro-Magnon (p622) – the modest cave whose finds of ancient bones gave us the local name for early modern humans.

If what you want from your cave experience is beautiful stalactites, head to grand, professionally lit Gouffre de Proumeyssac (p622) or the less dramatic Grottes de Maxange (p614) to see unusual little 'eccentrics' growing in non linear directions.

### Visiting Tips

- ➔ Summers are crowded and some sites close in winter; spring and autumn are ideal.
- ➔ Each site has its own rules for ticket acquisition; check websites. Where possible, book your time slot in advance.
- ➔ Visits are usually fixed-period tours, so you can't leave part way.
- ➔ Same-day ticket sales typically stop at least an hour before official closing times.
- ➔ Caves are generally around 12°C, so dress appropriately.

-serving *bib-gourmand* lunches. The on-site spa costs extra.

It's beside the main road, close to the train station.

### Au Vieux Moulin

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 53 06 94 33; www.moulindelebeune.com; 2 rue du Moulin Bas; menus €29-39; ☀ 7-8.30pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct) Reserve ahead for a dinner spot at this renovated water mill where French classic cuisine includes truffle- and foie-gras-based dishes and beef Rossini. It's part of the stream-side Moulin de la Beune, a hotel (doubles €76 to €96) tucked into a quiet garden area between the main road and Les Eyzies' cliffside village lanes.



## Drinking

### Carpe Diem

BAR

(39 av de la Préhistoire; ☀ noon-9.30pm Apr-Sep, shorter hours Mar & Oct) Around 50 beers from Orval to Proper Job are available to sip on a sunny terrace staring up at the cliff houses on Les Eyzies' main drag.

It's good for pub-grub meals too, notably seasonal mussels.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Les Eyzies is 21km west of Sarlat, on the D47. The train station is 700m north of town. Six daily trains on the Agen–Périgueux route stop here. Change at La Buisson for Sarlat.

## Montignac & Lascaux

POP 2823

Though best known for the Grottes de Lascaux just outside town, Montignac has a crumbling medieval fortress and arching bridges very attractively spanning the Vézère. The tiny lanes of the old city sit on the river's west bank, while many hotels are on the east side, near the Lascaux ticket office and place Tourny.

### Sights

Lascaux has often been referred to as the prehistoric equivalent of the Sistine Chapel, and it's a fitting comparison. A replica of the most famous sections of the original cave, known as Lascaux II, was created a few hundred metres away in 1983, and this served as the principal site open to visitors until Lascaux IV opened in 2016.

### Lascaux IV

HISTORIC SITE

(International Centre for Cave Art; ☎05 53 50 99 10; www.lascaux.fr; Montignac; adult/child €20/12.90; ☉8.30am-6pm Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar, closed Jan) Lascaux, 2km southeast of Montignac, is home to France's most famous prehistoric paintings. Though the original cave was long ago closed for its protection, Lascaux IV is a cutting-edge copy. Using laser technology and 3D printing, the exact contours, engravings and nearly 600 paintings have been reproduced to the millimetre, and the result feels remarkably like a real cave – it's damp, dark and chilly, and the whole experience can be spine-tingling.

After the hour-long cave visit, you're turned loose with a tablet to explore the excellent Lascaux Studio, where life-size renderings of all the major scenes are given context with superimposed images. There's a multimedia show, a 3D film and an interactive gallery examining relationships between prehistoric and modern art.

Online reservations (advisable) can be made up to two days ahead. A certain number of same-day tickets are sold on-site, so if you show up bright and early you might still get in without prebooking. Various combination deals offer reduced entry fees to nearby, related sites.

### Sleeping & Eating

#### Hostellerie La Roseraie

HOTEL €€

(☎05 53 50 53 92; www.laroseraie-hotel.com; 11 place d'Armes, Montignac; d €90-197, tr/q from €120/176; ☉Apr-late Oct; 🍷🍷) This mansion boasts its own gorgeous rose garden, set

around a palm-fringed pool, and the terrace is a delight. Room decor veers towards a hearts-and-flowers feel.

#### Le Triskell

CAFE €

(☎05 53 50 15 85; 1 rue du 4 septembre, Montignac; galette/menu from €8/16; ☉noon-3pm & 7-10pm Thu-Tue) This popular little crêperie offers not just delicious savoury-filled pancakes and generously loaded salads but also fine-weather rooftop seating with views out across the river...once you've handled the spiral stairs to get up there.

#### UniVert

VEGETARIAN €

(☎06 33 22 20 68; 7 place Carnot, Montignac; mains €8-14; ☉9.30am-3pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun, to 6pm or later Jul & Aug) This simple little *salon de thé* serves meat-free plates, including well-garnished quiches, and makes a pleasant choice for a terrace coffee facing the church.

### Getting There & Away

Montignac is 25km northeast of Les Eyzies on the D706. Without your own wheels, the only transport is school-day bus services from place Tourny to Sarlat at 7.22pm (returns from Sarlat's place Pasteur at 5.55am) and to Brive-la-Gaillarde at 6.43am (returning at 6.12pm).

## Upper Dordogne Valley

East of the A20, the Dordogne Valley and surrounding plateaux continue to be blessed with delightful villages and small towns. The region (www.vallee-dordogne.com) is generally less heavily toured than the Sarlat area, though ever-popular Rocamadour is a very notable exception.

### Rocamadour

POP 626

It's hard to resist a little gasp as Rocamadour first swings into view, its rooftops and shrines clamped dramatically to a plunging rock face of the Alzou Gorge. Most magical at sunset, the scene is topped by a dainty little 14th-century **château** on the overhanging cliff-top above. The site is named for St Amadour, a possibly mythical hermit said to have witnessed the death of St Paul. Amadour's body was found here in the 1160s, miraculously un-decayed some 700 years after his supposed death. Then in 1170 Henry II of England was miraculously cured here, making the place a major European pilgrimage site. On holy days in the Middle Ages as many as 30,000 people might have come



seeking favours from the tiny statue of the Virgin in its cliffside sanctuary.

Today, in summer, tourist crowds outnumber pilgrims, but the site remains holy and is an especially fascinating delight in the quieter months.

## Sights & Activities

Rocamadour is raised above the river on three main levels, with the Sanctuaires around halfway down from the clifftop castle towards the main commercial thoroughfare. The latter is crammed (just as in the pilgrims' heyday) with souvenir shops, but it remains appealing, with original medieval gateway remnants.

Around 1.5km northeast of the castle, L'Hospitalet is a tourist-oriented hamlet most useful for its overflow car parks, though a minor cave-art site beneath lures visitors to stay longer.

**★ Sanctuaires** HISTORIC SITE  
(☺ 9am-6.30pm) **FREE** The spiritual heart of Rocamadour, this sturdily walled complex consists of seven 12th- to 14th-century chapels built into the rock face, arranged around the central courtyard where St Amador's body was recovered. The highlight is **Chapelle Notre Dame** containing the tiny, miracle-working **Vierge Noire** (Black Madonna), carved from walnut in the 12th century. Overhead, the 9th-century iron bell is said to have rung on its own whenever one of the miracles occurred.

From the main street, access is by the **Escalier des Pelerins**, 223 wide steps that the pious once traversed on their knees. Or by **elevator** (Ascenseur; one-way/return €2.10/3.10; ☺ 10am-5pm Oct-Jun, 9am-7.30pm Jul-Sep). To the clifftop you could take the **funicular** (Ascenseur Incliné; www.ascenseurincline-rocamadour.com; one-way/return €2.60/4.20; ☺ 9am-6pm or later Apr-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Nov-Feb, closed Jan) or walk the **Chemin de Croix** (Stations of the Cross pathway).

**★ Gouffre de Padirac** CAVE  
(☎ 05 65 33 64 56; www.gouffre-de-padirac.com; Padirac; adult/child €15/10.50; ☺ hours vary, closed mid-Nov-Mar) Descend through a 75m-deep, 33m-wide chasm, then take a boat ride on 1km of underground waterways to see some of France's spangliest underground caverns and the **Lac des Grands Gours**, a 27m-wide subterranean lake. Prebook online for the 90-minute visit, which starts 15km north-east of Rocamadour.

**Chemin de Croix** WALKING  
This classic tree-shaded walking route zig-zags up from the sanctuaries to the castle, taking around 15 minutes. En route 'stations of the cross', some in mini caves, depict biblical scenes retelling the story of Christ's crucifixion. In comparison to that suffering, the sweaty climb doesn't seem so bad. There's little to see in the castle, but the clifftop views are superb.

A quieter alternative path leads back down to the Cité from beside the best viewing platform, 500m northwest of the castle.

## Sleeping & Eating

A couple of very special accommodation options lie in the surrounding region. If you've packed a picnic, enjoy it with fine views from the clifftop panorama points.

**Hôtel Le Troubadour** HOTEL €  
(☎ 05 65 33 70 27; www.hotel-troubadour.com; Belveyre; r €65-145; ☺ closed mid-Nov-mid-Feb; ☺ ☺ ☺) Choose from 10 rooms with unfussy Mediterranean vibes or several spacious self-catering cottages dotted about the expansive farmstead grounds, 250m off the D673 between Rocamadour (2.2km) and the train station (2.7km).

**★ Moulin de Latreille** B&B €€  
(☎ 09 65 22 04 03; www.moulindeatreille.com; Calès; d €120; ☺ mid-Mar-Oct; ☺) From Calès, 13km west of Rocamadour, signs lead down, down, down on a 2km dead-end lane. Just when you might have given up, there it is, a painstakingly restored 13th-century watermill in gorgeous seclusion at a bend of the River Ouyse. Three expansive rooms and a shared lounge make a very comfortable showcase for antique furniture upcycled by the British designer-owners.

**Hôtel Beau Site** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 05 65 33 63 08; www.beausite-rocamadour.com; La Cité; d €105-165; ☺ closed Nov-mid-Feb; ☺) The most comfortable of three hotels in the heart of Rocamadour, Beau Site occupies an updated medieval mansion opposite the lift base. Decor varies from room to room, the restaurant has a beautiful tree-shaded terrace and guests get shared use of a swimming pool in a co-owned hotel 1km away.

**Château de la Treyne** CASTLE €€€  
(☎ 05 65 27 60 60; www.chateaudelatreyne.com; Lacave; r €320-1300; ☺ Apr-early Nov; ☺ ☺ ☺) As you drive across the single-lane D43 bridge between Souillac and Rocamadour you might

spot a turret of this dream-hotel peeping through riverside woodland. It boasts 17 indulgent rooms, many with four-poster beds. The Michelin-starred cuisine is served in a stunning Louis XIII dining room or on a candlelit terrace teetering on the cliff-top, high above the Dordogne. It's near Pinsac village.

## **i** Getting There & Around

Rocamadour-Padirac train station on the Figeac–Brive line is 5km northeast. By car, Rocamadour is 59km north of Cahors, 51km east of Sarlat. The closest car parks (payable April to October) are P2/Le Château on the cliff-top by the castle and P5/La Vallée on the valley floor. Though the latter is barely 500m from La Cité, you could use the little **tourist train** ([www.lepetittrainderocamadour.com](http://www.lepetittrainderocamadour.com); one-way/return €2.50/3.50, child €1.75/2; ☺ 10.30am–7.30pm Apr–Sep) to cover the distance.

## Martel

POP 1647

Known as *la ville aux sept tours* (the town of seven towers) for its turret-topped skyline, Martel flourished from the 12th century as a crossroads market town under the Viscounts of Turenne, later gaining considerable wealth as a 19th-century truffle centre. The enchanting town retains plenty of historic architecture in its pedestrianised centre and, though hardly raucous, has enough cafe life to make it a good base for touring the Upper Dordogne.

## **o** Sights & Activities

### Place des Consuls

SQUARE

Martel's central square is home to the former fortress of the viscounts, **Hôtel de la**

**Raymondie**, and is filled by a great wooden **market hall** that comes to life on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

### **Chemin de Fer Touristique du Haut-Quercy**

RAIL

(☎ 05 65 37 35 81; [www.trainduhautquercy.info](http://www.trainduhautquercy.info); adult/child diesel train €8.50/5.50, steam train €11/7; ☺ Apr–Sep) One-hour return tourist-train trips from Martel cross a 35m-high viaduct and take a line section cut into a precipitous cliff face at Mirandol, where there's a much-appreciated photo halt. Several times daily in August (except Saturdays) there are steam-pulled services, but these are increasingly rare in other months; see the website for details.

At St-Denis-près-Martel you can connect with SNCF trains on the Rodez to Brive-la-Gaillarde line.

## **🛏** Sleeping & Eating

### Relais Sainte-Anne

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 65 37 40 56; [www.relais-sainte-anne.com](http://www.relais-sainte-anne.com); rue du Pourtalet; r €95–275; ☺ mid-Apr–mid-Nov; 🚰 🚿) Just 250m south of the main square via peaceful rue des Mirepoises, the Ste-Anne is central Martel's top choice, with 16 individually decorated rooms that blend country comforts with contemporary flair.

### ★ Manoir de Malgorse

B&B €€

(☎ 05 65 27 14 83; [www.manoir-de-malgorse.fr](http://www.manoir-de-malgorse.fr); Cuzance; d €160–230, ste €290–350; ☺ Apr–Oct; 🚰 🚿) Set in five private hectares 8km northwest of Martel, this 19th-century country mansion adds luxury to history with a chic combo of soothing colours and fluffy fabrics,

## WORTH A TRIP

### DAY DRIVES FROM MARTEL

A very varied, if busy, 90km driving loop starts by heading south for an early-morning visit to Rocamadour (p625). Next, veer northeast to the Gouffre de Padirac (p626) caves (prebook) and on to the pretty hamlet of **Autoire**, where a 1km-each-way hike takes you to a 30m waterfall. Afterwards, drive north to the impressive **Château de Castelnau-Bretenoux** (☎ 05 65 10 98 00; [www.castelnau-bretenoux.fr](http://www.castelnau-bretenoux.fr); Prudhomat; adult/child €8/free, parking €2; ☺ 10am–12.30pm & 2–4.30pm Sep–Jun, 10am–6pm Jul & Aug, closed Tue Oct–Mar), and return along the Dordogne's south bank via adorable **Carennac**, a riverside cluster of amber stone houses enfolding the 16th-century Château du Doyen, its free museum and church fronted by a magnificent tympanum.

For a shorter, if more winding, 60km circuit drive, north to historic **Turenne**, the striking château-topped town from which quasi-independent viscounts once ruled a huge swath of southwestern France. Then head east to the red-stone village of **Collonges-la-Rouge** and back via the one-street castle hamlet of **Curemonte** that crests a ridge above the River Sourdoire.

plus the possibility of aromatherapy and private yoga lessons.

### Petit Moulin

BISTRO €€

(☎ 06 59 59 27 66; [www.facebook.com/lepetitmoulinmartel](http://www.facebook.com/lepetitmoulinmartel); cnr rue Duguesclin & rue Droite; lunch/dinner menu €19/30; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm; ♿) A youthful team led by chef Pablo Aubert have made this old-town wine shop into one of Martel's most inviting restaurant experiences. If you like it too much to leave, there are excellent B&B rooms in the upper floors from just €75.

### ★ Au Hasard Balthazar

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 65 37 42 01; [www.auhasardbalthazar.fr](http://www.auhasardbalthazar.fr); rue Tournemire; lunch/dinner menus from €19/29.50; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun, closed Oct-mid-Apr) Full of character and perfectly placed in Martel's old quarter, this rustic stone-walled restaurant doubles as a shop displaying the packaged high-quality victuals of local farm Les Bouriettes (foie gras, walnut oil, cassoulet, pigeon confit etc). Courtyard seating is available beneath the Tour Tournemire.

### i Getting There & Away

Martel is 43km east of Sarlat-la-Canéda, 22km north of Rocamadour. There's easy parking directly west of the old-town centre.

## Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne

POP 1163

On a tranquil bend of the Dordogne, surrounded by agricultural fields, Beaulieu has a beautifully preserved medieval quarter of curving lanes lined with timber-framed houses and smart mansions, many dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. Its Romanesque abbey church has a wonderful carved tympanum (c 1130), but photographers are drawn particularly by the Chapelle des Pénitents, a 12th-century chapel that looks particularly magical reflected in the river in the half-light of dusk. Unusually for such a rural village, there's a seasonal **youth hostel** (☎ 05 55 91 13 82; [www.hifrance.org](http://www.hifrance.org); place du Monturuc; dm HI member/non member €16/27; ☀ Apr-Oct, reception 5.30-8pm; ♿) here and access is possible by a school-day bus from Brive-le-Gaillard (€2, one hour).

Beaulieu's **market** is on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. On the second Sunday in May there's a strawberry festival.

## THE LOT VALLEY

The serpentine River Lot flows around appealing Cahors, watering the region's renowned vineyards then cutting into an arresting landscape of limestone cliffs and canyons. The region ([www.tourisme-lot.com/en](http://www.tourisme-lot.com/en)) is loosely equivalent to the old province of Quercy, a name that you'll see used widely here.

## Cahors

POP 20,800

Come for Cahors' world-beating bridge, then stay for the fabulous wine, the extensive old town and the wonderful array of great low-key dining. The historical district lies directly east of the main north-south boulevard that's named for Léon Gambetta, a French statesman born here in 1838.

### 👁 Sights

Old Cahors is densely packed with timber-fronted houses and galleried mansions built by medieval merchants and bankers. Fine examples line rue Nationale's quiet, un-gentrified southern end and the narrow side lanes leading off it. At the northern end of bd Gambetta/rue de la Barre, the 14th-century **Tour Jean XXII** is a 34m tower that belonged to the family of Cahors-born Pope John XXII (1244-1316). A little further up is a **barbican** and the **gateway portal** from the old city walls.

### ★ Pont Valentré

BRIDGE

One of the world's most distinctive medieval bridges, Cahors' Unesco-listed gem was built in the 14th century with three tall defensive towers from whose machicolations missiles could be dropped upon attackers.

On the west bank, **La Maison de l'Eau** (☎ 2.30-5.30pm weekends & holidays) **FREE** gives

### DON'T MISS

#### LIGHTS ON CAHORS

Around an hour after sunset, the cathedral's west portal appears to catch fire. The effect is part of a great little light show that has sections so subtle that many pedestrians pass by without even noticing it. In July and August only, don't miss a much larger-scale free light show that plays out on the Pont Valentré.

## CAHORS WINE

Most wines from the Cahors area ([www.vindecahors.fr](http://www.vindecahors.fr)) are indulgently bold, rich Malbec reds, though you can also find underrated Côtes du Lot dry whites and some superbly fresh 'new' experiments like those from biodynamic **Mas del Perié** ([www.masdelperie.com](http://www.masdelperie.com); Trespoux; ☀ hours vary), 7km southwest of Cahors.

Start any tasting experience in Cahors at the Malbec Lounge, picking up the free winery map *Carte du Vignoble*.

For DIY winery visits, a good base is the historic river port of **Puy-l'Évêque**, 35km west of Cahors, where there's a brilliant British-run B&B, **Le Presbytère** (☎ 06 45 45 97 41; [www.lepresbyterefr.com](http://www.lepresbyterefr.com); 5 place du Rampeau; d incl breakfast €62-72), and a couple of excellent restaurants, including the great-value **Dodus en Ville** (☎ 05 65 22 91 82; <http://auxdodus.free.fr>; rue Ernest-Marcouly; 2-/3-course menus €12.50/15; ☀ noon-2.30pm & 7-9pm Tue-Fri, 7-9pm Sat). Just 4.5km southwest of Puy-l'Évêque in the hamlet of Bru, compare Malbecs at suave **Clos Triguédina** (☎ 05 65 21 30 81; [www.jlbaldes.com](http://www.jlbaldes.com); 30min tour & tasting €5; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat) and next door at merrily unpretentious **Château Nozières** (☎ 05 65 36 52 73; [www.chateauozieres.com](http://www.chateauozieres.com); ☀ 9am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Sat), where some tasters are delivered direct from the inox tanks to your glass by petrol-style pumps. Around 9km south of Puy, very professional **Château Chambert** (☎ 05 65 31 95 75; [www.chambert.com](http://www.chambert.com); Floressas; ☀ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun) **FREE** has an unthreatening drop-in tasting room that turns into a bistro in summer. Its on a hilltop 1km east of Floressas village, where smaller **Château Laur** (☎ 05 65 31 95 61; [www.vignobles-laur.fr/en](http://www.vignobles-laur.fr/en); ☀ hours vary) is unique in creating dry 'Paradoxe' white wines from rich-red Malbec grapes.

If you lack wheels, or a sober-minded driver, Lot On Tours ([www.lot-on-tours.com](http://www.lot-on-tours.com)) offers wine-tasting trips starting from Puy-l'Évêque or Cahors (one/two/four people from €65/120/220).

basic explanations of the bridge's history. A short walk beyond is a limpid spring-fed pool of pure drinking water, the **Fontaine des Chartreux** **FREE**, where the Celtic goddess of water was once worshipped.

★ **Cathédrale St-Étienne**

CATHEDRAL

(place de la Cathédrale; ☀ 7am-6pm) Topped by twin cupolas 32m high, Cahors' 12th-century cathedral might look a little tatty from outside, but as you enter it's hard to restrain a gasp at the vast frescoed dome overhead and the remarkably wide nave leading to the richly coloured stained glass of the Gothic apse. From there a door leads into a vaulted 16th-century cloister.

On the north façade, an 1140s tympanum depicts Christ ascending surrounded by swooning angels and pious saints. The arch above sees a bizarre series of figures (and the odd horse) indulge in an orgy of stabbing, while further up humanoid faces grimace from buttress bosses.

## Musée Municipal

MUSEUM

([www.mairie-cahors.fr/musee](http://www.mairie-cahors.fr/musee); 792 rue Émile Zola) Partly celebrating locally born pointillist

painter Henri Martin (1893-1972), Cahors' renovated municipal museum was slated to open soon after the time of research.



## Activities

★ **Cahors Malbec Lounge**

WINE

(place François Mitterrand; tastings €6-16; ☀ 11.30am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Sep-Jun, 11am-7pm Jul & Aug) At this superb starting point for acquainting yourself with the rich Cahors red wines, expert staff patiently explain the region's various *terroirs* and try to figure out which drop will most suit your tastes. It's attached to the tourist office, so there's zero sales pressure; the idea is to inspire.

## Lagrézette

WINE

(☎ 05 65 35 06 12; [www.chateau-lagrezette.com](http://www.chateau-lagrezette.com); Pont Valentré; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat mid-Feb-Nov) This appealing wine showroom combines a tiny free museum of barrel-making with a chance to taste Château Lagrézette wines, a prominent Cahors brand created around the castle of the same name, rebuilt from a ruin by the former CEO of luxury brand Cartier.

## Cahors

DORDOGNE, LIMOUSIN &amp; LOT CAHORS



## Les Crosières Fénelon

BOATING

(☎ 05 65 30 16 55; [www.bateau-cahors.com](http://www.bateau-cahors.com);  
 ⌚ 9.30am Apr-mid-Oct) All-day trips by boat to St-Cirq-Lapopie (adult/child €62/37) or the vineyards west of Cahors (adult/child €59/35), with a lunch stop en route.

 Festivals & Events

## Cahors Blues Festival

MUSIC

([www.cahorsbluesfestival.com](http://www.cahorsbluesfestival.com); ⌚ early Jul) One of France's top blues festivals fills place Charles de Gaulle for four nights in early summer.

 Sleeping

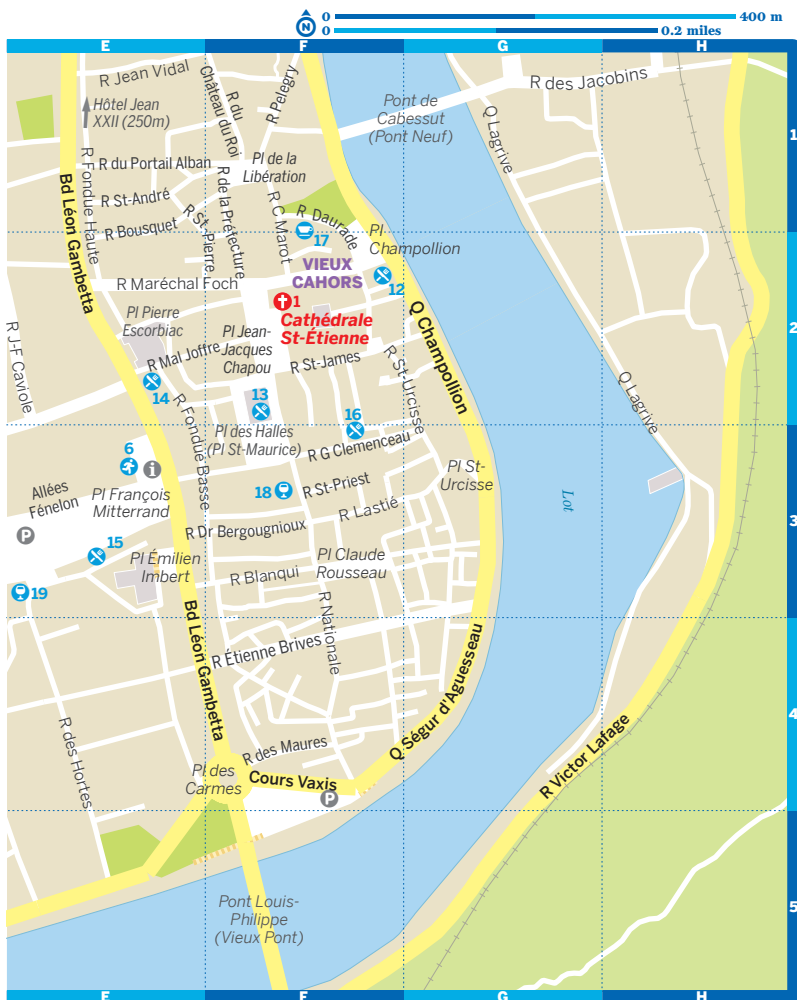
 Auberge de Jeunesse Le Chai

HOSTEL €

(☎ 05 36 04 00 80; [www.hifrance.org](http://www.hifrance.org); 52 av André Breton; dm incl breakfast €26; ⌚ closed Fri & Sat nights Dec-Feb; @ 📶) Opened in 2017, this modernist HI hostel (membership required) has a kitchen, a laundry (€3) and fabulous views over the Pont Valentré from a rooftop deck. Most dorms are en suite with only two or three beds.

Sheets are provided, but bring your own toiletries and towel. To reach town or the nearby station, use the cycle tunnel under





the railway on rue des Capucins or the pedestrian steps to rue Wilson.

### Hôtel Jean XXII

**HOTEL €**  
 (☎) 05 65 35 07 66; [www.hotel-jeanxxii.com](http://www.hotel-jeanxxii.com); 2 rue Edmond-Albé; s/d/tr/q €62/78/92/103; 🕒 reception 4.30-8pm; 📶) A few metres from the Tour Jean XXII, this excellent nine-room hotel mixes original stone, greenery and well-worn wood with a dash of metropolitan minimalism. There's a small roof terrace and a 1st-floor reading area with leather armchairs, but no lift.

### ★Hôtel Divona

**HOTEL €€**  
 (☎) 05 65 21 18 39; [www.hoteldivona.fr](http://www.hoteldivona.fr); 113 av André Breton; d €109-222; 📶) Built in 2016 with a classy yet pared-back vibe and hints of 1970s retro styling, this highly comfortable hotel's biggest appeal lies in the river-facing balconies. Each room has one, along with a coffee maker, a kettle, and use of the sauna and indoor pool. However, it's worth upgrading to much bigger 'superior' or 'privilege' rooms, notably 207, which surveys Pont Valentré.

## Cahors

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale St-Étienne..... F2  
2 Pont Valentré..... A3

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Fontaine des Chartreux..... B4  
4 Maison de l'Eau..... A4  
5 Musée Municipal..... D1

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 6 Cahors Malbec Lounge..... E3  
7 Lagrèzette..... B3  
8 Les Crosières Fénelon..... C5

### 📍 Sleeping

- 9 Auberge de Jeunesse Le Chai..... B3  
10 Hôtel Divona..... B2

### 🍴 Eating

- 11 Au Fil des Douceurs..... B3  
12 Auberges des Garbares..... F2  
13 Halle de Cahors..... F2  
14 Le Bistro d'Isa..... E2  
15 L'Ô à la Bouche..... E3  
16 Marie Colline..... F3

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 17 La Suite..... F1  
18 Le Dousil..... F3  
19 Oh My Beer..... E3

### 🎭 Entertainment

- 20 Les Docks..... B3

### Grand Hôtel Terminus

HOTEL €€

(☎05 65 53 32 00; www.balandre.com; 5 av Charles de Freycinet; d €75-115; 📞📺) Built in 1911, Cahors' original train-station hotel has retained much of the original atmosphere, including Tiffany glasswork and creaking oak stairs (though there's a lift, too). Room styles vary considerably between slightly faded floral and very pleasantly updated shades of grey.

With chandeliers and stained glass, the deeply traditional family-run restaurant, Balandre, is a gastronomic treat (two-/three-/six-course menus €36/50/69), but it only opens on Friday night and Saturday.

### Château de Mercuès

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(☎05 65 20 00 01; www.chateau-demercues.com; rue du Château, Mercuès; d/ste from €234/378, summer from €306/468; 🕒closed Nov-Mar; 📞📺📺) If money is no object, luxuriate in this partly 13th-century spired castle, a former summer home to Cahors bishops, that magnificently surveys the Lot Valley from a wooded ridge 14km northwest of the city. It's discreetly hidden in gated grounds, along with manicured gardens, a wine-ageing cellar and the world-class Le Duèze restaurant (four-/seven-course menus €98/155).



### Eating

Cafes cluster around the modern place François Mitterrand, with classic brasseries like **Le Bistro d'Isa** (bd Gambetta; lunch/dinner mains from €9.10/13; ☺cafe 8.30am-11pm, kitchen noon-3pm & 7-10pm), a great choice for stand-alone lunch fare. Loveably unpretentious family places include a couple on rue Wilson.

For expense-account gastronomy, there's an exclusive Michelin-starred restaurant at the Château de Mercuès.

### ★ Halle de Cahors

MARKET €

(place des Halles; ☺7.30am-2pm & 3.30-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun) The city's suavely updated covered market retains its original brick-arched walls on a square that's the focus for open-air markets on Wednesdays and Saturday mornings.

### Auberges des Garbares

FRENCH €

(☎05 65 53 91 47; 24 place Champollion; menu €15; ☺noon Tue, Wed & Sun, noon & 7pm Thu-Sat) Guillaume and Loetitia's bargain five-course menu of unsophisticated family cooking feels like a return to 1970s France. Better, however, are the à la carte dinner mains, such as utterly delicious *bar* (sea bass) cooked in butter and Pastis (also €15). Don't be late: lunch is at noon, dinner at 7pm.

### Marie Colline

VEGETARIAN €

(☎05 65 35 59 96; 173 rue Clémenceau; starters/mains €4.50/9; ☺noon-1.30pm Mon-Fri; 📺) This ivy-clad gem of a cafe serves a short daily-changing vegetarian lunch that might include spinach rolls, sweet-potato soup and apple-prune crumble, all house-made.

### ★ L'Ô à la Bouche

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎05 65 35 65 69; www.loalabouche-restaurant.com; 56 allée Fénelon; menus lunch €21.50-37, dinner €28-48; ☺noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) This small, contemporary restaurant takes its creative, local cuisine quite seriously, providing a gastronomic treat at prices that aren't astronomical for food of this quality.

Expect market-fresh ingredients, rich Malbec-based sauces and some inspired wine pairings.

### Au Fil des Douceurs

FRENCH €€

(☎05 65 22 13 04; 32 av André Breton; mains from €17, lunch/dinner menus from €16.50/27.50; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) Facing the eastern end of Pont Valentré, this place gives locally sourced produce an imaginative twist using anything from orange peel to oriental spices. Desserts are superb. The decor is less inspired than the food, but there's an appealing tree-shaded front terrace.



### Drinking & Entertainment

Don't miss a local wine tasting at the tourist office's Malbec Lounge (p629).

### Le Dousil

WINE BAR

(☎05 65 53 19 67; <http://ledousil.free.fr>; 124 rue Nationale; ☺ 11am-2pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat) This old-time cafe turned convivial wine bar is a lovably downmarket place to sample a glass of local Malbec from just €2.50.

### La Suite...

TEA HOUSE

(12 rue Daurade; tea/coffee from €5/1.60; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat) Wafting from this adorable little cafe come the scents of dozens of aromatic dried teas, along with those of hyacinths growing in tin cans on the tables.

### Oh My Beer

BAR

([www.oh-my-beer.fr](http://www.oh-my-beer.fr); 131 rue St-Gery; ☺ 8am-2pm & 5-11pm Mon & Wed-Sat) Friendly, unfussy beer specialist.

### Les Docks

ARTS CENTRE

(☎05 65 24 13 60; [www.lesdocks-cahors.fr](http://www.lesdocks-cahors.fr); 430 allées des Soupis) A stone's throw from the Pont Valentré, Les Docks combines an intimate gig venue, a recording studio and a youth counterculture centre.



### Information

**Tourist Office** (☎05 65 53 20 65; [www.holidays-cahors.co.uk](http://www.holidays-cahors.co.uk); place François Mitterrand; ☺ 10am-6pm or longer May-Sep, closed Sun & lunchtime Oct-Apr; 📞) Ask for the guide-pamphlet showing two dozen 'secret' gardens.



### Getting There & Away

Cahors has four to six daily trains to Paris (5½ hours) via Limoges (€19, 2¼ hours) and to Toulouse (€20.20, 1½ hours) via Montauban.

Several times daily bus 890 runs to Puy-l'Évêque (€2, one hour) and bus 889 goes to

Figeac (€2, 1¾ hours) via Tour-de-Faure (for St-Cirq-Lapopie).

## West of Cahors

It's a lovely drive following the eccentric loops of the Lot through lush vineyards to Puy-l'Évêque, then across the woodland hills via St-Martin-le-Redon (with a Romanesque church) to the very imposing rural castle ruin of **Château de Bonaguil** (☎05 53 71 90 33; [www.chateau-bonaguil.com](http://www.chateau-bonaguil.com); Bonaguil; adult/child €9.50/5; ☺ 10am-6.15pm Jul & Aug, 10am-4.45pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 2-4.45pm Mar, Oct & winter holidays). From there the cross-country route to Issigeac takes you through lovely **Monflanquin**, a fine hilltop *bastide* with rising central market square.

## East of Cahors

East of Cahors, take your time and drive at leisure along the cliff-edged Lot Valley. St-Cirq-Lapopie is the classic attraction, but other lesser-known villages are well worth brief stops too. Heading east, you might like tiny **Calvignac**, bigger **Cajarc** (a possible coffee or lunch stop), **Montbrun**, perched amid cypress trees, and **Larroque-Toirac**, with a towering castle pressed against a rocky frieze.

## St-Cirq-Lapopie

POP 205

Teetering at the crest of a sheer cliff, high above the River Lot, minuscule St-Cirq-Lapopie is a picture-perfect braid of terracotta-roofed houses and vertiginous streets tumbling down a steep hillside. As it's one of the most magical settings in the Lot, it's packed in high summer. However, in winter virtually everything closes down.



### Sights & Activities

St-Cirq has one long main street leading up to its highlights: the early-16th-century Gothic **church** (place de l'Église) and a ruined **castle**, where you'll be rewarded with an exquisite panorama across the Lot Valley. Many of the village's houses are now artists' shops producing pottery, leatherwork and jewellery.

### Grotte du Pech Merle

HISTORIC SITE

(☎05 65 31 27 05; [www.pechmerle.com](http://www.pechmerle.com); adult/child €14/8.50; ☺ 9.30am-5pm Apr-Oct) The

1200m-long Grotte du Pech Merle is one of very few caves around the Lot Valley found to have prehistoric art. Several galleries depict mammoths, bison and dappled horses, plus there are hand tracings, fingerprints, human figures and a beautifully preserved adolescent footprint, clearly imprinted in the clay floor. Booking ahead online is recommended year-round and essential on summer weekends. Visits include a 20-minute film (English and French) and a museum.

The entrance is perched on a hill, 1/2.5km by footpath/road from Cabrerets, itself 4km north of the Lot Valley by the D42; turn at Kalapca.

**Les Croisières de St-Cirq-Lapopie** BOATING  
(☎ 05 65 31 72 25; www.croisieres-saint-cirq-lapopie.com; Bouziès; 1hr tour adult/child €12.50/8.50; ☺ Apr-Oct) Runs regular river cruises on its small fleet of boats, starting from beside the functional Hotel Les Fallaises in Bouziès.

**Kalapca** OUTDOORS  
(☎ 05 65 24 21 01; www.kalapca.com; D41, Conduché; canoe rental half/full day €20/24; ☺ Apr-Sep) Hires out kayaks and canoes, perfect for experiencing the gorgeous river scenery at your own pace. It also has a trio of zip-lines (€18), one taking you a thrilling 310m right across the Conduché Valley.

Located 1km east of Bouziès at the D662-D41 junction.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Auberge de Sombrol** HOTEL €  
(☎ 05 65 31 26 08; www.lesombrol.com; r €60-95; 🏠) Staying in this classic sienna-stone town house right in the centre of the village, you'll have St-Cirq practically to yourself after dark. The eight rooms are above a restaurant (menus €19 to €32) serving Quercy-style lunches and weekend dinners featuring local lamb and mountain-river trout.

**Hôtel Le Saint Cirq** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 05 65 30 30 30; www.hotel-lesaintcirq.com; Tour-de-Faure; r €90-198; 🏠 🚰) In a vineyard facing St-Cirq across the river valley, this stylishly luxurious hotel is designed like a series of farmhouses, with terracotta-tiled floors and French windows, many with fine views. Use of the indoor pool and spa costs an extra €18 per person.

**Le Gourmet Quercynois** FRENCH €€  
(☎ 05 65 31 21 20; www.restaurant-legourmetquercynois.com; rue de la Peyrolerie; lunch/dinner

menus from €14/23; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm mid-Feb-Dec) While undoubtedly tourist oriented, this friendly, fairly priced restaurant near the top of the village includes some very well-prepared local classics, including a fine *salade quercynoise* (with sun-dried tomatoes and foie gras) and hyper-generous portions of slow-cooked lamb shank.

It's upstairs above a 'wine museum' via a sweet little open porch-terrace.

## Getting There & Away

St-Cirq is 25km east of Cahors and 44km southwest of Figeac. It is across the river from the main D662 Lot Valley road, accessed from Bouziès (4.5km northwest) or Tour-de-Faure (3km northeast) on steep narrow lanes that get seriously traffic clogged in summer. Five car parks charge a flat €5 fee (free after 7pm).

Cahors-Figeac buses stop at the Tour-de-Faure bridge. Climbing to St-Cirq, use the 1.5km footpath, not the dangerously busy D2 road.

## Figeac

POP 10,470

Charm-filled Figeac (*fee-zhak*), 70km northeast of Cahors, is a historic trading post founded by Benedictine monks. Place Champollion sits at the heart of a wonderfully well-preserved yet authentic old-town core with winding streets lined with medieval and ornate Renaissance houses, many with open-air galleries on the top floor that were once used for drying leather goods.

## Sights

★ **Medieval Figeac** AREA  
Enter the historic centre of Figeac at place Vival, where the tourist office occupies the **Hôtel de la Monnaie**, an arcaded 13th-century building once used by money changers. Purchase the excellent leaflet *Les Clefs de la Ville* (€0.30) and use it to guide yourself around Figeac's fine array of antique architecture. Rue de Balène and rue Caviale have the best examples of 14th- and 15th-century houses, while rue de Colomb has fine Renaissance *hôtels particuliers* (private mansions).

★ **Musée Champollion** MUSEUM  
(☎ 05 65 50 31 08; www.musee-champollion.fr; place Champollion; adult/child €5/free; ☺ 10.30am-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) This brilliant modern museum uses cuneiform tablets, mummies, manuscripts, videos

and assorted ancient inscription stones to celebrate the 5300-year history of the written word. It's within the birth home of Egyptologist and linguist Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832), whose efforts in deciphering the Rosetta Stone provided the key to understanding hieroglyphics. If you don't speak French, the audioguide is highly recommended (€3).

Behind the museum, the whole pavement of historic place des Écritures is inlaid with a giant black copy of the Rosetta Stone.

### Église St-Sauveur

CHURCH

(place de la Raision; ☎ 9am–6pm) Compostela pilgrims make a beeline for this partly 11th-century former Benedictine abbey church whose finest feature is the exquisite 17th-century woodwork of its side chapel, **Notre-Dame-de-Pieté**.



## Sleeping & Eating

A lively market fills place Carnot on Saturday mornings.

### Hôtel Le Quatorze

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 65 14 08 92; www.le-quatorze.fr; 14 place de l'Estang; d €69–109; ☎ closed Fri–Sun mid-Nov–Feb; 🍷) This friendly family-run hotel sits behind a small garden in a less-frequented corner of Figeac's old-town core. Rooms are very tidy, with kettle, desk and fresh new bathrooms.

### ★ Château de Viguier du Roi

HOTEL €€

(Mercure Figeac; ☎ 05 65 50 05 05; www.mercure.com; 52 rue Émile Zola; summer/winter r from €169/99; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Bringing a stylishly inventive mixture of modern and period design to one of Figeac's most beautiful historic palaces, this stunning city-centre hotel is like a museum, complete with picture-perfect courtyard garden, library and four sitting-room salons. Rooms range from big (33 sq metres) to vast (101 sq metres).

Chef Anthony Carballo brings a gastronomic twist to Quercy-style cuisine in

the hotel's revered in-house restaurant, **La Dinée du Viguier** (www.ladineeduviguier.fr; 4 rue Boutaric; mains €23–36, 3-/5-course menu €37/57; ☎ noon–2pm Sun–Fri & 7–9pm daily).

### ★ La Petite Graine

FRENCH €

(☎ 05 65 40 41 40; rue Émile Zola 41; 3-course meal €12; ☎ noon–12.45pm & 7.30–8.20pm) In a bare-stone medieval building, tuck into wholesome, daily-changing three-course set meals, sitting with jolly local pensioners at big gingham-topped tables. It's essentially a dining club (members pay less), but all are welcome. Everything is locally sourced, even the excellent craft beers (from €3).

Arrive as close as possible to opening time. Thursdays are vegetarian.

### Bazilik

BISTRO €

(☎ 06 62 00 21 98; 14 rue Baduel; menus €10–15; ☎ noon–3pm Mon–Fri; 🍷) This unusual little lunch place offers a choice of two set menus each weekday, one vegetarian, the other often featuring a Caribbean dish.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 65 34 06 25; www.tourisme-figeac.com; place Vival; ☎ 9am–7pm Jul & Aug, 9am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat Sep–Jun; 🗺)

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Bus 889 to Cahors (€2, 1¼ hours) runs four to six times daily via Bouziès and Tour-de-Faure (near St-Cirq-Lapopie).

### TRAIN

Figeac's train station is 800m south of the centre across the river. Damage from a 2018 fire still causes some problems, so for Toulouse (2½ hours) via Najac (50 minutes) you might need to start with a bus hop to nearby Capdenac. However, at least three daily trains on the line between Brive-la-Gaillarde (€16, 1¼ hours) and Rodez (70 minutes) once again stop here.





ANDREW MONTGOMERY/LOVELY PLANET ©



1. Lascaux II (p625) 2. Lascaux IV (p625) 3. Lascaux Cave (p625)  
4. Lascaux Cave (p625)



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2

THIPJANG / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## Vézère Valley Cave Art

Deep in caves of the Vézère Valley, prehistoric artists worked by the light of primitive oil torches, creating some of Europe's very first art.

### Who Were the Artists?

This early *Homo sapiens* culture is still referred to locally as Cro-Magnon, a name taken from the Dordogne cave where their remains were first discovered, though academic literature prefers the term Anatomically Modern Humans (AMH). From around 35,000 BCE they steadily displaced Neanderthals in a Europe still covered by vast ice sheets that periodically expanded and retreated. People lived a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, using the mouths of natural caves as temporary shelters while they followed the migration routes of their prey.

### What Did They Create?

The earliest-known cave art dates from before 22,000 BCE, with flint tools used to engrave mysterious geometric shapes and symbols, including female genitalia (gently described in some brochures as 'Venus' images). After 17,000 BCE, cave painting developed from simple hand tracings into complex multicoloured frescoes of leaping horses, mammoths, ibex, aurochs, reindeer and bulls. Fibre brushes, pads or sponges were used to apply mineral pigments derived from ochre (red and yellow), calcite (white), and charcoal and manganese salts (black). The same early artists also created jewellery from shells, bones, antlers and scrimshaw.

Though theories abound, nobody's sure what inspired the Cro-Magnon artists. However, their cave-painting activities seem to have come to an abrupt end around 11,000 BCE. That's around the same time as it's suspected that a comet exploded over southern Canada, leading to global temperature rises, the disappearance of continental ice sheets, mass extinctions (woolly mammoths, sabre-toothed tigers etc) and humans' transition to a more fixed, agricultural lifestyle.



4

THIPJANG / SHUTTERSTOCK ©





## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

5.36 million

### SIGNATURE DRINK

Bordeaux wines &  
cognac

### BEST URBAN BISTRO

Pickles (p645)

### BEST VINEYARD STAY

Château  
Troplong-Mondot  
(p666)

### BEST SEASIDE OYSTERS

La Canfouine au  
Canon (p669)



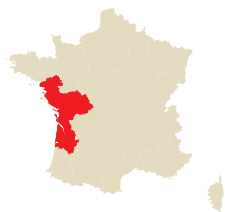
### WHEN TO GO

**May & Jun** Ducklings splash around the Marais Poitevin and it's a prime time to visit La Rochelle.

**Jun–Sep** The beaches bask in sunshine without the high-season crowds.

**Sep & Oct** Grape-harvesting season around Bordeaux; oyster and cèpe (wild mushroom) season all over.





## Atlantic Coast

**W**ith quiet roads winding through vine-striped hills and wild seashore interspersed with islands, this is where France returns to nature. More laid-back than the Med (but almost equal in sunshine), the Atlantic Coast is a place to slow down. But it does cities and culture well too. There's bourgeois Bordeaux with its old centre, rich wine culture and innovative dining scene; student-led Nantes with its fun 'n fascinating museums; and seafaring La Rochelle with aquarium, old port and offshore islands. A love of the finer things in life unites people in this region, a part of France where *art de vivre* means appreciating exceptional wine and feasting on an ocean of oysters and other sizzling fresh, salt-of-the-earth seafood.

### INCLUDES

Nantes .....	641	Bordeaux .....	657
Poitou .....	647	Around Bordeaux...	664
La Rochelle .....	649	Arcachon .....	667
Île de Ré .....	653	Cap Ferret .....	668
Cognac .....	656		





## Atlantic Coast Highlights

- 1 Bordeaux** (p657)  
Gorging on exceedingly fine architecture, art, food and wine in a Unesco-listed city that lives life to the full.
- 2 Dune du Pilat** (p666)  
Romping atop Europe's highest sand dune, followed by lunch with sensational sea-and-sand view at La Co(o)rniche.
- 3 La Rochelle** (p649)  
Scaling ancient defensive towers, sailing to Fort Bayard and encountering sharks in this sassy port city.
- 4 Île de Ré** (p653)  
Cycling smooth, flat bike paths past oyster farms and salt pans on a beautiful island.
- 5 Nantes** (p641)  
Riding on the back of a giant heron in

flight or a lumbering 60-tonne mechanical elephant.

- 6 St-Émilion** (p665)  
Tasting some of the world's most famous wines in the châteaux where they're made.
- 7 Marais Poitevin** (p648)  
Gliding through emerald-green waterways in France's 'Green Venice'.



## NANTES

POP 309,350

You can take Nantes out of Brittany (as when regional boundaries were redrawn during WWII), but you can't take Brittany out of its long-time capital, Nantes (Naoned in Breton).

Spirited and innovative, this artsy city up on the banks of the Loire has a history of reinventing itself. It was founded by Celts around 70 BCE and in 937 CE it joined the duchy of Brittany. The Edict of Nantes, a landmark royal charter guaranteeing civil rights to France's Huguenots (Protestants), was signed in Nantes by Henri IV in 1598.

By the 18th century Nantes was France's foremost port, and in the 19th century – following the abolition of slavery – it became an industrial centre; the world's first public transport service, the omnibus, began here in 1826. Shipbuilding anchored the city's economy until the late 20th century and when the shipyards relocated westwards to St-Nazaire, Nantes transformed itself into a thriving student and cultural hub.

### Sights

#### ★ Les Machines de l'île de Nantes

AMUSEMENT PARK

(☎08 10 12 12 25, 02 51 17 49 89; [www.lesmachines-nantes.fr](http://www.lesmachines-nantes.fr); bd Léon Bureau, Parc des Chantiers; adult/child €8.50/6.90, elephant ride €8.50/6.90, carousel visit & ride €8.50/6.90, carousel visit €6.50/5.30; ☉10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 2-5pm or 6pm daily Nov, Dec, Feb & Mar) Nantes' quirkiest sight is this fantasy world – a serious and seriously wacky workshop with mechanical contraptions galore displayed in plant-filled hothouses – where you can fly giant herons in **La Galerie des Machines** and prance around like a maharajah on a 12m-tall, 48-tonne **mechanical elephant** with a secret lounge in its belly. Outside, by the river, **Le Carrousel des Mondes Marins** (a gigantic funfair carousel) whisks you under the sea on the back of giant crabs, octopuses and other strange sea creatures.

#### ★ Château des Ducs de Bretagne

CASTLE

(☎02 40 02 60 11; [www.chateaunantes.fr](http://www.chateaunantes.fr); 4 place Marc Elder; adult/child €8/free; ☉château 10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, to 6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun, ramparts & moat gardens 8.30am-8pm daily Jul & Aug, to 7pm daily Sep-Jun) Forget fusty furnishings –

### NANTES CITY PASS

The **Pass Nantes** (24/48/72 hours €25/35/45), available from the tourist office and participating museums, includes unlimited bus and tram transport, entry to museums and monuments, plus extras such as a free guided tour and shopping discounts.

light-filled rooms inside the Castle of the Dukes of Brittany house multimedia-rich exhibits detailing the city's history. Look out for sobering documentation of the slave trade, and vintage scale models of Nantes' evolving cityscape.

The chateau's grassy moat gardens and rampart walk are free to meander and picnic in at leisure. Don't miss the playful summertime slide, built snug against the 15th-century ramparts, by contemporary Breton artist Tanguy Robert. Who wouldn't want to whoosh down it?

#### Musée Jules Verne

MUSEUM

(☎02 40 69 72 52; <https://julesverne.nantesmetro.pole.fr>; 3 rue de l'Hermitage; adult/child €6/2.50; ☉10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Mon, Wed-Fri & Sun, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sat Sep-Jun) Perched up high in a mansion above the river, this magical museum showcases 1st-edition books, hand-edited manuscripts and cardboard theatre cut-outs. Child-friendly interactive displays introduce or reintroduce you to the work of Jules Verne, who was born in Nantes in 1828. Signs are in French but Verne's books, such as *Around the World in 80 Days*, are so well known that it's worthwhile visiting regardless. The museum is a 2km walk downriver from the town centre.

#### Musée d'Arts de Nantes

MUSEUM

(☎02 51 17 45 00; [www.museedartsdenantes.fr](http://www.museedartsdenantes.fr); 10 rue Georges Clemenceau; adult/child €8/free, 1st Sun of month Sep-Jun & 7-9pm Thu free; ☉11am-7pm Wed & Fri-Mon, 11am-9pm Thu) Nantes' art museum, inside the historic **Palais des Beaux Arts**, was built to house the city's collection of fine art between 1891 and 1900. Today's permanent collection spans the 13th to 21st centuries and fills both the palace and the striking new Cube building, linking the palace with 18th-century Chapelle de l'Oratoire (1777). The deconsecrated chapel hosts temporary art exhibitions.



## Nantes

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Château des Ducs de Bretagne..... F2

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul..... F1  
3 Musée d'Arts de Nantes..... G1

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 4 Maisons du Monde Hôtel & Suites..... B4  
5 Nantes Centre Passage  
Pommeraye ..... B4  
6 Okko Hôtels Nantes..... E2

### 🍴 Eating

- 7 La Chorocé..... D1  
8 La Cigale..... A4

- 9 Pickles..... D1  
10 Ramen Ya..... B4  
11 Sepia..... D4  
12 Vacarme..... D2

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 13 Le Jéroboam..... D1  
14 Le Nid..... C2

### 🎬 Entertainment

- 15 Le Lieu Unique..... G3

### 🛍 Shopping

- 16 Boum Boum ..... C2  
17 Passage Pommeray ..... B4  
18 Tribü..... D2

## Mémorial de l'Abolition de l'Esclavage

MEMORIAL

(📞02 40 20 60 11; www.memorial.nantes.fr; quai de la Fosse; 🕒9am-8pm mid-Sep-mid-May, to 6pm mid-Sep-mid-May) Down by the water, 2000 brick-sized glass plaques embedded in the quay-side pavement scream out the names of slave-trading ships that regularly set sail from the port of Nantes from 1750 until the early 19th century. They form part of an emotive Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, designed in 2014 by Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko and American architect Julian Bonder. Steps lead down into a meditative tunnel beneath the quay, etched with abolitionist texts on a 90m-long glass panel.

## Musée Naval Maille-Brézé

SHIP

(📞09 79 18 33 51; www.maillebreze.com; quai de la Fosse; adult/child €8/5, incl engine room €10/6; 🕒guided visits 2.30pm & 3pm Tue-Fri, half-hourly 2.30-4pm Sat & Sun; ♿) A green stroll along Nantes' so-called **Quai des Plantes** – a string of themed 'gardens' (potted magnolias, maples, roses, fruit trees etc) interspersed with picnic tables and benches crafted from recycled wooden pallets – along the waterfront brings you to this handsome naval ship-turned-museum. Guided tours of the destroyer escort, in service from 1950, take in the engine room, weapons and detection systems, and living areas for the crew of 277 (including that all-essential-for-the-French, on-board bakery).

## Jardin des Plantes

PARK

(📞02 40 41 65 09; rue Stanislas-Baudry; 🕒8.30am-8pm Mar-Oct, shorter hours rest of year) Opened in 1860, this exquisitely landscaped park is among France's most interesting

botanical gardens. Century-old magnolia and mulberry trees, Japanese maples, tulip trees, redwoods (sequoias) and magnificent cedars tower above beautiful flower beds, duck ponds, fountains and the enchanting **Serre de l'Île de Palmiers**, a glass 19th-century hothouse filled with palm trees and decked out with tables and chairs for lounging on. There is a **children's playground** and goats to pet at the park's northern end, near the train station.

## Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul

CATHEDRAL

(📞02 40 47 84 64; www.cathedrale-nantes.fr; 1 place St-Pierre; 🕒8am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Apr, garden 8.45am-8pm, crypt 10am-7pm Jul & Aug) Inside Nantes' Flamboyant Gothic cathedral, the tomb of François II (r 1458-88), Duke of Brittany, and of his second wife, Marguerite de Foix, is a masterpiece of Renaissance art. Enjoy a moment of peace afterwards in Jardin de la Psalette, the secret cathedral garden out back from where you can also access the cathedral crypt.

## 🛏 Sleeping

For an alternative, creative roof above your head, check into Terre d'Estuaire's Les Nuits Imaginaires (www.terredestuaire.com), an itinerant project that sees glass cubes, elevated cabins and other inhabitable artworks pop up immediately west of Nantes, around Port de Cordemais in the Loire Estuary.

## Maisons du Monde Hôtel & Suites

HOTEL €€

(📞02 40 73 46 68; www.maisonsdumondehotel.com; 2bis rue Santeuil; d from €85; 📶📺🛏) Wood parquet flooring, decorative marble fireplace, exotic ostrich-feather wall decs and floral arrangements aplenty ensure a

## FOLLOW THE GREEN LINE

Meandering around Nantes, it is impossible to miss the painted pea-green line snaking along the pavement, zipping up unexpected staircases, sneaking along backstreet alleys and prancing with purpose across cafe pavement terraces. This, ingeniously, is Le Voyage à Nantes ([www.levoyageanantes.fr](http://www.levoyageanantes.fr)), an urban art trail that leads curious visitors to dozens of works of art – sculptures, contemporary art installations, stunning viewpoints, architectural works – all over the city. Many – such as sky-rise bar Le Nid (p646) or the slide built into the 15th-century ramparts of Château des Ducs de Bretagne (p641) – are amusingly playful and interactive. The trail is 12km long, but can be traced in sections too. Pick up a city map, marked with the trail, at the tourist office (p646) or simply follow the green line and see where it takes you.

warm welcome at this stylish hotel launched by the French homeware store of the same name. Its location on a pedestrian shopping street translates as quiet suites and apartments ('Stockholm', 'Zanzibar', 'Bruges' or 'Palm Springs'), and the kitchen-styled breakfast buffet (€16) is a home-from-home start to the day.

**La Maison Guého** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€  
(☎02 40 73 23 23; [www.atlantide1874.fr](http://www.atlantide1874.fr); 5 rue de l'Hermitage; d €130-150; 🍷🍷) For dedicated gourmets, this is the only place to stay. The chic B&B-styled *maison* might not be in the town centre – rather in an elegant 19th-century mansion, neighbouring the Musée Jules Verne high above the river – but its location at Nantes' finest Michelin-starred restaurant, **L'Atlantide 1874** (lunch/dinner menu €40/70), easily compensates. Rooms are bright, modern and spacious; and breakfast (€15) comes with a spectacular river view.

**Okko Hôtels Nantes** DESIGN HOTEL €€  
(☎02 52 20 00 70; [www.okkohotels.com](http://www.okkohotels.com); 15 rue de Strasbourg; d from €130; 🍷🍷🍷) Lifestyle is what four-star, design-driven Okko is all about. Eighty smart, functional rooms stack up on six floors, but it is the ground-floor 'club' with ample sofas to lounge on, iMac desktop and unlimited supply of tea, coffee and soft drinks that is the real lure. Guests mingle here over free drinks and copious nibbles every evening between 6.30pm and 9.30pm.

**Nantes Centre Passage Pommeraye** HOTEL €€  
(Mercure Hôtel; ☎02 40 48 78 79; [www.accorhotels.com](http://www.accorhotels.com); 2 rue Boileau; d from €89, ste from €119; 🍷🍷) It might be part of the Mercure hotel chain now, but Nantes' original artsy hotel continues to exude individuality with a designer

lobby sporting chic marble tables and art deco seating, and 71 rooms dressed in rich chocolate, duck egg blue and terracotta colour palettes. Breakfast can be a speedy coffee and croissant (€8), or buffet (€16).

**Hotel Sôzö** DESIGN HOTEL €€€  
(☎02 51 82 40 00; [www.sozohotel.fr](http://www.sozohotel.fr); 16 rue Frédéric Cailliand; d €110-345; 🍷🍷🍷) The architects who designed this place must have been in seventh heaven when asked to transform a graceful chapel dating from 1883 into a luxury, 24-room boutique hotel. The main features of the chapel have been retained, including the stained-glass windows, but sitting happily alongside are dozens of virgin-white angel wings, garish cartoon art and purple and red lights.

## Eating

The medieval Bouffay quarter, a couple of blocks west of the château around place du Change, is stuffed with Breton crêperies and run-of-the-mill eateries fronted by attractive pavement terraces. For excellent, modern French, delve into the non touristy areas around rue Léon Blum or rue Fouré to the south. Watch for edgy new openings on ever-evolving Île de Nantes.

★ **La Maison** BAKERY €  
(☎02 28 21 28 07; [www.maisonarlotcheng.com](http://www.maisonarlotcheng.com); 36 rue La Noue Bras de Fer; ☉8am-7.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍷) 'Eat simple, eat better' is the eco-conscious USP of this new-gen bakery and coffee shop, across the street from Les Machines de Nantes. Globetrotting owners Pierre-Antoine and Chin-Jy arrived in Nantes via Shanghai, Paris and London, and their earthy sourdough loaves, organic breads packed with nuts and grains, creative pastries and tarts are a flavoursome reflection of their global journey.

**Vacarme**

FRENCH €

(☎09 87 34 18 82; [www.facebook.com/vacarme](http://www.facebook.com/vacarme). nantes; 5 rue des Bons Français; 2-/3-course lunch menu €15/19, small plates €6.50-15; ☺11.30am-11pm Wed-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun) Tucked away on a side street in the busy Bouffay quarter, this fashionable *cave à manger* (wine bar with food) sports a fabulously retro interior (think chip-wood shelving, dark wood tables, 1960s speckled bar) and a thoroughly modern kitchen cooking up creative dishes such as flambéed mackerel with braised fennel, kumquat and caraway cream or pork with caramelised shallots and pickled turnips.

**Nazca**

SOUTH AMERICAN €

(☎02 40 35 34 30; <http://cebicheria.wixsite.com/nazca>; 31 rue Fouré; 2-course lunch menu €17, mains €16; ☺noon-1.45pm Mon-Wed, noon-1.45pm & 7.15-9.15pm Thu & Fri) Bruno Triballeau, chef at the French embassy in Bogota for 10 years, and his Colombian wife make a formidable duo at this stylish *cevicheria*. In their bright, two-room restaurant they serve Peruvian-inspired ceviche (raw, cubed, marinated fish) dishes bursting with taste and flavour, accompanied by Pisco cocktails and some lovely Chilean and Argentinian wines. When French cuisine tires, this is the address.

**Ramen Ya**

NOODLES €

(☎02 51 00 00 00; [www.facebook.com/ramenya](http://www.facebook.com/ramenya). nantes; 26 rue de la Fossé; mains €12.50; ☺noon-10pm) Chefs in canary-yellow T-shirts and bandanas add an incongruous 'fun factory' feel to this otherwise serious Japanese noodle bar, specialising in Yohokama iekai ramen. Order and pay at the entrance, then wait to be seated around the open kitchen-bar. Noodles, made with organic flour, come served in a homemade chicken and pork broth and are peppered with spinach, seaweed and your choice of topping.

**★ Pickles**

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎02 51 84 11 89; [www.pickles-restaurant.com](http://www.pickles-restaurant.com); 2 rue du Marais; 2-/3-/4-course lunch menu €18/22/30, 6-course tasting menu dinner €52; ☺noon-2pm Tue, noon-2pm & 8-10pm Wed-Fri, noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Sat, closed 3 weeks late Jul-Aug) This creative *néo-bistrot* would be right at home in Paris. Market-sourced, modern and predominantly organic cuisine by English chef Dominic Quirke (a Newcastle lad wed to a French lass) is sensational. Expect elaborate combinations fusing Asian flavours with ancient vegetables, forgotten

spices and lots of local fish – and don't be surprised if Dom comes to chat with you.

The house cocktail (€10) mixing Champagne with hibiscus syrup and Nantes-distilled Distiloire 1924 gin is the perfect prelude to any meal here, and wine pairings celebrate regional winemakers. Advance reservations are absolutely essential.

**★ Sepia**

BISTRO €€

(☎02 51 82 71 59; [www.sepia-restaurant.fr](http://www.sepia-restaurant.fr); 1bis allée de Turenne; 2-/3-course lunch menu €17/21, 2-/3-/6-course dinner menu €27/34/43; ☺12.15-1.45pm Tue & Wed, 12.15-1.45pm & 7-9pm Thu & Fri, 7-9pm Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun) ☺ Tune into France's growing movement of contemporary, eco-conscious eateries at this tiny, Scandinavian-styled neobistro. Everything (bar the sugar, spice and chocolate) used in the wonderfully creative cuisine – stacks of fresh herbs, grains and seasonal greens – is grown on small farms within a 100km radius, and zero-waste translates as a couple of daily choices for each course (including one veggie) chalked on the board.

**La Cigale**

BRASSERIE €€€

(☎02 51 84 94 94; [www.lacigale.com](http://www.lacigale.com); 4 place Gracilin; mains €16-26; ☺7.30am-12.30am) No visit to Nantes is complete without breakfast, brunch, lunch or afternoon tea at the city's legendary brasserie, a sensational feast of ceramic tile mosaics, gilt-framed mirrors and frescoed ceilings in a series of historic

**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE****GOURMET SANDWICH STOP**

With a teeny summertime pavement terrace basking in the sun and an enchanting interior bursting with antique curiosities, gourmet sandwich shop **La Chicorée** (☎02 40 35 56 38; [www.facebook.com/lachicoree44](http://www.facebook.com/lachicoree44); 13 rue Léon Blum; sandwiches €3.80-4.90; ☺10.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) is a secret locals would probably rather not share. It is the later-in-life creation of the fabulous Anne and Carole, with long careers in charcuterie and communications already under their belt. They make creatively stuffed baguette sandwiches to order (Moroccan-style chicken in a spicy rzel-hanou and dill sauce, fresh salmon with saffron...) alongside homemade soups, savoury tarts and desserts. Check Facebook for the day's menu.



salons dating to 1895. Freshly shucked Breton oysters (from €28 per dozen), decadent seafood platters (€56 to €149) and traditional French classics are served nonstop from 11.45am.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Trendy drinking areas include rue Léon Blum; rue Olivettes heading towards the river; and the rejuvenated riverbanks of Île de Nantes. The latter buzzes with atmosphere after dark when the 18 metal rings of **Anneaux de Buren** – a contemporary art installation by French artist Daniel Buren – plot out the water's edge in a rainbow of dazzling colour.

### ★ La Cantine du Voyage

BAR

(☎06 89 64 85 03; [www.facebook.com/LaCantineDeLEstuaireNantes](http://www.facebook.com/LaCantineDeLEstuaireNantes); 21 quai des Antilles; ☺ 11am–2am Tue–Sat, 11am–midnight Sun & Mon Apr–early Oct) There is no cooler place to chill with local urbanites over drinks than at this huge and trendy, seasonal pop-up bar by the water. Table football and a *pétanque* (French boules) pitch entertain the hipster masses, and the kitchen cooks up just one fixed,

#### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### WASHHOUSE BOATS

From the 17th to early 20th century, the River Erdre was dotted with dozens of *bateaux-lavoirs* – public washhouse boats or floating laundries where city dwellers could gather to wash their clothes and natter. Riverboats today are all about al fresco drinks: track down a handful of riverboats moored across the street from Gare Sud or try to beat the crowds that pack out **Le Bateau Lavoir** ([www.bateau-lavoir.fr](http://www.bateau-lavoir.fr); quai Ceineray; ☺ 5.30pm–late Mon–Sat, noon–3pm Sun Apr–Oct) on sunny days. Reminiscent of a Renoir painting with its pretty wood-decking terrace and tree-shaded green surrounds, the boat-shaped shack teetering on the water's edge serves local craft beer, organic juices, cocktails, a handsome wine selection and tasty tapas. A market-sourced lunch is cooked up on Sundays, and traditional board games coupled with music concerts provide some wonderful, old-fashioned entertainment.

wildly popular *menu* – salad followed by a feisty roast chicken and fries (lunch/dinner €11/14).

### ★ Le Jéroboam

WINE BAR

(☎02 72 02 30 47; [www.facebook.com/JeroboamNantes](http://www.facebook.com/JeroboamNantes); 21 rue Léon Blum; ☺ 6pm–2am Tue–Sat) This enchanting *bar à vin* with vintage green wood façade is the best spot in town to taste regional wines by the glass with a laid-back, hipster crowd. Should hunger strike, order a perfectly paired tartine (open sandwich). Enticing combos include curried fish with raisins and a citrus onion chutney and grilled *boudin* (black blood sausage) with caramelised shallots.

### Le Nid

BAR

(☎02 40 35 36 49; [www.lenidnantes.com](http://www.lenidnantes.com); place de Bretagne, 32nd fl, Tour Bretagne; lift €1; ☺ 2.15–10pm Wed, to 4am Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, 11.30am–1am Sun) Far more than just a bar, Le Nid (or The Nest) is an interactive art installation by Nantes artist Jean Jullien. Stools with yolk-yellow seat cushions resemble broken eggs and the bar squats inside a giant white bird, half-stork, half-heron. City views from the floor-to-ceiling windows – borrow a pair of binoculars from the bar – are predictably magnificent.

After-dark DJ sets, jam sessions and stand-up comedy inject a festive tone. Pay €1 to ride the lift to the 32nd-floor bar, nestled inside 144m-high **Tour Bretagne**, built in 1976 to house a 90,000L water reservoir.

## ★ Entertainment

### ★ Le Lieu Unique

THEATRE

(☎02 40 12 14 34; [www.lieunique.com](http://www.lieunique.com); quai Ferdinand Favre; ☺ bar 11am–8pm Mon, to 1am Tue & Wed, to 2am Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat, 3–8pm Sun) Within the one-time LU biscuit factory (crowned by an iconic angel-sculpted, domed tower, which you can ascend for €2), this industrial-chic *lieu unique* (unique place) is a cutting-edge venue for dance, theatre, art exhibitions and a mixed bag of live music. Its cafe-bar, with great music and laid-back vibe, is laptop central during the day. Deckchairs lounge by the water in summer.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎02 72 64 04 79; [www.nantes-tourisme.com](http://www.nantes-tourisme.com); 9 rue des États; ☺ 9am–7pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am–6pm Mon–Sat, to 5pm Sun Sep–Jun)

## CREATIVE SOUVENIRS

With its decorative line-up of pedestal statues representing traditional Nantais industries, 19th-century shopping arcade **Passage Pommeraye** ([www.passagepommeraye.fr](http://www.passagepommeraye.fr); off rue de la Fosse; ☺ hours vary) is a chic spot for Breton chocolate, Provençal perfumes, Le Creuset cookware and other mainstream French design.

But for unique, unusual souvenirs – many recycled and/or eco conscious – crafted by *les créateurs Nantais*, browse backstreet boutiques **Tribü** (<http://laboutiquetribu.blog.spot.com>; 4 rue de l'Hôtel de Ville; ☺ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat) ☺ and **Boum Boum** ([www.facebook.com/boumboumnantes](http://www.facebook.com/boumboumnantes); 14 rue Armand Brossard; ☺ noon-6pm Mon-Fri) ☺. Both showcase locally designed fashion accessories, paper products, jewellery, scented candles, dried floral bouquets, decorative prints and so on. 'Made in Nantes' highlights at the latter include personalised upcycled sneakers and funky shoe tassels by Raoulee, funky cushions by C'est Bien Jolii!, ceramics by Minuit Passé and vintage-inspired limited prints evoking various colourful Atlantic Coast icons by Nantes' inspirational Atelier Lugus.

## i Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Aéroport International Nantes-Atlantique** (NTE; [www.nantes.aeroport.fr](http://www.nantes.aeroport.fr)), 12km south-east of town, is served by budget airline easyJet and others.

### BUS

**Aléop** ([www.aleop.paysdelaloire.fr](http://www.aleop.paysdelaloire.fr)) buses linking Nantes and Poitiers (line 7; €2.40, three hours, two daily) use **Gare Routière Baco** (Bus Station; allée de la Maison Rouge), next to the Hôtel Dieu city bus and tram stop in town. **Eurolines** (☺ 08 92 89 90 91; [www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com); allée de la Maison Rouge; ☺ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 10am-noon & 1-5.30pm Wed, 9am-12.30pm & 1-5pm Sat) buses to/from elsewhere in France and Europe also depart from here.

**FlixBus** ([www.flixbus.fr](http://www.flixbus.fr)) and **BlablaBus** ([www.blablacar.fr/bus](http://www.blablacar.fr/bus)) lines to/from other French and European cities depart from the suburban **bus station** (2-4 rte de Paris) in Haluchère-Batignolles, an 18-minute tram ride (line 1, direction Beaujoire/Ranzay) northwest from the centre.

### TRAIN

The **train station** (27 bd de Stalingrad), with two entrances (north and south) in the city centre, is well connected to most of the country. Destinations include La Rochelle (from €10, 2¼ hours, three or four daily) and Bordeaux (€20, 4¼ hours, three or four daily), with a change of train in St-Pierre des Corps or La Rochelle.

## i Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

A *navette* (shuttle bus) links the airport with the train station's southern entrance (€9, 20 minutes) and place du Commerce every 20 minutes from about 5.30am until 11pm. Drivers sell tickets.

### BICYCLE

To use Nantes' shared bicycle scheme **Bicloo** ([www.bicloo.nantesmetropole.fr](http://www.bicloo.nantesmetropole.fr)), giving you access to bright orange-and-silver bikes parked up at stations all over town, download the app and create an account – or sign up in situ for a one- or three-day subscription at any payment terminal. Bikes are accessible from 4am to 1am, and cost €2/5 per one/three days, plus €0.50 for 30 to 60 minutes, €1.50 for 60 to 90 minutes, €2 over 90 minutes; the first 30 minutes are free.

### BUS & TRAM

Buses and trams run by **TAN** ([www.tan.fr](http://www.tan.fr)) intersect at the **Gare Centrale** (place du Commerce), under renovation until 2022 as the entire area is beautified with trees, fountains and benches. Buy tickets (single fare €1.70 or €5.80 for a 24-hour ticket) online, by smartphone or at tram-stop ticket machines. **Smart drivers** sell tickets for €2.

## Poitou

Inland from the coast lies the historic region of Poitou, governed by the Counts of Poitiers in the Middle Ages and today embracing the modern-day *départements* of Deux Sèvres and Vienne in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine *région*. Overwhelmingly rural, Poitou is an ancient slow-paced land specked with centurion goat farms and dairies, marshes and remarkable mural-laced Romanesque churches.

## Poitiers

POP 119,900

History-steeped Poitiers was founded by the Pictones, a Gaulish tribe, and rose to prominence as the former capital of Poitou. A

pivotal turning point came in 732 CE, when somewhere near Poitiers (the exact site is not known) the cavalry of Charles Martel defeated the Muslim forces of Abd ar-Rahman, governor of Córdoba, thus ending Muslim attempts to conquer France. Until the Revolution, this sublimely beautiful city was known as the 'town of 100 bell towers'; the remarkable Romanesque churches that remain today are in part a legacy of Eleanor of Aquitaine's financial support.

Poitiers has one of the oldest universities in the country, established in 1432 and today a linchpin of this small city: students make up 25% of the population.

About 10km north of Poitiers in Jaunay-Clan, a futuristic **theme park** (☎ 05 49 49 11 12; www.futuroscope.com; av René Monory, Chasseneuil-du-Poitou; day/evening ticket valid from 5pm €46/20; ☀ 10am-11.15pm Jun-mid-Jul, 9.30am-11pm mid-Jul-early Aug, 8.30am-10.45pm Aug, shorter hours rest of year, closed Jan-mid-Feb; 📺 📶) offers many space-age cinematic experiences.

**Église Notre-Dame-la-Grande** CHURCH  
(53 place Charles de Gaulle; ☀ 9am-7pm) **FREE**

The celebrated western façade of this Romanesque church was exquisitely sculpted in soft gold stone between 1115 and 1130. Spot the temptation of Adam and Eve, the Nativity, the 12 Apostles and many other biblical scenes – at their most spectacular in summer when a free 15-minute light show, evoking the medieval tradition of painting churches, is projected onto the façade. The painted columns inside the church today date to 1851.

**Église St-Hilaire le Grand** CHURCH  
(☎ 05 49 41 21 57; 26 rue St-Hilaire; ☀ 9am-7pm Apr-Nov, to 5.30pm Dec-Mar) **FREE**

Consecrated in 1049, used as a warehouse during the Revolution and partly rebuilt in the 19th century, this grandiose Romanesque church appears on Unesco's list of World Heritage Sites as a treasured stop on the Chemin de St-Jacques de Compostelle. The remains of 11th-century decorative paintings – in rich ochre, ginger and gold tones – in its ornate sculpted interior are striking.

**Poitiers Centre** HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 49 50 50 60; www.poitevins.fr/hotel-mercure-poitiers-centre; 14 rue Édouard Grimaux; d €101-199; 📺 📶) Kip in a Jesuit church built in 1852. Almost half of the 51 designer rooms at this four-star Mercure hotel are situated in the triple nave, vaulted choir or between

exquisite stone-sculpted columns of the 55m-long neo-Gothic chapel. Contemporary white-polished concrete walls blend in perfectly with ancient cream stone, and **Les Archives** is a memorable dining space serving French cuisine beneath stone vaults.

**Toqué!** BISTRO €

(☎ 05 49 62 19 33; www.bistro-toque.com; 44 rue de la Cathédrale; menu 2-course lunch €12.90, 2-/3-course dinner €25/29; ☀ noon-2pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-10.30pm Sat) Be prepared to dine extremely well at this brilliant modern bistro. Chef Grégory Delhaie roots his cuisine firmly in French tradition, infused with a generous dose of contemporary creativity. His signature pâté spiced with Espelette chilli peppers is an *entrée* must, as is his dessert metre of crème brûlée – six different flavours, two of each, served liked shooters – to share.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 49 41 21 24; www.visitpoitiers.fr; 45 place Charles de Gaulle; ☀ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat)

## Getting There & Away

The Poitiers **train station** (bd du Grand Cerf) has direct links to Bordeaux (€36, 1¼ hours), La Rochelle (€25.60, 1½ hours) and many other cities including Paris' Gare Montparnasse (from €54, 1¼ hours, 12 daily).

## Marais Poitevin

From Poitiers town, an hour's drive south-west along the A10 to Niort and beyond plunges you into the heart of the Marais Poitevin. This *marais* (marshland) – an enchanting web of pea-green waterways overlooked by quaint villages – is a protected nature park. For those seeking somewhere to really melt into rural life, there is no finer spot. Arçais and Coulon – little more than rural, waterfront villages – are the main towns in the park.

**Parc Naturel Interrégional du Marais Poitevin** (www.parc-marais-poitevin.fr) is a tranquil bird-filled wetland dubbed the Venise Verte (Green Venice) due to the duckweed that turns its maze of waterways emerald green each spring and summer. Covering some 800 sq km of wet and drained marsh, the marshlands are interspersed with villages and woods threaded by canals and bike paths. There are two main bases from which to punt out across the waterways: the small

honey-coloured town of Coulon and the romantic village of Arçais.

Boating and cycling are the only ways to satisfactorily explore the area; there's no shortage of operators hiring out bikes and flat-bottomed boats or kayaks for watery tours. Rental outlets in both towns offer identical services for the same price: kayak or canoe for one to three people per hour/half-day €14/38, six-person *barque* or traditional wooden boat €18/48, and stand-up paddle-board €15/45. Guided tours are also possible. Bikes can be hired from several operators in both towns for €6/12/20 per hour/half-day/day for regular wheels and €12/28/40 for an electric version.

Getting to either Coulon or Arçais is difficult in anything other than your own car or – for serious cyclists – bike.

## La Rochelle

POP 75,740

Known as La Ville Blanche (the White City), La Rochelle's luminous limestone façades glow in the bright coastal sunlight. One of France's foremost seaports from the 14th to 17th centuries, the city has arcaded walkways, half-timbered houses protected from the salt air by slate tiles, ghoulish gargoyles and a fabulous collection of lighthouses – all rich reminders of its magnificent seafaring heritage. The early French settlers of Canada, including the founders of Montreal, set sail from here in the 17th century.

This 'white city' is also commendably green, with efficient public transport and ample open spaces. Its *hôtel de ville* (town hall), built in 1606 and famously the oldest in France, is rising from the ashes after being the victim of a huge fire in 2013. La Rochelle's late-20th-century district of Les Minimes was built on reclaimed land, and now has one of the largest marinas in the country.

### Sights

La Rochelle's waterfront is dominated by its gigantic defensive towers; a single ticket covers admission to all three.

#### Tour de la Lanterne

LIGHTHOUSE

(www.tours-la-rochelle.fr; rue sur les Murs; 3 towers adult/child €9.50/free; ☀️ 10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2.15-6.30pm Apr, Jun & Sep, 10am-1pm & 2.15-5.30pm Oct-Mar) Easily mistaken for a church spire, this conical 15th-century

tower is La Rochelle's beauty queen. It was so named because of its role as the harbour's lighthouse (lit by an enormous candle) and is one of the oldest of its kind in the world. It is sometimes called Tour des Quatre Sergents in memory of four local sergeants, two of whom were held here for plotting to overthrow the newly reinstated monarchy before their execution in Paris in 1822.

#### Tour St-Nicolas

MONUMENT

(www.tours-la-rochelle.fr; rue de l'Armide; 3 towers adult/child €9.50/free; ☀️ 10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2.15-6.30pm Apr, Jun & Sep, 10am-1pm & 2.15-5.30pm Oct-Mar) The only tower to be decked out like a house, this 37m-high pentagonal stone tower has leaned slightly to one side ever since building was complete in 1376. It was originally used for both defensive purposes and as a royal residence, and the different rooms can still be visited. City views from the rooftop terrace are predictably fine – count 120-odd steps in total to the top.

#### Tour de la Chaîne

MONUMENT

(www.tours-la-rochelle.fr; cours des Dames; adult/child 3 towers €9.50/free; ☀️ 10am-6.30pm Jul

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

#### LUNCH WITH SEA VIEW & COASTAL STROLL

From La Rochelle's Vieux Port, follow the rampart walkway past Tour de la Lanterne and continue until you hit the city beach – and **La Yole de Chris** (☎️ 05 46 41 41 88; www.layoledechris.com; 5 allée du Mail, Plage de la Concurrence; mains €22-26, seafood platters €48-73; ☀️ noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm). The casual, sea-facing bistro of Rochelais chef Christopher Coutanceau (his triple Michelin-starred gastronomic restaurant is next door) across the street from shingle-sand Plage de la Concurrence, this beachside hang-out serves oysters, seafood platters, aromatic monkfish carpaccio, fish burgers cooked on a wood-fired grill and various other delicious seafaring dishes. Dine on the terrace with big blue view, or inside with sneak peeks of the chefs at work behind the bar crafted to look like a *yole* (elongated, wooden boat). Post-lunch, should a scenic stroll beckon, pick up the **coastal path** from the beach to sandy Plage de Chef de Baie, 4.5km west.

## La Rochelle

ATLANTIC COAST LA ROCHELLE



& Aug, 10am-1pm & 2.15-6.30pm Apr, Jun & Sep, 10am-1pm & 2.15-5.30pm Oct-Mar) To protect the harbour at night in times of war, an enormous chain was raised between the two 14th-century stone towers at the harbour entrance to La Rochelle, giving rise to the name Tour de la Chaîne (Chain Tower). There are superb views from the top and an insightful exhibition on French migration to the New World, hence Québec, in the 17th and 18th centuries.

### ★ Musée Maritime

(Maritime Museum; ☎ 05 46 28 03 00; www.musee-maritimelarochele.fr; place Bernard Moitessier;

MUSEUM

adult/child €9/6.50; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5.30pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) In a series of boldly coloured, red, blue and yellow canopied hangars at the Bassin à Flot, the Maritime Museum evokes the history of La Rochelle port, from the present to the days when Parisians would arrive by train in La Rochelle to then set sail on a steamer to South America and Africa.

### Aquarium La Rochelle

AQUARIUM

(☎ 05 46 34 00 00; www.aquarium-larochele.com; quai Louis Prunier; adult/child €16.50/12, online €14.50/10; ☎ 9am-11pm Jul & Aug, to 8pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-8pm Oct-Mar) La Rochelle's



## La Rochelle

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Musée Maritime.....C5  
2 Tour de la Lanterne.....A3

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Aquarium La Rochelle.....C4  
4 Tour de la Chaîne.....B3  
5 Tour St-Nicolas.....B3

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 6 Hôtel François 1er.....B2  
7 Ibis La Rochelle Vieux Port.....C3  
8 La Fabrique.....C3

### 🍴 Eating

À la Gerbe de Blé.....(see 12)

- 9 André.....B3  
10 La Yole de Chris.....A4  
11 Le Panier de Crabes.....C3  
12 Marché Central.....C1  
13 Prao.....C3

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 14 Cave de la Guignette.....C3  
15 Lerouge aux Lèvres.....C1

### 🛍 Shopping

- 16 Espritvoiles.....C3  
17 Merci Louis.....C3  
18 Prao Boutique.....C2

state-of-the-art, family-friendly aquarium is home to 12,000 marine animals and 600 different species. Visits begin by descending in a clunky old 'submarine' to the ocean floor, where you're greeted by the pouting fish of the North Atlantic and serenaded by the sound of crashing waves and classical music. After this you swim through the oceans and seas of the world learning about all its diverse lifeforms. One floor up is the magical Galerie des Lumières (Gallery of Lights).

## 🏠 Sleeping

### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎05 46 44 43 11; www.aj-larochelle.fr/hostel; av des Minimes; dm €18-31, tw €80-102; ☺reception 8am-noon, 2-7pm & 9-10pm) This popular 231-bed HI hostel is 2km southwest of the train station in the beachy seaside suburb of Les Minimes. Dorms sport four to six places in bunk beds – or bunk up in a twin. Rates include breakfast, and dinner is available for an additional fee. It's closed for two weeks in December.

### Ibis La Rochelle Vieux Port

HOTEL €

(☎05 46 41 60 22; place du Commandant de la Motte Rouge; d from €75; 📄📞📺) Even if you don't usually go for a chain hotel, make an exception for this: the 79 bright modern rooms of this contemporary hotel lounge behind the beautiful façade of a 17th-century chapel, built in a Jesuit style in 1628. The church was deconsecrated in 1887 and later became a warehouse. The striking lobby-lounge, with designer bar and sofa-strewn patio in an alfresco interior courtyard, are gorgeous spaces to linger.

## ★ Hôtel François 1er

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎05 46 41 28 46; www.hotelfrancois1er.fr; 13-15 rue Bazoges; s €79-135, d €99-149, tr €135-189, q €159-280; 📄📞📺) This 36-room themed hotel, squirrelled away in a centuries-old bourgeois mansion, is a secret museum of street art and rock memorabilia. Monumental portraits by local photographer Marie Monteiro dominate otherwise dazzling white rooms, and original works by France's top street artists pepper public areas. There are numerous acrobatic figures stencilled in white by Jérôme Mesnager and wildly expressive, plaster-cast faces by Gregos.

### La Fabrique

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎05 46 41 45 00; www.hotellafabrique.com; 7-11 rue de la Fabrique; d €58-160; 📄📞📺) At home in a former rope factory, design-driven La Fabrique sports 58 rooms arranged in a quad, above a vast open-plan lounge with Chesterfield sofas and an aerial art installation. Serene, almost-all-white rooms enjoy walk-in Italian showers, and summertime breakfasts (€12) are served on a peaceful patio.

## 🍴 Eating

Away from eatery-packed quays around the Vieux Port, locals mill along pedestrian rue St-Jean du Pérot and the streets surrounding covered La Rochelle's vintage, red-brick and peppermint-green covered market, **Marché Central** (place du Marché; ☺7am-1.30pm).

## ★ À la Gerbe de Blé

SEAFOOD €

(☎05 46 41 05 94; 7 rue Thiers; mains €10-16; ☺6.30am-4pm Mon-Sat) Lunch local. Between 10am and 1pm buy a dozen oysters from one of the stands in front of the Marché Central,

## MADE IN LA ROCHELLE

Souvenir shopping is down-to-earth and inspiringly grass-roots in this seafaring city.

Vinyl collectibles and 'bonnes et belles choses' (good and beautiful things) for the home, many handcrafted in the region, fill concept store **Prao Boutique** (☎05 46 37 24 73; www.prao.biz; 1 rue St-Nicolas; ☺ 2.30-7pm Mon, 10.30am-7pm Tue-Sat). Design posters inspired by local lighthouses, surfing and shellfish by La Rochelle's very own Prao Studio are a striking addition to any home, while vintage-styled printed notebooks made with recycled paper by Nantes-based Les Éditions du Paon are a stylish gift.

Nearby, at **Espritvoiles** (www.espritvoiles.fr; 67 rue St-Nicolas; ☺ 10.30am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Tue-Sat), local artist Sylvie Jaquen crafts casual, French-chic bags in all shapes, sizes and big bold colours from the same tough acrylic cloth used to make boat sails at this eye-catching boutique-atelier. Deckchairs in every colour of the rainbow, magazine racks, table mats, bins – even handy carry bags for your hiking poles – are among the other tempting accessories.

Gourmets can sip excellent specialist coffee in between browsing shelves of tasty foodstuffs at **Merci Louis** (☎09 86 40 76 52; www.facebook.com/Epiceriemercilouis; 18 rue St-Nicolas; ☺ 9.30am-7pm Tue-Sun), a 1950s-styled *épicerie fine* (upmarket grocery) selling artisan 'Made in France' goodies: chocolate, biscuits, teas, condiments etc. In the drinks section, look for Science Infuse craft beers brewed at the local university and pastis distilled on Île de Ré.

pay and ask for them to be shucked, then head around the corner to this buzzing cafe-bar built into the red-brick market wall. Tables on the pavement terrace enjoy the morning sun, and a simple menu of steak and fries, omelettes and sandwiches complements the BYO seafood.

★ **Le Panier de Crabes**

SEAFOOD €€

(☎09 53 56 59 97; www.facebook.com/lepanierdecrabes; 9 place de la Fourche; 6/12 oysters €11/19, seafood platters €20-33; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat, noon-2pm Sun, closed Jan) The Basket of Crabs is, funnily enough, a self-proclaimed *bistrot de gens de mer* (seafarers' bistro) dishing up sensational Marennes d'Oléron oysters, winkles and whelks, shrimps, crabs and extravagant seafood platters at a price that doesn't break the bank. Local seafarer Olivier Tétaud is the man behind this earthy, no-frills address and works exclusively with local fisherfolk.

**Prao**

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎05 46 37 85 46; www.prao.biz; 10 rue St-Nicolas; 2-/3-course menu lunch €15/17, dinner €24/28, mains €17; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun; ☎) Named after the multi-hull proa (*prao* in French) sailboat typical to the Pacific and Indian Oceans (pictured on the wall behind the bar), this lofty bistro with mezzanine lures a local crowd with its modern bistro fare and copious Sunday brunch (€12 to €22). Begin with leeks, mango and

truffle-laced Gouda cheese perhaps, followed by your pick of *plats* (mains) that change almost daily.

★ **André**

SEAFOOD €€€

(☎05 46 41 28 24; www.barandre.com; 5 rue St-Jean du Pérot; 2-/3-course menu from €19.50/24.50, mains €17-39; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm) The king of addresses for Sunday lunch – or seafood platters any time of day – André is an essential part of the La Rochelle landscape. Packed with locals since opening in 1947, the restaurant empire cooks up succulent seafood in every guise: mussels simmered in Champagne or sweet Pineau des Charentes wine, *choucroute* (sauerkraut) peppered with razor clams and whelks, a dozen oysters...

**Drinking & Nightlife**

There's no shortage of places to drink and people-watch along the quays at the picturesque Vieux Port – at their finest at sunset. Street-smart Rochelais gravitate to the peeping of wine bars and pubs on pedestrian, bohemian-feel rue St-Nicolas and neighbouring place de la Fourche.

★ **Cave de la Guigrette**

BAR

(Chez Garcia; www.la-guigrette.fr; 8 rue St-Nicolas; ☺ 11am-1.30pm & 5-9pm Mon-Wed, 11am-9pm Thu-Sat, 5-9pm Sun) For a sweet taste of 1930s La Rochelle, follow the crowd to this rough-cut wine bar where little has changed since it opened in 1933 in a blacksmith's yard.

Vintage photos and posters evoke the days when fishermen and sailors flocked here from the nearby port. On warm days, the drinking action and merriment spill out onto the pedestrian street in front.

### Lerouge aux Lèvres

WINE BAR

(☎05 46 50 08 17; www.lerouge-auxlevres.fr; 4 rue des Cloutiers; ☎noon-7pm Thu-Mon) Stéphane Lerouge – hence the playful name alluding to the French word for ‘lipstick’ – is the passionate sommelier behind this hybrid wine shop and *cave à manger*. His choice of organic, natural and biodynamic wines is exceptional, as are the creative food pairings sourced predominantly from the nearby market.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎05 46 41 14 68; www.la-rochelle-tourisme.com; 2 quai Georges Simeon; ☎9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, shorter hours in winter) Runs excellent seasonal guided tours.

## i Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Aéroport La Rochelle-Île de Ré** (La Rochelle Airport; www.larochelle.aeroport.fr), 6km northwest of the city centre off the N237, has a variety of flights to several British, Irish and European airports.

### BUS

Buses depart from in front of the train station and place de Verdun in town to various regional destinations, including year-round buses to/ from Île de Ré (single/day return €2/3.60). Find schedules online at www.transports.nouvelle-aquitaine.fr.

### TRAIN

The **train station** (place Pierre Semard) is linked by TGV to Paris' Gare Montparnasse (from €25, 3¼ hours). Other destinations served by regular direct trains include Nantes (from €10, 1¾ hours), Poitiers (from €13, 1½ hours) and Bordeaux (from €10, 2¼ hours).

## i Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

**Yélo** (☎08 10 17 18 17; www.yelo-larochelle.fr; 22 place de Verdun; ☎7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6.30pm Sat) shuttle buses link the airport with place de Verdun in the town centre (15 minutes, €1.30, every 30 to 30 minutes). Year-round bus 3 stops at the airport en route to/ from Île de Ré (single/day return €2/3.60).

### BICYCLE

**Greenbike** (☎05 46 29 31 03; www.location-greenbike.com; 41 quai du Gabut; per 4hr/day from €10/14, electric bike €18/28; ☎9am-1pm & 2-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6.30pm Sep-Nov & Apr-Jun) Rent pea-green beach cruiser bikes, city bikes, tandems, e-bikes and all the accompanying gear – baskets, helmets, children's seats and trailers – at this shop by Tour St-Nicolas. Leave your passport and a deposit.

The city's bike-sharing scheme Yélo has several bike stations around town, but for visitors it's easier to grab a banana-yellow bike from seasonal **Chalet Yélo** (☎08 10 17 18 17; www.yelo.agglo-larochelle.fr; place du Commandant de la Motte Rouge; up to 2/5/10hr €3/7/12; ☎9am-12.30pm & 1.30-8pm daily Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-8pm Sat & Sun Sep), in front of the tourist office.

### BUS

Local transport company Yélo has its bus hub and information office on place de Verdun. Bus 1 links place de Verdun with the train station and Vieux Port. A single/day ticket costs €1.30/4.50.

## Île de Ré

POP 17,380

Bathed in the southern sun, drenched in a languid atmosphere, and scattered with whitewashed villages cast in hues of pale aqua green and eggshell blue, Île de Ré is utterly idyllic. The island spans 30km from its most easterly and westerly points, and just 5km at its widest section. In July and August it is almost impossible to move around and even harder to find a place to stay.

On the northern coast, about 12km from the toll bridge Pont de Ré that links the island to La Rochelle, is main town **St-Martin-de-Ré** (population 2600), a quaint fishing port. Surrounded by 17th-century star-shaped fortifications and a citadel (today a prison) built by Vauban, the port town is a mesh of streets filled with quaint terraced cottages with wooden shutters and lace curtains, Paris-chic fashion boutiques, art galleries and salty sea views.

## 📍 Sights & Activities

St-Martin-de-Ré tourist office has plenty of information on water sports, including windsurfing, kite-surfing, paddle-boarding, sailing and canoeing.

## PEDALLING AROUND

Criss-crossed by an extensive network of smooth, well-signposted and scenic *pistes cyclables* (bicycle paths) well away from motorised traffic, pancake-flat Île de Ré is cycling paradise. In **St-Martin-de-Ré**, pick up free cycling maps at the tourist office or one of the many bike-rental outlets; **Yoo Too** (☎ 05 46 68 08 09; [www.cycles-yootoo.com](http://www.cycles-yootoo.com); 9 av Victor Bouthillier; per 4hr/day from €7/11, electric bike €22/27; ☀ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) is one of several to open year-round. Advance reservations are essential for July and August.

In summer, most other villages on the islands also have somewhere to rent bikes, trailers, seats for young children and so on. In July and August, shuttle buses transport cyclists and their bikes between four cycling information points on the island.

From St-Martin, a scenic 14km (one hour) trail follows the coast west past working oyster beds, before crossing the island past ancient salt pans to the pretty village of **Ars-en-Ré** where you can buy locally harvested rock salt and *fleur de sel* from the island's salt-producers cooperative. Count another 7km from here to Phare des Baleines, the island's 59m-tall lighthouse on its northwestern tip.

From the lighthouse, a shady 5.5km trail ducks through the protected forest of the **Forêt Domaniale du Lizay** to the north-coast village of **Les Portes-en-Ré**. Bird-watching enthusiasts (bring binoculars) should not miss the trail from here, via the Maison du Fier, into the marshes and salt pans of the **Réserve Naturelle Lilleau des Niges** and beyond to Ars-en-Ré. Time the ride with a memorable guided nature walk or activity (for adults and children) organised by the Maison du Fier.

### ★ Phare des Baleines

LIGHTHOUSE

(☎ 05 46 29 18 23; [www.lepharedesbaleines.fr](http://www.lepharedesbaleines.fr); 155 rte du Phare; adult/child lighthouse €3.50/2, old tower & museum €8/4, old tower, museum & lighthouse €11/6; ☀ 9.30am-9pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) For an overview of the island, scale Phare des Baleines, the island's scarlet-tipped, 57m-tall lighthouse on its northwestern tip. Tackling the dizzying, 257-step spiral staircase inside the 19th-century lighthouse (1854) rewards with a sweeping coastal panorama. Learn its history in the neighbouring **Musée de la Mer** and visit the lighthouse's shorter 17th-century predecessor, a 29m-tall tower now known as the **Vielle Tour** (old tower).

### Clocher Observatoire

TOWER

(☎ 05 16 19 81 96; 1 rue du Palais; adult/child €2.05/1.05; ☀ 10am-11pm Jul & Aug, to 7pm Sep-mid-Nov & Feb-Jun) Scale 117 steep, narrow steps inside the bell stone of fortified **Église St-Martin** for a mighty fine panorama of St-Martin-de-Ré and the coast. The well-used wooden staircase twists up past the bell tower's trio of bells, the largest of which dates to 1890 and weighs a mighty 1140kg. Be warned: the largest bell (called Mary Joséphine Elizabeth) rings for three minutes every half-hour, while another bell (called

Angélys) tolls for a deafening 10 minutes at 7am, noon and 7pm each day to announce the traditional call to prayer.

### Maison du Fier

BIRDWATCHING

(☎ 05 46 29 50 74; <https://ile-de-re.lpo.fr/maison-du-fier>; rte du Vieux Port, Les Portes-en-Ré; museum adult/child/family €4/3/10; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Mon-Fri, 2.30-7pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year, closed Dec-Mar) A short bike ride from the village of Les Portes-en-Ré brings you to this wooden building, surrounded by marshes and ancient salt pans in the **Réserve Naturelle Lilleau des Niges**. Some 300 different bird species frequent this soggy, sun-flooded nature reserve, and sightings of kestrels, red shanks and blue throats are common. The Maison du Fier runs a small nature museum and organises excellent guided nature walks and activities for both adults and children. Bring binoculars or rent some for €5/3 per day/half-day.

### Sleeping & Eating

Île de Ré is an easy day trip from La Rochelle. St-Martin-de-Ré tourist office has a list of boutique hotels, campgrounds and B&Bs; many close in winter and fill up months in advance in high season.

★ **Le Sénéchal**

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎05 46 29 40 42; www.hotel-le-senechal.com; 6 rue Gambetta, Ars-en-Ré; s €75-115, d €89-355; 🍷🍷) The stunning creation of a Parisian architect, this 22-room boutique hotel on the church square in Ars-en-Ré languishes luxuriantly in several traditional old-stone *maisons de village* and exudes panache and good taste. Scrubbed wooden floorboards, exposed stone walls, designer bathrooms and beautiful fabrics dress each room. Breakfast (adult/child €14/9) is served in a flowery courtyard, and there's a pocket-sized heated pool.

★ **La Martinière**

ICE CREAM €

(☎05 46 09 20 99; www.la-martiniere.fr; 17 quai de la Poithevinière, St-Martin-de-Ré; 1-/2-/3-scoop cones €3/3.80/4.40; ☀️10.30am-11pm Jul & Aug, to 9.30pm Sep, Oct, Apr & Jun) No trip to St-Martin-de-Ré is complete without an ice-cream cone from this *glacier* extraordinaire. There are between 250 and 300 incredible flavours to choose from, including madras, caviar and oyster, salted caramel, potato and caramel or rice pudding alongside strawberry, mango, passion fruit, peach and lavender, and other more traditional fruit flavours. Each season a new flavour is launched.

★ **La Tour du Sénéchal**

DELI €

(☎05 46 29 41 12; www.facebook.com/Tour duSenechal; 7 place Carnot, Ars-en-Ré; platters & mains €12-14, brunch €15-18; ☀️9am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 3pm Sun) Island life doesn't get better than an exhilarating bike ride past salt pans and the sea for lunch at this gourmet *épicerie* (specialist grocery), a passionate celebration of local and regional produce. Be it a dozen oysters (€19) and simple green salad or pomegranate-laced duck breast, every dish sizzles with grassroots flavours. Weekend brunch is a deliciously long and languid affair.

★ **La Cible**

SEAFOOD €€

(☎05 46 67 38 82; www.lacible-restaurantbar.fr; av de la Plage; mains €20-40; ☀️8.30am-1.45am Apr-Sep; 🍷) Dine beneath a tropical straw parasol on a wood-decking terrace gazing out to sea or opt for a table in the fashionable retro interior of this beachfront shack, slap bang on the sand in St-Martin-de-Ré. The kitchen cooks up appropriately fishy mains – sesame-encrusted tuna, lobster, Breton sardines and oysters, and the setting is postcard-perfect. Reserve tables in advance. In season, a bus shuttles party lovers at 1.30am from La Cible to the island's legendary nightclub **La Pergola**

## DON'T MISS

## AN OYSTER FARMER'S LUNCH

For an authentic taste of island life, spurn St-Martin's port-side restaurants and pick up the cycling path to Ars-en-Ré – either on foot or by bike. Within seconds of hitting the coast, the path brushes past a twinset of oyster farmer *cabanes* (huts), whose doors are open to the culinary curious. Grab a straw hat to keep off the sun, snag a table overlooking oyster beds and tuck into freshly shucked oysters courtesy of **Auberge Paysanne de la Mer** (☎06 83 08 20 38; chemin de la Galère, St-Martin-de-Ré; oysters per dozen €14; ☀️11am-4pm Mar-Oct). Or kick back next door on a brightly coloured bar stool facing the sea at **Ré Ostréa** (☎06 63 91 80 19; www.degustationhuitres-iledere.fr; chemin de la Galère, St-Martin-de-Ré; oysters per dozen from €14; ☀️10am-8pm Apr-Sep), a super-friendly oyster bar with fresh prawns, whelks, clams and dozens of island oysters to tempt.

Back at the Vieux Port in St-Martin, a couple of oyster farmers have stands inside the town's atmospheric covered food market, **Le Marché** (2 rue Jean Jaurès; ☀️5-8pm May-Sep, 8am-1pm Apr-Oct, closed mid-Nov–mid-Dec & Jan), the finest window there is on local produce.

On the north of the island, by the golf course in Les Portes-en-Ré, make a beeline for **Les Huitres de Trousse Chemise** (☎06 30 31 91 38; www.facebook.com/leshuitresde troussechemise; rte de la Levée-Verte; dozen oysters €15; ☀️11.30am-2.30pm & 6.30-9pm daily Jul & Aug, 11.30am-2.30pm Sun-Thu, 11.30am-2.30pm & 6.30-9pm Fri & Sat May–mid-Sep), the down-to-earth *cabane* of oyster farmer Franck Moreau. Order shucked-to-order oysters, whelks, prawns, clams and crab at the bar, grab a picnic table alfresco and take in the majestic sweep of salt pans and sandy marshland while waiting for your order to arrive in rustic wooden punnets.



(www.lapergola-iledere.fr), 8km southwest in La Couarde-sur-Mer.



## Drinking

### Kokot

COCKTAIL BAR

(53 quai de la Poithevinière; ☀ noon-2am Wed-Sun) At the far end of the port, this bijou seaside house, with soft sage green wooden shutters and shaded courtyard, is St-Martin-de-Ré's cocktail hotspot. Gather around wooden barrels doubling as tables to chink glasses of Charente-distilled Rétha Oceanic gin (made from hand-harvested seaweed from the island) or vodka or whisky made from Île de Ré potatoes.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 46 09 20 06; www.iledere.com; 2 av Victor Bouthillier, St-Martin-de-Ré; ☀ 9.30am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) At the entrance to the Vieux Port, St-Martin's tourist office has information on the entire island.

## Getting There & Away

A return ticket to drive across Pont de Ré (www.pont-ile-de-re.com), the graceful, 2.9km-long bridge connecting the mainland and island, costs €8 (or €16 mid-June to mid-September); pay on your way to the island from La Rochelle. Cyclists pay €1 to cross the bridge using dedicated cycling lanes.

Year-round interurban bus line 3 (https://transports.nouvelle-aquitaine.fr) links La Rochelle train station and place de Verdun with all the major towns on the island; a single/day return to St-Martin (one hour) is €2/3.60. In St-Martin, buses stop at the 'Cognacq Jay-Pole d'Échanges' bus stop, a 10-minute walk from the

Vieux Port or a five-minute ride on a free local shuttle bus.

## Cognac

POP 18,830

On the banks of the River Charente amid vine-covered countryside, Cognac is known worldwide for the double-distilled spirit that bears its name, and on which the local economy thrives. Most visitors head here to visit the famous cognac houses, but it's a picturesque stop even if you are not a fan of the local firewater.

### ★ Quai des Pontis

HOTEL €

(☎ 05 45 32 47 40; www.quaidespontis.com; 16 rue des Pontis; d/tr/q from €75/80/85; ☎ ☎ ☎) At home in a former furniture factory, this riverside estate is a leafy delight. Pick from one of seven design rooms in the attractive hotel building, an enchanting wooden cabin on stilts right by the water's edge or a romantic *roulotte* (caravan) for two. *Roulottes* and cabins have modern bathrooms, kitchenettes and a serenely peaceful outlook over the River Charente.

### ★ Hôtel Chai Monnet

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(☎ 05 17 22 32 23; www.chaismonnethotel.com; 50 av Paul Firino Martell; ☎ ☎ ☎) For dedicated Cognac lovers with a bottomless budget, this luxurious five-star address oozes atmosphere. Stylishly at home in a stunningly renovated former *chai* (cognac cellar), the hotel-spa combines a contemporary 'French country' decor with flawless service (the finest suite in the house enjoys its own private butler) and fabulous fine dining amid vintage cognac barrels.

## DON'T MISS

### THE HOME OF COGNAC

According to local lore, divine intervention plays a role in the production of Cognac. Made of grape *eaux-de-vie* (brandies) of various vintages, Cognac is aged in oak barrels and blended by an experienced *maitre de chai* (cellar master). Each year some 2% of the casks' volume – *la part des anges* (the angels' share) – evaporates through the pores in the wood, nourishing the tiny black mushrooms that thrive on the walls of Cognac warehouses. That 2% might not sound much, but it amounts to 20 million bottles a year. The entire production process, from vine to bottle, is explained at the town's **Musée des Arts du Cognac** (MACO; ☎ 05 45 36 21 10; www.musees-cognac.fr; place de la Salle Verte; adult/child €5/1; ☀ 11am-7pm Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun, to 8pm Thu Jun & Sep).

The best-known Cognac houses run tours of their cellars and production facilities, ending with a tasting session. Opening times vary annually; it's a good idea to reserve in advance. The tourist office (p657) has a list; most close to the public October to mid-March.

★ **L'Arty Show**

INTERNATIONAL €

(☎09 87 04 81 77; [www.facebook.com/lartyshow](http://www.facebook.com/lartyshow)) cognac; 23 rue du Pont Faumet; mains €15-16, menu €20; ☀noon-2pm Mon-Thu, noon-2pm & 7.30pm-midnight Fri) Cognac brandy invariably stars in the inventive, veg- and pulse-packed dishes of chefs Nathalie and Delphine at L'Arty Show, an edgy bistro with vintage flea-market furnishings and a name that sounds like *artichaut* ('artichoke' in French). The duo work with local, seasonal and often organic market products, and there is no menu: be prepared for a delicious surprise.

i **Information**

**Cognac Tourist Office** (☎05 45 82 10 71; [www.tourism-cognac.com](http://www.tourism-cognac.com); 16 rue du 14 Juillet; ☀9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year)

i **Getting There & Away**

Cognac **train station** (av du Maréchal Leclerc), 1km south of the town centre, has regular trains to/from Bordeaux (from €22.70, 2¼ hours) and La Rochelle (from €13.50, 1¼ hours).

**Bordeaux**

POP 254,440

An intoxicating cocktail of 18th-century savoir-faire, millennial hi-tech and urban street life on the lower Atlantic Coast, France's sixth-largest city is exciting and gutsy. Its city centre on the banks of the River Garonne forms the world's largest urban World Heritage Site (18 sq km), and contemporary architects continue the trend for excellence with breathtakingly wild and beautiful new creations. World-class museums, a vibrant riverside street culture, exceptional dining and a dynamic cafe life buoyed by Bordeaux' high-spirited university-student population make this a compelling place to linger for a few days. Then there's the glorious wine...

👁 **Sights**★ **La Cité du Vin**

MUSEUM

(☎05 56 16 20 20; [www.laciteduvin.com](http://www.laciteduvin.com); 134 quai de Bacalan; adult/child €20/9, priority access €25/14; ☀10am-7pm May-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) The complex world of wine is explored in-depth at groundbreaking La Cité du Vin, a stunning piece of contemporary architecture resembling a wine decanter on the banks of the River Garonne. The curvaceous gold building glitters in the sun and

its 3000 sq metres of exhibits are equally sensory and sensational. Digital guides lead visitors around 20 themed sections covering everything from vine cultivation, grape varieties and wine production to ancient wine trade, 21st-century wine trends and celebrated personalities.

Tours end with a glass of wine – or grape juice for the kids – in panoramic **Le Belvédère**, with a monumental 30m-long bar and chandelier made out of recycled wine bottles, on the 8th floor. Temporary art exhibitions, cultural events and brilliant, themed one-hour tasting workshops (€15 to €32), some of which pair wine with chocolate or caviar, are also worth watching out for.

All tickets are date-stamped; 'open' tickets ensure priority access without the queues. To get here, take tram B (direction Bassins à Flots) from Esplanade des Quinconnes, or walk 2.5km north along the river.

★ **Cathédrale St-André**

CATHEDRAL

(☎05 56 44 67 29; [www.cathedrale-bordeaux.fr](http://www.cathedrale-bordeaux.fr); place Pey Berland; treasury adult/child €2/free; ☀2-7pm Mon, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Sun, treasury 2.30-5.30pm Wed, Sat & Sun) **FREE** The Cathédrale St-André, a Unesco World Heritage Site prior to the city's classification, lords it over the city. The cathedral's oldest section dates from 1096; most was built in the 13th and 14th centuries. Enjoy exceptional masonry carvings in the north portal and, in the treasury, 14th- to 17th-century sacred paintings, statues, chalices and liturgical vestments donated to the cathedral in 1947 by Bordelais priest Barthélémy Marcadé.

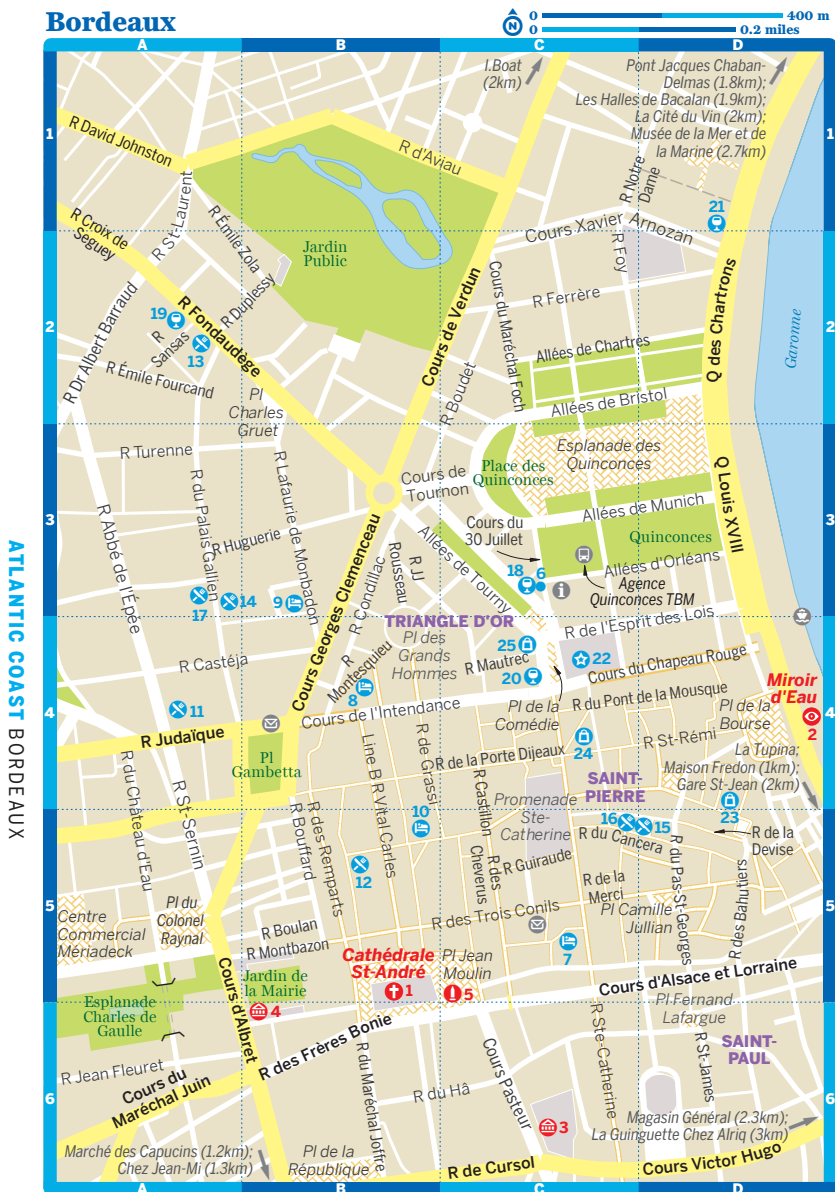
Even more imposing than the cathedral itself is the gargoyled, 50m-high Gothic bell-fry, **Tour Pey Berland** (☎05 56 81 26 25; [www.pey-berland.fr](http://www.pey-berland.fr); place Pey Berland; adult/child €6/free; ☀10am-6pm Jun-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Oct-May), erected between 1440 and 1466.

★ **Miroir d'Eau**

FOUNTAIN

(Water Mirror; place de la Bourse; ☀10am-10pm summer) **FREE** A fountain of sorts, the Miroir d'Eau is the world's largest reflecting pool. Covering an area of 3450 sq metres of black granite on the quayside opposite the imposing Palais de la Bourse, the 'water mirror' provides hours of entertainment on warm sunny days when the reflections in its thin slick of water – drained and refilled every half hour – are stunning. Every 23 minutes a dense fog-like vapour is ejected for three minutes to add to the fun (and photo opportunities).

## Bordeaux



## Musée d'Aquitaine

MUSEUM  
 (☎05 56 01 51 00; [www.musee-aquitaine-bordeaux.fr](http://www.musee-aquitaine-bordeaux.fr); 20 cours Pasteur; adult/child €5/free; ☉11am-6pm Tue-Sun) Gallo-Roman statues and relics dating back 25,000 years are among the highlights at this bright and spacious, well-curated history and civilisations

museum. Grab a bilingual floor plan at the entrance and borrow an English-language catalogue to better appreciate the exhibits that span prehistory through to 18th-century Atlantic trade and slavery, world cultures, the emergence of Bordeaux as a world port in the 19th century, and the city's

## Bordeaux

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cathédrale St-André.....B5  
2 Miroir d'Eau.....D4

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Musée d'Aquitaine.....C6  
4 Musée des Beaux Arts.....B6  
5 Tour Pey Berland.....C5

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 6 École du Vin de Bordeaux.....C3

### 📍 Sleeping

- 7 Central Hostel.....C5  
8 Hôtel Konti.....B4  
9 Hôtel La Cour Carrée.....B3  
10 Mama Shelter.....B5

### 📍 Eating

- 11 Garopapilles.....A4

- 12 Horace.....B5  
13 La Fabrique d'Oliver.....A2  
14 Le Cromagnon.....A3  
15 Miles.....D5  
16 Soif.....C5  
17 TentaziOni.....A3

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 18 Bar à Vin.....C3  
19 Le Sababa.....A2  
20 Night Beach.....C4  
21 Symbiose.....D1

### 📍 Entertainment

- 22 Grand Théâtre.....C4

### 📍 Shopping

- 23 Émile & Marguerite.....D4  
24 Galerie Bordelaise.....C4  
25 L'Intendant.....C4

modern developments in the 20th and 21st centuries.

### Musée de la Mer et de la Marine MUSEUM

(☎05 57 19 77 73; [www.museedelamerbordeaux.fr](http://www.museedelamerbordeaux.fr); 89 rue des Étrangers; adult/child €14/10, incl temporary exhibition €18/14; 🕒10.30am-6pm Wed-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun) This landmark museum comprises three floors of exhibition space devoted to almost everything there is to know about Bordeaux' maritime world, including its history, science, culture and traditions. Themes include the history of navigation and discovery, naval battles, the scientific conquest of the Atlantic and the fascinating world of oceanography. The building – a striking work of contemporary architecture designed to look like an ocean liner – was designed by local Bordeaux architect Olivier Brochet.

### Musée des Beaux Arts GALLERY

(☎05 56 10 20 56; [www.musba-bordeaux.fr](http://www.musba-bordeaux.fr); 20 cours d'Albret; adult/child €5/free; 🕒11am-6pm Wed-Mon) The evolution of Occidental art from the Renaissance to the mid-20th century is on view at Bordeaux' Museum of Fine Arts, which occupies two wings of the 1770s-built Hôtel de Ville, either side of elegant city park Jardin de la Mairie. The museum was established in 1801; highlights include 17th-century Flemish, Dutch and Italian paintings, and the last work painted by one of Bordeaux's earliest (and most celebrated) female artists, Rosa Bonheur (1822–99), who infamously wore men's trousers when she worked.

## 🛏 Sleeping

### Central Hostel HOSTEL €

(☎05 57 59 97 28; [www.centralhostel.fr](http://www.centralhostel.fr); 2 place Projet; dm €29-47, d €125-155; 📍📞) Urban-chic dorms sleeping six or eight and a trio of swish doubles with en suite bathrooms are spread across four floors at this central designer hostel in Saint-Pierre. The new-generation hostel also sports a bar with sun-drenched terrace and occasional live concerts, and a locavore restaurant serving a good-value €11.50 lunch deal, tasty evening tapas and a popular Sunday brunch.

### ★ Hôtel La Cour Carrée BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎05 57 35 00 00; [www.lacourcarree.com](http://www.lacourcarree.com); 5 rue de Lurbe; d/tr from €185/270; 📍📞📺) Tucked in an 18th-century house on a quiet side street with little passing traffic, this design-driven boutique hotel oozes natural style and peace. Soft, muted colours and contemporary Scandinavian furnishings complement ancient gold-stone walls in its 16 elegant rooms, and the pièce de résistance is the interior courtyard – a much-appreciated alfresco lounge in summer.

### Maison Fredon B&B €€

(☎05 56 91 56 37; [www.latupina.com/maison-d-hotes-fredon-bordeaux](http://www.latupina.com/maison-d-hotes-fredon-bordeaux); 5 rue Porte de La Monnaie; d €90-250; 📍📞) In an enchanting 19th-century town house of golden stone, this stylish five-room B&B is the accommodation arm of the La Tupina (p661) empire – which translates as five bourgeois doubles mixing contemporary furnishings with centuries-old white painted beams, and one

of the most delicious breakfasts in town. Some fantastic art pieces decorate the salon where guests can mingle.

### Mama Shelter

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎05 57 30 45 45; www.mamashelter.com/en/bordeaux; 19 rue Poquelin Molière; d €89-199; 📶📺📺) With personalised iMacs, video booths and free movies in every room, Mama Shelter is up-to-the-minute. White rooms are small, medium or large; XL doubles have a sofa bed. The joyous ground-floor restaurant sports the same signature rubber rings strung above the bar as other Philippe Starck-designed hotels. Summer-time drinks and dinner are served on the sensational rooftop terrace.

### ★ Hôtel Konti

HOTEL €€€

(☎05 56 52 66 00; www.hotel-konti.com; 10 rue Montesquieu; s/d €180/200; 📶📺📺) A head-to-toe facelift at this HappyCulture hotel in the chic, boutique-laden Triangle d'Or has made the four-star address sharper than ever. Stylish rooms inside the 18th-century *hôtel particulier* (private mansion) mix contemporary design with vintage bohemian chic – gorgeous textured wallpapers and graphics – and breakfast is a typical Bordelais feast.

### 🍴 Eating

#### Les Halles de Bacalan

FOOD HALL €

(☎05 56 80 63 65; www.facebook.com/hallesdebacalan; 149 quai de Bacalan; ☺8am-2.30pm & 4.30-8.30pm Tue & Wed, 8am-2.30pm & 4.30-10.30pm Thu, 8am-10.30pm Fri, 8am-2am Sat, 8am-5pm Sun) At home in a waterfront hangar opposite La Cité du Vin, this gleaming state-of-the-art market hall is a fantastic spot to grab a quick gourmet bite. Some 20 upmarket stalls cooking up everything from fish, burgers and meat to oysters, poultry, Italian products and cheese serve a daily menu. Seating is at bar stools or on the sun-drenched terrace overlooking the wet docks.

### ★ Le Magasin Général

INTERNATIONAL €

(☎05 56 77 88 35; www.magasingeneral.camp; 87 quai des Queyries; mains €10-25; ☺8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat & Sun; 📶📺📺) Follow the hip crowd across the river to this huge industrial hangar on the right bank, France's biggest and best organic restaurant with a gargantuan terrace complete with vintage sofa seating, ping-pong table and table football. Everything here – from vegan burgers and superfood salads to smoothies, pizzas, wine and French bistro fare – is *bio* (organic)

and sourced locally. Sunday brunch (adult/child €26/12) is a bottomless feast.

### La Fabrique d'Oliver

SANDWICHES €

(☎07 86 87 90 35; www.facebook.com/FabriqueByOliver; 70 rue Fondaudège; sandwiches €8.60-9.50; ☺11.30am-6pm Tue-Sat; 📶📺📺) Look past the glass jars of hazelnuts and bite-sized meringues in the window, past the wooden crates of ginger, lemons and other fresh produce, to catch inventive bakers Bruno Oliver and Arnaud Labodinière at work. Monster-sized gourmet 'sandwiches', crafted from *pain ferré* (a soft, easy-to-roll dough), come stuffed with smoked mozzarella, grilled nuts, marinated veg, pears, fresh herbs, pesto, oven-roasted pumpkin, all sorts.

### ★ TentaziOni

ITALIAN €€

(☎05 56 52 62 12; www.tentazioni-bordeaux.fr; 59 rue du Palais Gallien; 2-/3-course lunch menu €25/29, 4-/5-/6-course dinner menu €59/69/79; ☺7.30-9.15pm Tue & Wed, noon-1.15pm & 7.30-9.15pm Thu-Sat) Seasonal market produce stars in the sensational Franco-Italian dishes cooked up by Italian chef Giovanni Pierr-du at this Michelin-hailed bistro, starred since 2020. Breton wife, Johanna, is front of house and the contemporary interior design oozes a warm Italian panache. Expect homemade temptations like duck-stuffed *agnolotti* (pasta cushions) with smoked eel in a spice-laced duck broth, or pigeon and black squid-ink gnocchi.

### ★ Soif

BISTRO €€

(☎09 86 10 42 40; www.soif-bordeaux.com; 35 rue du Cancera; ☺noon-2pm & 7-11pm Wed-Sun) Soif ('thirsty' in French) might well be a *bistrot à vins* first and foremost, complete with retro 1950s zinc bar and a truly exceptional choice of natural and organic wines. But the small plates (€9.50 to €18) it serves are equally sensational, pairing battered Breton sardines with black radishes and sesame-laced rock salt perhaps, or hand-cut steak tartare with hazelnuts and celery cream.

### ★ Garopapilles

FRENCH €€

(☎09 72 45 55 36; www.garopapilles.com; 62 rue Abbé de l'Épée; menus lunch €39 & €65, 5-course dinner €95; ☺12.15-2pm Tue & Wed, 12.15-2pm & 7.30-9pm Thu & Fri) Reservations are essential at this Michelin-starred restaurant and wine cellar where *vins d'auteur* (carefully curated wines by small regional wine producers) accompany chef Tanguy Laviale's market-driven *cuisine à la hauteur* (an



elevated, tip-top cuisine). Dining is in an elegant, streamlined interior with dark wood flooring and little decorative distraction. In summer, lunch is served in a romantic, herb-fragranced courtyard garden.

### Miles

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎05 56 81 18 24; [www.restaurantmiles.com](http://www.restaurantmiles.com); 33 rue du Cancera; 3-/4-course lunch menu €29/34, 5-course dinner menu €55; ☺7.30-9.30pm Tue, Wed & Sat, 12.15-1.15pm & 7.30-9.30pm Thu & Fri) This contemporary oyster-grey space is the creation of a trio of innovative chefs from France, Asia and the Middle East whose creative and wholly seasonal kitchen reflects their mixed roots. There's no menu – rather a series of surprise tasting courses (or ‘miles’ in Miles-speak). Think mackerel with asparagus, sesame and citrus fruits perhaps, or soy-lacquered monkfish with seaweed.

### Horace

INTERNATIONAL €€

(☎05 56 90 01 93; 40 rue Poquelin Molière; mains €8-15; ☺8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3.30pm Sat & Sun) Whatever the time of day, Horace can do no wrong. Outstanding speciality coffee roasts (by Bordelais urban roasters L'Alchimiste and Oven Heaven beans), sophisticated fruit- and veg-packed breakfasts, homemade brioches and breads, and lunch/dinner menus bursting with creativity are the quality hallmarks of this coffee shop. Sunday brunch is always a sell-out.

### ★ Le Cromagnon

FRENCH €€€

(☎05 56 81 17 52; [www.lecromagnon.fr](http://www.lecromagnon.fr); 48 rue du Palais Gallien; 3-/6-course menu €45/65, wine pairing €30; ☺7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat) Chef Oaxana Ramat seduces gourmet tastebuds with a creative, modern French cuisine laced with comestible flowers. The young Moldovan-born chef's presentation is exquisite and the menu might feature lemongrass and ginger-spiced fish with citrus flowers perhaps, followed by duck in hibiscus sauce. Advance reservations essential.

### ★ La Tupina

FRENCH €€€

(☎05 56 91 56 37; [www.latupina.com](http://www.latupina.com); 6 rue Porte de la Monnaie; lunch menu €18, dinner menus €64 & €74, mains €20-60; ☺noon-2pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sun) Filled with the aroma of soup simmering inside a *tupina* ('kettle' in Basque) over an open fire, this iconic bistro is famed for its hardcore, southwestern French fare: calf kidneys with fries cooked in goose fat, milk-fed lamb, tripe and goose wings. Dining is farmhouse-style, in a maze of small elegant

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### MARKET OYSTERS

If there's one stall at iconic food market **Marché des Capucins** ([www.marchedescapucins.com](http://www.marchedescapucins.com); place des Capucins; ☺6am-1pm Tue-Sun) that sums up the contagious joie de vivre of Les Capus (as locals call Bordeaux' premier food market), it is *bistrot à huîtres* (oyster bar) **Chez Jean-Mi** (☎06 81 20 24 49; [www.facebook.com/Chez.Jean.Mi](http://www.facebook.com/Chez.Jean.Mi); place des Capucins, Maré des Capucins; seafood €5-25; ☺7am-3pm Tue-Thu, to 9pm Fri, to 3.30pm Sat & Sun). Owner Jean-Mi greets regulars and first-timers with the same huge smile, and his freshly shucked oysters, fish soup and copious seafood platters are of the finest quality money can buy. Arrive early at weekends to snag an alfresco table overlooking the open-air fruit and veg stalls on place des Capucins. Should a dozen oysters and a glass of white tickle your fancy for *petit dej*, Jean-Mi serves breakfast too.

rooms decorated with vintage photographs, antique furniture and silver tableware.



### Drinking & Nightlife

Bordeaux places great importance on drinking – be it tasting excellent vintages in a *bar à vin*, guzzling *cacolac* (chocolate milk made in Bordeaux since 1954) in a cafe or glugging local Darwin beer in an industrial hangar. Medieval Saint-Pierre teems with atmospheric cafe pavement terraces, as do Chartron's riverside quays. Mainstream nightclubs congregate on busy quai du Paladate near the train station.

### ★ Bar à Vin

WINE BAR

(☎05 56 00 43 47; <http://baravin.bordeaux.com>; 3 cours du 30 Juillet; ☺11am-10pm Mon-Sat) The handsome decor – herringbone parquet, stained glass depicting the godly Bacchus, and sky-high ceiling – matches the reverent air that fills this wine bar inside the hallowed halls of the Maison du Vin de Bordeaux. Gracious sommeliers serve dozens of Bordeaux wines by the glass (€3 to €8) and cheese, chocolate or charcuterie platters (€6 to €9) transport foodies straight to heaven.

### ★ Night Beach

BAR

(☎05 57 30 44 44; <https://bordeaux.intercontinental.com>; 2-5 place de la Comédie, 7th fl, InterContinental

Bordeaux – Le Grand Hôtel; ☀ noon-2.30pm & 7pm-1am Mar-Oct) There is no finer, more elegant or more romantic rooftop bar in Bordeaux than this fashionable hip, drinking-and-hobnobbing joint on the 7th floor of Bordeaux' historic Grand Hôtel. Views of the city, River Garonne and the vineyards beyond are a panoramic 360 degrees. French-chic seating is sofa-style beneath parasols, and DJ sets play at weekends.

### ★ Symbiose

COCKTAIL BAR

(Old-Fashioned Stories; ☎ 05 56 23 67 15; www.facebook.com/symbiosebordeaux; 4 quai des Chartrons; ☀ noon-2.30pm Mon, noon-2.30pm & 6.30pm-2am Tue-Fri, 6.30pm-2am Sat) There is something inviting about this clandestine address with a soft green façade across from the river on the fringe of the Chartrons district. This is the secret speakeasy that introduced good cocktails with gastronomic food pairings to Bordeaux. The chef uses locally sourced artisanal products, and cocktails rekindle old-fashioned recipes packed with homemade syrups and 'forgotten', exotic or unusual ingredients.

### ★ I.Boat

CLUB

(☎ 05 56 10 48 35; www.iboat.eu; cours Henri Brunet, Bassins à Flot 1; ☀ club 7.30pm-6am, cafeteria noon-2.30pm Mon, noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat) Hip-hop, rock, indie pop, psyche blues rock, punk and hardcore are among the varied sounds that blast out of this fun nightclub and concert venue, on a decommissioned ferry moored in the increasingly trendy, industrial Bassins à Flot district in the north of the city. Live music starts at 7pm, with DJ sets kicking in on the club dance floor from 11.30pm.

### Le Sababa

BAR

(☎ 06 27 53 51 29; www.sababa-bordeaux.com; 76 rue Fondaudège; ☀ 4pm-2am Tue-Sat) Should you need confirmation of just how on-trend Bordeaux is, head to this hipster bar – at home in an Airstream with heated wooden-deck terrace and alfresco tables and bar stools clustered around a potted olive tree. The bar inside the polished aluminium trailer stocks a fantastic range of Bordeaux wines, plus craft beers and spirits from southwest France.

A G&T made with golden Erika Old Tom gin distilled in southwest France is not to be missed. Pair your chosen drink with avocado toast, oven-baked Camembert or a rustic cutting board of *saucisson* (sausage) for the perfect apéritif.

### ★ Entertainment

Get up on the month's cultural events, concerts and happenings with **Sortir** (<http://sortirbordeaux.fr>), **Bordeaux Les Sorties** (<https://nouvelleaquitaine.sortir.eu>) and **Clubs & Concerts** ([www.clubsetconcerts.com](http://www.clubsetconcerts.com)), freebie listings mags available at the tourist office.

### Grand Théâtre

THEATRE

(Opéra National de Bordeaux; ☎ 05 56 00 85 95; www.opera-bordeaux.com; place de la Comédie; ☀ box office 1-6.30pm Tue-Sat) Designed by Victor Louis (of Chartres Cathedral fame), this grand 18th-century theatre stages operas, ballets and concerts of orchestral and chamber music.

### La Guinguette Chez Alriq

LIVE MUSIC

(☎ 05 56 86 58 49; www.laguinguettechezalriq.com; quai des Queyries; admission €6-8; ☀ 7pm-1.30am

## DON'T MISS

### BUNKER ART

**Les Bassins de Lumières** (Base Sous-Marine; ☎ 05 56 11 11 50; www.bassins-lumieres.com; bd Alfred Daney; ☀ 10am-7pm Sun-Thu, 10am-9pm Fri & Sat Apr-Sep, 10am-6pm Sun-Thu, 10am-7pm Fri & Sat Oct-Mar; 🖼) Artworks by Gustav Klimt, Paul Klee and other modern artists are projected onto the concrete walls of a WWII submarine base in a sensational, sound-and-light show at this digital-art gallery. Tickets, with a time-specific visiting slot, must be reserved in advance online. The colourful, dynamic 'show' is all the more vivid because of the bunker's sombre, deeply sobering exterior.

Hands-down the city's eeriest and most menacing sight, the mammoth hulk of a concrete submarine base (1941-43) was one of five built on the Atlantic Coast by the Germans during the war. Designed as a bunker to protect German U-boats from aerial attack, the pens and base proved impossible to destroy – by British forces during WWII and subsequently by the city, who now use the eyesore reinforced-concrete structure as a seriously cool, underground cultural centre, music concert stage and clubbing venue.

Wed-Sat, noon-8pm Sun Jun-Aug, 7pm-1.30am Thu-Sat, noon-8pm Sun May & Sep) For summertime music on the Rive Droite, there is no finer spot than this seasonal *guinguette* (open-air dance hall), with a couple of bars, casual food (pizza, oysters, mussels and fries, cheese and charcuterie platters etc), and live music covering everything from jazz and swing, to pop and beat-rich Balkan bands.

## Shopping

Europe's longest pedestrian shopping street, rue Ste-Catherine, links place de la Victoire and place de la Comédie; 19th-century shopping arcade **Galerie Bordelaise** (rue de la Porte Dijeaux & rue Ste-Catherine; ☺ hours vary) is nearby. Luxury fashion boutiques lace the Triangle d'Or ('Golden Triangle') formed by cours Georges Clemenceau, cours de l'Intendance and allées de Tourny. Trendy independent boutiques and design shops are concentrated on rue St-James in the Saint-Pierre quarter and rue Notre-Dame in Chartrons.

## ★ L'Intendant

WINE

(www.intendant.com; 2 allées de Tourny; ☺ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Welcome to what must be the grandest wine shop in the whole of France. A magnificent central staircase spiralling up five floors is surrounded by cylindrical shelves holding 15,000 bottles of regional wine at this highly respected *caviste* (wine cellar). Bottle prices range from €7 to thousands of euros. Watch for tastings most Saturdays.

## ★ Émile & Marguerite

DRINKS

(☎ 09 53 59 78 99; www.emileetmarguerite.fr; 13 rue du Parlement St-Pierre; ☺ 11am-7.30pm Tue-Sat) A specialist in French spirits, this stunning boutique is a treasure chest of drinkable curiosities no dedicated epicurean can resist. Favourites among the shelves of artisan whiskies, brandies et al include Sorgin yellow gin (aged in sauvignon blanc wine casks by Bordelais winemaker François Lurton), Nadé vodka (made with Bordeaux grapes and distilled in Cognac) and banana-spiced Oksen rum from Cap Ferret.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 56 00 66 00; www.bordeaux-tourisme.com; 12 cours du 30 Juillet; ☺ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5pm Sun) Runs an excellent range of city and regional tours; reserve in advance. There's a small but helpful **branch** (☎ 05 56 00 66 00; rue

Charles Domercq, Espace Modalis, Parvis Sud; ☺ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 1-3pm Sun May-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri Nov-Apr) at the train station. Both sell the **Bordeaux CityPass** (€29/39/43 for 24/48/72 hours) covering public transport, a city tour and admission to 20-odd museums and monuments.

## Getting There & Around

### AIR

**Aéroport de Bordeaux** (BOD;  information 05 56 34 50 50; www.bordeaux.aeroport.fr) is 10km west of the city centre in Mérignac.

Urban bus line 1+, operated by public-transport company TBM (www.infotbm.com), links the airport with place Gambetta, place de la Victoire and the Gare St-Jean train station in town. At the airport, buy tickets (€1.70) from the ticket dispenser next to the bus stop, in front of Terminal B, or directly from the driver. Buses run every 10 minutes or so between 6am to 11pm, and the journey time is 40 minutes (longer at rush hour).

### BICYCLE

Public bike-sharing scheme V3, run by local public transport company TBM, has 2000 regular and electric bicycles available for use at 179 bike stations citywide. Pay €1.70 to access a bike for 24 hours, plus €2 per hour after the first 30 minutes (free) is up; you'll need to initially register online or with your credit card at a V3 station. Public-sharing electric-bike operator **Zoov** (www.zoov.eu) charges €0.20 per minute.

To zoom around town by electric *trottinette* (kick scooter), download the app to locate and unlock a dockless scooter from one of several operators, including **Yego** (www.rideyego.com/bordeaux), **Pony** (www.getapony.com/en) and **Dott** (www.ridedott.com). Rates start at €1 to unlock, plus €0.20 per minute.

### BOAT

**Bat3** (www.infotbm.com) riverboats, operated by TBM, shuttle between the Stalingrad stop on quay des Queyries (near Magasin Général on the right bank) and several left-bank stops: Quinconces on quai des Maréchal Lyautey (opposite place de la Bourse), Les Hangars on cours du Médoc (opposite the Chartrons district), and La Cité du Vin. Use a regular bus or tram ticket, or purchase a single/double-journey Bat3 ticket on board for €3/4.

### TRAIN

Major services from **Gare St-Jean** (Cours de la Marne) include:

**Bayonne** From €20, 1¾ hours, at least 10 daily.  
**La Rochelle** From €20, 2½ hours, six daily.

**Nantes** €23, five hours, three daily.

**Paris Gare Montparnasse** From €41, two hours, at least 16 daily.

**Poitiers** €19 to €36, 1¼ hours, at least hourly.

**Toulouse** €16, 2¼ hours, hourly.

## Around Bordeaux

Bordeaux' world-famous vineyards surround the city – a perfect day trip. The **Es-space Information Routes du Vin** (134-150 quai de Bacalan, La Cité du Vin; ☎10am-7pm Apr-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) inside La Cité du Vin distributes free, colour-coded maps of production areas and driving itineraries along Les Routes des Vins de Bordeaux.

Otherwise, fine sand beaches bordered by dunes and lagoons stretch from Pointe de Grave south along the Côte d'Argent (Silver Coast) to the Bassin d'Arcachon and beyond, with great surf.

## The Médoc

Northwest of Bordeaux, along the western shore of the Gironde Estuary – formed by the confluence of the Garonne and Dordogne rivers – lie some of Bordeaux' most celebrated vineyards.

On the much-revered Left Bank of the muddy Gironde, the port town of **Pauillac** (population 1300) lies at the heart of this prestigious wine country, surrounded by the distinguished Médoc, Haut-Médoc, Margaux, St-Estèphe and St-Julien appellations.

Extraordinary châteaux pepper these parts, from the world-famous Château Ducru-Braucaillou on its southeast fringe to Château Margaux, with striking cellars designed by Lord Norman Foster of Thames Bank. The Pauillac wine appellation encompasses 18 *crus classés*, including the world-renowned Mouton Rothschild, Latour and Lafite Rothschild.

## Sights & Activities

The easiest way of visiting Médoc wineries and tasting local vintages is with a guided tour organised by Bordeaux tourist office (p663). The vast range covers everything from a straightforward château visit (from €8 per person), one-day vineyard excursions (€135), cycling tours with tastings and wine-themed escape games. Advance reservations are essential.

### Château Lanessan

WINERY

(☎05 56 58 94 80; www.lanessan.com; Cussac-Fort-Médoc; adult/child tour cellar €8/2, horse museum €8/2, gardens €8/2, cellar & museum €15/2; ☎10am-noon & 2-6pm by advance reservation) With an advance reservation, one of the easiest Médoc châteaux to visit is Château Lanessan, a neoclassical castle with English-style gardens and 19th-century greenhouse, 10km north of Margaux. You can tour just the wine cellar (one hour); visit the impressive stables built in a horseshoe-shape in 1880 with marble feed troughs, pine-panelled tack room and a museum of

### DON'T MISS

#### VINEYARD LUNCH BY DESIGN

Dining on a terrace overlooking a field of dark-red glass pebbles and a sea of vines beyond at **La Terrasse Rouge** (☎05 57 24 47 05; www.laterrasserouge.com; 1 Château La Dominique; 3-course menu €39, mains €21-32; ☎noon-2.30pm Sun & Mon, noon-2.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Thu-Sat; 📍🚶🚲), 5km north of St-Émilion, is nothing short of sublime. The spectacular vineyard restaurant was borne out of Jean Nouvel's designer revamp of Château La Dominique's wine cellars and chefs work with local producers to source the finest seasonal produce going: oysters from Cap Ferret, caviar from Neuvic in the Dordogne, and a naturally extraordinary wine list.

Another designer address in the vineyards to watch for is **Les Belles Perdrix** (☎05 57 55 38 28; www.troplong-mondot.com; 1 rte de Mondot; menus 3-/4-/5-course lunch €48/78/95, 5-/7-course dinner €95/125; ☎12.15-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm lunch & dinner Tue-Sat; 📍🚶🚲), reopening in 2021 on the wine-producing estate of St-Émilion's prized Château Troplong-Mondot. Graced with a Michelin star prior to its closure for extensive renovation works in 2017, the kitchen – still headed by chef David Charrier – exalts top-quality seasonal produce sourced from the finest farmers, honey makers, fishmongers, dairies and so on in the region.

19th-century horse-drawn carriages; or do both (1½ hours). The property also offers vertical wine tastings (€18; 1½ hours) and two-hour wine-blending workshops (€30).

### Château Lynch-Bages

WINERY

(☎05 56 73 19 31; www.jmcazes.com; Craste des Jardins, Pauillac; 1hr visit with tasting €9, 2½hr tastings €75; ☀9.30am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri) Château Lynch-Bages, gracefully set in the wealthy hamlet of Bages, 2km southwest of Pauillac, is one of the best-known Médoc wineries – due in no small part to the extraordinary energy, passion and charisma of the Cazes family, who have owned the estate since 1939. It is one of the region's oldest, its wine being among the 18 prestigious *Cinquièmes Crus* classified for the first time in 1855.

Construction is underway on new, state-of-the-art winemaking facilities for the château designed by architect Chien Chung Pei (son of IM Pei, responsible for the Louvre's glass pyramid in Paris). Until complete, tastings and wine classes take place in the family's 18th-century **Château Ormes de Pez** in St-Estèphe.

### La Winery

WINERY

(☎05 56 69 08 51; www.winery.fr; Rond-point des Vendangeurs, rte du Verdon, Arsac-en-Médoc; ☀10.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, to 6.30pm Sun) Don't miss Philippe Raoux' vast glass-and-steel wine centre just off the D1215. It hosts concerts, contemporary-art exhibitions and various fee-based tastings, including innovative sessions that determine your *signe œnologique* (wine sign); booking required. Its boutique stocks more than 1000 different wines.

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ Château

#### Cordeillan-Bages

DESIGN HOTEL €€€

(☎05 56 59 24 24; www.cordeillanbages.com; rte des Châteaux, Bages; d from €213; ☀Mar-Oct, restaurant mid-Feb–mid-Dec; 🍷@☎📞) 'A delight for hedonists' is how this luxurious 17th-century mansion describes itself – and understandably so. In the heart of Médoc wine country, this Relais & Châteaux hotel-restaurant is the ultimate splurge in viticulture and epicurean luxury. Twenty-eight modern rooms with designer furniture gaze brazenly at vines; wine tasting is an essential part of every stay and dining is deliciously gastronomic.

### ★ Café Lavinal

FRENCH €€

(☎05 57 75 00 09; www.jmcazes.com/en/cafe-lavinal; place Desquet, Bages; menus €29 & €39, mains €22-45; ☀noon-2.30pm & 7-9.15pm; 🍷📞📞) With a duo of local Médoc chefs in the kitchen and 120 wines on the *carte de vin*, a brilliant dining experience is assured at this village bistro in Bages, near Pauillac. Retro red banquet seating and a zinc bar evoke the 1930s, and the menu features revisited French classics like snails with whipped blue cheese, veal sweetbreads and pan-fried scallops with bacon foam.

## St-Émilion

POP 1920

The medieval village of St-Émilion perches above vineyards renowned for producing full-bodied, deeply coloured red wines and is easily the most alluring of all the region's wine towns. Named after Émilion, a miracle-working Benedictine monk who lived in a cave here between 750 and 767 CE, it soon became a stop on pilgrimage routes, and the village and its vineyards are now Unesco-listed.

Today, despite masses of tourists descending on the town, it's worth venturing 47km east from Bordeaux to experience St-Émilion's magic, particularly when the sun sets over the valley and the limestone buildings glow with halo-like golden hues.

## Sight & Activities

A variety of hiking and cycling circuits loop through the greater World Heritage jurisdiction; the tourist office (p667) has maps and books detailing itineraries. The tourist office also rents bicycles and runs some fantastic guided bike tours; in high season reserve your wheels in advance online.

### Clocher de l'Église Monolithe

TOWER

(Bell Tower; place des Créneaux; €2; ☀10.30am-noon & 2-4.30pm Sat & Sun summer, shorter hours winter) For captivating views of the hilltop hamlet, borrow one of four keys from the tourist office to climb the 196 spiralling steps of this 68m-high bell tower, built to crown subterranean rock church **Église Monolithe** (only open to guided tours) during the 12th to 15th centuries. Village and vineyard views from the top of its Flamboyant Gothic spire are beautiful – on a clear day you can spot Bordeaux.



## EUROPE'S HIGHEST SAND DUNE

**Dune du Pilat** This colossal sand dune (sometimes referred to as the Dune de Pyla because of its location 4km from the small seaside resort town of Pyla-sur-Mer), 8km south of Arcachon, stretches from the mouth of the Bassin d'Arcachon southwards for 2.7km. Already Europe's largest, the dune is growing eastwards 1.5m a year – it has swallowed trees, a road junction and even a hotel, so local lore claims. The view from the top – approximately 115m above sea level – is magnificent.

To the west you see the sandy shoals at the mouth of the **Bassin d'Arcachon**, including Cap Ferret and the **Banc d'Arguin** bird reserve, where up to 6000 couples of Sandwich terns nest each spring. Dense dark-green forests of maritime pines, oaks, ferns and strawberry trees (whose wood is traditionally used to build oyster-farmer shacks) stretch from the base of the dune eastwards almost as far as the eye can see.

Between Easter and early to mid-November, a wooden staircase – between 150 and 160 steps depending on the year – is erected on one side of the dune to help tourists scramble to its sandy top. Otherwise, clamber exhaustedly up the steep sand mountain – and exercise your inner child by flying down at an exhilarating sprint if you dare. Bare foot is preferable, although the sand can be perishingly cold in winter and as hot as burning coals in the height of summer.

Be warned that it can be desperately windy atop the dune: swirling, whip-lashing sand can be particularly unpleasant for younger children. Take care swimming in this area: powerful currents swirl out to sea from deceptively tranquil little bays.

**Espace Accueil** (☎05 56 22 12 85; www.ladunedupilat.com; ☀9.30am-5pm Apr-Oct) Before hiking up the dune, gather information on the flora, fauna and fragility of this protected natural site at the friendly tourist office. It organises free guided dune walks, distributes cycling maps and has information on the entire Bassin d'Arcachon area.

Cycling from Arcachon is the most exhilarating means of getting to/from the dune: there is one hill on the final approach, but otherwise the 8km ride is along a beautiful cycling path along the waterfront and through scented pine forests. Alternatively, local bus line 1 links Arcachon train station with the Dune du Pilat (€1).

★ **Maison du Vin de St-Émilion** WINE  
(☎05 57 55 50 55; www.maisonduvinsaintemilion.com; place Pierre Meyrat; ☀9.30am-6.30pm May-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Nov-Apr) An information centre, wine school and shop, this tip-top wine cellar is owned by the 250 winegrowers whose produce it sells at cellar prices. Begin with the small exhibition on the different St-Émilion appellations and test your nose by identifying 12 different aromas: honey, caramel or cocoa? Cherry, plum or blackcurrant? Reserve seasonal themed wine tastings (from €25) in advance.


### Tours

Some of the town's most interesting historical sites – notably the hermit saint's famous cave **Grotte de l'Ermitage** and early 12th-century church **Église Monolithe**, spectacularly carved in the limestone rock – can only be visited with a guided walking tour run by the tourist office (p667). Tours are themed and vary each season, but there's always a **St-Émilion Souterrain** (Underground

St-Émilion; 1½ hours, adult/child €9/free) tour that delves into the town's fascinating labyrinth of catacombs, and several wine-related tours that include tastings and vineyard visits.

### Sleeping & Eating

If you're on a budget, day-trip it here from Bordeaux. Otherwise, St-Émilion has gorgeous places to stay and eat. *Lamproie à la Bordelaise* – a type of river eel, sometimes nicknamed 'vampires of the seas' – is the local dish to try, around since the Middle Ages.

★ **Château Troplong-Mondot** HOTEL **ccc**  
(☎05 57 55 32 05; www.troplong-mondot.com; 1rte de Mondot; d €250-370;   ) An overnight at Château Troplong-Mondot, 2.5km east of St-Émilion village, offers a rare glimpse into the workings of a Premier Grand Cru Classé winery. Stylish modern rooms in a vintage, gold-stone building next to the 18th-century château ooze French Country chic and, most brilliantly of all, rates include

breakfast, an estate tour with tastings and electric fat bikes to spin through surrounding vineyards.

### ★ L'Envers du Décors

FRENCH €€

(☎) 06 57 74 48 31; [www.envers-dudecor.com](http://www.envers-dudecor.com); 9 rue du Clocher; 2-/3-course lunch menu €26.50/32, mains €25-34.50; ☉ noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm) A few doors from the tourist office, this legendary wine bar with fire-engine-red façade is one of the finest places to eat – and inevitably drink – in this tasteful wine town. Chef Bertrand Bordenave cooks fabulous market-driven local classics, including *escargots à la Bordelaise* (snail stew with tomatoes, white wine and chilli pepper), veal liver pan-fried in sherry vinegar, and oysters by the dozen.

### La Table de Pavie

GASTRONOMY €€€

(Hôtel de Pavie; ☎) 05 57 55 07 55; [www.hostellerie.deplaisance.com](http://www.hostellerie.deplaisance.com); 5 place du Clocher; menu lunch €58, dinner €155 & €205; ☉ noon-1.15pm & 7.30-9.15pm Tue-Sat) Wine pairings are in a league of their own at this exquisite Michelin double-starred restaurant, in the heart of the village in a luxurious, five-star hotel. Since September 2020 multi-starred chef Yannick Alléno has been the celebrity mastermind behind the sublime menu that smokes tender milk-fed lamb over grape vines, marries pigeon with asparagus lettuce, and serves Breton lobster in a Graves wine sauce.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎) 05 57 55 28 28; [www.saint-emilion-tourisme.com](http://www.saint-emilion-tourisme.com); place des Créneaux; ☉ 9.30am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) Excellent themed guided tours and plenty of useful information on wine tasting, walking and cycling. It also rents bicycles.

## i Getting There & Away

From Bordeaux, direct trains run daily to/from St-Émilion (€9.60, 35 minutes); in the middle of the day, SNCF buses replace the section of the journey between St-Émilion and Libourne.

St-Émilion train station is a scenic 1.7km walk from town.

## Arcachon

POP 11,280

A long-time oyster-harvesting area on the southern side of the tranquil, triangular Bassin d'Arcachon (Arcachon Bay), this seaside town lured Bordelaise aristocrats at the end of the 19th century. Its four little quarters

are romantically named for each of the seasons, with villas that evoke the town's golden past amid a scattering of 1950s architecture.

Arcachon's generous swath of golden-sand beach seethes with sun-seekers in summer, but there are plenty of equally sandy but less-crowded beaches, including the lovely Plage des Arbousiers, just a short bike ride away. Arcachon is the perfect launch pad for swashbuckling adventures on nearby Dune du Pilat, Europe's highest sand dune.

## 👁 Sights & Activities

Beautiful cycling paths wind along the waterfront and through scented pine forests to link Arcachon with the Dune du Pilat (8km south in Pyla-sur-Mer), Biscarosse (30km south) and east to Gujan Mestras (15km) and Le Teich (20km). In Arcachon, get a free *carte des pistes cyclables* from the tourist office showing all the trails around the Bassin d'Arcachon. Rent wheels at **Locabeach** (☎) 05 56 83 79 11; [www.locabeach.com](http://www.locabeach.com); 34 av du Général de Gaulle; 4hr/day city bike €10/13, e-bike €22/32; ☉ 10am-6pm) near the train station or **Dingo Vélos** (☎) 05 56 83 44 09; [www.dingo.velos.bike](http://www.dingo.velos.bike); 1 rue Grenier; 4hr/day bike €10/13, e-bike per day €32) by the beachfront.

### Plage d'Arcachon

BEACH

In the delightful Ville d'Été (Summer Quarter), Arcachon's deep sandy beach, Plage d'Arcachon, is flanked by two piers. Lively **Jetée Thiers** is at the western end, from where boats yo-yo across the water to Cap Ferret. The eastern pier, **Jetée d'Eyrac** has an old-fashioned carousel, a vintage Big Wheel and the town's turreted casino. The sheltered basin in which Arcachon sits means the water is always absolutely flat calm and ideal for families – a far cry from most Atlantic beaches.

### Ville d'Hiver

AREA

On the tree-covered hillside south of the Ville d'Été, the century-old Ville d'Hiver (Winter Quarter) has more than 300 villas, many decorated with delicate wood tracery, ranging in style from neo-Gothic through to colonial. It's an easy stroll or a short ride up the (free) art deco public lift in Parc Mauresque.

### Union des Bateliers Arcachonnais

BOATING

(UBA; ☎) 08 25 27 00 27; [www.bateliers-arcachon.com](http://www.bateliers-arcachon.com); 75 bd de la Plage; 🎫) Buy tickets for a variety of boat tours and themed excursions from the wooden huts next to the jetty from

where boats set sail. Year-round it operates regular boats to Cap Ferret (adult/child/bicycle return €14/10/11) and excursions to Île des Oiseaux (adult/child €17/12, 1¼ hours).

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ Le B d'Arcachon

DESIGN HOTEL €€

(☎05 56 83 99 91; www.hotel-b-arcachon.com; 4 rue du Professeur Jolvet; d €80-250; 📞@📺) A skip from the waterfront by Arcachon's Big Wheel, Le B can do no wrong. Spacious rooms enjoy serene turquoise, emerald and cream colour palettes, quality fabrics and rain showers. Superior rooms have a balcony with pea-green faux grass and sea views. Late check-out (noon), excellent service, picnics to order, bike rental and a delicious buffet breakfast (adult/child €15/10) too.

### ★ Chez Pierre

SEAFOOD €€

(☎05 56 22 52 94; www.cafedelaplage.com/chez-pierre; 1 bd Veyrier Montagnères; seafood platters €32-75, mains €22.50-35; ☀️ noon-3pm & 7-10.30pm) Stunning shellfish and seafood to suit most budgets, gracious service and an elegant terrace on the seafront with white tablecloths make this contemporary address the top dining choice in Arcachon. Sunset views – over a dozen deftly shucked oysters from the bay or a decadent shellfish platter fit for a king and queen – are impossibly romantic.

### ★ Club Plage Pereire

SEAFOOD €€

(☎05 57 16 59 13; www.clubplagepereire.com; 12 bd de la Mer; mains €14-30; ☀️ restaurant noon-3pm & 7-10pm, club 10am-midnight Apr-Sep) Each year this pop-up beach hut on sandy Plage Pereire is built afresh, much to the joy of local foodies and bons vivants who flock here for tasty seafood cuisine, tapas and burgers, the buzzing beach vibe, drinks on the sand and stunning sunsets. To get here, follow the coast west along bd de la Plage and bd de l'Océan for 2km.

### Le Bikini

SEAFOOD €€

(☎05 56 83 91 36; www.facebook.com/lebikini-arcachon; 18 allée des Arbousiers, Plage des Arbousiers; mains €20-30; ☀️ 9am-midnight) With comfy, candystriped cushioned seating overlooking kitesurfers on sandy Plage des Arbousiers and an atmospheric bar wrapped around a tree, the Bikini buzzes year-round with energy, fun and locals. Its kitchen cooks up first-class shellfish and seafood, fresh from the ocean – the *barbu* (brill) à la *plancha* is superb. Between meals (reservations

essential), it morphs into a hip cafe-bar and waterfront hang-out.

To get here, follow the cycling path from Arcachon along the coast towards Dune du Pilat for 4km. Check its Facebook page for summertime soirées on the sand.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎05 57 52 97 97; www.arcachon.com; 21 ave du Général de Gaulle; ☀️ 9am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun May, Jun & Sep, shorter hours in winter) The town's helpful tourist office is positioned between the train station and the seafront.

## Getting There & Away

The **train station** (bd du Général Leclerc) is a five-minute walk from the seafront along av de la Gaulle. From here there are frequent trains to Bordeaux (€11.80, one hour). To continue to the Dune du Pilat, take local Baia bus line 1 (www.bus-baia.fr) from in front of Arcachon train station (€1, 30 minutes, at least hourly).

Year-round shuttle boats run by Union des Bateliers Arcachonnais (p667) sail daily across the water to/from Cap Ferret (adult/child return €14/5, 30 minutes, at least hourly).

## Cap Ferret

POP 8580

Hidden within a canopy of pine trees at the tip of the Cap Ferret peninsula, the tiny and deliciously oyster-rich village of Cap Ferret spans a mere 2km between the tranquil bay and the crashing Atlantic waves. Surfing is a national pastime here and pedalling between oyster shacks and out to the red-and-white **lighthouse** (☎05 57 70 33 30; www.phareducaperret.com; adult/child €6/4; ☀️ 10am-7.30pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm daily Apr-Jun & Sep, 2-5pm or 6pm Wed-Sun Oct-Mar) on the cape's eastern shore is a deliciously old-fashioned highlight of any visit. Scale its 258 steps for a stunning cape panorama.

### La Maison du Bassin

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎05 56 60 60 63; www.lamaisondubassin.com; 5 rue des Pionniers; s/d from €130/155; ☀️ closed Jan; @📺) Cap Ferret's boutique choice mixes muslin-canopied sleigh beds with romantic four-posters, vintage model sail boats, white linens and wooden floors to create a stylish beach-chic ambience. Breakfast (€15) is served beneath trees in summer on a greenery-draped terrace, and the hotel has a

restaurant too. Some rooms are in a second building. Count no more than five minutes to the sand.

★ **La Canfouine au Canon** SEAFOOD €  
 (☎ 06 64 33 23 85; 75 rue Ste-Catherine, Le Canon; dozen oysters €12-15; ☀ noon-3pm & 6-9pm Apr-Sep, noon-3pm Sat & Sun Oct-Dec & Mar) Expect local products the whole way at La Canfouine ('hut' in the local dialect), an up-market place on the seashore in the fishing village of Le Canon, about 7km north of Cap Ferret along cycling trails. Order oysters, whelks and nail-sized prawns with a Bordeaux rosé or Graves white, and kick back on black sofa seating with world-class views of oyster beds and the Dune du Pilat beyond. Heaven.

★ **Hôtel de la Plage** FRENCH €€  
 (☎ 05 56 60 50 15; www.hoteldelaplage-cap-ferret.fr; 1 av de l'Herbe; mains €15-25; ☀ noon-3pm & 7-11pm Tue-Fri, noon-11pm Sat & Sun) Built in the 1860s to feed and accommodate the first oyster farmers who came to settle on Cap Ferret, this attractive wooden mansion oozes historic charm and story. Bordelais restaurateur Nicolas Lascombes is the creative nous behind the hipster restaurant today, known far and wide for its outstanding oyster bar, seafood dishes, nod to tradition and buzzing beach vibe.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 56 03 94 49; www.lege-capferret.com; 1 ave du Général de Gaulle, Claouey; ☀ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) Guided tours in English, including oyster-farm visits. Unfortunately it's 12.5km north of the Bélisaire boat jetty, making it most useful to motorists.

## i Getting There & Away

Cap Ferret is a scenic drive around Bassin d'Arcachon. Alternatively, drive here directly from Bordeaux (72km) along the D106.

Boats run by **Les Bateliers Arcachonnais** (☎ 05 57 72 28 28; www.bateliers-arcachon.com; Jetée Bélisaire) sail to Cap Ferret's Jetée Bélisaire year-round from Arcachon (adult/child €7/5, 30 minutes, at least hourly). In summer, seasonal boats link Cap Ferret with the Dune du Pilat; buy tickets online.

## i Getting Around

The easiest and most invigorating way to get around Cap Ferret's seafaring quarters is by bicycle; **Locabeach** (☎ 05 56 60 49 46; www.locabeach.com; Jetée Bélisaire; 4hr/day €10/15; ☀ 9.45am-6pm Apr-mid-Nov), by the Bélisaire boat jetty, rents wheels.



JUSTIN FOLKES/LOVELY PLANET ©



**1.** Bordeaux wine **2.** St-Émilion vineyards (p665) **3.** La Cité du Vin (p657), Bordeaux **4.** Grape harvest, Bordeaux (p657)



MAMIE BOUDJ/CITE DU VIN/XTU ARCHITECTS ©



2

## Wine, Glorious Wine

FREEMOODS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



The countryside around the Bordeaux region is full of renowned vineyards and legendary châteaux, many of which can be visited. Venture a little further north and the Cognac region offers a totally different sort of tittle.

### Cognac

Bordeaux isn't the only wine party in town. Cognac produces a drink so heavenly that even the angels are said to partake. Learn all about it during a visit to the Musée des Arts du Cognac (p656).

### St-Émilion

The quintessential French wine town and the oldest French wine region, St-Émilion (p665), has robust and generous wines that tickle the taste buds and any number of wine-related tours (available through the tourist office) to get the most from it.

### Bordeaux

No wine-tasting tour is complete without an exploration at the groundbreaking La Cité du Vin (p657) and a tasting workshop at the **École du Vin de Bordeaux** (Bordeaux Wine School; Map p658; ☎05 56 00 22 85; www.bordeaux.com; 3 cours du 30 juillet). Built on the wealth of the grape, Bordeaux lives up to its bourgeois reputation, but today an army of students gives the city a lighter edge.

4



FREEMOODS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### The Médoc

The Médoc region (p664) encompasses some of the finest wine territory in France, with such grand names as Mouton Rothschild, Latour and Lafite Rothschild hailing from this area. Numerous wine-themed tours are available.

### Oysters & Wine

One of the most pleasurable ways of enjoying the region's wines is at Bordeaux's Marché des Capucins (p661), with a glass of chilled white wine in one hand and a fresh, raw oyster in the other.

## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

309,200

### SIGNATURE DRINK

Cider and Izarra  
liqueur

### BEST BEACH EAT

Jean des Sables  
(p680)

### BEST BASQUE CUISINE

Choko Ona (p692)

### BEST VILLAGE RETREAT

Arcé (p695)



### WHEN TO GO

#### May

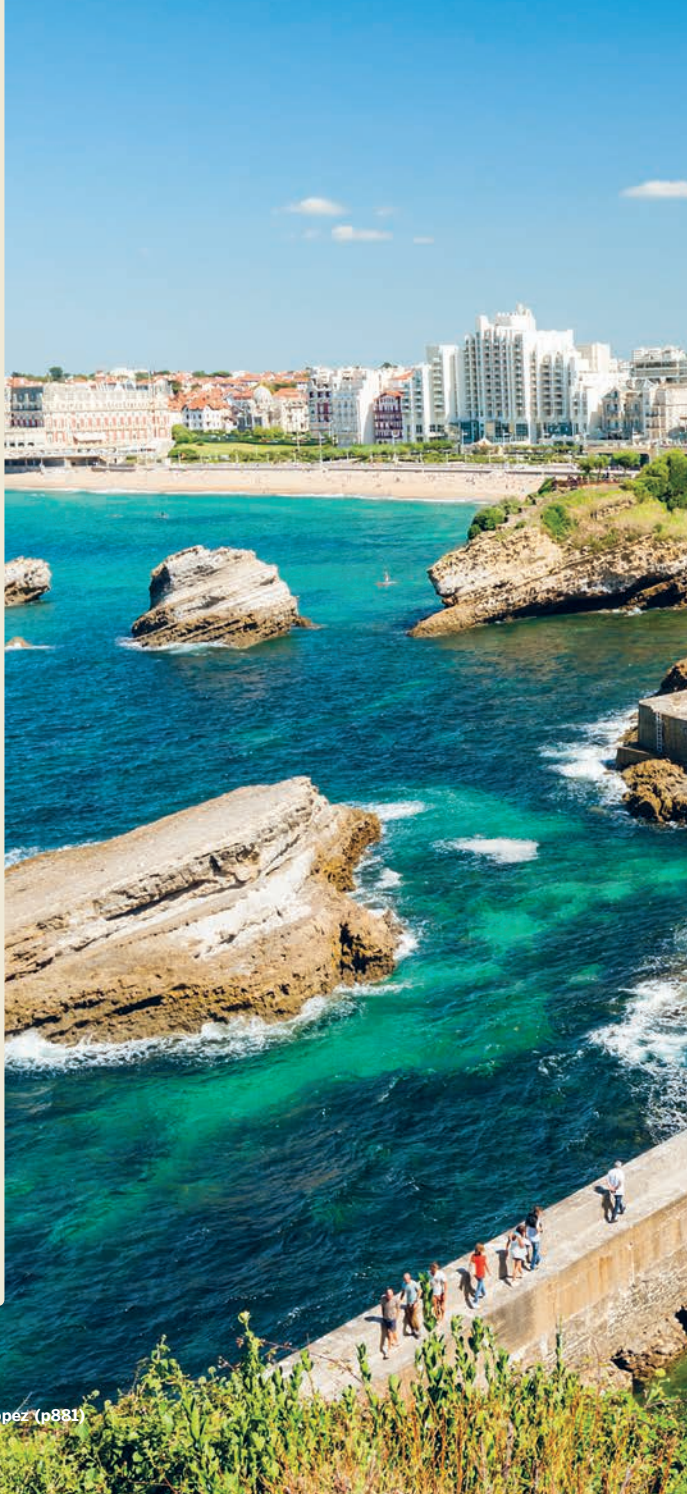
Chocolate time in Bayonne. Empty beaches and spring flowers in the mountains.

#### Aug

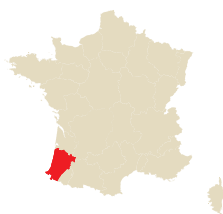
Beaches are packed, and the Fêtes de Bayonne is in full swing.

#### Sep & Oct

Autumnal colours are glorious in the hills, and the surf is as good as it gets.







# French Basque Country

**E**dged by the brilliant blue Bay of Biscay and the craggy foothills of the Pyrenees, Pays Basque (Basque Country) feels one step removed from the rest of France – which is hardly surprising, since it's been an independent nation for much of its history and has more in common with the nearby Basque regions of Spain. Proud, independent and fiery, the people of the Basque Country are fiercely protective of their history and culture. The region's biggest town is glitzy beach resort Biarritz, famous for its sweeping oceanfront and achingly cool surf scene. Nearby Bayonne is considered the true heart of Basque Country, from where remote villages and vineyards spill across hills towards the Spanish border.

## INCLUDES

Bayonne.....	674	Espelette .....	691
Biarritz.....	680	St-Jean Pied de Port .....	692
Guéthary .....	685	St-Étienne de Baïgorry .....	694
St-Jean de Luz .....	687		
La Rhune .....	690		



## French Basque Country Highlights

- 1 Biarritz** (p680) Joining the hordes of surfers and sunbathers on the famous seafrent.
- 2 Bayonne** (p677) Sampling at one of Bayonne's celebrated chocolate shops.
- 3 Sentier du Littoral** (p687) Hiking the wild coast path between Bidart and Hendaye.
- 4 St-Jean de Luz** (p687) Exploring this charming seaside town and its historic church.
- 5 St-Jean Pied de Port** (p692) Strolling the picturesque streets of this ancient pilgrimage town.
- 6 St-Étienne de Baïgorry** (p694) Hiking verdant valley hills and feasting on artisan ham and chocolate in this remote hamlet.
- 7 La Rhune** (p691) Riding a rattling vintage train up the summit of La Rhune.
- 8 Espelette** (p691) Shopping for the Basque Country's famous chilli pepper.
- 9 Les Landes** (p680) Catching the next big wave on the surf-rich, sandy beaches along the coast of Les Landes.

## Bayonne

POP 51,230

Stretching along the banks of the Rivers Adour and Nive, the waterside city of Bayonne is one of the prettiest in southwest France, and the capital of the French Basque Country. It's been a strategic stronghold since medieval times, and the old ramparts are still visible around the outskirts of the old town, otherwise known as **Grand Bayonne**. But it's the city's colourful half-timbered buildings, riverside terrace restaurants and boutique-fringed backstreets that make Bayonne delightful to meander at leisure.

West of the city, Bayonne's suburban sprawl spills into Anglet – famed for its beaches and surf – and the equally glam seaside resort of Biarritz. The trio collectively is often nicknamed BAB.

### Sights

Most sights are in Grand Bayonne, the oldest and most attractive part of the city on the western bank of the Nive, and the staunchly Basque quarter of Petit Bayonne across the river. Watch for the reopening by 2022 of the city's fine arts museum, **Musée Bonnat-Helleu** (☎05 59 46 63 60; [www.facebook.com/museebonnathelleu](http://www.facebook.com/museebonnathelleu); 5 rue Jacques Laffitte).

### Musée Basque et de l'Histoire de Bayonne

MUSEUM

(☎05 59 59 08 98; [www.musee-basque.com](http://www.musee-basque.com); 37 quai des Corsaires; adult/child €8/free, 1st Sun of month free; ☼10am-6pm Tue-Sun) This excellent ethnographic museum, currently under renovation but still open, is an ideal spot for better understanding the Basque region's complex culture and history. A grilled window and plaque by the entrance marks the location of a tower where abandoned babies were left up until 1867. Inside, traditional costumes, artwork, archaeological ephemera and so on evoke Basque history and custom. Watch for some interesting temporary exhibitions.

### Cathédrale Ste-Marie

CATHEDRAL

([www.cathedraledebayonne.com](http://www.cathedraledebayonne.com); place Monseigneur Vansteenberghé; ☎8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun, cloister 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm summer, to 5pm winter) The twin towers of Bayonne's Gothic cathedral soar above the city. Construction began in the 13th century, and was completed in 1451. Above the north aisle are three lovely stained-glass windows; the oldest, in the Chapelle St-Jérôme, dates

from 1531. There are also several beautifully restored frescoes. The entrance to the Gothic 13th-century **cloister** (place Louis Pasteur; ☉ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm) **FREE** is on adjoining place Louis Pasteur (corner of rue de l'Espagne).

## Sleeping

### Hôtel Loustau

HOTEL €

(Hôtel Ibis Styles Bayonne Gare Centre; ☎ 05 59 55 08 08; <https://loustau-hotel-bayonne.hotelmix.fr>; 1 place de la République; s/d/q from €79/89/108; 📶) It might be part of the Ibis Styles brand, but its peaceful riverside location with cathedral-spire view is far from cookie-cutter. Inside the century-old town house, guests are looked after with a fun and funky breakfast room with faux cowhide seating, an attractive co-working space, and 45 cheerful rooms. Breakfast, available to non-guests too, costs €10/6 for the bottomless buffet/'express' coffee and croissant.

### Hôtel des Arceaux

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €

(☎ 05 59 59 15 53; <https://hotel-des-arceaux-bayonne.hotelmix.fr>; 26 rue Port Neuf; d from €53, without bathroom from €47; 📶) Colourful, no-frills rooms slumber inside this attractive two-star hotel with foliage-strewn façade on one of Bayonne's prettiest arcaded streets. Some rooms share bathrooms and public areas are an endearing, home-away-from-home jumble of old furniture, faded prints, faux glass chandeliers and vintage curios – the rocking horse in the lounge-cum-breakfast room-cum-reception is irresistible. Breakfast €7.50.

### Hôtel les

#### Basses Pyrénées

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 25 70 88; [www.hotel-bassespyrenees-bayonne.com](http://www.hotel-bassespyrenees-bayonne.com); 13 rue Tour de Sault; s €110-150, d €130-195, q €180-300; ☉ closed mid-Feb–early Mar; 📶📶📶) Reception at Bayonne's most luxurious hotel is tucked into a tower within the town's ramparts. Rooms blend high-end

## FÊTES DE BAYONNE

Beginning on either the first Wednesday in August or occasionally the last in July, the **Fêtes de Bayonne** ([www.fetes.bayonne.fr](http://www.fetes.bayonne.fr); ☉ early Aug or late Jul) attracts thousands of people from across France and Spain for a five-day orgy of drinking, dancing, processions, fireworks and bulls. In many ways it's like a less commercialised version of the famous San Fermín festival in Pamplona (Spain) and, just like in Pamplona, Bayonne also holds bull running. However, here the bulls are actually cows – though they still have horns and they still hurt when they mow you down – and they don't run down the streets, but are instead released on the crowd in front of Château Neuf, across the River Nive on place Paul Bert in Petit Bayonne.

During the *fête*, bullfights also take place during which bulls are maimed or killed. If you're thinking of attending a bullfight, it's important to understand what you'll witness. The bull's back and neck are repeatedly pierced by the lances, resulting in quite a lot of blood, as well as considerable pain and distress for the animal. The bull gradually becomes weakened through blood loss before the *torero* delivers the final sword thrust. If done properly, the bull dies instantly from this final thrust, albeit after bleeding for some time from its other wounds. If the coup de grâce is not delivered well, the animal dies a slow death. When this happens, the scene can be extremely disturbing.

One of the biggest highlights of the *fête* is the **opening ceremony**, when huge crowds gather in front of the town hall at 10pm on the Wednesday night for an impressively noisy firework display and the arrival of a 'lion' (the town's mascot).

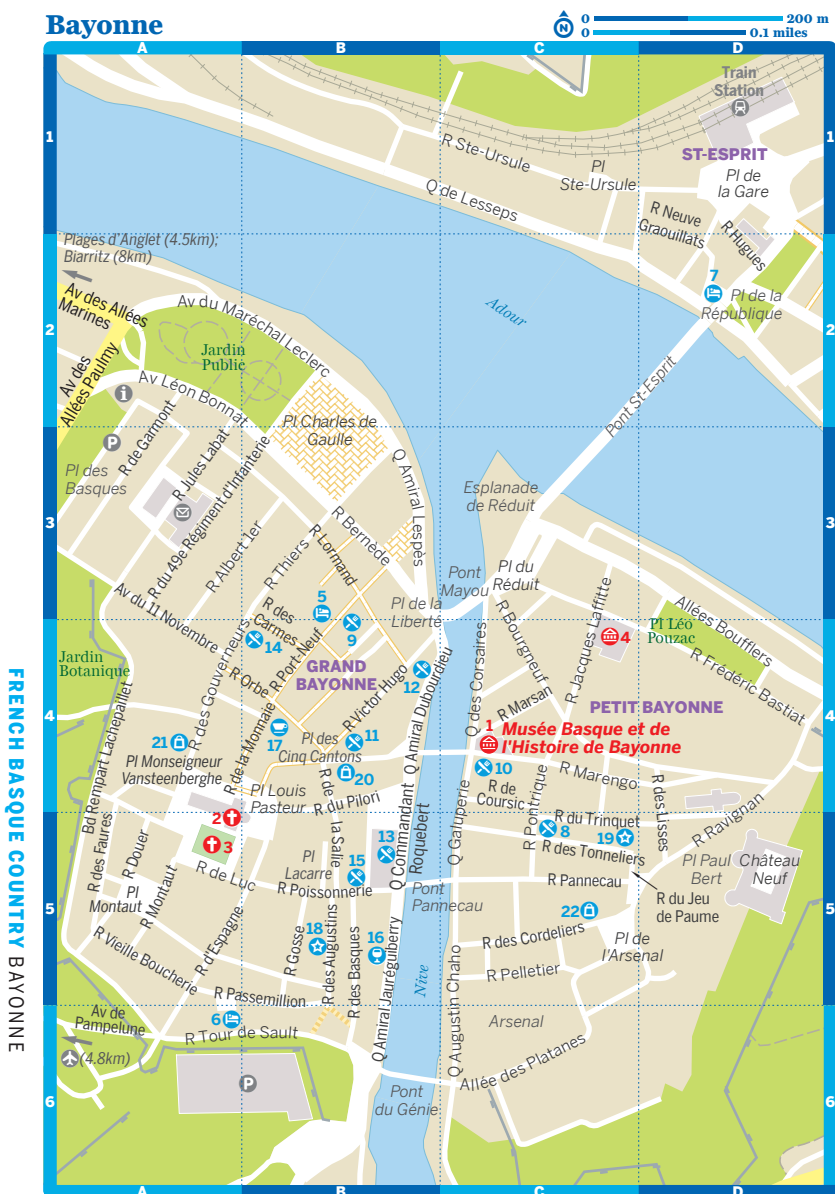
While the nocturnal activities might be a bit much for children, the daytime processions, marching bands, organised children's picnics and events are tailor-made for the delight of little ones. Thursday daytime has the most child-friendly activities.

If you're planning on attending the *fête*, you'll need to book at least six to eight months in advance for hotel accommodation anywhere in the vicinity of Bayonne. A number of temporary campgrounds (count about €75 for six days) are erected in and around Bayonne; otherwise do what many revellers do and sleep in the back of a car (camping outside one of the campgrounds is forbidden).

Finally, unless you want to stand out like a sore thumb, dress all in white and don a red sash and neck-scarf.



## Bayonne



FRENCH BASQUE COUNTRY BAYONNE

antique-styled furnishings with comfy patterned linens, and breakfasting or dining alfresco on the enchanting square in front, tree-shaded and stung with fairy lights, is a mellow summertime pleasure. Buffet/express breakfast €15/9.

## Eating

Bayonne has superb places to eat, and dining is cheaper than nearby Biarritz.

The **covered market** (quai Commandant Roquebert; ☎ 7am-1pm Mon-Fri, 6am-1.30pm Sat, 8am-1.30pm Sun) sits on the west bank

## Bayonne

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Musée Basque et de l'Histoire de Bayonne .....C4

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Cathédrale Ste-Marie .....A5  
3 Cloister .....A5  
4 Musée Bonnat-Helleu .....C4

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 5 Hôtel des Arceaux .....B3  
6 Hôtel les Basses Pyrénées .....A6  
7 Hôtel Loustau .....D2

### 🍴 Eating

- 8 Bakera .....C5  
9 Cazenave .....B4  
10 Eklat .....C4  
11 Janine .....B4

- 12 La Table de Sebastien Gravé .....B4  
13 Les Halles .....B5  
14 Mokofin .....B4  
15 Xurasko .....B5

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 16 Ibaïa .....B5  
17 Puyodebat .....B4

### 🎪 Entertainment

- 18 La Luna Negra .....B5  
19 Trinquet St-André .....C5

### 🛍 Shopping

- 20 Belharra-La Fabrique .....B4  
Daranatz .....(see 9)  
21 Duplessis .....A4  
22 Pierre Ibaïalde .....C5

of the Nive; several tasty eateries with tiny street terraces line the riverfront immediately south of here along quai Amiral Jauréguiberry.

### ★ Janine

BISTRO €

(<http://janine.business.site>; 12 rue Port des Castets; mains €10-17; ☎9am-3.30pm Mon-Sat; 📞) Janine is fashionably understated and just a tad alternative, with a great pavement terrace, loud music, street-style decor and chipped crockery. This is the place for wholesome breakfast pancakes (drenched in maple syrup or with eggs and bacon) and market-driven lunches cooked up by chef David and team in the open kitchen; every day is something different.

### Mokofin

FRENCH €

(☎05 59 59 04 02; [www.mokofin.com](http://www.mokofin.com); 27 rue Thiers; dishes €6-9; ☎10am-3pm & 4-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Sat) Those craving a gourmet picnic in the park should make a beeline for this magenta-pink boutique near the Château Vieux. Beautifully conceived savoury tarts, *bocaux* (glass conservation jars) filled with creative salads and warm dishes, canapés and finger foods by Joëlle and Maïte-na Erguy make this a stop to remember. A handful of street tables allow you to eat in situ.

### Cazenave

CAFE €

(☎05 59 59 03 16; [www.chocolats-bayonne-cazenave.fr](http://www.chocolats-bayonne-cazenave.fr); 19 rue Port Neuf; hot chocolate €6.30, with toasts €10.30; ☎9.15am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat) The window displays at this historic chocolate shop, around since 1854, are an

art-form. Choose from 14 different chocolate bars, each with a number and colour-coded wrapper, or a devilish choice of ganache-filled *bonbons chocolats* (individual chocolates).

With tables alfresco beneath the arches on the attractive street, Cazenave's *salon de thé* (tea room) is a perfect spot to linger over a pot of old-fashioned *mousseaux au lait* (frothy hot chocolate), whipped by hand as tradition demands and served with a pot of whipped cream on the side. Make breakfast out of it by ordering buttered toasts. Creamy homemade ice creams too.

### Bakera

BASQUE €

(☎05 59 25 51 68; 15 rue des Tonneliers; tapas €1.50-6, mains €15-21; ☎10am-3pm & 4-10pm Tue-Sat) It might be a tad off the beaten tourist track, but this quintessential Basque bistro is a great place to try classic dishes shot through with southwestern spice and flavour. *Chipirons* (squid) spiced with garlic and parsley, and *boudin* (blood sausage) are favourites. Tapas dishes are scribed on the blackboard outside and lunchtime cooks up a good-value *formule* (fixed two- or three-course menu).

### Eklat

CAFE €

(☎05 59 42 64 95; [www.facebook.com/eklatbayonne](http://www.facebook.com/eklatbayonne); 2 rue Marengo; cookies & cakes €2-5.50; ☎10am-6pm Thu-Mon) Across the river in Petit Bayonne, chic Scandinavian design and a mix of table, bar stool and cushioned window seating welcome the sweet-toothed in this contemporary *salon de thé* and cafe. Marigold rugs keep alfresco drinkers snug

beneath the arches on colder days, and the jewel-like cookies and *pâtisseries fines* by pastry chef Mathieu Hilde are sublime.

**La Table de Sebastien Gravé** FRENCH €€  
(☎05 59 46 14 94; [www.latable-sebastiengrave.fr](http://www.latable-sebastiengrave.fr); 21 quai Amiral Dubourdieu; menu lunch 2-/3-course €21/26, dinner €39, mains €22; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Born-and-bred Bayonnais chef Sebastien Gravé and wife Laure cook traditional Basque flavours in all kinds of innovative ways at their river-facing restaurant in Grand Bayonne. The sleek and minimal interior sports plain wooden tables and pop-art prints on the walls, and the dessert menu is particularly enticing. The chocolate mousse with salted caramel and smoked peanut ice cream is truly sublime.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Petit Bayonne is awash with pubs and bars (all generally open from noon to 2am Monday to Saturday), especially along rue Panneau, rue des Cordeliers and quai Galuperie.

**Xurasko** TAPAS  
(☎05 59 59 21 77; 16 rue Poissonnerie; ☺noon-11pm) Rough and ready, and all the better for it, this atmospheric corner bar near the market buzzes with after-dinner drinkers, market workers and tourists. Pull up a stool by the zinc bar or grab a table on the street and tuck into tapas plates accompanied by a glass of bubbly Txakoli wine or a Bob's beer.

**Ibaña** BAR  
(☎05 59 59 86 66; 45 quai Amiral Jauréguiberry; ☺noon-2pm & 6pm-2am Tue-Sat) Join Bayonnais for drinks and authentic tapas or tasting platters of cheese, charcuterie and typical southwestern *magret de canard* (duck breast) and foie gras at this bustling 'bar bodéga' near the covered market. Tapas highlights (tapas €4.50 to €13) include smoked trout in lemon and dill cream, veal tataki with red onions and grape chutney, fiery fried padrón peppers and honey-roasted *camembert de brebis* (goat's cheese).



## Entertainment

**Trinquet St-André** SPECTATOR SPORT  
(☎05 59 59 18 69; [www.facebook.com/pelotesnb](http://www.facebook.com/pelotesnb); 4 rue du Jeu de Paume; ☺from 4pm Thu Jan-Jun) Hidden down a backstreet, this atmospheric *trinquet* (indoor court) stages *main nue pelota* (bare-hand *pelota*) matches under an impressive timber-framed roof. Enjoy the buzz of post-match discussion afterwards

in its lively bistro-bar, Brasserie du Trinquet St-André.

**La Luna Negra** LIVE MUSIC  
(☎05 59 25 78 05; [www.lunanegra.fr](http://www.lunanegra.fr); 7 rue des Augustins; adult €10-17, child €4; ☺7pm-2am Wed-Sat) Down an alley in the old town, this venerable late-night cafe-theatre and cabaret venue stages a mixed program of comedy, world music, salsa and live jazz.



## Shopping

Bayonne is famous for two premium products – handmade chocolates, which have been made here for centuries, and the cured ham known as *jambon de Bayonne*. One other local souvenir, that you probably won't be able to get through customs, is a *baïonnette* (bayonet), developed here in 1640 on rue des Faures (Blacksmiths St).

**Duplessis** FOOD & DRINKS  
(☎05 40 07 36 21; [www.duplessis-bayonne.fr](http://www.duplessis-bayonne.fr); 4 rue des Gouverneurs; ☺9.30am-2.30pm & 4.30-7pm Mon-Sat) As if to confirm Bayonne's foodie reputation, this boutique with sky-blue paintwork is the *atelier* (workshop) of artisan fish smoker Cédric Duplessis. In a tiny smoking room outback, he smokes Scottish salmon and local Baïgorry trout over aromatic chippings of the same beech or plane tree wood used to craft the Basque *pala* (wooden bat used in the Basque ball game of the same name).

**Belharra-La Fabrique** DRINKS  
(☎05 59 64 27 22; [www.belharra.eu](http://www.belharra.eu); 9 rue Port de Castets; ☺10.15am-1pm & 1.45-6pm Tue-Sun) Beer lovers will love the pocket-sized boutique of Bayonne's grassroots artisan brewery, Brasserie Belharra, whose name means L'Herbe or The Grass in Basque. The vintage-style etiquettes alone, featuring coastal elements of the Pays-Basque region, make a stylish souvenir to take home. Taste and buy peppery citrus *blanche* and biscuity *blonde* brews, and if you become truly hooked, ask to visit the brewery.

**Pierre Ibaïalde** FOOD  
(☎05 59 25 65 30; [www.pierre-ibaialde.com](http://www.pierre-ibaialde.com); 41 rue des Cordeliers; ☺9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug) This is the address to buy Bayonne's celebrated *jambon* – traditionally served wafer thin, and claimed by locals to be every bit as good as *pata negra* or prosciutto. There are two or three guided tours (in French) daily of the shop and drying room if you really want to understand

what makes the ham special; reserve in advance online.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 59 46 09 00; www.bayonne-tourisme.com; place des Basques; ☀ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of the year) Information, bike rental and guided city tours.

## **i** Getting There & Around

### AIR

**Aéroport Biarritz Pays Basque** (BIQ; www.biarritz.aeroport.fr) The airport is 5km southwest of central Bayonne and 3km southeast of downtown Biarritz.

Chronoplus bus line 4 links Bayonne with the airport (€1, 20 minutes, hourly). A taxi from the town centre costs around €25.

### BUS

Bus lines 5 and 52 run by Chronoplus (www.chronoplus.eu) link Bayonne with Biarritz town centre and Anglet; bus line 4 links Bayonne with Aéroport Biarritz Pays Basque and Biarritz train station. Bus line 3 travels to St-Jean de Luz (40 minutes) and Hendaye (1½ hours).

Services run several times an hour; a ticket valid one/24 hours costs €1/2 plus an initial

€0.20 for the rechargeable card. Summer beach traffic can double journey times.

For longer journeys, regional buses operated by Transports en Nouvelle-Aquitaine (https://transports.nouvelle-aquitaine.fr) leave from place des Basques for the Spanish border.

For Spain-bound buses from Aéroport Biarritz Pays Basque to San Sebastián (1½ hours) and Pamplona (three to four hours), check in with Alsa (www.alsa.es) and BlablaBus (www.blablacar.fr).

Flixbus (www.flixbus.com) services run to Bilbao from Toulouse (6½ hours, four daily) and Bordeaux (6¾ hours, three daily) via Bayonne, Biarritz, St-Jean de Luz and San Sebastián. Fares start from €5 for Bayonne to San Sebastián.

### TRAIN

TGVs run between Bayonne and Paris Gare Montparnasse (€56 to €93, four hours, five daily). Other destinations include Bordeaux and Toulouse.

For travel to Biarritz, catch a bus; Biarritz' train station is out of town. For destinations further south, trains run at least hourly, including services to St-Jean de Luz (€5.40, 25 minutes) and Hendaye (€8, 40 minutes). There are also four trains daily to St-Jean Pied de Port (€10.30, one hour).

## DON'T MISS

### BAYONNE CHOCOLATE

Bayonne's long association with chocolate stems from a rather unlikely source – the Spanish Inquisition. Fleeing persecution in their Spanish homeland, Jewish chocolate-makers settled in Bayonne's St-Éspirit neighbourhood, establishing the town's reputation for producing some of the finest chocolate anywhere in France. By 1870, Bayonne boasted 130 chocolatiers, more than in all of Switzerland – although now only around a dozen remain.

The town's historic *chocolatiers* are neighbouring **Daranatz** (☎ 05 59 59 03 05; www.chocolat-bayonne-daranatz.fr; 15 rue Port Neuf; ☀ 9.15am-7pm, shorter hours winter) and Cazenave (p677), tucked beneath the arches on arcaded rue Port Neuf. Watch chocolate being made during a tour of **L'Atelier du Chocolat** (☎ 05 59 55 00 15; www.atelierduchocolat.fr; 1 allée de Gibéleou; adult/child €6/3; ☀ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sep-Jun), which includes a historical overview of chocolate in Bayonne and, of course, the chance to taste the goods.

*Thé cacao* ('chocolate tea' aka black tea infused with cocoa bean husks), pots of hot chocolate served with whipped cream and a selection of petits fours on the side, Kakolak (cold chocolate frappé) and a bottle of *bière au cacao* (chocolate beer) brewed by Basque brewery Eguzki are unique chocolate experiences to be savoured in situ at historic *chocolatier* **Puyodebat** (La Tasse à Moustache; ☎ 05 59 58 06 97; www.facebook.com/latasseamoustachepuyodebat; 11 rue Orbe; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Mon-Sat). Best up, hot chocolate is served in a traditional *tasse à moustache* – a bone china teacup, typical to the 1800s, with a bridge across the top to prevent one's moustache getting drenched in chocolate.

Bayonne hosts its own chocolate-themed weekend in May, **Les Journées du Chocolat**.

## LES LANDES

The *département* of Les Landes, just north of Bayonne and Anglet, is a vast tract of farmed pine forests, lakes and seaside towns. It's great for hiking and biking, but for most people, the reason to visit is its seemingly never-ending beaches. From the mouth of the Adour at Anglet to the mouth of the Gironde stretches a ribbon of shimmering golden sand, backed by dunes and basking under a deep blue sky.

The combination of sand and waves has made this the heartland of French surfing. The action centres on the small beach towns of **Capbreton** and **Hossegor**, where there are numerous surf schools offering lessons for both novice and experienced riders. Meanwhile, the tiny village of **Moliets** may have the best beach of all, with powder-soft sand.

The Landes area is very popular with French holidaymakers in summer, but the accommodation is a bit underwhelming – pricey hotels, busy campgrounds and rough-and-ready surf camps. Contact the tourist offices in **Hossegor** (☎05 58 41 79 00; www.hossegor.fr; 166 av de la Gare; ☀9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of the year; 📍) or **Capbreton** (☎05 58 72 12 11; www.capbreton-tourisme.com; av du Président Pompidou; ☀9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of the year) for details.

Seafood bistros and bars can be found in most of the coastal towns, plus a couple of pleasant country restaurants further inland. In Hossegor, the top spot to dine on the sand is **Jean des Sables** (☎05 58 72 29 82; www.jeandessables.com; 121 bd de la Dune; lunch/dinner menus €35/68 & €80; ☀noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm, closed for lunch Mon, Wed & Fri Jul & Aug, closed Mon & Tue mid-Sep–Jun), with beach terrace and sumptuously created fare, bursting with fresh seafood. To hobnob with a laid-back hipster crowd inland, hit **Waxed** (www.facebook.com/waxedcoffee; 202 av des Menuisiers; mains €8-12; ☀8.30am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun; 📍) for speciality coffee, breakfast and brunch. The surfer-cool coffee shop squats inside Wasted Talent, a brilliant surf-inspired concept store.

From Bayonne's place des Basques, RDTL (www.rdtl.fr) bus 7 goes to Capbreton/Hossegor (€2, 40 minutes, up to six Monday to Saturday) and other areas of Les Landes.

## BIARRITZ

POP 25,400

Half glitzy seaside resort, half chill surfer hang-out, Biarritz has been a favourite beach getaway since Napoléon III and his Spanish-born wife Eugénie arrived during the mid-19th century. Its elegant villas and heritage-listed mansions, which glitter with belle époque and art deco finesse, have retained their glamour. Unfortunately the 20th century wasn't quite so considerate, and the seafront is a mishmash of architectural styles, 1970s concrete carbuncles included. Nevertheless, undeniably cool Biarritz remains one of the southwest's top seaside spots and throngs with visitors in summer.

### Sights

#### Aquarium de Biarritz

AQUARIUM

(☎05 59 22 75 40; www.aquariumbiarritz.com; esplanade du Rocher de la Vierge; adult/child €15/11, combined ticket with Cité de l'Océan €24/16; ☀9.30am-7pm) Housed in a wonderful art

deco building near the old port, Biarritz' aquarium is seething with underwater life from the Bay of Biscay and beyond, including huge aquariums of sharks (seven different species in all), playful grey seals (watch them being fed each day at 10.30am and 5pm) and tropical reef fish, as well as exhibits exploring Biarritz' whaling past.

#### Cité de l'Océan

MUSEUM

(☎05 59 22 75 40; www.citedelocean.com; 1 av de la Plage; adult/child €13/9, combined ticket with Aquarium de Biarritz €24/16; ☀10am-7pm Apr-Oct & school holidays, 2-7pm rest of year) Biarritz' splashiest sea-themed attraction is part-museum, part-theme park and part-educational centre. It takes a fun approach to learning about the sea in all its forms – attractions invite older kids to surf like a pro (from six years), join an underwater expedition to study grey sharks in the Polynesian reserve of Fakarava (from six years) or fly upside down aboard the hair-raising Seaborg (minimum height 142cm). Younger children can watch various 3D films in the auditorium.



## Rocher de la Vierge

VIEWPOINT

(Rock of the Virgin) If the swell's big, you might get a drenching as you cross the toy-town-like footbridge (closed in high wind) at the end of Pointe Atalaye to Rocher de la Vierge, named after its white statue of the Virgin and child. Views from this impressive outcrop extend to the mountains of the Spanish Basque Country.

## Chapelle Impériale

CHURCH

(☎05 59 22 37 10; 15 rue des 100 Gardes; €3; ☉2-6pm Thu & Sat Jun-Sep, 2-5pm or 6pm Thu & Sat Oct-Dec & Mar-May) Built in 1864 on the instructions of Empress Eugénie, this glitzy church mixes Byzantine and Moorish styles, and the plaza in front has a superb view of the Grande Plage. Buy tickets on the tourist office website to avoid queues.

## Phare de Biarritz

LIGHTHOUSE

(☎05 59 22 37 10; esplanade du Phare Biarritz; ☉2-6pm daily Jul & Aug, 2-5pm or 6pm Sat & Sun year-round) **FREE** Climbing the 258 twisting steps inside the 73m-high Phare de Biarritz, the town's 1834 lighthouse, rewards you with sweeping views of the Basque coast; reserve slots in advance on the tourist website.

From the Grande Plage, it is a scenic 20-minute walk or 10-minute jog (1.59km) to the lighthouse along the **Chemin du Phare**, a signposted fitness trail sporting a couple of activity stations with scannable QR codes to access the different exercises.

## Asiatica

MUSEUM

(Musée d'Art Asiatique; ☎05 59 22 78 78; www.museeasiatica.com; 1 rue Guy Petit; adult/child €10/free; ☉10.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 2-7pm Sat & Sun Jul, Aug & during French school holidays, 2-7pm Sat & Sun rest of year) Out on the edge of town is this unexpected treasure trove of ancient Indian, Chinese and Tibetan statues, monuments and temple artwork. The layout is a bit haphazard, but the information cards (in several languages) clearly explain the significance of the objects. It's generally considered the country's finest collection of oriental art outside Paris.

## Activities

Once the almost exclusive haunt of the rich and pampered, Biarritz is now known more as the capital of European surfing (although in truth, the real centre of European surfing are the small towns of Hossegor and Capbreton, around 25km to the north). The city's main beach, **Grande Plage**, is good

from mid-low tide on a moderate swell, but the 4km-long stretch of beaches that make up Anglet to the south are usually more consistent.

There are loads of surf schools around town that offer lessons from around €35 per hour; the tourist office keeps a list. Make sure your school is registered with the Fédération Française de Surf (FFS; www.surfingfrance.com) to make sure you get the best standard of training.

## Plages d'Anglet

BEACH

North of Pointe St-Martin, the adrenaline-pumping surfing beaches of Anglet (the final 't' is pronounced) continue northwards for more than 4km. Don't miss **Anglet Surf Avenue**, a surfers' 'Hall of Fame' trail along the beachfront promenade near Anglet's main surf club. Concrete and bronze plaques embedded in the ground feature the footprints – in the typical stance on their board – of some of the world's most celebrated riders from 1930 to the present day.

## Sleeping

### Surf Hostel Biarritz

HOSTEL €

(☎07 65 66 22 22; www.surfhostelbiarritz.com; 27 av de Mignon; dm €32-45, d €70-110; @☎) Count 20 minutes to walk into town from this small fun-packed hostel, at home in a cliff-top villa overlooking the sea. 'Dorms' sleep two to four people and decor is contemporary, with bold bright colour palettes and lots of surf boards stuck to the walls. Colombian chef Pacho is a wicked cook. The hostel rents bikes with surf racks, and runs surf and yoga camps.

## BIKING ABOUT

Fabulous guided bike tours – for all ages and levels – in town, along the coast and off-road up high in the mountains are organised in season by **Velextrix** (☎05 59 98 69 70; www.facebook.com/velextrix; 23bis av du Maréchal Foch; ☉9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm). The on-trend bike shop sells, repairs and rents bicycles, including city bikes (half-day/day €19/29), fat bikes (€30/46), three categories of mountain bikes ranging from leisure (€30/46) to 'super-sportif' (€120/180) and scooters (€45/80) – best up, all wheels are electric. In season, sign up for guided bike tours for all levels.

# Biarritz



## La Maison du Lierre

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

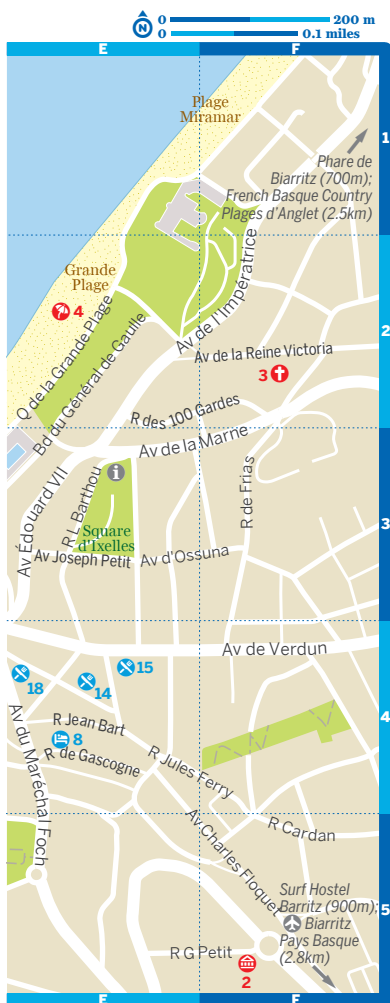
(☎05 59 24 06 00; [www.hotel-maisondulierre-biarritz.com](http://www.hotel-maisondulierre-biarritz.com); 3 av du Jardin Public; s €75-102, d €82-189; 🍷) The icing on the cake at this attractive, Basque-red mansion is an enchanting patio garden with palm trees, potted olive trees, vintage stone fountain and a couple of intimate wrought-iron tables for two. Inside, the central staircase is a listed monument and rooms are named after flowers.

Service is very much *maison d'hôte* style and guests have access to a sauna. Breakfast is €13.

## Hôtel Édouard VII

HOTEL €€

(☎05 59 22 39 80; [www.hotel-edouardvii.com](http://www.hotel-edouardvii.com); 21 av Carnot; s €80-140, d €90-190, f €120-190; 🍷📺) In a cream-coloured, 18th-century mansion with royal blue wooden shutters, this three-star heritage hotel has a touch of old-fashioned grandeur about it. Grandfather clock in the lobby, decorative pots of dried lavender, antique furniture and floral rugs infuse the place with bourgeois charm, and some of the 18 rooms enjoy a wrought-iron balcony. Kudos for the faux sheep grazing in the pocket-sized garden.



## Biarritz

### Sights

- 1 Aquarium de Biarritz ..... B3
- 2 Asiatica ..... F5
- 3 Chapelle Impériale ..... F2
- 4 Grande Plage ..... E2
- 5 Rocher de la Vierge ..... A3

### Sleeping

- 6 Hôtel de Silhouette ..... C4
- 7 Hôtel Édouard VII ..... C5
- 8 Hôtel Villa Koegui ..... E4
- 9 La Maison du Lierre ..... D4

### Eating

- 10 Bar du Marché ..... D4
- 11 Bar Jean ..... C4
- 12 Carøe ..... C5
- 13 Chez Albert ..... B3
- 14 Epoq ..... E4
- 15 Le Pim'pi Bistrot ..... E4
- 16 Les Contrebandiers ..... D4
- 17 Les Halles ..... D4
- 18 Milwaukee Café ..... E4
- 19 Saline ..... C5

### Drinking & Nightlife

- 20 Miremont ..... D3

hotel remains surprisingly secluded thanks to its hidden location set back from the main street. It's full of fun, from the weird faces on the wallpaper to the sheep sculptures grazing in the grassy garden out back. The building dates from 1610, but it's metropolitan modern in style.

### Eating

Biarritz has a great range of restaurants, from fine dining to beachfront cafes, as well as a cracking tapas culture – check out the area around the city's lovely covered market **Les Halles** ([www.halles-biarritz.fr](http://www.halles-biarritz.fr); rue des Halles; ☺ 7am-2pm).

### Hôtel Villa Koegui

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 50 07 77; [www.hotel-villakoegui-biarritz.fr](http://www.hotel-villakoegui-biarritz.fr); 7 rue de Gascogne; s €125-210, d €135-260; ☺☺) This contemporary, four-star hotel brings big-city style to Biarritz. Fourteen urban-cool and minimalist rooms brim with quirky furnishings and decor; admire a pair of fibreglass flamingos in the window. The central courtyard garden is a big plus.

### Hôtel de Silhouette

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎ 05 59 24 93 82; [www.hotel-silhouette-biarritz.com](http://www.hotel-silhouette-biarritz.com); 30 rue Gambetta; d from €149; ☺☺) Just steps from the covered market, this four-star

### Saline

SEAFOOD €

(☎ 05 59 43 65 98; [www.saline-ceviche-bar-restaurant-biarritz.com](http://www.saline-ceviche-bar-restaurant-biarritz.com); 62 rue Gambetta; ceviche & poke bowls €15-21, mains €18-23; ☺) For a contemporary spin on Biarritz' traditional fish menu, reserve a spot at this trendy ceviche bar with big windows overlooking the street. The interior design – beach-inspired straw shade overhead and one wall papered with palm tree fronds – evokes a fantastic sense of vintage exotica, and the menu is equally flamboyant. Think marinated raw fish packed with Caribbean, Pacific and South American flavours.

★ **Epoq**

(☎ 09 88 09 68 12; [www.restaurant-epoq.com](http://www.restaurant-epoq.com); 11 rue du Helder; shared plates €7-15; ☀ noon-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm; 🍷) Laid-back mezzanine dining, creative wall art (skateboards, vegetal panels) and huge glass bell jars of kombucha fermenting on the glass-roofed bar create an on-point, sustainable ambience at this fashionable 'épicerie locavore'. A daily-changing mix of gourmet sharing plates and bowls fuse local seasonal produce with unexpected modern flavours (a pickled veg or candied fruit, an Asian spice) and cocktail pairings are excellent.

★ **Caroe**

(☎ 09 83 34 54 60; [www.caroe.fr](http://www.caroe.fr); 51 rue Gambetta; shared plates €9-20; ☀ 7.30-11pm, closed Sun Sep-Jun) Local fashionistas rave about this contemporary fish bar – for good reason. An exquisite interior design – wood parquet, bold turquoise wall tiling and minimalist wooden tables – complement an inventive shared-plates menu that fuses flavours to perfection. Share clams with miso, sake, orange-infused oil and hazelnuts perhaps, or line-caught squid laced with caramelised almonds, ginger vinegar and red-onion marinated hake.

**Le Pim'pi Bistro**

(☎ 05 59 24 12 62; [www.facebook.com/lepimpi](http://www.facebook.com/lepimpi) bistro; 14 av de Verdun; menu lunch €15-20, dinner €39, mains €22; ☀ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat) Fanny and Manu are the gastronomes behind this resolutely old-fashioned bistro, revered locally for its classic dishes oozing skill and passion. Be it a juicy entrecôte (steak) with extra-fat fries cut by hand, the fishy

FUSION €€

catch of the day served in a hazelnut butter with creamy broccoli, kale and citrus, or a feisty blood sausage with pan-fried squid, everything smacks of the morning market.

**Chez Albert**

(☎ 05 59 24 43 84; [www.facebook.com/restaurantduportdespecheursbiarritz](http://www.facebook.com/restaurantduportdespecheursbiarritz); 51bis allée Port des Pêcheurs; mains €18-30, seafood platters from €45; ☀ 12.15-2pm & 7.30-10pm Thu-Tue) For fish almost fresh off the boat, head down to the rough 'n' ready port where you can literally watch the day's catch being landed straight off the quays here. Blue-and-white tablecloths add a nautical ambience, and the majestic seafood platters – piled high with oysters, lobster, crab, winkles, cockles, langoustines and other fishy delights – are most definitely the thing to order.

SEAFOOD €€

**Milwaukee Café**

(☎ 05 59 54 17 04; [www.facebook.com/pg/milwaukeekeafe](http://www.facebook.com/pg/milwaukeekeafe); 2 rue du Helder; mains €14-17; ☀ 9am-6.30pm Tue-Sat, to 5pm Sun) A little dose of American deli culture is cooked up here inside a jolly candy floss-pink interior: burgers, salads, smoothies and health shakes, followed up by delicious cupcakes, pancakes and barista-made coffee. The name is a reference to the owner's family – she's a Milwaukee native, but grew up in Biarritz.

CAFE €€

**Drinking & Nightlife**

The bar-busy area around rue du Port-Vieux and Les Halles are the hotspots for Biarritz' nightlife. Most cafe-bars stay open till around 2am in season. Find a couple of cheery nightclubs and lounge bars just behind Grande Plage.

**DON'T MISS****BASQUE PINTXOS**

Like Bayonne, tapas (or *pintxos* as they're known in Basque Country) is an ever-popular way to eat in Biarritz. Whether it's a quick snack over drinks or a slap-up feast, there are plenty of places to indulge, especially around the covered market.

**Bar du Marché** (☎ 05 59 23 48 96; 8 rue des Halles; tapas €2-4; ☀ 8am-3pm & 6pm-2am) Around since 1938, this market-side bar with sunny yellow canopy shading a fabulous terrace bar is good for both sit-down meals and late-night tapas.

**Bar Jean** (☎ 05 59 24 80 38; [www.barjean-biarritz.fr](http://www.barjean-biarritz.fr); 5 rue des Halles; tapas €8-22, mains €15-29; ☀ 10.30am-1am) One of the oldest tapas venues in town, Bar Jean is traditional and in summer spills onto the street beside the covered market.

**Les Contrebandiers** (☎ 05 59 24 02 27; [www.facebook.com/lescontrebandiersbiarritz](http://www.facebook.com/lescontrebandiersbiarritz); 20 av Victor Hugo; tapas €5-15; ☀ 9am-11.45pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) This fashionable spot is attached to a wine shop and offers creative small plates.

## SURF'S UP

France's Basque and Atlantic coasts have some of Europe's best surf. Autumn is prime time, with warm(ish) water temperatures, consistently good conditions and few(er) crowds. The big-name spots are **Biarritz**, **Bidart**, **Hossegor** and **Capbreton**, where you can watch pro surfers battling it out for world-title points in the World Surf League ([www.worldsurfleague.com](http://www.worldsurfleague.com)). In fact, decent surf can usually be found almost anywhere between St-Jean de Luz in the south and Soulac-sur-Mer in the north.

The reef breaks around **Guéthary**, just to the south of Biarritz, are also popular, or you could join Bordeaux' surfers on the beaches around **Lacanau**.

Less-frequented spots can be found around the pine-forested **Cap Ferret** peninsula, along with various other remote areas along the coastline of Les Landes.

For beginners, the mellow waves at **Hendaye**, just to the south of St-Jean de Luz are perfect. There are plenty of surf schools; lessons start at around €35. Contact local tourist offices for details.

## Miremont

CAFE

(☎05 59 24 01 38; [www.miremont-biarritz.com](http://www.miremont-biarritz.com); 1bis place Georges-Clémenceau; ☀9am-8pm) Operating since 1880, this *grande dame* harks back to the time when belle époque Biarritz was the beach resort of choice for the rich and glamorous. Today it still attracts perfectly coiffed hairdos (and that's just on the poodles), but it's the fine tea and cakes that draw in the well-heeled – none of whom seem to mind the sky-high prices.

## i Information

In July and August there are tourist-office annexes at the airport and train station, and at the roundabout just off the Biarritz *sortie* (exit) 4 from the A63.

The **tourist office** (☎05 59 22 37 10; [www.tourisme.biarritz.fr](http://www.tourisme.biarritz.fr); Square d'Ixelles; ☀9am-7pm Jul-mid-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) is at home in a melon-pink, Second Empire-style château from 1866.

## i Getting There &amp; Away

## AIR

Domestic and international flights leave from Aéroport Biarritz Pays Basque (p679). Chronoplus ([www.chronoplus.eu](http://www.chronoplus.eu)) bus line 4 links the airport with Biarritz train station, and line 36 goes into Biarritz town centre. Both run every half-hour or so and take about 10 minutes; a ticket valid one/24 hours costs €1 (plus €0.20 for a rechargeable ticket card).

## BUS

Frequent Chronoplus buses (line 5) run between Biarritz centre, Anglet and Bayonne. Hegobus ([www.hegobus.fr](http://www.hegobus.fr)) operates bus line 3 between Biarritz' train station and St-Jean de Luz (€1, 30 minutes).

Buses to Spain, including San Sebastián and Bilbao, also depart from that stop.

## TRAIN

Biarritz train station is 3.5km southeast of the town centre. Bus lines 5 and 38 operated by Chronoplus ([www.chronoplus.eu](http://www.chronoplus.eu)) link the station with the city centre. Bus line 4 links Biarritz train station with Aéroport Biarritz Pays Basque (five minutes) and Bayonne (20 minutes); lines 5 and 52 also go to Bayonne from the train station. A ticket valid for one/24 hours on all routes costs €1/2 plus an initial €0.20 for the rechargeable ticket card.

Trains serve: Paris Gare Montparnasse (from €82, 4¼ hours, five daily), Bordeaux (€15 to €34.40, 2¼ hours, 10 daily), St-Jean de Luz (€3.50, 15 minutes, 15 daily) and Hendaye (€6.20, 30 minutes, 15 daily).

## i Getting Around

In season, free Chronoplus ([www.chronoplus.eu](http://www.chronoplus.eu)) shuttle buses trundle around central Biarritz (every 15 minutes, 7.30am to 7.30pm, Monday to Saturday) and along the coast to the beaches.

The region's public bike sharing scheme **Vélibleu** (☎06 37 81 39 94; <https://koboo.fr/velibleu>) has a bike station in front of the tourist office on Square d'Ixelles. The first 10 minutes is free, then pay €2 per hour. Download the smartphone app to get going.

## Guéthary

POP 1320

Halfway between Biarritz and St-Jean de Luz is the little seaside village of Guéthary, once a whaling station, but now a swish getaway for the Basque Coast's jet set. Set out along a steep hillside that leads down to an attractive harbour and seafront; it's a pretty



spot for an afternoon stroll, with a couple of small sandy beaches tucked in under the breakwater and some grand art deco architecture spread along its winding walkways.

## Sights

### Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain

MUSEUM

(☎ 05 59 54 86 37; www.musee-de-guethary.fr; 117 av du Général de Gaulle; adult/child €2/free; ☉ 3-7pm Mon & Wed-Sat Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Mon & Wed-Sat May, Jun, Sep & Oct) Housed inside the magisterial Villa Saraleguinea, this intriguing little art museum is based around the collection of local poet Paul-Jean Toulet, who lived in Guéthary during the last years of his life, and the sculptor Georges Clément de Swiecinski. It's an eclectic mix that takes in everything from Roman ephemera to abstract sculptures, as well as changing exhibitions of contemporary art, photography and ceramics – but it's the house and grounds that really steal the show.

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ Villa Anvers

RENTAL HOUSE €€

(☎ 06 52 93 85 99; www.villa-anvers.com; 160 chemin du Phare; apt 2 person €95-255, 4 person €125-350; 🏠 📺) Sea views from balcony, lounge or bedroom window don't get more exhilarating than those enjoyed by the five self-catering apartments inside this handsome old Basque villa, perched up high next

to a teeny lighthouse above the golden sands 'n surf of Parlementia beach. Simple but stylish apartments sleep two to four, a couple sport their own private balcony, and guests share a garden.

### ★ Hôtel Balea

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 26 08 39; www.hotel-balea-guethary.com; 106 rue Adrien Lahourcade; d from €95; 🏠 📺 📶) Pay attention, class – this cracking hotel receives top marks. It's housed in Guéthary's former public schoolhouse, and the decor echoes its educational heritage in entertaining ways – from an original playground mural and arithmetical room numbers to the vintage maps and pots of pens adorning the breakfast room. It's cool, fun and reasonably priced, even in season. A+.

### ★ Elements

FRENCH €€

(☎ 09 86 38 08 51; www.facebook.com/restaurantelements; 1247 av de Bayonne, Bidart; shared plates €6-30; ☉ noon-2pm & 7-9.45pm Tue-Fri, 6-10pm Sat) Working closely with the region's top producers, *vignerons* (winemakers) and fishermen, this on-trend eatery fuses Basque flavours with bags of creativity. Many of the inventive small plates to share are raw or vegan, and seasonal organic ingredients predominate. Think springtime baby asparagus peppered with fresh chilli pepper and chive flowers, pork belly with aromatic yuzu oil and kombucha or oven-roasted cauliflower.

## DON'T MISS

### SUNSET COCKTAILS & PINTXOS

Guéthary spoils with fashionable terraces to watch the sun sink into the flaming pink and orange sea, red sangria or Basque spritz in hand. Down at the port, **Txamara** (☎ 05 59 26 51 44; www.restaurant-guethary-txamara.fr; 195 chemin du Port; tapas €5-25, mains €19-22; ☉ noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Jul & Aug, closed Mon & Tue winter) is a trendy bodega-restaurant which doubles as HQ for surfers striding out to the waves. Grab an alfresco table to feast on gourmet *pintxos* (tapas) by the water's edge; the upstairs restaurant cooks up more sweeping ocean views and outstanding fish.

Only somewhere as brazenly cool as Guéthary could drum up **Le Poinçon** (☎ 05 59 26 57 44; www.facebook.com/lepoincon; 94 rue du Comté de Swiecinski; tapas €5-25, mains €15-25, brunch €20; ☉ noon-2pm & 7-10pm or 10.30pm Jul-Sep, closed Jan, Feb & Tue & Wed Oct-Jun), right next to the train station with hipster canary-yellow patio overlooking the railway tracks and big blue beyond. Every evening ushers in a different house cocktail and inventive dishes might include mussels, clams and squid spiked with cocoa husks, or homemade ravioli stuffed with aubergine, mozzarella and parmesan.

'Guethappy' is the inviting strapline at **Bahia Beach** (☎ 05 59 26 59 69; chemin Barognenia; ☉ Mar-Oct) on the coastal path above Parlementia beach. Long, shared wooden tables at the laid-back beach bar face the sea and fishy dishes to share might include monkfish with black garlic, squid à *la plancha* or hake with rocket pesto. Opening hours reflect the weather; find daily updates on its Facebook page.

## A COASTAL HIKE

**Sentier du Littoral** Running 25km between Bidart and Hendaye, this coastal hiking trail passes through the region's most beautiful seaside scenery, carpeted with fragrant maquis, pockmarked by rocky coves and backed by the shimmering blue line of the Atlantic horizon.

Download a route map from the Guéthary tourist office website.

There are access points at various locations between Bidart, Guéthary, St-Jean de Luz, Socoa and Hendaye. It's perfectly feasible to just do a couple of sections and then catch a bus or train back to Biarritz or St-Jean de Luz. Interpretative panels are positioned along the trail.

Bring plenty of water and sunscreen, and aim to do your walking in the early morning or late afternoon, as the summer sun can be relentless.

Roadside Elements is 7km north of Guéthary on the D810.

### **i** Information

**Guéthary Tourist Office** (☎ 05 59 26 56 60; www.guethary-tourisme.com; 450 av du Général de Gaulle; ☀ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year)

### **i** Getting There & Away

Chronoplus bus 3 links Guéthary with Bayonne's place des Basques (40 minutes) and Hendaye's Grande Plage (50 minutes). There are no direct buses to downtown Biarritz; take bus 3 to the Bernain-Montori stop in Anglet, then the T1 to Biarritz' Hôtel de Ville (Mairie). On all routes a single/24-hour ticket costs €1/2 plus an initial €0.20 for the rechargeable card.

Up to 12 trains daily run from Guéthary's tiny station to St-Jean de Luz (€2, six minutes) and to Bayonne (€4, 20 minutes, 11 daily). From Biarritz' out-of-town train station (€2.30, six minutes), take bus line 5 or 38 to Biarritz town centre (€1, 15 minutes).

## St-Jean de Luz

POP 14,100

If you're searching for the quintessential Basque seaside town – complete with atmospheric narrow streets, a lively harbour and a sparkling sandy beach – you've found it.

The attractive town of St-Jean de Luz, 24km southwest of Bayonne, grew up around the mouth of the River Nivelle as a fishing port, pulling in large catches of sardines, anchovies and, rather less salubriously, whales in bygone days. Later, like the rest of the Basque coastline, it became a fashionable resort for well-to-do French, English and Spanish tourists in the late 19th

century, but the town still maintains a sizeable fishing fleet.

St-Jean and its sleepy sister town of Ciboure are linked by busy Pont Charles de Gaulle, which overlooks the fishing port. In summer, the best way to cross the river mouth is to catch one of the regular ferries that chug between the two.

### **👁** Sights & Activities

St-Jean's shady backstreets are great for a wander, especially along the main shopping thoroughfare of rue Gambetta. The town's grandest buildings are around place Louis XIV.

The tourist office has information on diving and surfing schools, and seasonal boat cruises.

### ★ Église St-Jean Baptiste

CHURCH

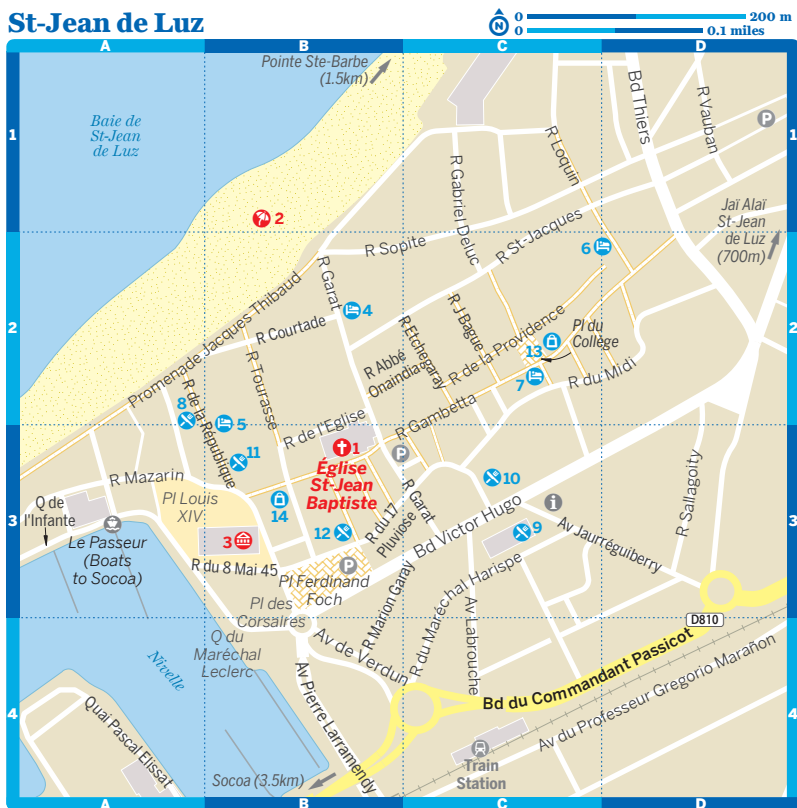
(www.paroissespo.com/eglise-st-jean-baptiste-st-jean-de-luz; rue Gambetta; ☀ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-7.30pm Sun) The plain façade of France's largest and finest Basque church conceals a splendid interior with a magnificent Baroque altarpiece. It was in front of this very altarpiece that Louis XIV and María Teresa, daughter of King Philip IV of Spain, were married in 1660. After exchanging rings, the couple walked down the aisle and out of the south door, which was then sealed to commemorate peace between the two nations after 24 years of hostilities.

### Maison Louis XIV

HISTORIC BUILDING

(☎ 05 59 26 27 58; www.maison-louis-xiv.fr; 6 place Louis XIV; adult/child €6.50/4; ☀ 10.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Jul & Aug, tours 11.30am, 3pm, 4pm & 5pm Jun & Sep, 11.30am, 3pm & 4pm Easter & Oct) The grandest house in town was built in 1643 by a wealthy shipowner, but its main claim to fame is as the house where Louis XIV lived out his last days of bachelorhood before

## St-Jean de Luz



## St-Jean de Luz

## 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Église St-Jean Baptiste ..... B3

## 📍 Sights

- 2 Grande Plage ..... B1  
3 Maison Louis XIV ..... B3

## 🏠 Sleeping

- 4 Hôtel Ohartzia ..... B2  
5 Hôtel Txoko ..... B2  
6 La Devinière ..... D2  
7 Les Almadiès ..... C2

## 🍷 Eating

- 8 Auberge Kaïku ..... A2  
9 Buvette de la Halle ..... C3  
10 La Pile d'Assiettes ..... C3  
11 Moustache ..... B3  
12 Xaya ..... B3

## 🛒 Shopping

- 13 Maison Adam ..... C2  
14 Sandales Concha ..... B3

marrying María Teresa. It's awash with period detail and antiques. Half-hour guided tours (with English text) depart several times daily in July and August.

## Socoa

HISTORIC SITE

(Ciboure) The heart of the historic district of Socoa is about 2.5km west of Ciboure along the continuation of quai Maurice Ravel (named for the *Boléro* composer, who was born in Ciboure in 1875). Its prominent **fort** was built in 1627 and later improved by Vauban. You can walk out to the Digue de Socoa breakwater or climb to the **light-house** via rue du Phare, then out along rue du Sémaphore for fabulous coastal views.

## 🎆 Festivals &amp; Events

## Fêtes de la St-Jean

CULTURAL

(☀️ Jun) Bonfires, music and dancing take place on the weekend nearest 24 June in celebration of St John the Baptist.

**Fête du Thon**

FOOD &amp; DRINK

(Tuna Festival; ☺ Jul) The Tuna Festival, on the second weekend in July, fills the streets with brass bands, Basque music and dancing, while stalls sell sizzling tuna steaks.

**La Nuit de la Sardine**

CULTURAL

(☺ Jul & Aug) The Night of the Sardine – a night of music, folklore and dancing – is held twice each summer, on a Saturday in early July and in August.

**🛏 Sleeping****★ Les Almadiès**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 85 34 48; www.hotel-les-almadies.com; 58 rue Gambetta; d €95-125; 📞) This tiny three-star hotel, with typical Basque-red wooden shutters and matching ceramic flower boxes, overlooks a leafy car-free square off shop-busy rue Gambetta. A handful of the seven rooms sport balconies to watch the action on the street below, and breakfast (€14) is served around tables dressed in traditional striped Basque fabrics.

**★ Hôtel Txoko**

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 85 10 45; www.hotel-txoko.com; 20 rue de la République; d €70-190; 📞) There is no escaping the high-season tourist crowd at this nine-room hotel, slap-bang on one of St-Jean's buzziest dining streets and just steps from the beach. Brightly coloured, striped Basque fabrics add a cheery dash to rooms, a courtesy tray with tea and coffee inject a welcome touch of home, and the best doubles have a balcony. Breakfast €12.

**La Devinière**

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 26 05 51; www.hotel-la-deviniere.com; 5 rue Loquin; d €150-200; 📞) With its pristine white façade sporting cherry-red woodwork and leafy wall frescoes above the porch, this boutique hotel is instantly charming. Inside, antiquarian books, period furniture and vintage curios in both the piano-clad lounge and eight rooms create a soothing old-world vibe – room 11 even has its own mini-library. Kudos for the delightful small patio and garden rooms. Breakfast €12.

**Hôtel Ohartzia**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 26 00 06; www.hotel-ohartzia.com; 28 rue Garat, St-Jean de Luz; d/tr/q €105/135/155; 📞) A stone's throw from the sea, this three-star hotel sits in the heart of St-Jean's urban action. Its attractive façade is a riot of sea-blue paintwork and pottery flower pots, and inside, sea-blue walls in reception create a relaxed mood. Rooms vary in sizes, and

breakfast is served in warm weather in a tree-shady walled garden out back.

**🍴 Eating****★ Xaya**

FRENCH €

(☎ 05 59 47 75 48; https://xaya.fr; 5 rue St-Jean; menu lunch €14-22, menu dinner €37, mains €20-27; ☺ 12.15-2pm & 7.45-9.45pm Tue-Sun, closed Thu in winter) Duck down a side street into this stone-walled cellar for excellent French food with a Basque twist. There is grilled fish and steaks, braised rabbit and pigeon to order à la carte, or tuck into delectable *pintxos* (tapas) for the table to share. Inside it's bright and modern, with mirrors, upcycled barrels and blonde wood.

**Moustache**

ICE CREAM €

(14 rue de la République; ☺ noon-8pm) A matching pair of gold and black bulldogs guard the entrance to this artisan glacier from St-Malo, who seduced Basque locals overnight with its creamy ice creams in a riot of different flavours. Highlights on the list of 85 to choose from include caramelised apple, lemon meringue and – most fabulously of all – gâteau basque.

**Buvette de la Halle**

SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 05 59 26 73 59; 18bis bd Victor Hugo; dishes €8-16; ☺ 6am-2pm & 7-9pm Sep-Jun, closed Tue) For the full-blown French market experience, this tiny corner restaurant in red-brick Les Halles is a must. Sit at the counter under its collection of vintage teapots, and tuck into

**BEACH TALK**

A superb panorama of St-Jean de Luz unfolds from **Pointe de Ste-Barbe**, a craggy promontory at the northern end of the Baie de St-Jean de Luz and about 1km beyond the town beach. Go to the end of bd Thiers and keep walking.

The beautiful arcing sands of St-Jean's **Grande Plage** sprout stripy bathing tents from June to September. It's protected from the wrath of the Atlantic by breakwaters and jetties, and is one of the more child-friendly beaches in the Basque Country.

Or hit the sands at **Plage de Ciboure**, a modest beach 2km west of Socoa on the corniche (the D912), served June to October by Le Passeur (p690) shuttle boats.

hearty plates of Bayonne ham, *piperade maison* (tomato, red pepper and onion stew laced with Espelette chilli pepper), grilled sardines and prawns, oysters, mussels and fries, fish soup and local cheeses.

### La Pile d'Assiettes

FRENCH €

(☎ 09 81 97 42 40; 6 rue Renau d'Elissagaray; mains €14-17; ☉ 9.30am-3pm Mon, Tue & Thu, 9.30am-3pm & 6-10pm Fri-Sun; 🍷🍴) Tucked away near the covered food market, the Pile of Plates serves creative ham and Gorgonzola tartines, vegan buddha bowls, perfectly spiced steak tartare and other seasonal lunch 'n brunch dishes to a sassy local crowd. The funkier seats in the house are a twinset of red-velour cinema chairs, a wicker swing seat and, of course, the shaded pavement terrace.

### ★ Auberge Kaïku

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 05 59 26 13 20; www.kaiku.fr; 17 rue de la République; menu lunch/dinner €40/78, mains €40-44; ☉ 12.30-2pm & 7.30-10pm Thu-Mon) Known for his modern interpretation of Basque classics, Michelin-starred chef Nicholas Borombo lures a local foodie crowd with dishes bursting with unusual ingredients, from Asian spices to edible flowers. The setting is lovely too, in an old-town house from 1540, on a cobbled street near the beach. Reservations and smart attire essential.

### 🛒 Shopping

#### ★ Maison Adam

FOOD

(☎ 05 59 26 03 54; www.maisonadam.fr; 49 rue Gambetta; ☉ 8am-12.30pm & 2-7.30pm) Maison Adam, in the biz since 1666, is famed far and wide for its sweet *macarons Basques* (chewy almond biscuits) and traditional *gâteaux basques* filled with custard cream, cherry jam or, more unusually, chocolate.

#### Sandales Concha

SHOES

(☎ 05 59 51 07 56; www.luzespadrille.com; 2 rue Gambetta; ☉ 10am-8pm Jul & Aug, shorter

hours rest of year) The traditional shoe of the Basque Country is the espadrille and at this shop dating from 1935, you can choose from a huge range: there are 26 colours in all, starting from €9 a pair.

### 📍 Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 59 26 03 16; www.saint-jean-de-luz.com; 20 bd Victor Hugo; ☉ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun, closed Sun Nov-Mar) City maps, guided tours and mountains of information on sea-faring activities (surfing, sailing, stand-up paddle-boarding...).

### 📍 Getting There & Around

Hegobus (www.hegobus.fr) operates bus line 3 to Bayonne (40 minutes, at least hourly Monday to Saturday), Biarritz' train station (30 minutes) and Ciboure (20 minutes). Fares are a flat €1. Summer beach traffic can double bus-journey times, however, making trains to Bayonne (€5.40, 25 minutes) via Biarritz (€3.50, 11 minutes) the faster option. Change in Hendaye (€3.40, 15 minutes) for onward connections to Spain.

Shuttle boat **Le Passeur** (www.ciboure-paysbasque.com/cote\_detente/navette\_mar\_iteime.php; €3, complete loop €6; ☉ 6 daily Apr-Sep) plies the waters between the jetty on the northern edge of St-Jean's beach, quai de l'Infante and Socoa.

## La Rhune

Traditionally considered the first mountain of the Pyrenees, the 905m-high, antenna-topped and border-straddling La Rhune ('Larrun' in Basque), 10km south of St-Jean de Luz, has always been considered sacred by Basques, though today more people come for the spectacular views than for religious or cultural reasons.

The mountain is best approached from **Col de St-Ignace**, 3km northwest of Sare on the D4 (the St-Jean de Luz road). From here,

## THE BASQUE LANGUAGE

According to linguists, Euskara, the Basque language, is unrelated to any other tongue on earth, and is the only language in southwestern Europe to have withstood the onslaught of Latin and its derivatives. Basque is spoken by about a million people in Spain and France, nearly all of whom are bilingual. In the French Basque Country, the language is widely spoken in Bayonne and the hilly hinterland. Travelling around, the Basque flag (similar stripe arrangement to the UK's but with a red field, a white vertical cross and a green diagonal one) is a frequent sighting throughout the region, as is the *lauburu* (like a curly four-leaf clover), a Basque symbol signifying prosperity, or life and death.



## WORTH A TRIP

## GROTTES DE SARE

**Grottes de Sare** (☎ 05 59 54 21 88; www.grottesdesare.fr; off the D306; adult/child €9/5; ☀ 10am-6pm Jun-Sep, to 5pm Oct, reduced hours rest of year) Who knows what the first inhabitants of the Grottes de Sare, some 20,000 years ago, would make of today's whizz-bang technology that now lights up the Stygian gloom in these stunning subterranean caves? Multilingual 45-minute tours take you through a gaping entrance via narrow passages to a huge central cavern, where impressive shows of holograms and laser lights are staged.

Follow the D306 for 6km south of the village of Sare. Hegobus (www.hegobus.com) bus 45 goes from St-Jean de Luz to the caves (€1, 45 minutes, three or four daily).

you can take a fairly strenuous five-hour (return; about 11km) hike, or have all the hikers curse you by hopping on **Le Petit Train de la Rhune** (www.rhune.com; single/return adult €16.50/19.50, child €9.50/12.50; ☀ mid-Mar-early Nov). This charming little wooden train takes 35 minutes to haul itself up the 4km to the summit. In July and August departures are every 40 minutes; the rest of the time there are about nine per day. Be prepared for a wait of up to an hour in high summer if you haven't bought your ticket online.

Hegobus (www.hegobus.fr) runs bus line 45 from St-Jean de Luz train station to the train depot (€1; get off at Col de St-Ignace) for Le Petit Train de la Rhune. Otherwise, reach the mountain with your own wheels.

## Espelette

POP 2020

The whitewashed Basque village of Espelette is famous for its dark-red chillies, an integral ingredient in traditional Basque cuisine. So prized is *le piment d'Espelette* that it's been accorded Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP) status, like fine wine. In autumn you can scarcely see the walls of the traditional white houses under rows of chillies drying in the sun. Year-round, a visit to Espelette is a gourmet treat.

The last weekend in October marks Espelette's **Fête du Piment**, with processions, a

formal blessing of the chilli peppers and the ennoblement of a *chevalier du piment* (a knight of the pimiento).

## 👁 Sights & Activities

### Centre d'Interprétation

#### de l'AOP Piment d'Espelette

MUSEUM

(☎ 05 59 93 88 86; www.pimentdespelette.com; 25 place du Marché; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) Learn about the only French spice to have its own quality-branded AOP at this engaging discovery centre, adjoining the post office on the village's main square. A 20-minute film explores the history of Espelette's prized chilli pepper, grown in and around the village since the 1650s, and the centre organises guided visits to local farms. Today 211 producers cultivate 275 hectares here, producing 227 tonnes of the dried, fiery-red chilli powder a year.

Seeds are traditionally sown after the Fête de la St-Joseph in mid-March and planted out in open fields in May. Stringent rules governing the AOP mean plants must be planted 40cm apart, in rows 60cm apart. Flowers turn fields white from late June, and the first peppers are harvested by hand once they turn dark red in August. Some are sold fresh – in a traditional hand-sewn *corde* or string of 20 peppers – and the rest are dried and crushed to become chilli powder.

### L'Atelier du Piment

FOOD

(☎ 05 59 93 90 21; www.atelier-du-piment-espelette.fr; chemin de l'Église; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm)

**FREE** On the edge of the village, the highlight of this shop overflowing with chilli-pepper products is its outdoor discovery trail. Accessible during the chilli pepper season (mid-May to late November), the trail takes visitors through the various stages of production, from seed to spice jar. It's also possible to arrange a guided visit of the shop's chilli-pepper plantation.

## 🛏 Sleeping & Eating

### ★ Hôtel Euzkadi

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 93 91 88; www.hotel-restaurant-euzkadi.com; 285 Karrika Nagusia; d €83-95, tr €110-120, q €134-150; ☀ 12.30-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm; 🍷 🍷) This eye-catching, red-and-white half-timbered hotel in the heart of the village, white façade draped in chilli peppers strung up to dry in the sun, is characteristic of the architecture of the Basque Country. Three-star rooms sport wooden parquet flooring, crisp white walls and traditional striped Basque

bed throws in vibrant red, golds, blues and creams.

Dining in its restaurant (menus €21 to €32, mains €14 to €22) is classic Basque. *Piment d'Espelette* naturally figures heavily in many local specialities such as *axoa* (tender minced veal simmered with onions and fresh chillies).

### ★ Choko Ona

BASQUE €€

(☎ 05 59 15 71 65; <https://choko-ona.fr>; 155 rue Xerrendako Bidea; lunch menu €25, 3-/5-course dinner menu €52/72; ☺ 12.15-1.30pm & 8-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Cross the river to uncover this contemporary, Michelin-starred dining address, deceptively hidden inside a traditional white-and-red Basque town house from the 18th century. Its minimalist interior is designer chic, fire-engine red tables and chairs colour the patio out back, and wine pairings are exquisite. In the kitchen, modern young chefs Clement and Flora are a formidable duo.

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 59 93 95 02; [www.espelette.fr](http://www.espelette.fr); 145 Karrika Nagusia; ☺ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year)

### i Getting There & Away

Bus line 14, operated by Txik Txak ([www.txik-txak.fr](http://www.txik-txak.fr)), links Espelette with Bayonne (€2, 40

minutes, two to four daily), via Cambo-les-Bains. The nearest train station is in Cambo-les-Bains.

## St-Jean Pied de Port

POP 1590

At the foot of the Pyrenees, the town of St-Jean Pied de Port (St-Jean at the Foot of the Pass) is a popular waypoint for hikers on the pilgrim trail. The hikers you're bound to see along the main cobbled street of rue de la Citadelle are, in fact, continuing an age-old tradition. For centuries this town, 53km southeast of Bayonne, has been the last stop in France for pilgrims heading south over the Spanish border, a mere 8km away, and on to Santiago de Compostela in western Spain.

The walled town itself is beautifully preserved, ringed by ramparts and topped off by a sturdy citadel. It's an ideal day trip from Bayonne, particularly on Monday when the market is in full swing.

### 👁 Sights & Activities

St-Jean makes a great base for hiking, even if you're not up for the whole Santiago de Compostela route. Two GRs (*grandes randonnées*; long-distance hiking trails) pass through town: the **GR10** (the trans-Pyrenean long-distance trail running from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean over the course of 45 days) and the **GR65** (the Chemin de St-Jacques pilgrim route).

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

#### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

There's no doubting the Basque Country's beauty, but unfortunately its good looks mean it's far from a well-kept secret. The coast can be horrendously crowded in summer, but with your own wheels it's possible to escape into the hills to find some of the area's less-frequented corners.

**Ainhoa** Quintessential Basque village, with a huddle of Instagram-worthy 17th-century houses and Michelin-starred hotel-restaurant **Ithurria** (☎ 05 59 29 92 11; [www.ithurria.com](http://www.ithurria.com); place du Fronton, Ainhoa; menus €48-92, mains €32-36; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-9pm Jul & Aug, noon-2pm Tue & 7.30-9pm Fri-Mon, 7.30-9pm Thu mid-Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct; 📞 📺).

**Itxassou** This hilltop village is famous for its cherries and its scenic surrounds.

**La Bastide-Clairence** With whitewashed houses brushed in lipstick red, this is arguably the most beautiful of all Basque mountain villages.

**Bidarray** A pretty riverside village famed for its white-water-rafting opportunities.

**Forêt d'Iraty** A vast beech forest that turns the high mountain slopes fire-orange in autumn. A web of walking trails allows for easy exploration.

**Larrau** This quaint village surrounded by monster hills is another hiker's favourite, with gorges and a monstrous cavern nearby.

## MAKHILA TO ORDER

**L'Atelier Anciart Bergara** (☎05 59 93 03 05; www.makhila.com; Fronton, Larressore; ☺8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) At this workshop, aptly overlooking the *pelota* court in the village of Larressore, 6km north of Espelette, craftspeople make the traditional wooden walking sticks known as *makhila*, which have been carried by shepherds, farmers and hillspeople in the Basque Country for as long as anyone cares to remember. Customarily made from medlar wood and topped by a decorative leather pommel capped with steel, bone, horn or bronze, each one is made to order to suit its owner and can take several weeks of work to complete.

Most *makhilas* also have a hidden secret – the hand-grip can be slipped off to reveal a sharp spike, effectively turning a harmless walking stick into a deadly weapon. The workshop offers three core models costing anything from around €300 to €700, or you can order your own custom version for considerably more. Either way, it's a fascinating art that's well worth watching – a film explains what's what.

You'll need your own wheels to visit Larressore.

Shorter sections of each route make for a great day hike from St-Jean; ask at the tourist office for route maps.

## ★ Walled Town

AREA

Though modern St-Jean has expanded considerably, during medieval times the entire town was enclosed by defensive ramparts guarding France's southwestern corner against incursions from across the Spanish border. The old town's four original *portes* (gates) are still in situ, including one at either end of the main street, cobbled rue de la Citadelle.

The traditional entry point for pilgrims is via **Porte St-Jacques**, at the top end of the street, while at the other, **Porte Notre-Dame** stands next to the town's most famous landmark – **Pont d'Eyheraberry**, a photogenic arched bridge spanning the River Nive since 1720. Inside the gate, **Église Notre Dame du Bout du Pont** is a key stop for pilgrims.

As you walk along rue de la Citadelle, look out for the dates of construction carved into the lintels above the doorways (the oldest we found was 1510). Also keep your eyes peeled for the motif of the scallop shell – the traditional symbol of the Santiago de Compostela, as pilgrims who completed the route would take a souvenir shell home from the Spanish coast.

## La Citadelle

FORTRESS

From the top of rue de la Citadelle, next to Porte St-Jacques, a rough cobblestone ramp then footpath ascends to the massive citadel itself, from where there's a spectacular panorama of the town, surrounding rolling

hills and steep slopes of nearby Irouleguy vineyards. Constructed in 1628, the fort was rebuilt around 1680 by military engineers of the Vauban school. Nowadays it serves as a secondary school and is closed to the public.

From the panoramic table in front of the school, bear right to follow signs for 'Poterne-Église' – a footpath outside the citadel's moss-covered ramparts which leads downhill through woods back to the river and Porte Notre-Dame.

## Prison des Évêques

MONUMENT

(Bishops' Prison; ☎05 59 37 00 92; 41 rue de la Citadelle; adult/child €3/free; ☺10.30am-7pm Jul-Aug, 11am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Wed-Mon Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) Dating back to the 14th century, this vaulted cellar served as the town jail after 1795, as a military lock-up in the 19th century, then as a place of internment during WWII for those caught trying to flee to nominally neutral Spain. The lower section dates from the 13th century, when St-Jean Pied de Port was a bishopric of the Avignon papacy; the building above it dates from the 16th century. There are seasonal exhibitions inside.

## 🍴 Sleeping &amp; Eating

Much of the accommodation is geared towards pilgrims on the long hike to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain. This type of accommodation is very basic: normally budget dorm beds (around €15 per person). At many places non-pilgrims will be turned away.

If you stay inside the old town, you'll have to haul your luggage on foot from wherever you park.

## GRASSROOTS CHEESE, WINE & GIN

Farmers from the surrounding hills pour into St-Jean-Pied-de-Port on Monday morning to sell their fresh chillies, creamy rounds of AOP Ossau-Iraty cheese made with milk from black-headed Manech sheep, and other fresh produce at the town's open-air **food market** (place Charles de Gaulle; ☺ 8am-1pm Mon). Dedicated cheese lovers with their own wheels can follow the **Route de l'AOP Ossau-Iraty** or Route du Fromage, a driving itinerary peppered with farms and cheese dairies; St-Jean tourist office has route maps.

For red, white and rosé AOP Irouléguy wines from the surrounding hills, head to the old-town **Boutique Brana** (☎ 05 59 37 00 44; www.brana.fr; rue de l'Église; ☺ 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Jul & Aug, closed Tue & Sun Sep-Jun), next to Porte de Navarre. The artisan winegrower cultivates 20 hectares of vineyards on steep, south- and south-west-facing slopes a couple of kilometres north in Ispoure. Brana also produces an extraordinary boutique gin laced with Espelette chilli pepper at its distillery in the **Village d'Artisans** (rte de St-Jean-Pied-de-Port, Ossès; ☺ 10am-1pm & 2.30-7pm Mon-Sat Jul-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2.30-7pm Tue-Sat Oct-Jun), a one-stop shop for local crafts (pottery, espadrilles) and farm produce (foie gras, cheese, meats), 11km north of St-Jean-Pied-de-Port on the D918 towards Ossès and Bayonne.

### Hôtel Ramuntcho

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 37 03 91; www.hotel-ramuntcho.com; 1 rue de France; d €72-96; ☺ closed Dec; 🍷) In the same hands for generations – and with a suitably old-fashioned feel – this is the only hotel proper inside the walled town. It's in a typical Béarn half-timbered house, with 16 peach-coloured rooms; some overlook the street, others the Pyrenean foothills. From May to September there's also a ground-floor restaurant serving local dishes.

### Le Central

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 59 37 00 22; 1 place Charles de Gaulle; menus €25-48, mains €15-27; 🍷 🍷) Traditional French cuisine, including a crisped-to-perfection *confit de canard* and veal escalope à la crème, are served on a pretty summer terrace overlooking the bucolic River Nive and its gushing waterfall. White tablecloths and waiters in black waistcoats add a touch of old-world grandeur to the proceedings, on the ground floor of Hôtel Le Central.

### Chez Arrambide

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 05 59 37 01 01; www.hotel-les-pyrenees.com; 19 place Charles de Gaulle; menus €42-105, mains €36-52; ☺ 12.15-1.45pm & 7.45-9pm Jul & Aug, Wed-Mon Sep-Jun; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Slumbering on the ground floor of four-star Hôtel des Pyrénées, Michelin-starred Chez Arrambide is renowned in the region. Dining is formal, with white tablecloths amid a classical decor. Chef Philippe Arrambide works wonders with market produce, transforming hare, rabbit, beef and a shoal of fresh seafood into edible works of art.

## ★ Entertainment

Year-round, variants of *pelota* (admission €10), including a bare-handed *pelota* tournament, are played at the *trinquet*, *fronton municipal* (*pelota* court) and *jaï alai* courts. In summer, these tend to take place at 5pm on a Friday.

In high summer, traditional Basque music and dancing takes place in the *jaï alai* court or the church. Confirm schedules with the tourist office.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 59 37 03 57; www.saint-jeanpieddeport-paysbasque-tourisme.com; 14 place Charles de Gaulle; ☺ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) Maps of local walking trails and schedules for *jaï alai* matches.

## i Getting There & Away

A train is the only public transport to/from Bayonne (€10.30, one hour, four daily); this is a spur line and does not go any further than St-Jean Pied de Port. There is also an SNCF bus that runs from Pau's train station to Bayonne, passing through St-Jean Pied de Port en route.

## St-Étienne de Baïgorry

POP 1480

The village of St-Étienne de Baïgorry straddles the idyllic Vallée de Baïgorry, laced with hiking trails. This superbly picturesque village stretches along a branch of the River Nive, and like so many Basque settlements,

the village has two focal points: its unique church and *fronton*, next to each other on the same square.

## Sights & Activities

St-Étienne de Baïgorry makes a good base for hikers, with several spectacular walking trails passing close by, including the GR10; you'll still need a car to reach many of the trailheads. The tourist office can supply route suggestions and **Station de Trail** ([www.stationdetrail.com/fr/stations/pays-basque-vallee-de-baigorri](http://www.stationdetrail.com/fr/stations/pays-basque-vallee-de-baigorri)) maps out 10 routes suitable for both trail runners and walkers.

**Église St-Étienne de Baïgorry** CHURCH  
(☎05 59 37 47 28; place de l'Église; ☺9am-noon & 2-6pm) The lovely church of St-Étienne was built in the 11th century using the red stone of the nearby Arradoy, and is in the Roman-Byzantine style. It's notable for its three floors of dark wood galleries, its painted triumphal arch and the three altars embellished with gilded altarpieces. Keep your eyes open for recycled Roman columns in the nave.

## Sleeping & Eating

★ **Arcé** HOTEL €€  
(☎05 59 37 40 14; [www.hotel-arce.com](http://www.hotel-arce.com); Rte Colonel Ispéguy Baïgorry; d €110-350; ☺closed Nov-Apr; ♿♿) With its picture-postcard riverside location and enchanting rooms oozing a sophisticated, old-world elegance, this peaceful village hotel – in the same family for five generations since 1864 – is one of Pays Basque's most idyllic retreats. Find it across the river from the church square. The pool is reached via an orange grove and humpback bridge, and there's a boules pitch right by the water.

Dining on local lamb, Banca trout and other seasonal local produce in the gourmet

restaurant (menu €36, mains €20 to €32, closed Wednesday and lunch Monday) – very much an address in its own right – is riverside, beneath plane trees, in summer. Breakfast €20.

**Laia Txokolategia** CAFE €  
(☎05 59 37 51 43; [www.laia.fr](http://www.laia.fr); rue de l'Église; ☺9.30am-noon & 2-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 9.30am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jun) Post-river stroll or strenuous hike up the Col d'Ispeguy, pay a visit to the village's artisan chocolate-maker, Olivier Casenave, for a cooling ice cream or decadent *chocolat chaud* (hot chocolate; €1.80 to €2.50). Then shop. Each chocolate bar or ganache-filled *bonbon chocolat* is crafted here in small batches and tasting the week's *cuvée*, rather like wine, is a different experience every time.

## Shopping

★ **Maison Petricorena** FOOD  
(☎05 59 37 41 36; [www.petricorena.com](http://www.petricorena.com); Pont Romain; ☺9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat) At the eastern end of the village, by the fairytale old-stone **Pont Romain** across the river, it's impossible to miss the *jambons* hanging in colourful striped Basque fabric bags on the 1st-floor balcony of Maison Petricorena. Inside, the celebrated fourth-generation butcher and *épicerie* bursts with gourmet Basque goodies: local saffron, ham and chorizo, cherries, *brebis* (sheep's cheese) and its famous Sakari sauce.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎05 59 37 47 28; [www.saintjeanpieddeport-paysbasque-tourisme.com](http://www.saintjeanpieddeport-paysbasque-tourisme.com); 1 place de la Mairie; ☺9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year)

## Getting There & Away

You'll need your own wheels to reach this village.





RICARDO HERNANDEZ/SUTTERSTOCK



1. *Jai alai* (traditional Basque game) 2. Fêtes de Bayonne (p675)  
3. Drying red chillies, Espelette (p691) 4. *Lauburu* symbol



JUSTIN FOLKES/IGNELLY PLANET ©

## Basque Culture

Call a Basque French or Spanish and it's almost certain you'll receive a glare and a stern 'I'm Basque!' in return. It's no surprise, as the Basques are different, with their own unique culture and history, and a language – Euskara (p690) – unrelated to any other European language. Basque people are genetically different, too: many share the same blood group, which can be traced back to Europe's earliest settlers.

### Pelote Basque

*Pelote Basque (pelota)* is the catch-all name for around 16 traditional Basque ball games. The most well-known has players using a scoop-like basket called a *chistera*, while *main nue* is played with an open hand; *jai alai* is the most high-octane variant, and has a professional league with games screened on local TV. Every village has its own *pelota* court, called a *fronton*.

### Festivals

Basque festivals are the best places to see traditional dress: even if you're not in costume, wearing red and white is mandatory. It's said there are around 400 Basque dances, many of which require a special outfit.

### Lauburu

The most visible symbol of Basque culture is the *z*, also known as the Basque cross. Regarded as a symbol of prosperity, it's also used to signify life and death.

### Basque Eats

The Basque version of tapas is called *pintxos*; two or three dishes per person is usually enough. Look out for local specialities:

**Le piment d'Espelette** This chilli pepper is an essential spice in Basque cooking.

**Fromage des Pyrénées** Local cheeses are best bought straight from the farm: look out for premium varieties such as Ossau-Iraty.

**Jambon de Bayonne** The Basque version of *pata negra*, sliced wafer-thin.

**Axoa** Mashed veal with tomato, onions and *le piment d'Espelette*.

**Izarra** A fiery herb-flavoured liqueur that comes in green and yellow versions.





## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

476,000

### MAIN CITY

Pau

### BEST PLACE TO FIND YOURSELF

Walking the Chemin  
de Croix (p708)

### BEST PLACE TO FEED THE BIRDS

Falaise aux Vautours  
(p714)

### BEST PLACE TO ADMIRE THE MOUNTAINS

Cirque de Troumouse  
(p715)



### WHEN TO GO

**Feb** Pau's annual  
carnival takes over  
the capital's streets.

**Jul** Shepherds move  
their flocks in the  
Transhumance, and  
the Tour de France  
races through.

**Oct** The leaves of  
the beech trees that  
blanket the mountain  
slopes turn a flaming  
red and orange.



## The Pyrenees

**S**piking the skyline for 430km along the Franco-Spanish border, the snow-dusted Pyrenees offer a glimpse of France's wilder side. This serrated chain of peaks contains some of the country's most pristine landscapes and rarest wildlife, including the iconic griffon vulture, izard (chamoix; a type of mountain goat) and brown bear.

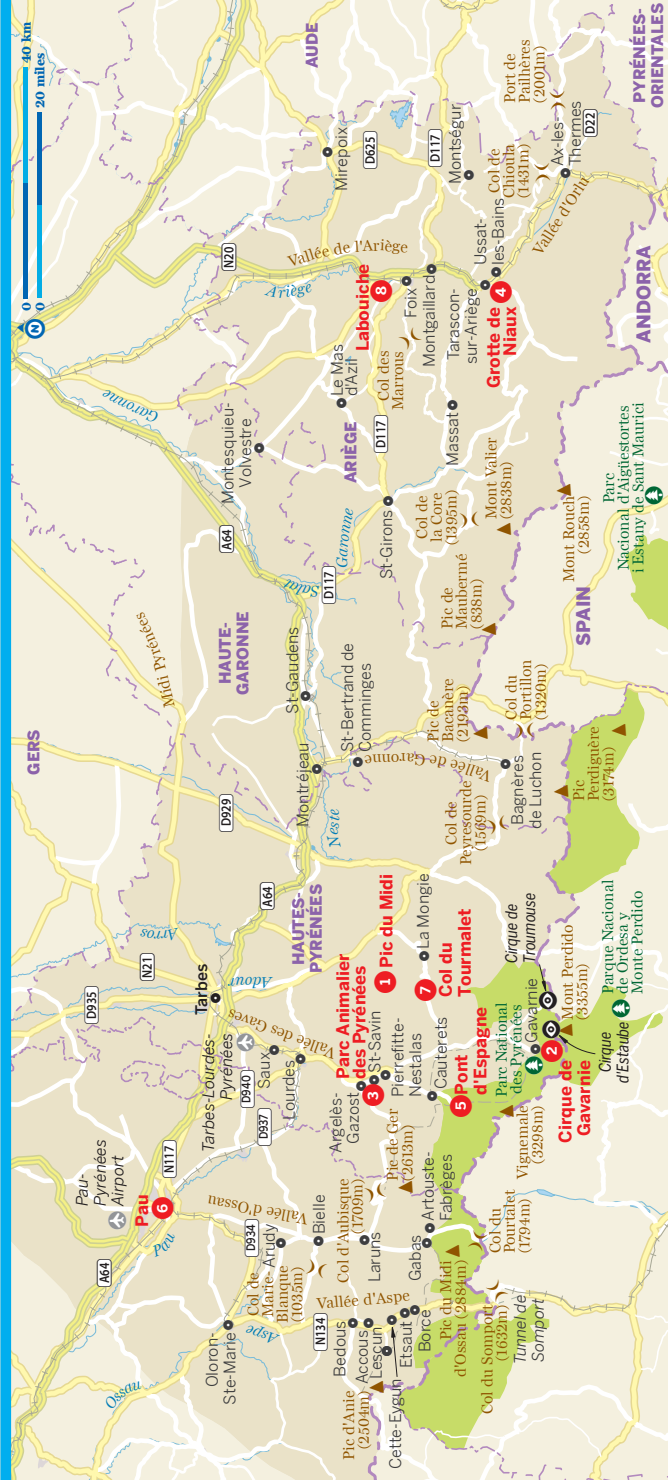
Rural and deeply traditional, the Pyrenees' wild landscapes now provide a paradise for skiers, climbers, hikers and bikers. But there's more to the mountains than just outdoor thrills: there are alpine villages to wander, hilltop castles to admire and ancient caves to investigate. They might not be on quite the same scale as the Alps, but what the Pyrenees have in abundance is an unsurpassed beauty.

### INCLUDES

Pau . . . . .	701	Cauterets . . . . .	716
Lourdes . . . . .	705	Vallée des Gaves . . . .	718
Parc National des Pyrénées . . . . .	710	Vallée de Garonne . . .	718
Vallée d'Aspe . . . . .	711	Bagnères de Luchon . .	718
Vallée d'Ossau . . . . .	713	St-Bertrand de Comminges . . . . .	719
		Vallée de l'Ariège . . . .	720

## The Pyrenees Highlights

- 1 Pic du Midi** (p718)  
Admiring the views from the sky-top observatory.
- 2 Cirque de Gavarnie** (p715)  
Walking into the heart of the mountain amphitheatre.
- 3 Parc Animalier des Pyrénées** (p709)  
Seeing endangered Pyrenean wildlife.
- 4 Grotte de Niaux** (p722)  
Marvelling at the prehistoric cave-paintings.
- 5 Pont d'Espagne** (p716)  
Tracking the trails around Cauterets.
- 6 Pau** (p701)  
Exploring hidden lanes and chocolate shops in the old town.
- 7 Col du Tourmalet** (p704)  
Driving over the Pyrenees' highest road pass.
- 8 Labouiche** (p720)  
Floating through the underworld on a subterranean river.





## PAU

POP 77,130 / ELEV 220M

In many ways, Pau feels closer to a Riviera resort than a mountain town, with its grand villas, public parks and palm-lined promenades. The largest city in the Pyrenees was once a favourite wintering spot for expat British and Americans, and there's still a touch of fin-de-siècle grandeur around its well-kept streets.

### Sights

The town centre sits on a small hill with the Gave de Pau (River Pau) at its base. Along its crest stretches bd des Pyrénées, a wide promenade offering panoramic views of the mountains. A creaky **funicular railway** dating from 1908 clanks down from bd des Pyrénées to av Napoléon Bonaparte.

Pau's tiny old centre extends for about 500m around the château.

### **Château de Pau** CHATEAU

(☎05 59 82 38 00; www.chateau-pau.fr; 2 rue du Château; adult/child €7/free; ☀9.30am-12.15pm & 1.30-5.45pm, gardens open longer hours) Originally the residence of the monarchs of Navarre, Pau's castle was transformed into a Renaissance château amid lavish gardens by Marguerite d'Angoulême in the 16th century. Marguerite's grandson, Henri de Navarre (the future Henri IV), was born here – cradled, so the story goes, in an upturned tortoise shell (still on display in one of the museum's rooms).

### **Musée Bernadotte** MUSEUM

(☎05 59 27 48 42; 8 rue Tran; ☀11am-6pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** This town house is the birthplace of one of Napoléon's favourite generals,

Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte (nicknamed 'Sergeant belle-jambe', on account of his shapely legs). Now a museum, the house explores the strange story of how Bernadotte came to be crowned king of Sweden and Norway in 1810, when the Swedish parliament reckoned that the only way out of the country's dynastic and political crisis was to put a foreigner on the throne.

### **Musée des Beaux-Arts** GALLERY

(☎05 59 27 33 02; rue Mathieu Lalanne; ☀11am-6pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** Works by Rubens and El Greco both figure at Pau's fine-arts museum, but the museum's prize piece is a famous Degas canvas, *A New Orleans Cotton Office*, painted in 1873.

### Festivals & Events

#### **Carnaval Biarnés** CARNIVAL

(www.carnavalbiarnes.com; ☀late Feb) Pau holds its annual carnival during the lead-up to Lent. Street parades, costumed processions and general merriment take over the town, and there's even a mock bear hunt.

#### **Hestiv'Òc** MUSIC

(www.hestivoc.com; ☀mid-Aug) Over three days in mid-August (usually the first weekend after the 15th), this massive fest features free concerts and theatre performances all around the city centre. Pau's biggest and best event is always a good time, so don't miss it if you're in the area.

### Sleeping

#### **Hôtel de Gramont** HOTEL €

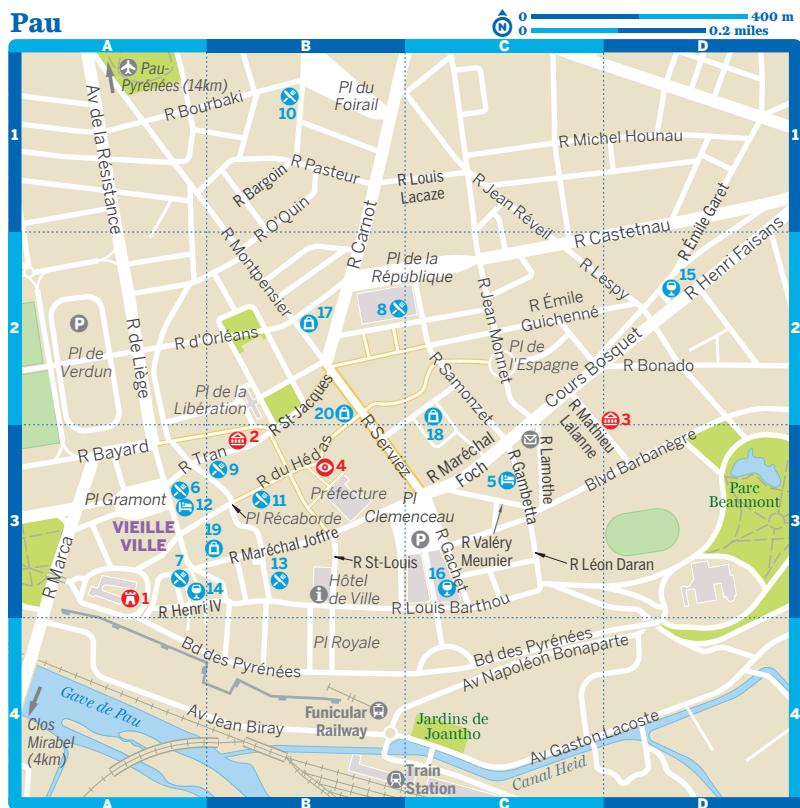
(☎05 59 27 84 04; https://hotel-gramont-pau.com; 3 place Gramont; s/d from €58/68; 🍷🍷🍷) With its curving staircases, marble touches,

### DON'T MISS

#### THE REBIRTH OF THE HÉDAS QUARTIER

Although it runs for almost 1km right through Pau's historic centre, the **rue du Hédas** is bafflingly easy to miss. For centuries, the creek that flowed here was used as a sewer, and it retained an air of ill repute right up through the 1950s. Then in 2016, the city launched a rejuvenation project for this neglected corner of the city, and it was transformed into a sparkling new promenade. Bold, sculptural light installations were installed along the 800m lane, gardens and public spaces were added (including *pétanque* courts and a playground), and new businesses arrived. Today, it's a fascinating place to explore, with a handful of eating and drinking spots, and surprising vestiges of the past: the fountain off place Récaborde was once the only source of water in Pau, and was used as a makeshift laundry well into the 20th century. Nearby, at No 20, a doorway beneath a lion sculpture marks the entrance to the home of Pau's last executioner. There are limited access points, though you will find stairs, a lift and slides down to the lane from place d'Espagne.

## Pau



giant pool table and grand entrance, there's a sense of 19th-century class to this elegant and very central hotel. The rooms are bright, comfortable and spacious, and the English-speaking staff are smiley and helpful. Very good value.

### Hôtel Bristol

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 59 27 72 98; [www.hotelbristol-pau.com](http://www.hotelbristol-pau.com); 3 rue Gambetta; s €80-100, d €90-110, f €120-130; 📞 🚗) A classic old French hotel but with up-to-date rooms, all wrapped in a grand 19th-century building. Each room is uniquely designed, with stylish decor, bold artwork and elegant furniture, while big windows fill the rooms with light. Ask for a mountain-view room with balcony. Breakfast is pricey at €12.

### Clos Mirabel

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 05 59 06 32 83; [www.clos-mirabel.com](http://www.clos-mirabel.com); 276 av des Frères Barthélémy, Jurançon; d €139-209, ste €295-315; 📞 🚗 🚲 🚰) If you don't mind being

7km west of the city, this 18th-century manor house makes a fine retreat. There are five colour-coded B&B bedrooms with heritage furniture, fireplaces and wood floors: top picks are the Blue Bedroom and the vast Master Bedroom. The gardens and pool are a bonus and everyone loves the setting among the famed Jurançon vineyards and the stirring views out across the Pyrenees.

## ✂ Eating

### La Fiancée du Désert

MIDDLE EASTERN €€

(☎ 05 59 27 27 58; 21 rue Tran; mains around €9, menus €13-19; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Colourful tapestries, fairy lights, aquariums and Moroccan lamps set the scene at this rustically chic spot that seems to be everyone's favourite eatery *du jour*. The small plates are best – order a platter with tabouli, hummus, babaganoush, falafel and many other Lebanese delicacies and taste

## Pau

### 📍 Sights

- 1 Château de Pau ..... A3
- 2 Musée Bernadotte ..... B3
- 3 Musée des Beaux-Arts ..... D2
- 4 Rue du Hédas ..... B3

### 🛌 Sleeping

- 5 Hôtel Bristol ..... C3
- 6 Hôtel de Gramont ..... A3

### 🍴 Eating

- 7 Café du Passage ..... A3
- 8 Halles de Pau ..... B2
- 9 La Fiancée du Désert ..... B3
- 10 Les Amants du Marché ..... B1

Les Papilles Insolites ..... (see 18)

- 11 Maynats ..... B3
- 12 Omnivore ..... A3
- 13 Resto Dit Vin ..... B3

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 14 Au Grain de Raisin ..... A3
- 15 Le Garage ..... D2
- 16 Les Sardines ..... C3

### 🛒 Shopping

- 17 Au Parapluie des Pyrénées ..... B2
- 18 BricOTruc ..... C2
- 19 Francis Miot ..... B3
- 20 Josuat ..... B2

everything. End with mint tea and heavenly baklava.

### Les Amants du Marché

VEGETARIAN €

(☎ 05 59 02 75 51; [www.lesamantsdumarche.fr](http://www.lesamantsdumarche.fr); 1 rue Bourbaki; lunch menu €13, mains around €13; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍴) Vegetarians have much to celebrate at this delightful little eatery across from the organic market. The chalkboard menu changes regularly and showcases ingredients often overlooked in traditional French cooking. You'll find deliciously creative dishes along the lines of broccoli and split-pea terrine; bok choy with chickpeas, cumin and peanut sauce; and arancini with squash, feta, sundried tomatoes and fennel.

### Resto Dit Vin

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 59 60 00 14; 8 rue de Foix; mains around €20; ☺ noon-2pm Mon-Thu, noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Fri & Sat) This small and comfortably casual restaurant serves finely turned out, modern French dishes from a changing weekly menu. Many have a slight Asian twang to them. There's also a good list of local wines and freshly pressed juices. Great value €17 *menu du jour*.

### Omnivore

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 59 27 98 08; [www.omnivorepau.fr](http://www.omnivorepau.fr); 1 place Gramont; mains €19-21; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-10pm Sat) This is one of those restaurants where the food is so carefully crafted and presented that you half wonder if you wouldn't be better sticking it on the wall in a picture frame rather than just eating it. If you do give in though, you'll discover quality, local produce with an emphasis on duck and Biscay fish.

The weekday *menu du jour* is unbeatable value at €18.

### Maynats

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 59 27 68 65; 3 rue de Hédas; mains €17-20; ☺ 7.45-9.45pm Tue, noon-2pm & 7.45-9.45pm Wed-Sat) Hidden down on atmospheric rue de Hédas, Maynats is Pau's standout restaurant. It's wonderfully unpretentious with unfussy wooden furniture and a welcoming vibe, and the food, which includes dishes such as cod with a fig sauce, is highly creative and always surprising. The weekday lunch menu (€22) is an ideal way to explore multiple tastes at an affordable price.

### Les Papilles Insolites

FRENCH €€

(☎ 05 59 71 43 79; [www.lespapillesinsolites.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.lespapillesinsolites.blogspot.co.uk); 5 rue Alexander Taylor; tapas €8-12; ☺ 3-10pm Wed, 11am-1.30pm & 7-10pm Thu-Sat) Run by a former Parisian sommelier, this cosy wine bar serves beautifully prepared small plates like Galician-style octopus, scallops with leeks or lamb with cumin. Complete the experience with the owner's choice of one of the 350-odd wines stacked around the shop. Gorgeously Gallic.

### Café du Passage

FUSION €€

(☎ 05 59 06 29 17; 5 place Reine Marguerite; mains €17-24; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat; 🍴) This festive, colourfully decked-out space fits

### 📍 MARKET ALERT!

**Halles de Pau** (Covered Market; [www.hallesdepau.fr](http://www.hallesdepau.fr); place de la République; ☺ 7am-3pm Tue-Sun) Pau's produce market is housed within a beautifully designed, light-filled building, opened in 2020. It hosts food sellers, cafes, restaurants and special events throughout the year, including some aimed specifically at children with gourmet tastes.

the bill when you seek a bit more *joie de vivre* with your dining experience. Amid low-playing grooves and whimsical murals, diners tuck into juicy burgers, fish and chips and sizeable vegetable platters. On warm days, join the outdoor diners at tables on the square.



## Drinking & Nightlife

'Le Triangle', bounded by rue Henri Faisans, rue Émile Garett and rue Castetnau, is the centre of student nightlife, and a string of bars extends along bd des Pyrénées. Pau has some inviting cafes and teahouses – perfect spots to retreat if the weather sours.

### Les Sardines

BAR

(9 rue Gachet; ☎ 6pm-2am Tue-Sat) True to name, this festive place is always packed. Amid vintage signs and a curiously configured ceiling, a mostly 20-something crowd gathers over excellent wine selections (more than two dozen by the glass), cocktails lit up by glow sticks and enticing sharing plates. Go early to score a table.

### Le Garage

BAR

(☎ 05 59 83 75 17; www.le-garage-bar.fr; 49 rue Émile Garett; ☎ noon-1.30am Mon-Fri, from 3pm Sat & Sun) Le Garage plays heavily on the filling-station theme, with road signs, rockabilly tunes and dangling motorbikes overhead (choose your table carefully). It draws a young and lively crowd, and there's often live music on weekends – and sports shown on multiple screens at other times.

### Au Grain de Raisin

WINE BAR

(☎ 05 59 82 98 44; http://barsàvins.com; 11 rue Sully; ☎ 5pm-midnight Wed-Sat, 4-11pm Sun) A welcoming wine bar near the château, which serves a good selection of Continental beers and local wines by the glass (from €3.80 to €6.80), accompanied by plates of tapas.



## Shopping

Pau is famous for its *chocolatiers* (chocolate shops): the top names are **Josuât** (www.josuât.fr; 23 rue Serviez; ☎ 9.30am-12.15pm & 2.30-7.15pm Mon-Sat) and **Francis Miot** (www.francis-miot.com; 48 rue Maréchal Joffre; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat).

### BricOTruc

VINTAGE

(☎ 06 68 32 49 29; 5 rue Alexander Taylor; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Wed-Sat) After browsing the boutiques of nearby rue Serviez, stop by BricOTruc, which has a delightful assortment of recycled jewellery, picture frames, toys, artwork, vases and other assorted bric-a-brac, all handsomely displayed.

### Au Parapluie des Pyrénées

FASHION &amp; ACCESSORIES

(www.parapluiedeberger.com; 12 rue Montpensier; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat) This lovely old shop makes the beech-handled, rattan-ribbed umbrellas traditionally used by Pyrenean shepherds. Also specialises in the anachronistic art of umbrella repair.



## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 59 27 27 08; www.pau-pyrenees.com; place Royale; ☎ 9am-6pm



## ROAD PASSES IN THE PYRENEES

High road passes link the Vallée d'Ossau, the Vallée d'Aspe and the Vallée des Gaves (all of which have regularly featured as punishing mountain stages during the Tour de France). The altitude means that they're often blocked by snow well into June; signs indicate whether they're *ouvert* (open) or *fermé* (closed).

**Col d'Aubisque** (1709m; open May to October) The D918 links Laruns in the Vallée d'Ossau with Argelès-Gazost in the Vallée des Gaves. An alternative that's open year-round is the D35 between Louvie-Juzon and Nay.

**Col de Marie-Blanque** (1035m; open most of year) The shortest link between the Aspe and Ossau valleys is the D294, which corkscrews for 21km between Escot and Bielle.

**Col du Pourtalet** (1794m; open most of year) The main crossing into Spain generally stays open year-round except during exceptional snowfall.

**Col du Tourmalet** (2115m; open June to October) Between Barèges and La Mongie, this is the highest road pass in the Pyrenees. If you're travelling east to the Pic du Midi (eg from Cauterets), the only alternative is a long detour north via Lourdes and Bagnères-de-Bigorre.

## WORTH A TRIP

## WALK THE TRESPOEY QUARTIER

Scottish doctor Alexander Taylor turned Pau into a fashionable winter retreat for the wealthy of Britain when, in the mid-1800s, he recommended the town for its healthy climate.

Many of these newcomers built grand holiday mansions in the leafy Trespoeuy *quartier* to the east of the city centre. The tourist office can provide a leaflet outlining a short walk through the area past those mansions which are still standing, although most are closed to the public.

Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun mid-Aug-mid-Jul, 9.30am-1pm & 2-5pm mid-Jul-mid-Aug) Stocked with useful information on local transport and the Pyrenees generally.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Aéroport Pau-Pyrénées** (PUF; ☎ 05 59 33 33 00; [www.pau.aeroport.fr](http://www.pau.aeroport.fr); rte de l'Aéroport, Uzein) The airport is around 11km northwest of town. There are currently four to six daily flights to Paris Orly (HOP!), three daily to Paris Charles de Gaulle (Air France), one to three daily to Lyon (HOP!), and nine per week to Marseille (Twin Jet).

### BUS

Bus services are very limited, although there are at least a couple of daily services to Mont-de-Marsan and one to Agen, which depart from in front of the train station.

### TRAIN

Trains arrive at the Gare de Pau, just below the historic centre. There are five TGVs daily from Paris. In summer, SNCF buses run from Oloron-Ste-Marie into the Vallée d'Aspe.

**Bayonne** €16.40 to €27.80, 1¼ hours.

**Oloron-Ste-Marie** €8, 35 to 52 minutes.

**Paris Montparnasse** €79 to €149, 4½ hours via direct TGV.

**Toulouse** €15 to €37, two to 2½ hours.

## **i** Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

**Idelis** (☎ 05 59 14 15 16; [www.reseau-idelis.com](http://www.reseau-idelis.com)) runs an airport shuttle (€1) to Pau's train station and town centre. From the airport, buses run roughly hourly from 7.20am to 7.10pm; from the train station, buses run from 6.40am to 7.10pm. The journey time is a slow hour.

Note that buses don't run on Sunday, so you'll need to reserve a taxi at the airport **information desk** (☎ 05 59 33 33 00); expect to pay between €30 and €40.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public transport in Pau is handled by Idelis. Single/day tickets cost €1/3.50. Pau's bike-sharing network **IDecycle** ([www.idecycle.com](http://www.idecycle.com); per day/week €1/5) is handy for zipping around town.

**Funiculaire de Pau** In service since 1908, this clunky old funicular is a fun way to travel the short but steep distance from the area around the train station up to the bd des Pyrénées. Trains run every few minutes between dawn and dusk.

## LOURDES

POP 13,950 / ELEV 400M

The sprawling town of Lourdes, 43km south-east of Pau, has been one of the world's most important pilgrimage sites since 1858, when 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous (1844-79) is claimed to have been visited 18 times in a rocky grotto by the Virgin Mary.

Now known as the Sanctuaires Notre Dame de Lourdes, the grotto is considered one of the holiest sites in Christendom. Over six million people arrive in Lourdes every year hoping to be healed by the holy waters, but the modern town of Lourdes itself can feel rather dispiriting, with a tatty tangle of neon-signed hotels and souvenir shops selling everything from plastic crucifixes to Madonna-shaped bottles of holy water.

Outside the theme-park-like atmosphere of the town, you'll find some intriguing sites, including a hilltop castle and various humble abodes where Soubirous resided – which more than anything illustrate the many hardships the lower classes endured in the late 19th century.

## **o** Sights & Activities

### ★ Sanctuaires Notre Dame de Lourdes

([www.lourdes-france.org](http://www.lourdes-france.org); av Monseigneur Théas; ☎ 745am-10pm) The spiritual centre of

CAVE





## Lourdes

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Sanctuaires Notre Dame de Lourdes... C2

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Basilique Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire ..... B2  
 3 Basilique Supérieure ..... B2  
 4 Château Fort..... E3  
 5 Grotte de Massabielle..... A2  
 6 Le Cachot ..... E3  
 7 Maison Paternelle de Ste-Bernadette.. E2  
 8 Moulin de Boly ..... E2  
 9 Porte St-Michel..... C3

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 10 Chemin de Croix ..... B3

### 📍 Sleeping

- 11 Bestwestern Beauséjour ..... G1  
 12 Hôtel Majestic ..... F2

### 📍 Eating

- 13 Ganapathy ..... E3  
 14 Les Halles de Lourdes..... E4  
 15 Lung Ta ..... F3  
 16 O Piment Rouge..... E3

Lourdes is the subterranean grotto where Bernadette Soubirous is believed to have experienced her visions in 1858. From the **Porte St-Michel**, a broad boulevard sweeps towards the gilded spires of the **Basilique du Rosaire** (☀️8am-6pm) and the **Basilique Supérieure** (Upper Basilica; ☀️7am-6pm).

Underneath is the fabled **Grotte de Massabielle** (av Monseigneur Théas; ☀️5am-midnight), where people queue for hours to enter and take a blessed dip in the cave's icy-cold baths, while other pilgrims content themselves with lighting candles of remembrance outside.

From Palm Sunday to mid-October, nightly torchlight processions start from the Massabielle Grotto at 9pm, while at 5pm there's the Procession Eucharistique (Blessed Sacrament Procession) along the Esplanade des Processions.

### Château Fort

MUSEUM

(Fortified Castle; [www.chateaufort-lourdes.fr](http://www.chateaufort-lourdes.fr); adult/child €7.50/3.50; ☀️10am-1pm & 2-7pm mid-Jul-mid-Oct, to 6pm mid-Oct-mid-Jul) Lourdes' imposing castle stands on a sheer hill just behind the town. There's been a stronghold here since Roman times, but the present building combines a medieval keep with fortifications added during the 17th and 18th centuries. Since the 1920s, the castle has housed the **Musée Pyrénéen**, which displays local artefacts and folk art. Among the exhibitions here, you'll find mid-20th century Pyrenees travel posters, beautiful miniaturised châteaux from France, and intriguing traditional costumes from various valleys near Lourdes.

A free lift takes you up to the castle from rue Baron Duprat. If you'd rather walk up, take the Rampe du Fort, a lane located just off rue du Bourg.

### Pic du Jer

VIEWPOINT

(☎️05 62 94 00 41; [www.picdujer.com](http://www.picdujer.com); bd d'Espagne; funicular return adult/child €12.50/10; ☀️9.30am-6pm late Mar-early Nov, to 7pm Jul & Aug) Panoramic views of Lourdes and the central Pyrenees are on offer from this rocky outcrop just outside town. There are two routes to the top: a punishing three-hour hike (ideal for penitents) or a speedy six-minute ride on the funicular (ideal for everyone else).

There's a choice of routes back down: a black-run mountain-bike trail, or a more family-friendly option along the **Voie Verte des Gaves**, a decommissioned railway that finishes up at the lower funicular station.

To get to the lower funicular, take bus A1 from Les Halles.

### Grottes de Bétharram

CAVE

(☎️05 62 41 80 04; [www.betharram.com](http://www.betharram.com); chemin Léon Ross, St-Pé-de-Bigorre; adult/child €15/9.50; ☀️9am-6pm Jul-Aug, 9am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm late Mar-Jun, 9am-noon & 1.30-5pm Sep & Oct) Grottes de Bétharram is a network of subterranean caverns that has been carved out from the limestone, glittering with impressive formations of stalactites and stalagmites. Visits to the cave aboard a combination of foot, minitrain and barge last around 1½ hours, but be warned: the site gets extremely busy in high summer. It's along the D937, 14km west of Lourdes.

### Moulin de Boly

MUSEUM

(Boly Mill; ☎️05 62 42 16 36; 12 rue Bernadette Soubirous; ☀️9am-noon & 3-5pm Jul-Oct, 3-5pm Nov-Jun) **FREE** Bernadette was born in this millhouse on 7 January 1844, one year after the marriage of her parents Louise Castérot and François Soubirous. She lived here for the first 10 years of her life; it's still possible to see her childhood bedroom, along with the house's mill machinery.

**Le Cachot**

HISTORIC SITE

(☎ 05 62 94 51 30; 15 rue des Petits Fossés; ☺ 9am-noon & 3-5pm Jul-Oct, 3-5pm Nov-Jun) **FREE** In 1857 Bernadette Soubirous' family fell on hard times and were forced to move to this dingy former prison, where they lived communally in a room measuring just 16 sq metres. It was while living here that Bernadette stumbled across the Grotte de Massabielle, having been sent out to collect firewood.

**Maison Paternelle de Ste-Bernadette**

MUSEUM

(☎ 05 62 94 22 51; 2 rue Bernadette Soubirous; €2; ☺ 9.30am-12.15pm & 2.15-6.30pm Apr-Oct) After Bernadette Soubirous experienced her visions, Lourdes' abbot bought this house for her family. It's still run by her descendants, and has a collection of memorabilia including family photos and a bed where Bernadette supposedly slept.

**Chemin de Croix**

WALKING

(Way of the Cross) The Chemin de Croix (sometimes known as the Chemin du Calvaire) leads for 1.5km up the hillside from the Basilique Supérieure past 14 life-size bronze-painted figures representing Stations of the Cross. Seriously devout pilgrims climb to the first station on their knees.

**Sleeping**

Lourdes has an enormous number of hotels (second only to Paris in terms of bed space, believe it or not), and you can generally find some good deals by shopping around. Unfortunately, most places are rather plain, with cookie-cutter rooms and services. For something more interesting (but pricier), consider basing yourself outside town.

**Lourdes****Hôtel Majestic**

HOTEL €

(☎ 05 62 94 27 23; www.hotel-lourdes-majestic.com; 9 av du Général Baron Maransin; d/tr/q from €39/59/69) Although it's on a busy avenue, the friendly and good-value Hôtel Majestic is worth considering for its bright, attractive rooms, with polished wood floors and big windows that let in ample light (but little street noise). It's also quite central, and an easy 300m (downhill) walk from the train station.

**Bestwestern Beauséjour**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 62 94 38 18; www.hotel-beausejour.com; 16 av de la Gare; s €75, d €88-195; ☐ ☎ ☎) A step above most of the Lourdes competition, the

Beauséjour is set in an elegant 19th-century building, and has plenty of fine attributes: a bar-brasserie on the main floor, a small heated outdoor pool, good service and a convenient location across from the train station. Rooms range in size and quality; the cheapest are quite compact.

**Around Lourdes****Eth Béryé Petit**

B&amp;B €

(☎ 05 62 97 90 02; www.berypetit.com; 15 rte de Vieille, Beaucens; d from €78; ☐ ☎) Twelve kilometres south of Lourdes, this 17th-century farmhouse offers country charm and knock-out mountain views. There are three rooms: the most spacious is Era Galeria, which has French windows onto a private balcony, while Poeyaspé and Bédoret are tucked into the beamed attic. Rates are cheaper for subsequent nights. Cash only. It's off the N21 near Beaucens.

**Hôtel les Rochers**

HOTEL €

(☎ 05 62 97 09 52; www.lesrochershotel.com; 1 place du Castillou, St-Savin; d €68-76, f €110; ☐ ☎) In the idyllic village of St-Savin, 16km south of Lourdes, this handsomely landscaped hotel makes a perfect mountain retreat. It's run by an expat English couple, John and Jane, who have renovated the rooms in clean, contemporary fashion – try for one with a mountain view. Half-board is available and the hotel can provide picnic lunches that will satisfy the hungriest hiker.

**Eating**

Lourdes' eating options are generally rather uninspiring, though there is a growing assortment of international restaurants (catering to Lourdes' global visitors).

**Les Halles de Lourdes**

MARKET €

(place du Champ Commun; ☺ 6.30am-2pm, closed Sun mid-Oct-Apr) Lourdes' covered market occupies most of the square. It's a fine spot for cheeses, charcuterie, antipasti and other good picnic fare.

**Ganapathy**

INDIAN €

(☎ 05 62 45 68 31; 5 rue Baron Duprat; mains €8-13, menu lunch/dinner €12/14; ☺ 11am-11pm; ☎) A favourite of visitors from the subcontinent, this cheerfully decorated restaurant calls itself a Sri Lankan restaurant but the vast majority of dishes are actually north Indian classics such as chicken tikka masala, lamb biryani and prawn curry.

**Lung Ta**

TIBETAN €

(☎ 05 62 92 80 45; [www.restaurantlungta.fr](http://www.restaurantlungta.fr); 8 rue des Quatre Frères Soulas; mains €10-12; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Wed-Mon; 🍴) This cosy and warmly lit Tibetan eatery is a surprising find in Lourdes. Amid rice-paper lamps, Tibetan prayer flags and a small Buddha shrine, diners tuck into filling dishes from the high plateau. Rich soups like Tsel Thuk (with vegetables and house-made noodles) are satisfying on a cold spring day. Good vegetarian choices.

**O Piment Rouge**

BASQUE €€

(☎ 05 62 41 47 87; [www.restaurant-piment-rouge.com](http://www.restaurant-piment-rouge.com); 37 rue de la Grotte; mains €18-22, menu lunch €14-16, dinner €19-29; ☀ noon-1.45pm Thu-Tue, 7-9.30pm Thu-Mon) Dining out can be decidedly hit-and-miss in Lourdes, which makes this delightful eatery a doubly good find. It serves up delicacies from the Basque Country, including squid cooked in ink, tender stewed lamb and a decadent custard sponge cake.

**★ Le Viscos**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 05 62 97 02 28; [www.hotel-leviscos.com](http://www.hotel-leviscos.com); 1 rue Lamarque, St-Savin; menus €32-75; ☀ 12.30-1.30pm Tue-Sun, 7.30-8.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍴 🍷 🍴) Ex-TV chef Jean-Pierre St-Martin has established a gastronomic hideaway in St-Savin,

16km south of Lourdes. Known for blending Basque, Breton and Pyrenean cuisine, as well as his unshakeable passion for foie gras, he's now assisted by his son Alexis. Expect rich, traditional fine-dining food. Unusually for such a top-end joint, it also does a €15 children's gourmet menu.

**i Information**

**Sanctuaires Notre Dame de Lourdes Information Centre** (Centre d'Information; ☎ 05 62 42 78 78; [www.lourdes-france.com](http://www.lourdes-france.com); av Monseigneur Théas; ☀ 8.30am-12.15pm & 1.45-6.30pm) For information on the Sanctuaires Notre Dame de Lourdes.

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 62 42 77 40; [www.lourdes-infotourisme.com](http://www.lourdes-infotourisme.com); place Peyramale; ☀ 9am-6.30pm) Lourdes' main tourist office has general information on the Pyrenees and advice on accommodation, transport and activities.

**i Getting There & Away****AIR**

**Tarbes-Lourdes-Pyrénées Airport** (☎ 05 62 32 92 22; [www.tlp.aeroport.fr](http://www.tlp.aeroport.fr)) is 10km north of Lourdes on the N21. There are at least three daily flights to Paris Orly (Air France and HOP!), plus three to four weekly flights to London Stansted, three to Milan and two to Krakow (all

**WORTH A TRIP****NATURE WATCH**

**Parc Animalier des Pyrénées** (☎ 05 62 97 91 07; [www.parc-animalier-pyrenees.com](http://www.parc-animalier-pyrenees.com); 60bis av des Pyrénées, Argelès-Gazost; adult/child €20/14.50; ☀ 9.30am-6pm or 7pm Apr-Oct) This fantastic wildlife park, off the D821 near Argelès-Gazost, is home to many rare and not so rare Pyrenean species. The animals live on special 'islands' designed to mirror their natural habitat: marmots (which, despite the huge numbers of them in the Pyrenees are not actually native to these mountains), chamoix and non-native Alpine ibex (the Pyrenean ibex became extinct in January 2000) inhabit rocky hills and brown bears lord it over their own boulder-strewn mountain kingdom.

There are also flying displays by birds of prey and the park's resident vultures. You can even spend the night in a trapper's cabin, with windows looking into the wolves' enclosure, or sleep in Le Refuge, a dome-shaped cabin with a floor-to-ceiling window overlooking the bears' habitat. Both cost €450 per night for a double.

The park is doubly important given that many of the species here have either disappeared in the wild or are teetering on the brink of extinction – most notably the brown bear (known in the US as the grizzly), which has all but vanished in the Pyrenees as a result of hunting and habitat loss. Despite fierce opposition from local farmers, a reintroduction program using wild bears from Slovenia has attempted to re-establish a breeding population, and it's thought that there are now around 30 bears roaming wild across the mountains. Unfortunately 2020 was as bad a year for bears as it was for humans. A number of Pyrenean bears were found dead by suspicious means, and President Macron announced that his government would no longer support the reintroduction program.

The park is closed in the mornings for the first half of October.

Ryanair), as well as several a week to Brussels (TUI Fly) and Rome (AlbaStar).

### BUS

The small **bus station** (place Capdevielle) has services northwards to Pau (though trains are much faster and the recommended way to go). Buses running between Tarbes and Argelès-Gazost (at least eight daily), the gateway to the Pyrenean communities of Cauterets, Luz-St-Sauveur and Gavarnie, also stop here.

Buses to Cauterets (€2, 55 minutes, at least five daily) leave from the train station.

### TRAIN

**Gare de Lourdes** (33 ave de la Gare) has regular train connections, including direct TGVs to Pau and Paris Montparnasse. Trains to Toulouse often connect through Tarbes.

**Bayonne** €10 to €37, two hours via Pau.

**Paris Montparnasse** €67 to €137, from 4¼ hours via TGV.

**Pau** €8.30, 34 minutes.

**Toulouse** €19 to €30, 2¼ hours.

## PARC NATIONAL DES PYRÉNÉES

Stretching for 100km across the Franco-Spanish border, the Parc National des Pyrénées conceals some of the last pockets of true wilderness left in France. The web of valleys and glaciated peaks here are home to an incredible array of rare flora and fauna, including brown bears, wolves, griffon vultures, lammergeier, and the bizarre and totally endemic, desman (think of a cross between a mouse, a hedgehog, and an anteater and then throw it in a glacial stream like an otter!). But the park is not just a paradise for wildlife. The scenery here is both intimate and grand and the whole park is laced with hiking trails that give access to some of Europe's most gorgeous mountain scenery.

Within the park's boundaries are the highest peaks in southwest France, including the loftiest of all, Vignemale (3298m).

### Activities

#### Mountain Biking

Once the last snows melt around mid-April to May, many of the Pyrenean ski stations open up their trails to VTTs (*vélos tout-terrains*; mountain bikes).

Val d'Azun, Bagnères du Bigorre, Barrouse, Barèges, Ax and several other places

all have extensive areas of *sentiers balisés* (marked trails). The useful Pyrénées Passion ([www.pyrenees-passion.info](http://www.pyrenees-passion.info); in French) website lists the main VTT areas and the Pyrénées Cyclo ([www.pyrenees-cyclo.com](http://www.pyrenees-cyclo.com); in French) website has specific trail descriptions.

#### Walking

Three hundred and fifty kilometres of way-marked trails (including the Atlantic-to-Mediterranean GR10 route) criss-cross the park. Within the park are about 20 *refuges* (mountain huts), primarily run by the Club Alpin Français (CAF). Most are staffed only from July to September but some – the larger and more popular ones – maintain a crew for longer. Even when not staffed, many *refuges* can still be accessed by hikers.

Each of the six park valleys (Vallée d'Aure, Vallée de Luz, Vallée de Cauterets, Val d'Azun, Vallée d'Ossau and Vallée d'Aspe) has a national park folder or booklet in French, *Randonnées dans le Parc National des Pyrénées*, describing 10 to 15 walks.

In general, the hiking season runs from late-May until late-October. However, in recent years increasingly erratic weather conditions have at times turned all this on its head and it's been possible to walk high trails on New Years' Day and see trails buried under early snow by mid-September!

#### White-Water Sports

The Gave d'Aspe, Gave d'Oloron and Gave d'Ossau offer excellent white-water rafting. There are several companies based around Oloron-Ste-Marie, including Gaïa Aventure (p713) and **Centre Nautique de Soeix** (☎ 05 59 39 61 00; <http://soeix.free.fr>; 367 rte du Gave d'Aspe, quartier Soeix, Oloron-Ste-Marie; rafting adult/child from €25/18), which both offer canoeing, kayaking and rafting trips. Prices start at between €25 and €35 for a two-hour session.

#### Skiing

While the Pyrenees can't rival the Alps for skiing, there are some good resorts (many family-friendly) and rates are cheaper than in the Alps. The northerly aspect of the French side of the chain means the resorts on the French side invariably have more snow than those on the Spanish side. But the Spanish resorts are often bigger, with a greater array of runs. Alongside normal skiing and snowboarding, *ski nordique* (cross-country skiing) and *raquette à neige*



(snowshoeing) are increasingly popular. Atmospheric Cauterets (p716) is the best known and most stylish.

### Grand Tourmalet

SKIING

(www.n-py.com; La Mongie) Home to 58 pistes, the Grand Tourmalet is the largest resort in the Pyrenees. Its 100km of runs trace their way around Col du Tourmalet and the Pic du Midi.

### Val d'Azun

SKIING

(www.valdazun.com) The best cross-country skiing in the Pyrenees, 30km southwest of Lourdes.

## i Information

For general information, the PNR Pyrenees (www.pyrenees-parcnational.fr) website, the park's official tourist site, is the place to start. It has comprehensive information on activities, accommodation and sights.

There are also small park visitor centres in Etsaut, Laruns, Arrens-Marsous, Cauterets, Luz-St-Sauveur, Gavarnie and St-Lary-Soulan.

## i Getting There & Away

Public transport is quite limited in the area. Getting around without a car is a challenge here, so it's wise to arrange a hire vehicle in Pau or Lourdes.

## Vallée d'Aspe

The westernmost of the main Pyrenean valleys, the Vallée d'Aspe draws adventure seekers, hikers and those simply seeking a peaceful retreat from modern life at one of the valley's 13 picturesque cobblestone villages. Majestic peaks and sun-dappled forests make a fine backdrop to trekking, horse riding, mountain biking and paragliding.

Home to just over 3000 people, the valley has been an important thoroughfare since Julius Caesar's Roman legionnaires marched this way. Later, during medieval times, the valley became one of the main routes for pilgrims on the Chemin de St-Jacques, seeking a way across the mountains en route to Santiago de Compostela.

The small town of Oloron-Ste-Marie stands at the valley's northern end. From here, the N134 runs south, roughly following the course of the River Aspe for about 50km to the border, passing through the villages of Sarrance, Bedous, Accous, Cete-Eygun and Etsaut en route.

## o Sights

### Écomusée de la Vallée d'Aspe

MUSEUM

(☎ 05 64 19 00 16; 🕒 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-Oct) **FREE** Four sites around the

## THE PYRENEAN BROWN BEAR

In 2004 in the Vallée d'Aspe, the last native brown bear left in France was shot by a boar-hunter, supposedly in self-defence. The demise of the female bear, known as Cannelle to conservationists, marked the extinction of a species that a century ago was still a relatively common sight in the Pyrenees. France was in uproar; the then-President Chirac declared it 'a great loss for French and European biodiversity'.

The species has since been reintroduced using bears imported from Slovenia. They have bred successfully, and it's thought that by 2020 there were around 60 brown bears now roaming across both sides of the mountains.

The plight of brown bears in the Pyrenees has become an important touchstone for French conservationists, but it remains a deeply controversial issue, especially for local shepherds and farmers, who see the bears as dangerous predators that pose an unwelcome threat to their flocks and livelihoods. The issue reached a flash point in 2017 when a bear attacked a flock of sheep near Couflens. In a panic, the entire flock of 209 sheep fled over a cliff near the Spanish border and perished.

In the Ariège region, which seems to be home to the greatest concentration of bears, farmers claim that livestock attacks by bears doubled between 2017 and 2018 and continue to rise, but conservationists say that these cases weren't all bear-related and that the figures have more to do with anti-bear sentiment in Ariège. In the summer of 2020 tensions in the Ariège rose further after a bear was shot and killed by unknown perpetrators. But not all farmers are against the bears, and educational programs, compensation packages and the increasing use of large guard dogs – give them a very wide berth if you encounter one while out walking – mean local communities are starting to accept the presence of the bears.

valley, collectively known as the *Écomusée de la Vallée d'Aspe*, explore the area's heritage and agricultural traditions. There are small folk museums in the villages of Sarance, Lourdios-Ichère and Borcé, but the most interesting site is Les Fermiers Basco-Béarnais in Accous.

**Les Fermiers Basco-Béarnais** FACTORY  
(www.ossau-iraty.fr; rue Gambetta, Accous; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Thu & Sat, to 5pm Fri) At this farmers' co-op and *fromagerie* (cheese shop), you can sample cheese made from the milk of local ewes, goats and cows.

## Activities

### Hiking

For most people, the main reason to visit the Vallée d'Aspe is the chance to tramp the trails. Route suggestions and planning tools are available from the useful Caminaspe (www.caminaspe.fr) website.

The GR10 long-distance trail (part of the iconic Chemin St-Jacques) winds through the valley via the high-altitude village of Lescun, 5.5km from Bedous, which offers westerly views of the stunning **Cirque de Lescun**, an amphitheatre of jagged limestone mountains, backed by the 2504m **Pic d'Anie**. The village also marks the start of several fantastic day hikes. One impressive section of the GR10 leads northwest from Lescun via the Refuge de Labérout and along the base of Les Orgues de Camplong (Camplong Organ Pipes). As long as the weather holds, you'll be guaranteed spectacular views back over the Vallée de Lescun and the distinctive Pic du Midi d'Ossau (2884m), but it's a high-altitude hike, so check the weather forecast, wear proper

footwear, and pack wet-weather gear just in case.

Another popular route follows the GR10 south from Borce or Etsaut to **Fort du Portalet** (Urdos), a 19th-century fortress used as a prison in WWII by the Germans and the Vichy government. In summer, 2½-hour tours (€10) in English can be organised through the Bedous tourist office or online (www.tourisme-aspe.com/fort-du-portalet.html).

The Bedous tourist office (p713) sells maps and the locally produced guidebook, *Le Topo des 45 Randonnées en Vallée d'Aspe*.

### Donkey Trekking

**Le Parc Aux Ânes** DONKEY TREKKING  
(☎ 05 59 34 88 98; www.garbure.net/ane\_rando.htm; Etsaut; 4-day trip incl meals adult/child €245/175, plus per donkey €150) Run by the owners of **La Garbure** (per adult €21, half-board €34) *gîte*, this donkey-trekking outfit offers a range of guided trips, staying at remote mountain *gîtes* (self-catering cottages) – or, if you wish, wild camping. It's a fabulous experience and a great way to explore the mountains with children who can hop on a donkey when tired. Best of all, thanks to your new donkey pal, you don't even have to carry your baggage.

### Mountain Biking

**Rando Bike** MOUNTAIN BIKING  
(☎ 05 59 34 79 11; www.rando-bike.fr; Accous; adult/child half-day €24/19, full day €30/24) On Accous' main street, this experienced firm rents out bikes and also runs its own half- and full-day *randonnées VTT* (mountain-bike trips). If you're here in winter, they'll also teach you how to snowshoe.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### THE TRANSHUMANCE

If you're travelling through the Pyrenees between late May and early June and you happen to find yourself stuck behind an enormous cattle-shaped traffic jam, there's a good chance you may have just got caught up in the age-old tradition of the Transhumance, in which shepherds move their flocks from their winter pastures up to the high grass-rich meadows of the mountain uplands.

This ancient custom has been a fixture on the Pyrenean calendar for hundreds of years, and is still regarded as one of the most important events of the year in the Pyrenees. The Transhumance is carried on in the time-honoured way – usually on foot, assisted by the occasional sheepdog or quad-bike – and several of the valleys host lively festivals to mark the occasion. The whole show is repeated in October, when the flocks are brought back down to the valleys before the snows of winter descend in earnest.

## White-Water Sports

### Gaïa Aventure

WATER SPORTS

(☎06 18 58 08 69; [www.gaiaaventure.com](http://www.gaiaaventure.com); 27 av d'Espagne, Bidos; rafting trips per person from €25) This outfit leads white-water rafting trips on the rivers near Oloron-Ste-Marie. Prices start at between €25 and €35 for a two-hour session.



## Festivals & Events

The valley holds three annual **markets** in celebration of its local produce: an Easter market in Bedous, a summer market in Aydius on the first Sunday of August, and an autumn food fair in Sarrance.

Other events to look out for are **Le Transhumance de Lourdios** in early June, and the **Fête du Fromage d'Etsaut**, a cheese fair on the last Sunday in July.



## Sleeping

Accommodation is mainly geared towards walkers, with several seasonal campgrounds and *gîtes d'étapes* operating on a *demi-pension* (half-board) basis.

### Camping Le Gave d'Aspe

CAMPGROUND €

(☎05 59 34 88 26; [www.campingaspe.com](http://www.campingaspe.com); Urdos; per adult/child/tent €4.40/2.90/5, bungalow per weekend/week from €125/315; ☀May-Sep) Beautifully situated alongside the clattering River Aspe, in a forested site near the mountain village of Urdos, this is a superb family-friendly campground. There's a choice of timber bungalows or canvas-roofed chalets, or you can pitch your own tent.

### Camping du Lauzart

CAMPGROUND €

(☎06 13 13 12 17; [www.camping-gite-lescun-pyrenees.com](http://www.camping-gite-lescun-pyrenees.com); Lescun; per adult/tent/child €4/5/3; ☀Apr-Sep; @☎) Fifty-seven spacious sites pitched under the trees with full-blown mountain views, in a secluded spot just outside Lescun. There's an on-site cafe and fresh bread is delivered daily.

### Chambre d'Hôtes Pouquette

GUESTHOUSE €

(☎05 59 39 48 52; [www.chambre-hotes-aspe-bearn-pouquette.com](http://www.chambre-hotes-aspe-bearn-pouquette.com); Cette-Eygun; d €50-64; ☎☎) Surrounded by undulating peaks, Pouquette makes for a fabulous base while exploring the Vallée d'Aspe. Its five pleasantly furnished rooms are painted in cheerful colours, and the friendly owners have a wealth of information on the region (Madame Ziane speaks excellent English). In the summer, the pool is a fine place to cool off after a day of hiking.

### La Toison d'Or

B&amp;B €€

(☎05 47 91 94 04; [www.aubergetoisondor.com](http://www.aubergetoisondor.com); place de l'Église de Cette, Cette-Eygun; d from €85; ☎☎) You'll keep expecting members of Monty Python to pop their heads round the corner at this bizarrely brilliant medieval-era *auberge* (country inn), where the rooms hunker behind arches, block-stones and carved wooden doors. It's been gradually renovated by owner Julie; the breakfast room is the highlight, with its vaulted ceiling and monumental mountain view. It's a 2km drive from Cette-Eygun.

### Auberge Cavalière

B&amp;B €€

(☎05 59 34 72 30; [www.auberge-cavaliere.com](http://www.auberge-cavaliere.com); quartier Estanguet, Accous; d/tr/f incl breakfast €74/109/139; ☎☎) You'll really feel part of valley life at this rambling old horse farm 3km south of Accous, which offers five floral rooms and a cosy family *gîte*. The stone house is a picture of rustic character. Dinner and picnic baskets can also be arranged.

## Information

**Pyrenees National Park Visitor Centre** (Maison du Parc National des Pyrénées; ☎05 59 34 88 30; ☀10.30am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm May-Oct) Housed in Etsaut's disused train station. This is a good place to get info on walking paths and other attractions in the area.

**Tourist Office** (☎05 59 34 57 57; [www.tourisme-aspe.com](http://www.tourisme-aspe.com); place Sarraillé, Bedous; ☀9am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Jul-Aug, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) The valley's main tourist office.

## Getting There & Away

SNCF buses and trains connect Pau and Oloron-Ste-Marie up to 10 times daily.

**Citram Pyrenees** (☎05 59 27 22 22; [www.citrampyrenees.fr](http://www.citrampyrenees.fr)) runs a regular bus (three to five daily Monday to Saturday, two daily at weekends) from Oloron into the valley, stopping at all the main villages en route to Somport.

## Vallée d'Ossau

Stretching south from Pau to the Spanish border, the Vallée d'Ossau is known for its deep pastoral traditions, sleepy villages and spectacular mountain scenery. The valley tracks its namesake river from its confluence with the Aspe at Oloron-Ste-Marie all the way to the watershed at Col du Pourtalet (1794m), some 60km to the south. The entrance to the valley as far as Laruns is green and pastoral, carpeted with lush fields

and farms. Further south, the mountains stack up as the valley draws ever closer to the Spanish border. Aside from magnificent walks amid chiselled peaks and topaz lakes, there's much to explore in this valley: quaint and little-visited mountain settlements, soaring griffon vultures at the Falaise aux Vautours, and the Petit Train d'Artouste, one of Europe's highest train rides.

## Sights & Activities

There are 18 tiny villages dotted along the Vallée d'Ossau. The main focus is Laruns, 37km from Pau, a sturdy hamlet that has an excellent tourist office (p715) and national park centre (p716), both stocked with information on hiking, mountain biking, rafting and other outdoor pursuits.

**Falaise aux Vautours** WILDLIFE RESERVE  
(Cliff of the Vultures; ☎05 59 82 65 49; www.falaise-aux-vautours.com; Aste-Béon; adult/child €6/4; ☀10.30am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug, 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri Apr-Jun & Sep) Scan the thermals above the western Pyrenees (they're much less frequently encountered in the central and eastern parts of the range) and you will almost certainly spot the pre-historic-looking griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) which soar above the mountains in search of carrion to feast on.

Around 100 nesting pairs of griffon vultures have made their home on the limestone cliffs of this 82-hectare reserve and CCTV cameras allow you to see inside their nests from the visitor centre.

**Bielle** VILLAGE  
The former 'capital' of the valley, Bielle is a beautiful village with many fine 15th- and

16th-century houses, linked together via a guided walk.

**Rébénacq** VILLAGE  
Rébénacq is one of the few *bastides* (fortified towns) of the Pyrenees, built in 1347 by a lieutenant of Gaston Fébus, the 11th Count of Foix. Like all *bastides*, it's set around a central square, the place de la Bielle, whose buildings and dimensions have barely changed in almost eight centuries.

**Castet** VILLAGE  
Perched precariously on a glacial outcrop, this hilltop village boasts a 12th-century keep and a truly magnificent valley view. From the *belvédère* (panoramic viewpoint) known as Port de Castet (868m), hiking and biking trails wind along the hillside.

**Eaux-Bonnes** VILLAGE  
During the 19th century, the small village of Eaux-Bonnes (literally, Good Waters) flourished as a spa resort thanks to its geothermal hot springs, which fed public baths frequented by many illustrious figures, including the Empress Eugénie. Even if you're not here for a treatment at the local spa, Eaux-Bonnes is worth a stroll through the town's historic centre, which looks all the more striking against the mountainous backdrop of the Pyrenees.

## Sleeping & Eating

**L'Arrajou** GUESTHOUSE €  
(☎05 59 82 62 38; www.larrajou.com; quartier de l'Église, Bilhères; s/d/f €69/74/135; ☑☎) Sublime mountain views await at this charming guesthouse set in the tiny village of Bilhères. Expect a warm welcome from the

### DON'T MISS

#### SCENIC TRAIN RIDE

**Le Petit Train d'Artouste** (☎05 59 05 36 99; https://artouste.fr; adult/child/family €25/18/80; ☀mid-May-mid-Oct) Six kilometres east of Gabas, near the ski resort of Artouste-Fabréges (1250m), a cable car cranks up the Pic de la Sagette (2032m) to reach the start of one of France's most scenic train journeys. The toy-sized Train d'Artouste (affectionately known as Le Petit Train) was built for dam workers in the 1920s, but now trundles its way for 10km to Lac d'Artouste, offering heart-stopping views over the valley and the spiky Pic du Midi d'Ossau.

The train gets very busy in summer, carrying over 100,000 passengers in the months it's open – try to visit at the start and end of the season, when it's usually quieter. Tickets can be bought in advance online and by phone. Trains run half-hourly in July and August, and hourly at other times. The return-trip lasts about four hours.

You can also buy one-way tickets (sold at the station only) and tickets that give you more time at the lake, allowing you to do some longer walks.

## WORTH A TRIP

## CIRQUES DE GAVARNIE, TROUMOUSE &amp; D'ESTAUBÉ

Fifty-two kilometres south of Lourdes on the D921 you'll find three of the most breathtaking vistas in the French Pyrenees: a trio of mountain amphitheatres, carved out by (fast-shrinking) glaciers and framed by table-topped, snow-dusted peaks – many of which top out at over 3000m.

The town of Gavarnie has a few pleasant lodging options. Most have fireplaces where you can warm up after a day exploring the mountain trails.

The standard walk to the **Cirque de Gavarnie** is the easiest of the area's three mountain amphitheatres to reach – and consequently the most popular. In summer it's almost too popular with thousands of people a day making the short three-hour return hike from the village to the cirque. Crowds aside, this is one of the most impressive mountain cirques in Western Europe. It's especially stunning in October when the beech forests put on a golden glow and the first of the winter snows sparkles across the summits. Waterfalls (including one of the highest in France) tumble down the vertical walls of the cirque. Between Easter and October you can clip-clop along on a horse or donkey (around €25 to €35 for a return-trip). Be sure to wear proper shoes, as the trail can be slippery and rocky.

A second spectacular mountain amphitheatre, and equally easy to reach, is the **Cirque de Troumouse**, which is accessed via the minor D922 from Gèdre, 6.5km northeast of Gavarnie. From the main Cirque de Troumouse parking area you can take a summertime-only 'train' (which is actually a tractor pulling some train carriages), to the edge of the cirque. From here there are various short signed walks that offer fine views of the cirque, including an easy 30-minute one-way walk to the Lac des Aires. The train costs €5 per person. For those up for the challenge, a far more rewarding way of reaching the cirque is by parking near the church in tiny Héas and following the clear trail uphill into the cirque from there (five hours return).

Hidden among the mountains between Troumouse and Gavarnie is the **Cirque d'Estaubé**, the most wild and remote of the area's three mountain amphitheatres and only accessible on foot. The trail starts from the turn-off to the barrage des Gloriettes, which you pass on the D922 en route to Troumouse. It's about a four-hour return walk; you'll need proper boots, water and snacks.

kind-hearted hosts, sunny rooms with bay windows and hearty breakfasts with locally sourced products. During the high season, dinner (€20) is also available.

**Le Balcon de l'Ossau**

GUESTHOUSE €

(☎06 09 71 78 06; [www.chambres-hotes-ossau.fr](http://www.chambres-hotes-ossau.fr); 17 rue du Bourg, Bescat; s/d from €56/61; 📶) In Bescat, the owners Kathrin and Michel roll out the welcome mat, with three hand-somely set rooms with gnarled wooden roof beams, wicker furnishings, and a peaceful garden where you can take in the views over the iconic Pic du Midi d'Ossau (2884m). Outdoors lovers can get loads of tips on hikes and other activities in the area.

**Logis Hôtel de France**

HOTEL €

(☎05 59 05 60 16; [www.hotel-defrance-arudy.com](http://www.hotel-defrance-arudy.com); 1 place de l'Hôtel de Ville, Arudy; s/d/tr/f €67/70/87/95; 📶) In Arudy, this old-fashioned hotel looks like it's appeared from a vintage postcard. It's on a quiet street leading to the church; outside there

are pale green-blue shutters and a pebble-dash-and-wood frontage, while inside are pleasant, no-frills rooms and a good country bistro serving regional dishes such as *garbure béarnaise* (a rich meat-and-veg stew).

**Casa Paulou**

GUESTHOUSE €€

(☎05 59 05 35 98; [www.gitespyrenees-laruns.fr](http://www.gitespyrenees-laruns.fr); 6 rue Bourgneuf Claa, Laruns; s/d €50/80; 📶) In the town of Laruns, the friendly, and beautifully restored, stone-walled farmhouse of Casa Paulou makes a great base for outdoor adventures in the surrounding countryside. Its five comfy rooms are quite large and painted in cheerful colours; some have magnificent views of the mountains. It's within walking distance of the restaurants of Laruns.

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (La Maison de la Vallée d'Ossau Office de Tourisme; ☎05 59 05 31 41; [www.valleedossau-tourisme.com](http://www.valleedossau-tourisme.com); Laruns;



🕒 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun;  
📍 Located on the square, this spot sells good hiking maps for the area.

**National Park Visitor Centre** (Maison du Parc National des Pyrénées de Laruns; ☎ 05 59 05 41 59; www.pyrenees-parcnational.fr; Laruns; 🕒 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri Jul-Aug) Beside the Laruns tourist office.

## 📍 Getting There & Away

Citram Pyrénées (p713) runs buses from Pau to Laruns (€2, one hour, one to three daily), stopping at Rébénacq, Arudy, Bielle, Laruns and Eaux Bonnes.

SNCF trains from Pau stop at Buzy-en-Béarn from where there are a few onward bus connections as far as Laruns (40 minutes).

## Cauterets

POP 803 / ELEV 930M

It might not have the altitude of its sister ski stations in the Alps, but in many respects Cauterets is a more pleasant place to hit the slopes. While many of the Alpine resorts have been ruthlessly modernised and are crammed to capacity during the winter ski and summer walking seasons, Cauterets has clung on to much of its fin-de-siècle character, with a stately spa and grand 19th-century residences dotted round town.

Snow usually lingers here until early May, returning in late October or early November (although ski resorts don't open until December). In summer the landscape around Cauterets transforms into a hikers' paradise, with trails winding their way into the Parc National des Pyrénées.

## 🗨 Sights & Activities

Cauterets' main ski area is the Cirque du Lys.

Local guides offer outdoor activities including paragliding, rock climbing, fishing and via ferrata. Ask at the Cauterets tourist office (p717), or consult the Cauterets website (www.cauterets.com).

### Pont d'Espagne

HIKING

(cable cars adult/child €15/12) The most popular hike in Cauterets leads to the sparkling **Lac de Gaube**. A one-hour walk from Pont d'Espagne, the brilliantly blue mountain lake lies cradled by serrated peaks. Another, longer, but more rewarding, trail (two hours' walk one way) winds up the **Vallée de Marcadau** to the Refuge Wallon-Marcadau (1866m). The actual Pont d'Espagne is a high arched stone bridge that affords incredible

views over a huge waterfall. It's a couple of minutes' walk from the car park.

From the giant car park at Pont d'Espagne, 6.4km above Cauterets, a combination *télécabine* (cable car) and *télesiege* (chairlift) provides easy access to the trailheads.

Shuttle buses (adult/child return €7.50/4.50) run between Cauterets and the Pont d'Espagne car park every couple of hours in July and August. The car park costs €7 for up to 12 hours.

### Cirque du Lys

HIKING

(cable car adult/child €15/12.50; 🕒 10am-noon & 1.45-5.15pm Jul & Aug) Cauterets' second-most popular hiking area is this mountain amphitheatre, 1850m above sea level. The best route is to catch the cable car and chairlift from Cambasque up to **Crêtes du Lys**, and walk back down the mountain for 1½ hours via the **Lac d'Illhéou**, where there's a handy lakeside *refuge* for lunch. From there it's another 1½ hours back to Cambasque.

The valley is also home to Cauterets' **mountain-bike park** (one-day pass adult/child €17.50/14.50; 🕒 mid-Jul & Aug), with three routes and a drop of 1500m to test your skills.

### Bains du Rocher

SPA

(☎ 05 62 92 14 20; www.bains-rocher.fr; av du Docteur Domer; 2hr pass adult/child €18.50/9.50; 🕒 10am-9pm daily May-Sep, 2-7.15pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.45pm & 2-7.45pm Sat & Sun Oct & Dec-Apr) It wasn't snow that attracted the first tourists to Cauterets – it was the area's hot springs, which bubble up at temperatures between 36°C and 53°C. The waters are rumoured to have numerous healing properties. At this bath complex, you can treat yourself to a sauna, *hammam* (Turkish steam bath) or hot tub, and enjoy the lovely view of the mountains while basking in the pool.

Men need Speedo-style swimwear (sold at the entrance) rather than boardshorts.

## 🛏 Sleeping

### Camping GR10

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 06 20 30 25 85; www.gr10camping.com; rte de Pierrefitte, Quartier Concé; site for 2 adults €19; 🕒 May-Sep; 📍) Around 2.5km north of town on the D920, this is the pick of Cauterets' campgrounds. It's tucked in a flat, grassy site cradled by mountains and forest, and has 69 spacious sites plus great facilities (hook-ups, *pétanque*, tennis courts and heated

bathrooms). It even has its own adventure park with a via ferrata.

**★ Hôtel du Lion d'Or** HOTEL €€  
(☎05 62 92 52 87; [www.liondor.fr](http://www.liondor.fr); 12 rue Riche-lieu; d €84-168; 📍) This country-cottage-style hotel oozes mountain character from every nook and cranny. In business since 1913, it is deliciously eccentric, with charming old rooms in polka-dot pinks, sunny yellows and duck-egg blues, and mountain-themed knick-knacks dotted throughout, from antique sleds to snowshoes.

Breakfast includes homemade honey and jams, and the restaurant serves hearty Pyrenean cuisine.

**Hôtel Le Bois-Joli** HOTEL €€  
(☎05 62 92 53 85; [www.hotel-leboisjoli.com](http://www.hotel-leboisjoli.com); 1 place du Maréchal-Foch; d €150-200; 📍) Above a popular cafe right in the middle of Cauterets, this attractive hotel makes a good central base, with rooms in rich hues of blue, red or green, and mountain views from the upper floors. Breakfast is available in the wood-filled cafe downstairs, but it's a bit steep at €11.50.

## Eating

**Fromagerie du Saloir** DELI €  
(av Leclerc; ☎8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat) Inside the market (Les Halles de Cauterets), cheese lovers can swoon over the seemingly endless varieties of *fromage* as well as liqueurs (including one called Gratte Cul, a traditional wild-rosehip liqueur made in the Pyrenees. It literally translates as 'scratch arse').

**La Ferme Basque** FRENCH €  
(☎05 62 92 54 32; <http://fermebasque.free.fr>; rte de Cambasque; mains €15-31, menus €23-32; ☎12.30-2.30pm & 7-9pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-2.30pm Sun) This country farmhouse just west of Cauterets has a delightfully rustic restaurant specialising in *garbure*, omelettes with foie gras and mushrooms, and other hearty mountain cooking. There's also a shop where you can buy homemade pâté, honey, charcuterie and other goodies. It's a pleasant but steep 1km walk from Cauterets – take the trail beside **Pavillon des Abeilles** ([www.pavillondesabeilles.com](http://www.pavillondesabeilles.com); 23bis av du Mamelon Vert; ☎10.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Wed-Sat) **FREE**.

Call ahead if you plan to dine; otherwise stop in during the afternoon for tea and desserts.

**La Cheeserie** FRENCH €€  
(☎06 42 35 35 34; [www.facebook.com/lacheeserie](http://www.facebook.com/lacheeserie); Galerie Aladin, rue de Belfort; raclette & fondue per person €18-25; ☎2-10pm; 📍) A *fromage*-lover's paradise, La Cheeserie whips up a dozen varieties of *raclettes* (a cheese dish) and fondues, served with delicacies like *magret de canard* (seared duck breast), white asparagus and chorizo. There's a suitably impressive wine list, and on warm days you can enjoy those cheeses at one of the outdoor tables on the lane.

**La Fruitière** FRENCH €€  
(☎05 62 42 13 53; [www.hotellerie-fruiterie.csvss.fr](http://www.hotellerie-fruiterie.csvss.fr); menus lunch €15, dinner from €22; ☎noon-3pm & 7-9pm May-Oct) For dining with a view, nowhere beats the Fruiterie. It sits at the head of the Vallée de Lutour, and has a mountain-view terrace that'll blow your thermal socks off. The food is traditional and delicious: tuck into baked trout or grilled duck with a cream of foie gras, and follow with blueberry tart.

It's 7km south of town along the D920.

Afterwards, walk off your lunch by hiking the easy (three hours return) and attractive trail to the Lac d'Estom, which sits at the base of a great shaft of mountains. The trail starts right outside the restaurant.

You can make the most of the pretty setting by overnighting here (double room with half-board €120).

**La Reine Hortense** FRENCH €€  
(☎06 75 67 01 50; Chemin Rural de la Reine Hortense; menus €21-33; ☎10am-7pm Mar-Oct) Although you can drive here, the best way to arrive at this rustic mountaintop eatery is on foot. Follow the GR10 walking trail (red and white trail markers) east out of the town centre; it's about two hours return. Once there, you can dine on grilled meats, *raclette* and crêpes while enjoying spectacular views from the outdoor tables.

## Information

**Cauterets Tourist Office** (☎05 62 92 50 50; [www.cauterets.com](http://www.cauterets.com); place Maréchal Foch; ☎9am-noon & 2-6pm) A helpful office on the main square.

**Mountain Information Office** (Office de la Montagne; ☎05 62 91 02 83; place Maréchal Foch; ☎8.30am-12.30pm & 5-7.30pm Jun-Sep, 4-6.30pm Fri, 9am-12.30pm & 4-6.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-May) On the main square, this handy office is the best place to pick up trail maps and get tips on scenic walks in the area.

**Pyrenees National Park Visitor Centre** (Maison du Parc National des Pyrénées; ☎ 05 62 92 52 56; place de la Gare; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Sells walking maps and guidebooks, and organises guided walks in summer.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Sadly the last train steamed out of Cauterets' magnificent station in 1947. It now serves as the **bus station** (place de la Gare), with SNCF buses running between Cauterets and Lourdes train station (€8.30, one hour, three to six daily).

## VALLÉE DES GAVES

Gentle and pastoral, the Vallée des Gaves (Valley of the Mountain Streams) extends south from Lourdes to Pierrefitte-Nestalas. Here the valley forks: the narrow, rugged eastern tongue twists via Gavarnie, while the western tongue corkscrews up to Cauterets.

## **o** Sights

### ★ Pic du Midi

VIEWPOINT

(www.picdumidi.com; rue Pierre Lamy de la Chapelle; adult/child €45/27; ☀ 9.30am-7pm Jun-Sep, 10am-5.30pm Oct-Apr) If the Pyrenees has a mustn't-miss view, it's the one from the Pic du Midi de Bigorre (2877m). Once accessible only to mountaineers, since 1878 the Pic du Midi has been home to an important observatory, and on a clear day the sky-top mountain views are out of this world. A cable car climbs to the summit from the nearby ski resort of La Mongie (1800m). Early mornings and late evenings generally get the clearest skies and smallest crowds.

At the top, there are several viewing terraces, all offering a different perspective on the serrated mountain landscape. There's also a museum that gives an overview of the observatory and its development over the years. When hunger strikes, you can grab a snack at the sandwich shop or linger over a meal at the restaurant (*menus* €30 to €36).

If you're visiting in the low season, check the website for closures due to bad weather or periodic closures. In summer, if you're travelling from the western valleys via the Col du Tourmalet, double-check the road is open before you set out – it's usually closed between November and May.

Note that children under the age of three are not permitted because of the risk of altitude-related health problems. Pregnant

women and those with breathing or heart problems are also strongly advised against a visit.

### Le Donjon des Aigles

BIRD SANCTUARY

(☎ 05 62 97 19 59; www.donjon-des-aigles.com; Beaucens; adult/child €15/9.50; ☀ 10am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Apr-Sep) Some 15km south of Lourdes, in the spectacular surroundings of the 11th-century Château de Beaucens, you can see one of the world's largest collections of birds of prey. Among the taloned residents are bald eagles, fish eagles, horned owls, vultures and a collection of parrots: spectacular flying displays, when giant raptors buzz metres above the heads of spectators, are held at 3.30pm and 5pm (3pm, 4.30pm and 6pm in August).

## **i** Getting There & Away

Public transport is limited. Most visitors arrive in the area by hired vehicle, which gives the freedom to explore the surrounding countryside.

## VALLÉE DE GARONNE

Located in a central swath of the Pyrenees, this picturesque region is home to a few old-fashioned villages, including St-Bertrand de Comminges, which has a famed cathedral. You'll also find one of the most popular ski resorts in the Pyrenees, which doubles as a gateway to fantastic trekking in the summer.

## Bagnères de Luchon

POP 2400 / ELEV 630M

Bagnères de Luchon (or simply Luchon) is a trim little town of gracious 19th-century buildings, expanded to accommodate the *curistes* who came to take the waters at its splendid spa. It's now one of the Pyrenees' most popular ski areas, with the challenging runs of Superbagnères right on its doorstep. There are also some fine walks in the area – including some that leave right from town.

## **+** Activities

### Thermes de Luchon

BATHHOUSE

(☎ 05 61 94 52 52; www.thermes-luchon.fr; cours des Quinconces; ☀ 7.20am-12.15pm year-round & 3-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Dec-Feb) You can't leave Luchon without visiting the *vaporarium* of Thermes de Luchon. It's said to be the only natural *hammam* in Europe.

The experience takes place amid 160m of underground rock-walled corridors where you can sit on (admittedly uncomfortable) benches and breathe in the scented, steamy air. Afterwards, dunk yourself in the warm-water pool, naturally heated to 34°C, then repeat.

### Superbagnères

SKIING

(☎05 61 79 21 21; www.luchon-superbagneres.com; rue de Superbagnères; adult/child one-way €7.80/5.90; ☀ski lifts 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Jul & Aug, 1.30-6pm weekends May-Jun & Sep, 8.45am-6pm or 7pm in winter) Luchon's *télécabine* (ski lift) whisks you up to the mountain plateau known as Superbagnères (1860m), the starting point for the area's winter ski-runs (day pass adult/child €35.50/26.50) and summer walking trails. The tourist office has lots of information on possible routes, and sells maps and guides.



### Sleeping & Eating

This mountain town is a fine spot to try Pyrenean dishes like *garbure* as well as classic French bistro fare. The best place to browse for a meal is along restaurant-lined *allée d'Etigny*.

### Villa d'Alti

HOTEL €€

(☎05 61 79 75 54; www.villadalti.com; 3 ave Jacques Barrau; dm/s/d from €30/35/65; 📺🚰) Set in a former convent in the southern part of town, this large 27-room hotel has bright, generally spacious rooms (but tiny bathrooms) with wide plank floors and fine views over the surrounding greenery. There are also a few dorm rooms and some compact singles that are fine value for budget travellers.

### ★ Le Castel de la Pique

HOTEL €€

(☎05 61 88 43 66; www.castel-pique.fr; 31 cours des Quinconces; s/d €80/90; 📺🚰) There's a bit of storybook charm to this hotel, with its château corner-turrets and 19th-century façade. Once inside, the lovely rooms don't disappoint, with wood floors, mantelpieces and French windows opening onto decorative balconies: mountain views are practically universal. Owner Alain is a character, and a mine of local knowledge. All in all, it's a bargain – especially with breakfast at a well-priced €8.60.

### Covered Market

MARKET €

(rue du Docteur Germès; ☀8am-1pm daily Apr-Oct, Wed & Sat Nov-Mar) Luchon's covered market was established in 1897 and is still going strong.

### L'Heptaméron des Gourmets

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎07 62 14 50 64; www.heptamerondesgourmets.com; 2 bd Charles de Gaulle; 7-course menu €70, with wines €110; ☀7-10.30pm Tue-Sat) This swish restaurant is the address for traditional French fine dining. Start with an apéritif in the salon, with its book-lined shelves and leather armchairs, then graduate to the kitschy conservatory for rich cuisine drowned in creamy sauces and truffle butters. Reserve ahead.

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎05 61 79 21 21; www.luchon.com; 18 allée d'Etigny; ☀9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun; 📺) Helpful office with loads of info on activities in the surrounding area. On Luchon's main restaurant- and shop-lined strip.

### i Getting There & Away

Trains run between Luchon and Montréjeau (€7.90, 50 minutes, five to eight daily), which has frequent connections to Toulouse (€18.80, 70 minutes) and Pau (€2.40, 1½ hours).

## St-Bertrand de Comminges

POP 244 / ELEV 520M

On an isolated hillock, St-Bertrand and its Cathédrale Ste-Marie loom over the Garonne Valley and the much-pillaged remains of the Gallo-Roman town of Lugdunum Convenarum. Lush hillsides surround the tiny village, and its narrow lanes are lined with photogenic buildings from the 15th and 16th centuries.

The ancient Roman settlement was founded by the Roman general Pompée around 72 BCE, and there are a few modest remains from this ancient time located a short stroll from the cathedral. By the 2nd century CE, the town had a population of at least 10,000 inhabitants. The boom days didn't last, however, and the city was sacked by Vandals in 409 and subsequently abandoned. The town saw new life in the 12th century when the cathedral was built, and it became an important stop on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela.

St-Bertrand de Comminges is located 35km north of Bagnères de Luchon, reachable by taking D125N and N125N.

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

## EUROPE'S LARGEST CAVE SYSTEM

**Lombrives** (☎06 70 74 32 80; <http://grottedelombrives.com>; off N20, Ussat-les-Bains; standard tour adult/child €12/8; ☀9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Jun & Sep, 2-5pm May & Oct) Twenty-two kilometres northwest of Ax-les-Thermes on the N20 near Ussat-les-Bains, Europe's largest cave system burrows its way through the soft limestone rock beneath the Pyrenees' peaks. Guided tours take in more than 200 stalactite-lined tunnels, grottoes and galleries, including a sandy expanse known as the Sahara Desert, and limestone columns variously resembling a mammoth, a wizard and the Virgin Mary.

Standard tours last two hours, but longer 'randonnée spéléologique' expeditions are available for the adventurous (and nonclaustrophobic).

## VALLÉE DE L'ARIEGE

On the eastern side of the French Pyrenees, the sleepy Vallée de l'Ariège is awash with prehistoric interest: it's home to some of Europe's most impressive underground rivers and subterranean caverns, many of which are daubed with cave paintings left behind by prehistoric people.

The most useful bases are Foix, former seat of the Comtes de Toulouse, and Mirepoix, a well-preserved *bastide*.

## 📍 Sights

## Château de Foix

CHATEAU

(☎05 61 05 10 10; rue du Rocher; adult/child €11.50/8; ☀9am-6pm summer, shorter hours rest of year) The Ariège's most unmistakable landmark is Foix' triple-towered castle, the stronghold of the powerful Comtes de Foix. Built in the 10th century, it survived as their seat of power throughout the medieval era and served as a prison from the 16th century onwards. The castle is approached via a cobbled causeway from the old town. The view from the battlements is wonderful and a recent refurbishment has spruced up the displays on medieval life.

## Rivière Souterraine de Labouiche

RIVER

(☎05 61 65 04 11; [www.labouiche.com](http://www.labouiche.com); Baulou; adult/child €11.40/9.40; ☀10-11am & 2-4.30pm

Apr-Jun & Sep, 9.30am-5pm Jul & Aug, 2-4pm Tue-Fri, 10-11am & 2-4.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-mid-Nov) Deep beneath the village of Labouiche, 6km northwest of Foix, flows Europe's longest navigable underground river. Discovered in 1908 by a local doctor, it's been open to the public since 1938. Barge trips lasting 75 minutes run for about 1.5km along its underground course, with guides pulling the boats along by ropes attached to the ceiling, and walkways entering more caverns and eerie chambers.

The highlight of the visit is saved for the end: a clattering waterfall known as the **Cascade Salette**, which tumbles into a sparkling turquoise pool. Depending on rainfall, the waterfall's speed can vary anywhere from 100L to 1500L per second. It's all quite touristy, but the kids are bound to love it.

Best of all on a blazing summer's day, the caves hover at a cool constant temperature of 13°C.

## Grotte du Mas d'Azil

CAVE, MUSEUM

(☎05 61 05 10 10; [www.sites-touristiques-ariège.fr](http://www.sites-touristiques-ariège.fr); ave de la Grotte/D119, Le Mas-d'Azil; adult/child €9/5.50; ☀cave tours 10.15am-4.45pm mid-Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 9.45am-7pm Jul & Aug, 11.15am-4.30pm mid-Feb-mid-Apr) Twenty-five kilometres northwest of Foix, near Le Mas d'Azil, this rock shelter is famous for its rich finds of prehistoric tools. Visits are by guided tour, which take you through underground galleries and describe the lives of those who lived here as well as some of the artefacts found here by archaeologists over the years. Note that you won't see any original paintings here.

The ticket also includes entry to the **Musée de la Préhistoire** (☎05 61 69 99 90; Grand Rue, Le Mas d'Azil; adult/child €4.50/2, combo ticket incl cave tour €9/5.50; ☀9.30am-8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 1-6pm Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct) in the town of Mas d'Azil (1km north of the cave entrance). English-language tours are available once or twice per day from June to October. Call or go online to reserve a spot. Note that the entrance to the cave is right on the D119 in a vehicular tunnel dug through the mountain. Parking is just south of the tunnel entrance; a pedestrian walkway runs parallel to the road.

## Les Forges de Pyrène

MUSEUM

(☎05 34 09 30 60; [www.forges-de-pyrene.com](http://www.forges-de-pyrene.com); rte de Paris, Montgailhard; adult/child €10.20/6.80; ☀10am-6pm Tue-Sat Jul-Oct; 🚶 In



Montgailhard, 4.5km south of Foix, this 'living museum' explores Ariège folk traditions, with live displays of ancient trades such as blacksmithing, shoe-making, bread-baking, tanning and thatching.

### Parc de la Préhistoire

MUSEUM

(☎05 61 05 10 10; Tarascon-sur-Ariège; adult/child €11.50/8; ☀10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Sep, Oct & Apr-Jun) Eighteen kilometres south of Foix, near Tarascon-sur-Ariège, this excellent museum-park provides a useful primer on the area's prehistoric past. The centrepiece is the **Grand Atelier**, which uses film, projections and an audiovisual commentary to explain the story of human settlement. There are also many animal skeletons, including a cave bear and a mammoth, as well as a full-scale reproduction of the Salon Noir in the Grotte de Niaux (p722).

Outside you can follow a trail around the park's grounds, explore a selection of prehistoric tents and learn how to use an ancient spear-thrower.

### Château de Montségur

CHATEAU

(www.montsegur.fr; Montségur; adult/child Jul & Aug €6.50/3.50, other times €5.50/3; ☀9am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-5pm Mar & Oct, 11am-4pm Nov-Dec & Feb) It's a steep 20-minute climb to the ruins of this dramatically sited hilltop fortress, 32km east of Foix (and don't forget to bring your own water), but the views over the countryside make it a real highlight of Ariège. It's the westernmost of the string of Cathar castles stretching across into Languedoc; the original castle was razed to rubble after the siege, and the present-day ruins largely date from the 17th century.

It was here, in 1242, that the Cathars suffered their heaviest defeat; the castle fell after a gruelling nine-month siege, and 220 of the defenders were burnt alive when they refused to renounce their faith. A local legend claims that the Holy Grail was smuggled out of the castle in the days before the final battle. Tickets also grant admission to the historical museum in the nearby village of Montségur.

### Musée de Montségur

MUSEUM

(www.montsegur.fr; adult/child €2.50/1.50, combo ticket to Château de Montségur €6.50/3.50; ☀2-5pm Mar, to 6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-noon & 1-6.30pm Jul & Aug, closed Mon) Tucked into the sleepy village of Montségur, this small museum contains a collection of Cathar relics, models of siege weapons and visual displays

of what the town's castrum would have looked like during its glory days in 1240 (rather impressive). There's also a pair of skeletons found buried together who were likely slain during the town's destruction in 1244.

### Sleeping & Eating

There are plenty of appealing lodging options scattered around the Ariège valley. Aside from pretty rural inns, you'll also find good-value guesthouses in Foix, and atmospheric hotels in the heart-tuggingly pretty village of Mirepoix, about 25km to the northeast.

### Foix

#### La Ciboulette

B&amp;B €

(☎05 61 01 10 88; www.laciboulette.net; rte St Pierre-de-Rivière, Lieu-Dit La Rochelle; s €49-69, d €64-89, f €109) In a peaceful setting some 3km west of Foix, this small family-run guesthouse has several attractive rooms decorated with artwork and elegant furnishings. Views over the mountains add to the charm. Don't miss a meal of creatively prepared local dishes in the excellent restaurant on-site (open Thursdays to Mondays, mains €14.50 to €18.50).

#### Hôtel Restaurant Lons

HOTEL €

(☎05 34 09 28 00; www.hotel-lons-foix.com; 6 place Dutilh; d €67-94; ☀☎) One of the better hotels in Foix, this is an old-fashioned affair with rambling corridors and functional but comfy rooms, some of which look onto the river, while the others face Foix' shady streets. The riverside restaurant offers good-value regional dishes (*menus* €23 to €36).

#### Guarana

ITALIAN €€

(☎06 05 89 12 99; 3 rue de la Faurie; mains €14-25, menu €34,90; ☀noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Welcoming and unfussy restaurant serving an unexpected mix of well-presented Italian, South American and French flavours, which are often all in one intriguing bundle. Expect things like octopus with mussels and pasta or thick Argentinian-style steaks and delicious salads.

#### Le Jeu de l'Oie

FRENCH €€

(☎05 61 02 69 39; 17 rue Lafaurie; menus €18-26; ☀noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Tucked along one of Foix' quiet back lanes, Le Jeu de l'Oie serves satisfying plates of *confit de canard* (duck confit) and cassoulet as well as roasted

salmon with a chorizo crust and roasted red peppers stuffed with goat's cheese. It has a warm, easy-going atmosphere and excellent-value *menus*.

## Mirepoix

### Les Minotiers

HOTEL €

(☎ 05 61 69 37 36; www.hotelmirepoix.com; ave Maréchal Foch; s/d from €55/64;   ) This affordable hotel in Mirepoix has clean and simple rooms with big windows, just a short stroll to the village centre. Though the design is fairly generic, it's hard to beat the prices. The on-site restaurant (*menus* €17 to €38) earns high marks for its Pyrenees-inspired fare (try the pastry-covered lamb with morels).

### Maison des Consuls

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 61 68 81 81; www.maisondesconsuls.com; 6 place du Maréchal Leclerc; d €95-140;  ) This attractive hotel, with an old wooden façade, has themed all its rooms after notable figures from Mirepoix' past. The best ones are the Louis XVI-style Monseigneur room, with windows overlooking the main square, and the Dame-Louise room, decorated in Louis XIII-style, with a four-poster bed and a superb view over the cathedral.

The more modern Voyageur room has its own small balcony (but twin beds).

## Elsewhere

### Auberge les Myrtilles

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 05 61 65 16 46; www.auberge-les-myrtilles.com; Col des Marrous, Le Bosc; d €70-110;   )

You'll feel rather like you're staying in the Canadian wilderness here, with its timber-framed chalet cabins and forested hillside setting. It's a wonderful place to settle yourself: despite the rustic style, there are lots of luxury spoils, including a covered swimming pool with a knockout view, a Swedish-style sauna and, of course, mountain panoramas on every side. It's about 20km west of Foix on the D17.

The restaurant serves good, though fairly pricey, local cuisine.

## ★ Domaine de Terrac

GUESTHOUSE €€

(☎ 05 61 96 39 60; www.domainedeterrac.com; Lieu-Dit Terrac, Rimont; d incl breakfast €95-125;  ) Awaken to the sound of birdsong in the valley from this hillside guesthouse 30km west of Foix. Set in a beautifully restored 200-year-old farmhouse, the Domaine de Terrac has five sunny rooms set with quality furnishings and polished wood floors (two rooms also have private balconies). The Welsh-Québécois owners make guests feel right at home and serve excellent meals. The sauna and hot tub are nice extras.

## Château de Beauregard


HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 61 66 66 64; www.chateaubeauregard.net; av de la Résistance, St-Girons; d €100-1200, ste €200-220, d incl half-board €184-300;   ) In St-Girons, halfway between St-Gaudens and Foix along the D117, this grand château with pointy roof turrets is surrounded by 2.5 hectares of beautiful gardens and has grand rooms named after writers (some have their

## DON'T MISS

### PREHISTORIC PAINTERS OF THE PYRENEES

**Grotte de Niaux** (☎ 05 61 05 10 10; www.sites-touristiques-ariege.fr; adult/child €14/10;

 tours hourly 10.15am-4.15pm, extra tours in summer) Most people know about the prehistoric artworks of the Dordogne, but far fewer realise that ancient painters left their mark in caves all across the Pyrenees. Halfway up a mountainside about 12km south of Foix, the Grotte de Niaux is the most impressive, with a fabulous gallery of bison, horses and ibex adorning a vast subterranean chamber called the **Salon Noir**. There's also one tiny depiction of a weasel – the only cave painting of the animal yet found.

The Salon Noir is reached via an 800m underground trek through pitch darkness. To preserve the paintings, there's no lighting inside the cave, so you'll be given a torch as you enter. On the way, look out for graffiti left by previous visitors, some of which dates back to the 17th century.

The cave can only be visited with a guide. From April to June and in September and October there's usually one English-language tour a day at 1.30pm. In July and August, English-language tours typically happen at 9.45am and 12.15pm. Visitor numbers are limited, so call or go online to reserve a place. Photos are prohibited within the cave and it's not recommended for children under six years of age.

## DON'T MISS

## SATURDAY SHOPPING SPREE

**Marché de St-Girons** (rue du Champ de Mars, St-Girons; ☀ 8am-1pm Sat) In the village of St-Girons, a massive market spreads along the riverbank every Saturday throughout the year. If you're in the area, it's well worth fitting it into your itinerary. You'll find beautiful fruits and vegetables, bakery items, cheeses, smoked meats, freshly baked tarts, craft beers and more – nearly all of which is produced in the surrounding region.

Among the food stalls you'll find delicious *galettes* (savoury buckwheat crêpes), meaty sandwiches, pizzas, crêpes and Asian-style dumplings. Edibles aside, the market also has antiques, crafts, clothes, sheepskins, natural beauty products, baskets, books, records and plenty of other finds.

bathrooms hidden in the castle's corner towers). There's also a pool, spa and a restaurant (*menus* €30 to €54) serving traditional Gascon meals.

★ **L'Abbaye de Camon**

B&amp;B €€€

(☎ 05 61 60 31 23; [www.chateaudecamon.com](http://www.chateaudecamon.com); 3 place Philippe de Lévis, Camon; d €145-200; ☀ Apr-Oct; 📶 📺 📺) Wow – what a spot. Founded as a Benedictine abbey in the 12th century, this

is now possibly the poshest B&B anywhere in the Pyrenees. The building's decor puts most châteaux to shame, with vaulted archways, winding staircases, a Renaissance-style drawing room, ravishing gardens and a lovely pool – plus five regal rooms oozing antique grandeur. It's around 13km southeast of Mirepoix.

i **Information**

Information on the main sights in the Vallée de l'Ariège is available on the Sites Touristiques Ariège ([www.sites-touristiques-ariège.fr](http://www.sites-touristiques-ariège.fr)) website. If you're visiting several sights, it's worth picking up the free **Pass Multi-Sites** at the first place you visit, which gives discounts at all the subsequent places you go to.

**Foix Tourist Office** (☎ 05 61 65 12 12; [www.tourisme-foix-varilhes.fr](http://www.tourisme-foix-varilhes.fr); 29 rue Delcassé; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sun mid-Jun-Aug)

**Mirepoix Tourist Office** (☎ 05 61 68 83 76; [www.tourisme-mirepoix.com](http://www.tourisme-mirepoix.com); place Maréchal Leclerc; ☀ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sun Jul-Aug, 9.15am-12.15pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun; 📶)

i **Getting There & Away**

Regular trains connect Toulouse and Foix (€15.60, 1¼ hours). You'll need your own wheels, however, if you want to properly explore the villages and scenic back roads of the Ariège.

One or two daily runs of bus 950 go between Mirepoix and Pamiers train station (€6, 30 minutes).

## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

837,300

### DÉPARTEMENTS

Tarn-et-Garonne,  
Tarn, Gers

### BEST GIANT AUTOMATON

Minotaur (p731)

### BEST ART MUSEUM

Musée Ingres  
Bourdelle (p739)

### BEST ARMAGNAC BRANDY

Château de Monluc  
(p741)



### WHEN TO GO

#### Feb

Paint the town purple  
at Toulouse's violet  
festival.

#### May–Aug

Prime time for Arma-  
gnac distillery and  
vineyard tours; music  
festivals ramp up.

#### Sep

Pleasant sunshine  
and thinner crowds;  
Les Quatre-Cent  
Coups carnival kicks  
off in Montauban.







## Toulouse Area

**G**astronomy and good living underpin this sun-kissed corner of southwestern France, dappled with farms, vineyards and flower-sprinkled meadows. Tables groan under hefty dishes like *cassoulet* and confit duck, savoured with complex Gaillac wines and Armagnac digestifs. Historic Toulouse is a booming hi-tech metropolis, famed for aerospace industries including Airbus. But more typical of the region are sleepy *bastides* (fortified market towns), octagonal towered ancient churches and widespread *pigeonniers* – stilted dovecotes originally built to collect droppings for fertilizer. Slicing through it all is the Canal du Midi, a daring 17th-century feat of engineering.

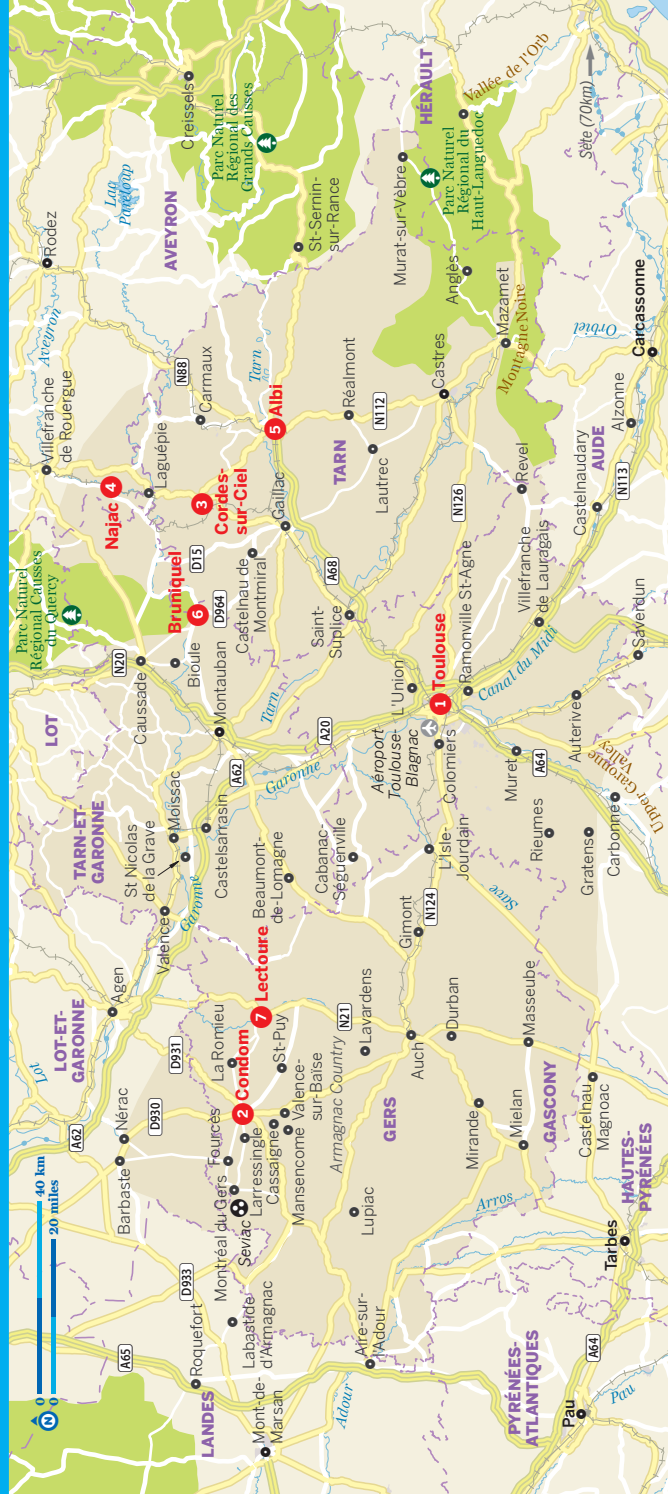
### INCLUDES

Toulouse . . . . .	727	Najac . . . . .	739
Tarn . . . . .	735	Montauban . . . . .	739
Castres . . . . .	735	Armagnac . . . . .	740
Albi . . . . .	735	Condom & Around . .	740
Cordes-sur-Ciel . . . .	738	Lectoure . . . . .	742
		Auch . . . . .	742



## Toulouse Highlights

- 1 Aerescopia** (p730)  
Getting aboard a real Concorde in one of the world's best museums of aeronautics.
- 2 Condom** (p740)  
Sampling Armagnac brandy in scenic, centuries-old distilleries.
- 3 Cordes-sur-Ciel** (p738)  
Strutting the lofty ramparts of a fortified town in the clouds.
- 4 Najac** (p739) Framing perfect castle views between sweeps of medieval houses.
- 5 Albi** (p735) Weaving through medieval laneways to Albi's gargantuan cathedral.
- 6 Bruniquel** (p735)  
Driving between Gaillac and Montauban through this and other impossibly quaint villages.
- 7 Lectoure** (p742)  
Seeking bric-a-brac bargains in this atmospheric town of crafts folk and antique shops.



## TOULOUSE

POP 479,600

Ochre rooftops and blushing brick churches earned Toulouse the nickname 'La Ville Rose' (The Pink City). Its enchanting Vieux Quartier (Old Quarter) is an intriguing jumble of coral-coloured shopfronts and mansions, but beyond, the city sprawls into France's fourth-largest metropolis. It's an animated, hectic place with one of the largest universities outside Paris and a rapidly expanding raft of high-tech and aeronautical industries. Whether in teeming food markets, *salons de thé* or the thick of its smouldering jazz, techno and rock scenes, Toulouse is a place that lives life to the full.

### History

Then known as Tolosa, Toulouse was one of Europe's biggest cities in Roman times. It became the Visigoth capital from 418 CE, ruling most of what is now Spain and southwest France. Over the 9th century, the Counts of Toulouse rose to become southern France's greatest feudal dynasty until toppled by the Albigensian Crusade in the early 13th century. However, since 1152, the city had effectively been ruled by the 'Capitouls', representative magistrates who gave Toulouse an unusual degree of autonomy right up until the French Revolution. Economically, the city was ruined in the Hundred Years' War but rebounded in the 16th century with trade in woad, a then-valuable blue vegetable dye. During WWI, with Paris under threat from German attack, France moved many critical industries to the southwest, also storing many of the capital's great arts treasures in Toulouse's Couvent des Jacobins. After the war, Toulouse remained a centre for chemical and aviation industries.

### Sights & Activities

Central Toulouse covers a large area but, as much is pedestrianised, it's best explored on foot or by bicycle. For the suburban hi-tech sites, however, allow plenty of access time by public transport.

Seasonal **pleasure cruises** ([www.bateaux-toulousains.com](http://www.bateaux-toulousains.com); adult/child from €12/6; ☺ Mar-Oct; 🚿) glide along the Garonne (from the quai de la Daurade) and the Canal du Midi (from Port St Sauveur or Port d'Embouchure). Pre-booking is wise in high summer.

### ★ Capitole

ARCHITECTURE

(📍 05 61 22 34 12; place du Capitole; ☺ 10am-6.30pm Sun-Fri, closed during official functions)

**FREE** The city hall is a neoclassical masterpiece built from the 1750s onwards, though earlier versions had hosted Toulouse's 'Capitouls' (governing magistrates) since 1190. The building's main (eastern) façade combines pink brick with gleaming white columns. The interior is a veritable gallery of fine art by excellent local artists: pre-Raphaelite-style medieval scenes on the grand stairway; a big hall by pointillist Henri Martin; and key moments of city history depicted in the spectacular late-19th-century **Salle des Illustres** (Hall of the Illustrious).

The Capitole faces Toulouse's main square, an architecturally cohesive festival of red brick with café tables spilling forth from distinctive arcades.

### ★ Basilique St-Sernin

CHURCH

([www.basilique-saint-sernin.fr](http://www.basilique-saint-sernin.fr); place St-Sernin; ☺ cathedral 8.30am-7pm Jun-Sep, to 6pm Oct-May, ambulatory 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm or 6pm mid-summer)

**FREE** A spire tops the five-staged, octagonal tower of Toulouse's finest building; one of the most delightful Romanesque churches anywhere. Built between 1070 and 1300, the soaring nave is beautifully proportioned with double side-aisles and lit with long-hanging chandeliers. It focusses attention on the gilded altarpiece above the tomb of St Sernin (aka St Saturnin), Toulouse's first bishop who met a gruesome end when pagan priests tied him to a bull in 257 CE.

### Couvent des Jacobins

CHURCH, MONASTERY

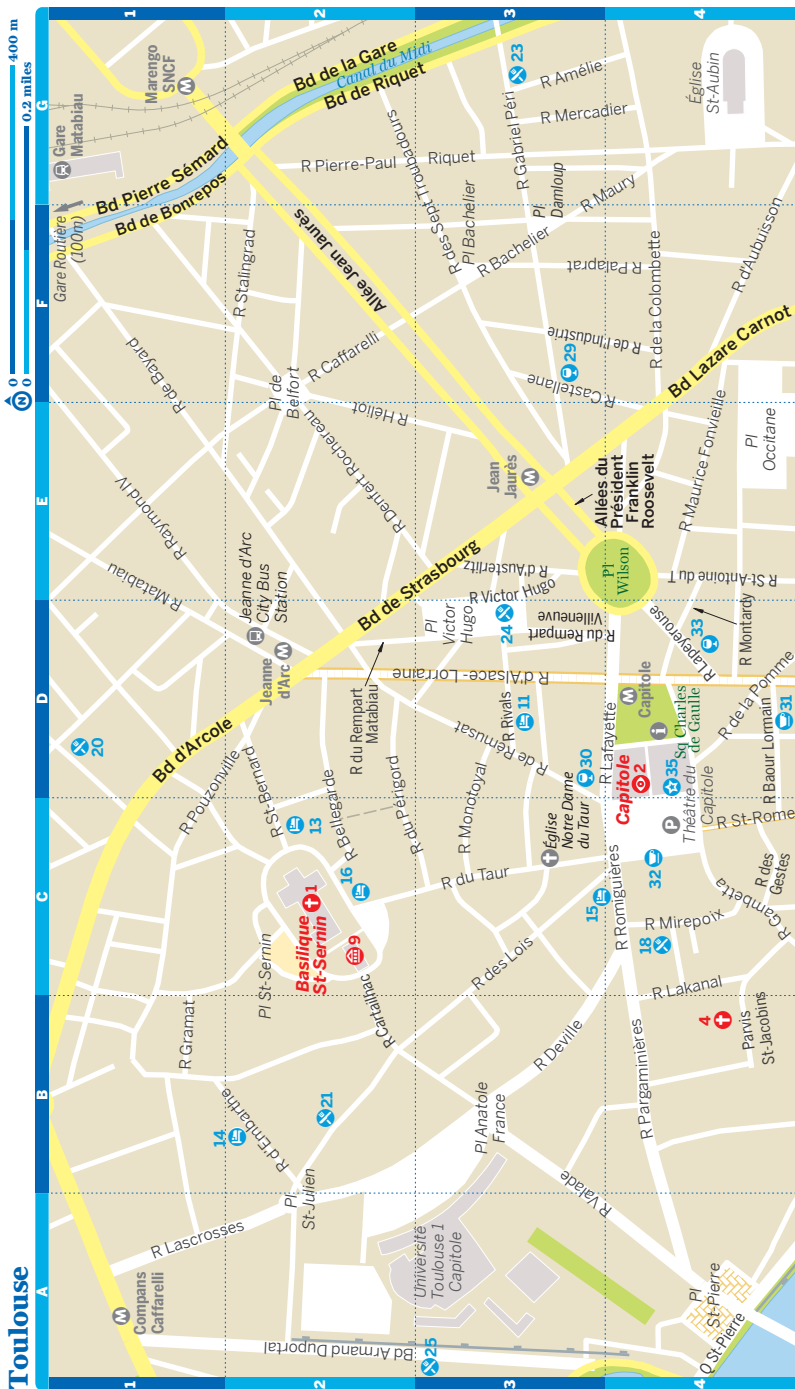
(📍 05 61 22 23 82; [www.jacobins.toulouse.fr](http://www.jacobins.toulouse.fr); rue Lakanal; church/cloister free/€5; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Mother church of the Dominican order, the 13th- to 14th-century Église des Jacobins looks domineeringly oppressive from outside. Within, however, it's a light-suffused delight with palm-vaulted central columns towering above the simply presented holy relics of the great spiritual thinker, St Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). You'll need a ticket to access the delightful cloister, the echoing Salle Capitulaire and the Chapelle St-Antonin with its great ceiling frescoes.

### Musée des Augustins

GALLERY

([www.augustins.org](http://www.augustins.org); 21 rue de Metz; adult/child €5/free; ☺ 10am-6pm Thu-Mon, to 9pm Wed) Within a former Augustinian monastery, this fine-arts collection spans nearly two millennia from the Roman era to the early 20th

## TOULOUSE AREA





## Toulouse

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Basilique St-Sernin ..... C2  
2 Capitole ..... D4

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Cathédrale de St-Étienne ..... F6  
4 Couvent des Jacobins ..... B4  
5 Fondation Bemberg ..... C5  
6 Jardin des Plantes ..... F8  
7 Musée des Augustins ..... D5  
8 Musée Paul-Dupuy ..... D7  
9 Musée St-Raymond ..... C2

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 10 Les Bateaux Toulousains ..... G8

### 📍 Sleeping

- 11 Hôtel Albert 1er ..... D3  
12 Hôtel des Beaux Arts ..... B6  
13 Hôtel St-Sernin ..... C2  
14 La Petite Auberge de St-Sernin ..... B2  
15 Le Grand Balcon ..... C3  
16 Villa du Taur ..... C2

### 🍴 Eating

- 17 A Taula ..... C5  
18 Au Gascon ..... C4  
19 La Faim des Haricots ..... D5  
20 La Pente Douce ..... D1  
21 La Petite Île ..... B2  
22 Le Genty Magre ..... D5  
23 L'Oncle Pom ..... G3  
24 Marché Victor Hugo ..... D3  
25 Michel Sarran ..... A3  
26 Py-r ..... C6  
27 Une Table à Deux ..... D7

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 28 Au Père Louis ..... D5  
29 Connexion Café ..... F3  
30 Fat Cat ..... D3  
31 Flower's Café ..... D4  
32 Le Florida ..... C4  
33 Ma Biche sur le Toit ..... D4  
34 N°5 Wine Bar ..... C5

### 🎭 Entertainment

- 35 Théâtre du Capitole ..... D4

century. Echoing stairwells and high-vaulted chambers are part of the fun, but works by Toulouse-Lautrec and Monet are particular draws. Don't miss the gurning gargoyles in the 14th-century **cloister gardens**.

### Fondation Bemberg

MUSEUM

(☎05 61 12 06 89; [www.fondation-bemberg.fr](http://www.fondation-bemberg.fr); place d'Assézat; adult/under 26yr €8/5; 🕒10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Sun, to 8.30pm Thu) Welcome to the Hôtel d'Assézat, Toulouse's most impressive 16th-century Renaissance mansion. On the 1st floor, velvet-walled rooms are packed with period furniture while the 2nd-floor gallery has sketches by Picasso and Toulouse-Lautrec, plus minor works by Pissarro, Sisley and Egon Schiele.

### Cathédrale de St-Étienne

CATHEDRAL

(place St-Étienne; 🕒8am-7pm Mon-Sat, from 9am Sun) Culminating in a fabulously carved altarpiece, the cathedral's wide, vaulted choir (1275-1592) is flanked by soaring twin side-aisles in classic Gothic style. That's thrust incongruously together with a heavy nave barely half the width and considerably older (except for the west portal and rose window, which came later). The result is a fascinating sense of architectural schizophrenia.

### Musée St-Raymond

MUSEUM

(☎05 61 22 31 44; [www.saintraymond.toulouse.fr](http://www.saintraymond.toulouse.fr); 1 place St-Sernin; adult/child €5/free; 🕒10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Originally a refuge for the poor, this

historic brick building beside the Basilique St-Sernin is an archaeological museum packed with an astonishingly rich collection of Roman sculpture and ancient sarcophagi.

### Musée Paul-Dupuy

MUSEUM

(☎05 31 22 95 40; [www.ampdupuy.fr](http://www.ampdupuy.fr); 13 rue de la Pléau; adult/child €5/free; 🕒10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Inside a 17th-century mansion, this offbeat treasure trove includes religious art, historical timepieces and antique medical tools that make you grimly ponder the prospect of being sliced open before the advent of modern medicine.

### Jardin des Plantes

PARK

(allée Frédéric Mistral; 🕒7.45am-9pm summer, to 6pm winter) **FREE** A refreshing place to picnic amid lawns and labelled trees, this 7-hectare park is accessed beside the city's extensive natural history museum ([www.museum.toulouse.fr](http://www.museum.toulouse.fr)) or via footbridges from the circular fountain garden 'Grand Rond'.

## 📍 Blagnac

At the northern end of Toulouse's airport highway (junction 902.3), the Airbus complex is almost a town of its own.

### ★ Aeroscopia

MUSEUM

(☎05 34 39 42 00; [www.musee-aeroscopia.fr](http://www.musee-aeroscopia.fr); allée André Turcat; adult/child €14/11; 🕒9.30am-6pm, closed early Jan; 📍; 🚗 T1 to Beauzelle) Centred



upon a vast hangar containing around 20 airplanes, this magnificent aviation museum gives a thorough, interactive introduction to the development of aeronautical design (in English) and walks you through a Concorde and an A330B with glass panels that reveal the workings beneath. A gigantic A380 is parked outside.

Hands-on games include designing your own airplane livery and flying an A380 simulator (€4 extra, coins-in-slot). To visit parts of the nearby vast Airbus factory, book online for special **tours** ([www.manatour.fr](http://www.manatour.fr); Blagnac; tours adult/child €15.50/13; ☺ Mon-Sat by reservation) (at least two days ahead for non-EU citizens). Bring ID.

## ◉ Montaudran

Southeast of central Toulouse (25 minutes on bus 23 from **Jeanne d'Arc**), the city's former airport site is a vast reconstruction zone. Even if you don't visit the museums here, do watch the amazing 9m-tall **mechanical Minotaur** take a lumbering walk-about. If you want to ride on the creature's back, check timings with the Halle de la Machine, which sells tickets.

### Halle de la Machine

MUSEUM

(☎05 32 10 89 07; [www.halldelamachine.fr/en](http://www.halldelamachine.fr/en); 3 av de l'Aérodrome de Montaudran; adult/child €9/4.50, with Minotaur ride €16/8; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, Minotaur ride 2.15pm or 3pm; ♿; 📄 23 to Montaudran Gare) Python-fantasy creations of a Terry Gilliam-esque mind have become working 3D creatures and are now the phantasmagorical inmates of this mechanical menagerie. Blackboards list timings for the various experiences.

### L'Envol des Pionniers

MUSEUM

([www.lenvol-des-pionniers.com](http://www.lenvol-des-pionniers.com); 6 rue Jacqueline Auriol; adult/child €8/5; ☺ 1-6pm Tue-Sun, from 10am Jul-Aug; ♿; 📄 23) This flashy new multilingual museum uses games, films and a reconstructed Samson 2A2 biplane to illustrate Toulouse's role in developing the world's first airmail service (1918). One early pilot was *Petit Prince* author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-44), whose aviator gloves are displayed. Book on arrival for simulator rides (€5 extra).

## 🌸 Festivals & Events

### Fête de la Violette

CULTURAL

(☺ early Feb) Since the 19th century, street parades and accompanying revelry have been

painting the town purple in a celebration of Toulouse's favourite flower. Everything from sweet and savoury food to liqueurs and wines will have the unmistakable scent of violet. Dress accordingly.

## 🛏 Sleeping

Midweek, business hotels are often full, but rates drop at weekends. If driving, ask ahead about reduced-cost overnight parking deals.

### La Petite Auberge de St-Sernin

HOSTEL €

(☎07 60 88 17 17; [www.lapetiteaubergedesaintsernin.com](http://www.lapetiteaubergedesaintsernin.com); 17 rue d'Embarthe; dm €24.25; ☺ reception 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-9pm; ♿) A minute's walk from the Basilique St-Sernin, this well-organised backpacker hostel has lockers, kitchenettes and creaky bunks in each of the en-suite dorm rooms. Unsophisticated sitting areas allow pre-midnight socialising. Sheets provided; bring a towel.

### ★ Villa du Taur

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎05 34 25 28 82; [www.villadutaur.com](http://www.villadutaur.com); 62 rue du Taur; d €89-159; ♿) This hip yet super-friendly hotel has stylishly comfortable guest rooms that double as mini galleries, with the artworks available for sale – even the Banksy vinyls. Showers are fashioned like luxury cages and you get an in-room Illy coffee maker.

## DON'T MISS

### SPACE TRIP

#### Cité de l'Espace (☎05 67 22 23 24;

[www.cite-espace.com](http://www.cite-espace.com); av Jean Gonord; adult €21-26, child €16-19.50; ☺ 10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, to 5pm or 6pm rest of year, closed Mon in Feb, Mar & Sep-Dec, closed Jan; ♿) The huge space museum on Toulouse's eastern outskirts offers a full day of experiences, but do look carefully at the daily updated info-sheet which lists a relatively complex timetable of activities, including planetarium and stellarium tours and an Apollo mission simulator. There are four floors of other exhibits on space exploration and a chance to get aboard a Mir space station, just one of several replica spacecraft on show in the central 'garden'.

Queues can be long: consider booking online in peak season. Bus 37 takes around 20 minutes from metro stations Ramonville and Joliment, every 20/45 minutes on weekdays/Sundays.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

## DUCKING BEANS

Much traditional Gascon cuisine revolves around *confit de canard* (cured duck cooked in its own fat) and Toulouse sausage. Simmer both together in rich, fatty, white-bean stew and you've got *cassoulet*. For classic *cassoulet*, have lunch upstairs above the Marché Victor Hugo (p732) or dinner at unpretentious **Au Gascon** (☎ 05 61 21 67 16; www.augascon.fr; 9 rue des Jacobins; mains €10.50-16; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat; ☺). For the dish cooked by a gourmet chef, hit **Le Genty Magre** (☎ 05 61 21 38 60; www.legentymagre.com; 3 rue Genty Magre; mains €26-30, lunch/dinner menu €28/50; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat, closed lunch Wed).

★ **Le Grand Balcon**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 34 25 44 09; www.grandbalconhotel.com; 8-1 rue Romiguières; d weekend/weekday from €90/140, ste €200-270; ☹ ☺) Moody charcoal-grey corridors lead to understatedly stylish rooms with excellent bedding, cloudscape bed boards, small sitting spaces and Nespresso machines. Corner suites have views right across the place du Capitole.

**Hôtel des Beaux Arts**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 34 45 42 42; www.hoteldesbeauxarts.com; 1 place du Pont Neuf; s/d/ste from €80/99/200; ☹ ☺) The Beaux Arts' riverside brasserie is a brass-and-panelling classic. Its hotel is contrastingly smothered with lashings of pop art that fills the foyer but is less overwhelming in some of the comfortably refurbished guest rooms, many with river views spied between plane trees.

**Hôtel St-Sernin**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 61 21 73 08; www.hotelstsernin.com; 2 rue St-Bernard; s €63-111, d €91-172; ☺ ☺) This tranquil establishment houses 17 soothing and small-but-sleek rooms. Of four that overlook the Basilique St-Sernin, rooms 10 and 20 are best, with floor-to-ceiling windows and tiny balconies. Beware that although there's a lift, it starts one floor up.

**Hôtel Albert 1er**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 61 21 47 49; www.hotel-albert1.com; 8 rue Rivals; s €61-171, d €68-188; ☹ ☺) Primary-coloured furniture sets off grey-toned walls and fish-eye mirrors to give this friendly

little hotel a sense of style and comfort better than you might expect for the price. The economy rooms are pretty small, so consider paying extra for a 14-sq-metre classic or bigger.

 **Eating**

Classic Belle Époque brasseries with street terraces line the western side of place du Capitole. Cosy places for world cuisines cluster in lanes off place de la Daurade, with cheaper versions, snack bars and late-night student grub along rue Pargaminières.

**Taste of Toulouse** (www.tasteoftoulouse.com) has an inspirational blog that's well worth following even if you don't take one of Jessica's well-informed foodie tours.

**Marché Victor Hugo**

MARKET €

(www.marche-victor-hugo.fr; place Victor Hugo; mains €16-20; ☺ market 7am-1.30pm Tue-Sun, restaurants from noon) Hidden at the base of a hideous concrete car park lies Toulouse's marvellous central food market where stall shops groan with tempting regional produce. Upstairs, five tiny serveries turn these fresh ingredients into highly prized luncheons. Arrive before noon and squeeze together with off-duty traders and in-the-know locals at the crowded mass of basic tables.

**L'Oncle Pom**

BISTRO €

(☎ 05 61 54 39 86; www.lonclepom.com; 32 rue Gabriel Péri; menus €13-26, mains €11-16; ☺ noon-1.45pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) In a marvellously whacky twin-levelled setting decked with old TVs, radios and kids' toys, Uncle Pom reverses traditional ordering: first choose your potato recipe, then add a side dish of meat, fish or vegetables. Ingredients are market-fresh or locally sourced.

**La Petite île**

FRENCH €

(☎ 05 61 21 54 31; 39 rue des Salenques; eat-in/takeaway meal €740/6; ☺ noon-3pm Mon-Fri) For a tasty budget lunch, enter beneath the straw parasol and pick one of four generously heaped options celebrating the Franco-Indian flavour combinations of Réunion.

**La Faim des Haricots**

VEGETARIAN €

(☎ 05 61 22 49 25; www.lafaimdesharicots.fr; 3 rue du Puits Vert; meals €11.90-15.90; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm; ☺) At this budget vegetarian canteen, everything's *à volonté* (all you can eat): choose salads, quiches, soups or hot dish of the day... or all of them.

**A Taula**

TAPAS €

(www.facebook.com/ataulatolosa; 11 rue Malcouinat, Ostal Occitania; dishes €5-7; ☎10am-11pm) One of Toulouse's most distinctive medieval houses is now a centre celebrating Occitan language and culture. Across the courtyard, push open the heavy door to find the very personal bar-lounge offering great-value tapas and globe glasses of wine from €3.50.

**★ Une Table à Deux**

FRENCH €€

(☎06 50 06 00 34; www.unetabledeux.fr; 10 rue de la Pléau; lunch/dinner menus from €17/35; ☎noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Mon-Fri, closed lunch Wed) It takes some searching to find this exciting little gem, whose talented, well-travelled chefs turn super-fresh locally sourced produce into short but wonderfully inspired, regularly changing menus. Veggie option usually available.

**La Pente Douce**

FRENCH €€

(☎05 61 46 16 91; www.lapentedouce.fr; 6 rue de la Concorde; lunch/dinner mains €18/24, lunch menu €23; ☎noon-2pm Fri & Sat, 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat) This hip neighbourhood restaurant promises gourmet food at democratic prices, and follows through with small but impeccably creative dishes from a constantly changing blackboard menu.

**Py-r**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎05 61 25 51 52; www.py-r.com; 19 descente de la Halle aux Poissons; 3-/6-course menu €68/88; ☎12.30-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) Toulouse's gastronomic darling produces some of the city's most dazzling 21st-century cuisine at prices that are comparatively affordable...for a Michelin double-starred restaurant. Book at least a week ahead.

**Drinking & Nightlife**

Almost every square in the Vieux Quartier has at least one cafe that's busy day and night. Other areas lively after dark include rue Castellane, rue Gabriel Péri and near the river around place St-Pierre.

**★ Au Père Louis**

WINE BAR

(45 rue des Tourneurs; ☎11am-2.30pm & 6-11.30pm Mon-Sat) Oozing with atmosphere, this time-warp marvel serves food at lunchtime, but at night, tables are removed for drinkers to stand and sip around blackened barrels. The home-made speciality is *quinquina* (€3.50), a sweet, fortified aperitif flavoured with orange peel, apple extract and cinchona bark (source of quinine, the antimalarial treatment).

**N°5 Wine Bar**

WINE BAR

(☎05 61 38 44 51; www.n5winebar.com; 5 rue de la Bourse; wine from €0.80; ☎6pm-1am Mon-Sat) Considered the world's best wine bar for its astonishing stock, not its decor, this unique place uses a smart-card system to let you pour your own choice from 30 open bottles. The choice changes constantly and the smallest measures are minute tasters... but enough that you can get to taste vintage *grands crus* that are normally way beyond most budgets.

**Le Florida**

CAFE

(☎05 61 23 94 61; www.leflorida-capitole.fr; 12 place du Capitole; ☎7am-1am; ☎) This classic people-watching brasserie-cafe gleams with mirrors, Belle Époque fittings and mural-painted panelling dating from 1874. Opens early for coffee/breakfast.

**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE****TOULOUSE'S MASTER CHEF**

Celebrity chef Michel Sarraon is a judge on a popular TV cooking programme and cuisine consultant for Airbus. Unless you book months ahead, chances are that you won't score a table at his Michelin double-starred eponymous **restaurant** (☎05 61 12 32 32; www.michel-sarraon.com; 21 bd Armand Duportal; mains €58-80, lunch menu €60; ☎noon-1.45pm & 8-9.45pm Mon-Fri, closed lunch Wed & all of Aug). However, Sarraon is also part of the creative team behind **Ma Biche sur le Toit** (☎05 31 61 56 19; www.mabichesurletoit.com/en; 6th fl, Galeries Lafayette; mains €20-41, lunch/dinner menu €23/50; ☎noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Sat, bar 10am-1.30am daily), a rooftop restaurant where meals, especially the weekday lunches, bring beautiful, artistic food within reach of mere mortals without a diamond credit card. You can also enjoy the great views outside dining hours when the place becomes a cafe/cocktail bar.

**Flower's Café**

☎ 05 34 44 93 66; www.theflowerscafe.com; 6 place Roger Salengro; ☀ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, from 2pm Sun) On the street terrace beside a tinkling fountain, or in the quaintly pseudo-antique 'library' room upstairs, sip a coffee or indulge in tea with luscious home-made cakes.

**Fat Cat**

☎ 6pm-1.30am) This beat-heavy bar serves highly imaginative cocktails for hipsters plus a menu of shots ranging from rare rums and mezcal to absinthe and gins. Don't embarrass yourself asking for beer.

**Connexion Café**

☎ 5.30pm-1am Tue-Fri, to 2am Sat) A mash-up of cocktail bar, nightclub and tapas bar in a converted industrial space. Live gigs straddle genres, from hip-hop to jazz to metal.

**★ Entertainment****Théâtre du Capitole**

☎ 05 61 22 31 31; www.theatreducapitole.fr; place du Capitole) Ballet, opera and classical music in a spectacular setting. Under 26? Ask about €10 *tarif jeune* tickets.

**Le Bikini**

☎ 05 62 24 09 50; www.lebikini.com; rue Théodore Monod, Ramonville St-Agne; ☀ from 8pm; ♫ B to Ramonville) This concert venue has been vibrating with the sounds of rock, pop, world music and DJ sets for more than 30 years. It's hidden behind a bio-tech industrial park, a 20-minute walk along the canal-side cycle paths from Ramonville metro.

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** ☎ 08 92 18 01 80; www.toulouse-tourisme.com; square Charles de Gaulle; ☀ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, from 10am Sun) Housed within a castle-style keep built in 1525 and topped with a photogenic spire added in 1872 by Viollet-le-Duc.

For exchange rates better than at the airport, try **C2Exchange** ☎ 05 61 13 64 25; www.c2exchange.fr; 48 rue de Remusat; commission €2.50; ☀ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-5.30pm Sat) or **Ex|Change** (www.ex-change.fr; 30 rue du Taur; ☀ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat).

**i Getting There & Away****AIR**

**Toulouse-Blagnac Airport** (TLS; ☎ 08 25 38 00 00; www.toulouse.aeroport.fr), 8km northwest of the city centre, has flights to 16

domestic airports and over 20 foreign countries, mostly Mediterranean and West European plus Montreal, Canada in summer. There's a commission-free ATM in hall B1.

**BUS**

Regional and long-distance bus services including FlixBus and BlablaBus use Toulouse's **Gare Routière** (Bus Station; bd Pierre Sémard) beside Gare Matabiau.

**TRAIN**

Toulouse's main train station is **Gare Matabiau** (bd Pierre Sémard), 1km northeast of the city centre. For Paris, the fastest options go via Bordeaux, but direct services run to Paris Austerlitz (seven/eight hours by day/night). Other useful direct options:

**Albi** €14.40, one hour, 11 to 16 daily  
**Auch** €16.40, 1½ hours, up to nine daily  
**Bordeaux** from €15, 2¼ to three hours, 13 daily  
**Carcassonne** from €16.80, 45 minutes to one hour, up to 23 daily  
**Castres** €16.10, 70 minutes, up to 11 daily  
**Marseilles** from €25, four hours, seven daily  
**Montauban** €10.50, 30 minutes, up to 26 daily  
**Nîmes** €16 to €44.60, 2½ hours, 10 daily

**i Getting Around****TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

The cheapest option (€1.70) is tram T2 to Arènes (not at Arènes Romaines), then metro line A to Capitole (around 40 minutes). One ticket is sufficient for the two legs but must be validated on both.

The direct option is the Navette Aéroport bus (€8) to the train station via place Jeanne d'Arc. It takes 25 minutes in ideal conditions but vastly more during rush hour jams when the tram is a safer bet.

Both services depart outside arrivals hall C approximately every 20 to 30 minutes from around 5am. Last service from town/airport is at 9.40pm/12.10am.

A **taxi** ☎ 05 61 30 02 54) to the airport costs around €30.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Local buses, trams and the efficient two-line metro (5.15am to midnight Sunday to Thursday, 5.15am to 3am Friday and Saturday) are all run by **Tisséo** (www.tisseo.fr). Tickets are valid on any of them including up to three transfers within an hour of the ticket's validation (it's essential to time-stamp each time you board a bus or tram). Bought from a machine, one/10 tickets cost €1.70/13.70. On buses you can pay €2 in cash one-way. Machines also sell 24-hour/three-day passes for €6.10/12.20.

## CAR & BICYCLE

Cars need a Crit'Air sticker ([www.certificat-air.gouv.fr/en](http://www.certificat-air.gouv.fr/en)) to enter central Toulouse. Parking is hard to find and/or expensive (per day €16.90/27.40 at Marengo/Capitole car parks).

**VéloToulouse** ([www.velo.toulouse.fr](http://www.velo.toulouse.fr); 24-hour/weekly membership €1.20/5) is a handy ride-and-drop bicycle-hire system.

## TARN

### Castres

POP 49,490

Large and prosperous, the town of Castres encircles a vibrant historical core. Seen from the **quai des Jacobins**, the riverfront has an almost Italian look with the box balconies of tight-packed old houses overhanging both banks. The **Jardin de l'Évêché** is a formal garden laid out by Le Nôtre, better known for work at Versailles. It fronts Castres' statey town hall, within which (upstairs) is an excellent **gallery** (☎05 63 71 59 27; rue de l'Hôtel de Ville; adult/child €5/free; ☀10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun) of Spanish painting, mostly religious work and portraiture. Though known as the Musée Goya, only three canvasses are actually by Goya himself, but you also get a Murillo, an El Greco and even a Picasso. For no-fuss refreshment, all-day cafe-brasseries spill tables across central **place Jean Jaurès**. That's named for the Castres-born father of French socialism who is commemorated

in a one-room **museum** (☎05 63 62 41 83; 2 place Pélisson; adult/child €3/1.50; ☀10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jun, 10am-noon & 2-6pm daily Jul-Aug) nearby, albeit with almost no explanations in English.

### **i** Getting There & Away

Castres has up to 11 daily trains from Toulouse (€16.10, 70 minutes) and is on bus routes from Gaillac and Albi (no service on Sundays). If you're driving from Albi (70km), consider taking a scenically winding detour via the medieval ridgetop village of Lautrec.

### Albi

POP 73,845

The historic centre of this bustling provincial city is a glorious muddle of winding streets and half-timbered houses, deeply cut through by the River Tarn and overshadowed by a monumental cathedral. That building's size and dominance was a deliberate symbol of regained ecclesiastical power in a town that had been so synonymous with 12th-century heresy that non-conformist Cathars were widely nicknamed Albigensians before their extermination after 1208. Thereafter, the city was ruled for centuries by archbishops from the Palais de la Berbie. The cathedral is now home to a superb museum-gallery celebrating the Albi-born artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), who went on to depict the bars and brothels of turn-of-the-century Paris in his own inimitable style.

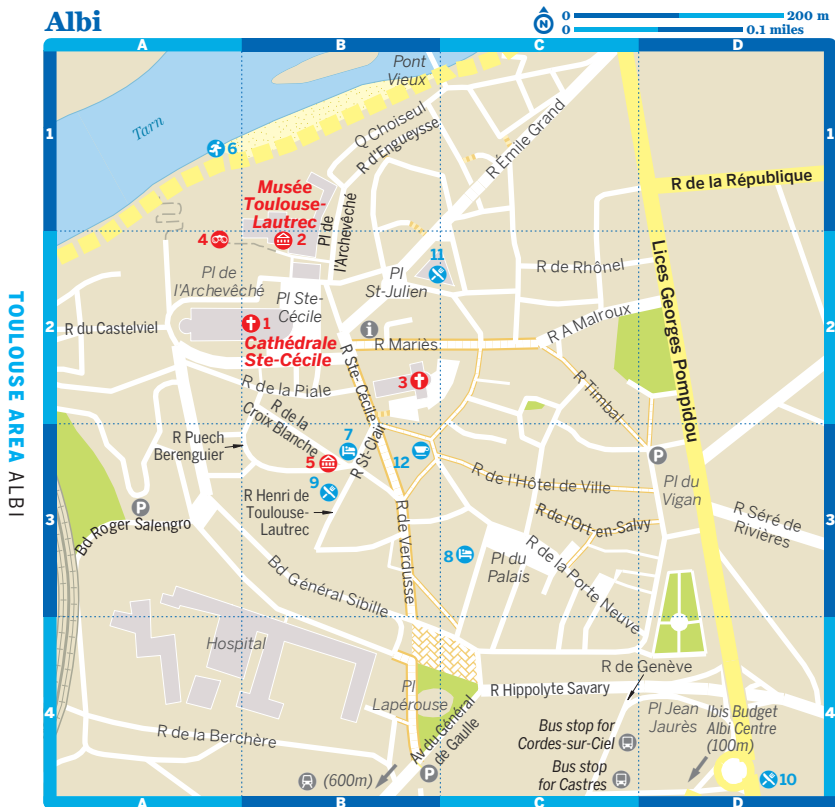
#### DON'T MISS

#### GAILLAC TO MONTAUBAN

Between Toulouse and Albi, low-key **Gaillac** is synonymous with its namesake wines. Sample a wide range at the excellent **Maison des Vins** (☎05 63 57 15 40; [www.vins-gaillac.com](http://www.vins-gaillac.com); place St-Michel; ☀10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm, closed afternoon Sun Oct-Mar), central yet hidden within a red-brick former abbey complex. From Gaillac, a scenic 70km route to Montauban starts by climbing 10km through vineyards to hilltop **Castelnau-de-Montmiral**, famed for the complete arched *couverts* of its small central square. Remarkable **Puycelis**, 13km further west, is a partly walled citadel perched so high above the road that it's easy to miss. Star of the route is the delectable little castle-village of **Bruniquel** that guards the mouth of the Ayveron Gorges. Steep cobbled paths lead up to viewpoint gardens passing several craft workshops, a pub, restaurant and a couple of cafes, though most close in winter. Behind a large mill complex on the Aveyron River, **Montricoux** retains a remarkably complete medieval core, with numerous overhanging half-timbered town houses and a gallery featuring the excellent cubist-inspired painter Marcel-Lenoir within the privately owned castle.



## Albi



## Albi

**Top Sights**

- 1 Cathédrale Ste-Cécile ..... B2  
 2 Musée Toulouse-Lautrec ..... B2

**Sights**

- 3 Collégiale & Cloître Saint-Salvi ..... B2  
 4 Jardin du Palais ..... A2  
 5 Maison du Vieil Albi ..... B3

**Activities, Courses & Tours**

- 6 Albi Croisières ..... A1

**Sleeping**

- 7 Hôtel St-Clair ..... B3  
 8 L'Alchimy ..... C3

**Eating**

- 9 L'Ambroisie ..... B3  
 10 L'Epicurien ..... D4  
 11 Marché Couvert ..... B2

**Drinking & Nightlife**

- 12 Au Moulin à Café ..... B3

**Sights & Activities**

**Albi Croisières** (☎05 63 43 59 63; [www.albi-croisieres.com](http://www.albi-croisieres.com); quai Choiseul; ☀May-Oct) offers seasonal riverboat rides.

**Cathédrale Ste-Cécile**

CHURCH  
 (☎05 63 38 47 40; [www.cathedrale-albi.com](http://www.cathedrale-albi.com); place Ste-Cécile; choir €5, with treasury €6; ☀9.30am-5.45pm Mon-Sat, 9.30-10.15am & 1.30-5.15pm Sun)

The world's biggest red-brick church, this formidable cathedral looks outwardly more like a castle. Indeed, started in 1282, it was partly conceived to impose the power of Catholicism following the 13th-century anti-Cathar crusades. Inside, 15th-century (and later) frescoes cover the walls, explained in a multilingual audioguide that's included in the fee should you choose to visit the fabulously carved Gothic choir.

## ★ Musée Toulouse-Lautrec MUSEUM

(☎ 05 63 49 48 70; www.musee-toulouse-lautrec.com; Palais de la Berbie, place Ste-Cécile; adult/student €10/free; ☀ 9am-6pm late Jun-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Oct-late Jun) This splendid museum owns over 1000 original works by Albi's famous son, Toulouse-Lautrec, including two versions of the famous *Au Salon de la rue des Moulins* hung side by side to illustrate his technique. The 2nd floor houses an excellent if poorly lit gallery of early 20th-century art including work by Matisse and Pierre Bonnard. Part of the 1st floor explains the fascinating history of the gigantic brick building that houses the museum, originally the 13th-century fortress-palace of the Albi lord-bishops.

## Jardin du Palais VIEWPOINT

(☀ 24hr) **FREE** In morning light, the most beautiful spot in Albi is a viewpoint overlooking the Madeleine quarter reflected in the river as a weir pounds between the two bridges. In the foreground is a clipped topiary garden at the foot of the Toulouse-Lautrec museum.

## Musée de Lapérouse MUSEUM

(☎ 05 63 49 15 55; www.mairie-albi.fr/fr/le-musee-laperouse; 41 rue Porta; adult/child €4/free; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Jun, to 6.30pm daily Jul-Sep) Within a 19th-century vermicelli mill, this intriguing museum follows the adventures of explorer Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de Lapérouse, born in Albi in 1741. From 1785 he sailed around the Pacific Ocean, describing Hawaii while charting eastern Siberia (where there's still a Lapérouse Bay) and arriving at Botany Bay less than a week after British convict-colonists. In 1788, however, Lapérouse and his boats mysteriously disappeared, presumed sunk on reefs of the Solomon Islands.

## Collégiale & Cloître Saint-Salvi CHURCH

(rue Mariès; ☀ church 8.30am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Wed, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Fri & Sat, 2-5pm Sun, cloister 7am-7pm) **FREE** This delicate church is worth a look for its lovely 13th-century cloister whose columns are decorated with Gothic and Romanesque flourishes.

## Maison du Vieil Alby MUSEUM

(1 rue de la Croix Blanche; adult/child €2/free; ☀ 2-5pm Mon-Sat) In a timber-framed medieval building, this little museum houses a small exhibition on the city's history and its connections with Toulouse-Lautrec.

## ★ Festivals & Events

Albi has a major **carnival** (www.carnaval-albi.com; ☀ late Feb or early Mar) and attracts big names in pop, rock and folk for its **Pause Guitare** (www.pauseguitare.net; ☀ early Jul) music festival.

## 🛏 Sleeping

### Ibis Budget Albi Centre HOTEL €

(☎ 05 63 36 27 30; 16 rue Gambetta; d €55-80; 📶) Unlike most budget motels, this fresh, modern place has several flashes of style and a 24-hour reception that doubles as an inviting bar (Gaillac wine from €3). It's just five minutes' walk south of the old centre.

### Hôtel St-Clair HOTEL €

(☎ 05 63 54 25 66; www.hotel-albi-saintclair.com; 8 rue St-Clair; s €40-65, d €48-75; 📶) A rabbit's warren of a hotel where creaky rooms with brassy bordered mirrors fill two old houses slap-bang in the middle of Vieil Albi.

### ★ Villa Caroline B&B €€

(☎ 07 83 95 22 70; www.villacaroline-albi.com; 16 rue de l'Equerre; d €90-130; 📶) Sensitively modernised by a charming Spanish couple, this antique house has large, super-tasteful guest rooms, an expansive shared lounge-kitchen and a breakfast terrace with fine views of Albi cathedral across the river.

### L'Alchimy BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 63 76 18 18; www.alchimyalbi.fr; 10-12 place du Palais; d/ste from €160/250; 📶) Behind a trio of classic townhouse facades, this alluring boutique hotel offers some lovely art deco detailing within, but there's no reception beyond a small desk in the bustling fashion-conscious brasserie-restaurant.

## 🍴 Eating & Drinking

Old Albi has plenty of well-priced places to eat very well. Street cafes ring place du Vigan, creative bistros fill lanes near the cathedral, and around the brilliant triangular **Marché Couvert** (Market Hall; place St-Julien; ☀ 7am-2pm Tue-Sun), built in 1905, streets fill with open-air stalls on Saturday mornings.

### ★ L'Ambroisie BISTRO €

(☎ 05 63 76 43 54; 4 rue Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec; lunch/dinner menus from €17/28; ☀ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm) Book ahead to ensure a rare seat at this welcoming little restaurant whose exquisite, great-value food reflects the French and Mexican influences of the owners.

**Amapola Kitchen & Coffee**

FRENCH €

(☎05 63 77 63 04; [www.facebook.com/amapola.kitchen](http://www.facebook.com/amapola.kitchen); 100 rue Porta; dishes €8-13, lunch menu €16; ☀11.30am-3pm Sun, 11.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sat & 7.30-10pm Thu-Sat) Bread is served on spikes to save space at this intimate, youthful spot just north of the old bridge, where delicious tapas-sized bowl meals combine French and Middle Eastern flavours. Open all day for good coffee and wine.

**L'Épicurien**

FRENCH €€

(☎05 63 53 10 70; [www.restaurantlepicurien.com](http://www.restaurantlepicurien.com); 42 place Jean Jaurès; mains €19-25, menus €19-65; ☀noon-2pm & 8-10pm Tue-Sat) So popular that you'll be squeezed together with fellow gourmands, this much-lauded upper-market brasserie-restaurant serves French comfort food, whose refreshing modern edge reflects that of the decor. Desserts are works of art.

**Au Moulin à Café**

TEAHOUSE

(☎05 63 43 15 51; 1 rue Oulmet; ☀10am-7pm Tue-Sat) This romantic teahouse feels like a 19th-century apothecary, its antique mirrors reflecting shelves packed with tea wares, syrups and sweets. Great for coffee, cakes and budget lunches too.

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎05 63 36 36 00; [www.albi-tourisme.fr](http://www.albi-tourisme.fr); 42 rue Mariès; ☀10am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm or longer) Buy the Albi City Pass (€13) if you plan to visit both the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec and cathedral choir. It also saves €1.50 at the Musée de Lapérouse.

**i Getting There & Away**

Monday to Saturday, copper-coloured Tarn-line buses run to **Castres** (€2, 50 minutes, at least

hourly) and **Cordes-sur-Ciel** (€2, 35 minutes) from different points around place Jean Jaurès.

From a station 900m southwest of the cathedral, trains serve Rodez (€15.60, 1½ hours, six to nine daily) and Toulouse (€14.40, one hour, 11 to 18 daily) via Gaillac (€4.90, 20 minutes).

**Cordes-sur-Ciel**

POP 910

What a gem! Scraping the clouds, Cordes-sur-Ciel's spikey stone silhouette seems tailor-made for a *Game of Thrones* fantasy set. Pass through fortified gateway arches, then follow cobbled lanes up to a bird's-eye vantage point surveying a vast sweep of rolling hills and meadows. The austere but photographically harmonious architecture provides homes for galleries, restaurants, boutiques and artisans' shops, as well as a chocolate museum and helpful **tourist office** (☎05 63 56 00 52; [www.cordessurciel.fr](http://www.cordessurciel.fr); 42 Grand Rue Raimond VII; ☀10.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm or later daily Apr-Oct, to 4pm & closed Sun Nov-Mar) whose medieval back room is almost a museum in itself.

**🍽 Sleeping & Eating**

A handful of midrange hotels, atmospheric B&Bs and small, sweet restaurants are scattered in and around Cordes. Many close November to March.

**★ Hostellerie du Vieux Cordes** HOTEL €€

(☎05 63 53 79 20; [www.hotelcordes.fr](http://www.hotelcordes.fr); 21 rue St-Michel; d €85-140; 🍷) Oozing historical charm, this perfectly central hotel has a reception desk guarded by a suit of armour, a courtyard dominated by a 300-year-old wisteria vine, and a memorable lounge-bar dotted with international antiques. Pricier

**DON'T MISS****CANAL DU MIDI**

Taking 15 years to build by a workforce of some 12,000 men, the 241km Canal du Midi was one of France's greatest 17th-century engineering projects: a navigable waterway linking the River Garonne (and thus the Atlantic) to the Mediterranean. The canal's commercial importance was eclipsed by the railways in the 19th century, but today it's enormously popular with pleasure-boaters. Weekly rental of a *péniche* (motorised, live-aboard narrowboat) typically costs between €1000 and €2000 plus fuel and deposit waiver through companies including Locaboat ([www.locaboat.com/en](http://www.locaboat.com/en)) and Canalous ([www.canalous-canalumidi.com/us](http://www.canalous-canalumidi.com/us)). Prices rise in summer; boats are rested November to March. Alternatively, hire a bike and appreciate the canal's tranquil, tree-lined scenery from its towpaths. Website <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route> details the various legs. If you stick to the first 50km southeast from Toulouse, the way is smoothly asphalted as far as Seuil de Naurouze – the canal's highest point.

guest rooms have a minibar and kettle, with breathtaking views from 'superior' versions.

### S Callipyge

CAFE €

(☎06 90 02 87 28; www.facebook.com/scallipyge; 5 rue St-Michel; mains €12-20; ☎10.30am-10pm Thu-Tue Easter-Oct) Upper Cordes' most quirkily enticing cafe has fine views, an arty interior, a menu of Italian food and occasional live music.

### Getting There & Away

Bus 707 from Albi (€2, 35 minutes, five daily except Sundays) arrives at place de la Bouteillerie in the lower village. From there it's a steep 800m walk up to old Cordes, or use the seasonal shuttle, **La Navette** (www.petittrain-tarn.com; adult/child €3/2; ☎every 20 minutes 10.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Apr-Oct). Car parking costs €3.50/2 per day in summer/winter.

## Najac

POP 720

Little Najac is one of France's most memorable villages. Its long main square, **place du Faubourg**, is beguilingly lined by a photogenic assortment of ancient timber-framed cottages and shopfronts. But what makes the scene unforgettable is where the square narrows into a steeply descending lane whose medieval buildings perfectly frame a view of the 12th-century **fortress** (☎05 65 29 71 65; adult/child €6/4.50; ☎10.30am-7pm Jul-Aug, 10.30am-1pm & 3-5.30pm or later Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct). Though it's partly ruined, you can still climb the round tower of the keep in which Richard the Lionheart signed an 1185 pact against Toulouse. To reach it you'll have to walk. Dog-leg left at the **Maison du Gouverneur** (https://maisondugouverneur-najac.fr), a powerfully built 13th-century stone mansion with seasonal exhibits about local history. Then continue along rue du Chateau, whose last section climbs a steep foothold to the gateway.

Like the castle, Najac's handful of shops, restaurants and *gîtes* mostly close from November to March, but a bluesy bar-cafe, a *boulangerie*, a good crêperie and the great-value B&B of the **Elelta craft shop** (☎09 66 90 21 26; www.elelta.com; 14 place du Faubourg; d/tr from €62/77; ☎) all open year-round. In season, the 17-room hotel **Oustal del Barry** (☎05 65 29 74 32; www.oustaldelbarry.com; place du Faubourg; menu €30; ☎closed Nov-Mar; 🍷🍷) offers gastronomic dining.

### Getting There & Away

Najac's unstaffed train station lies across the river in the valley way below. That's 3.5km by road or around 1.2km by partly slippery footpaths. Trains run four to six times daily to Toulouse (€19.20, 1½ hours) and three or four times to Figeac (€10.60, 50 minutes) or Capdenac.

## Montauban

POP 62,290

Nestled on the banks of the River Tarn, Montauban is a prosperous, artistic-minded city with a central core that retains the grid-like plan of a classic *bastide* (fortified market town). Its gallery-museum is world-class.

### Sights

#### ★ Musée Ingres Bourdelle

GALLERY

(☎05 63 22 12 91; https://museeingresbourdelle.com; 19 rue de l'Hôtel de Ville; adult/child €8/4; ☎9am-5pm Tue, 10am-7pm Wed-Sun) In what was originally a castle and later the town hall, Montauban's superlative fine-arts museum focusses particularly on locally born neoclassical artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). Don't miss the modern parodies of his famous long-backed nude, *Grande Odalisque*, or the astonishing collection of old masters that inspired him (Van Eyck, Jordaens, Van Dyck, Poussin etc). The lower floor celebrates Montauban sculptor Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929), who studied under Rodin and made some fabulously expressive busts of Beethoven before developing early art deco leanings.

In the bowels of the castle dungeons there's also a remarkable collection of Gallo-Roman archaeological finds, plus the odd torturer's rack.

#### Place Nationale

SQUARE

The historic upper town is a grid of medieval lanes, dotted with enticingly personal little shops. At its heart is this exquisite square, hemmed by magnificent double-vaulted arcades that support four-story pink-brick buildings.

#### Cathédrale Notre Dame

CHURCH

(place Franklin Roosevelt; ☎8.30am-noon Sun-Fri & 2-7pm Mon-Sat) **FREE** Montauban's 18th-century cathedral is a veritable gallery of great religious art, with monumental statues by Marc Arcis (1655-1739), Christ's entombment as a semi-cubist canvas by Marcel-Lenoir (1872-1931), plus one of Ingres' masterpieces,

## THE MUSKETEERS

Well before muskets, royal musketeers (*mousquetaires de la garde*) were the elite soldiers of the 17th-century French crown. Most notable amongst them was Charles de Batz de Castelmore, aka the Comte d'Artagnan, a 17th-century James Bond who worked as a spy for Cardinal Mazarin, Louis XIV's éminence grise. He was famously fictionalised by Dumas in *The Three Musketeers* along with Aramis, Porthos and Athos, all based on real-life Gascon fighters. They appear together in a major statue outside Condom's cathedral while d'Artagnan alone stands on the monumental steps at Auch.

*Le Vœu de Louis XIII* (1824), depicting the king pledging France to the Virgin.

## 👁️ Out of Town

A 20-minute train hop away in **Moissac** ([www.tourisme.moissac.fr](http://www.tourisme.moissac.fr)) is a Unesco-listed **abbey church** (☎ 05 63 04 01 85; [www.tourisme.moissac.fr](http://www.tourisme.moissac.fr); 6 place Durand de Bredon; ☀ 8am-7pm) **FREE**, whose **cloister** (adult/child €6.50/4.50; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Apr-Jun & Oct, 10am-7pm Jul-Sep, 1.30-5pm Nov-Mar) dating from 1100 CE is claimed to be the 'world's oldest'.

## 🎆 Festivals & Events

**Les Quatre-Cent Coups** STREET CARNIVAL  
(400 Blows; [www.montauban-festivites.com](http://www.montauban-festivites.com); ☀ 2nd weekend of Sep) Concerts, balls and street parties commemorate an oft-repeated myth: that Louis XIII, besieging Huguenot Montauban in 1621, blasted off 400 cannons simultaneously, but still failed to take the town.

## 🛏 Sleeping & Eating

**Abbaye des Capucins** HISTORIC HOTEL cc  
(☎ 05 63 22 00 00; [www.abbayedescapucins.fr](http://www.abbayedescapucins.fr); 6-8 quai de Verdun; d €82-120; 📞 📺 📺) This great-value four-star business hotel fills the shell of a 17th-century abbey with breakfast served in a deconsecrated former chapel. There's an open swimming pool in the courtyard and a sauna and steam room that are free for guests.

## 📍 Getting There & Away

**Montauban Ville Bourbon train station** (av Mayenne) is 1.2km west of place Nationale, across the River Tarn. Direct services include:

**Bordeaux** €15 to €34, 1¼ hours, six daily

**Cahors** €12.30, 45 minutes, 12 daily

**Moissac** €6.50, 20 minutes, 10 daily

**Toulouse** €10.50, 25 to 45 minutes, frequent

## ARMAGNAC

An ever-undulating carpet of meadows and vineyards unfurls in Armagnac, an area renowned for its centuries-old brandy-making traditions and for picturesque *bastides* dating from the Hundred Years' War, when the area was pinched between French and English control.

## Condom & Around

POP 6735

This mellow cathedral city is a superb base from which to visit Armagnac's brandy producers and *bastide* villages. Locals are well aware that its name elicits sniggers among English speakers and town signs are firmly nailed down to avoid falling prey to souvenir hunters. In fact, the name's derivation is from the Gallo-Roman word 'Condatomagus', meaning a market town at a river confluence – the Gèle and Baïse Rivers meet here.

## 👁️ Sights

**Cathédrale St-Pierre** CHURCH  
(place St-Pierre; ☀ 8am-6pm) **FREE** On the foundations of a Benedictine abbey from 1011, this formidable cathedral was rebuilt in Flamboyant Gothic style with a lofty nave and elaborate chancel. Its 16th-century **cloister**, accessed from rue de l'Évêché, was designed to offer wet-weather protection for Compostela pilgrims.

**Musée de l'Armagnac** MUSEUM  
(☎ 05 62 28 47 21; 2 rue Jules Ferry; adult/child €2.20/1.10; ☀ 3-6pm Wed-Sat & Mon Apr-Oct) In an old cellar, this modest museum illustrates Armagnac production with a small collection of vintage bottles, agricultural tools and an 18-tonne antique press.



## Around Condom

### ★ Abbaye de Flaran

ABBAYE

(☎ 05 62 28 50 19; [www.abbayedeflarn.fr](http://www.abbayedeflarn.fr); Valence-sur-Baïse; adult/child €5/2; ☀ 9.30am-6.30pm Jul-Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Sep-Jun) This serene former Cistercian abbey, 10km south of Condom, has a pretty cloister and herb garden, but is especially outstanding for its art gallery hosted in the former monks' dormitories.

Changing exhibits taken from the fabulous Simonow collection will likely include canvases by Cézanne, Monet and Corot, as well as sculpture by Salvador Dalí.

### Larressingle

VILLAGE

(<http://larressingle.free.fr>) Minuscule Larressingle, 6km west of Condom, is France's 'smallest fortified town'; its walls tightly cocooning the now-ruined castle-keep that was once home to the medieval bishops of Condom.

Another 11km west, **Montréal-du-Gers** is a very photogenic *bastide* and 2.3km beyond that is the excavated site of a Gallo-Roman villa known as **Séviac** ([www.elusa.fr](http://www.elusa.fr)). Drive back to Condom via the super-quaint circular village of **Fourcès**.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Les Trois Lys

HOTEL €€

(☎ 05 62 28 33 33; [www.lestroislys.com](http://www.lestroislys.com); 38 rue Gambetta; s €60-120, d €85-200;     ) In an 18th-century courtyard house right on Condom's pedestrianised main street, this characterful Dutch-run hotel has retained many original period features, adding antique, somewhat mismatched furniture and original 1920s poster art.

### Maison Saint-Pé

B&B €€

(☎ 09 73 01 21 12; [maisonsaintpe@gmail.com](mailto:maisonsaintpe@gmail.com); 193 rte du Condom, Bérault; ste €90-110;  ) Around 6km southeast of Condom towards St-Puy, obliging hosts Cesar and Samuel welcome guests to their immaculately rebuilt stone farmhouse where three huge suite rooms are equipped with faultless taste and high-end fittings.

### Lacassagne

B&B €€

(☎ 06 86 99 14 70, 09 75 31 38 68; <http://lacassagne-maisonhotels.com/en>; Larressingle; d/ste incl breakfast €120/140;  ) Adventurous world traveller Nyima is also a talented interior designer who has fashioned three wildlife-themed guest rooms within her delightful stone home. Soothingly wide

## ARMAGNAC: THE ORIGINAL BRANDY

Armagnac is best understood as Cognac's sophisticated older sister. It has the longest history of any French brandy, with references to its medicinal qualities dating way back to the 14th century. Yet while double-distilled Cognac is world-renowned, single-distilled Armagnac is made in far smaller quantities and appreciated by a more select circle of digestif connoisseurs. Due to tax laws, many smaller growers these days outsource the actual distillation of their wines to bigger outfits like Jean Cavé ([www.armagnac-jean-cave.fr](http://www.armagnac-jean-cave.fr)) before bringing back the young spirits to barrel-age in their own châteaux – four years minimum for VSOP, 10 years or more for XO. Countless local outfits offer tastings of their Armagnacs, along with Floc de Gascogne (a sweet wine-brandy blended aperitif), prune liqueurs and ever-improving Côtes de Gascogne wines.

If you can find a sober chauffeur, Armagnac tastings add to the delight of driving tours around Condom. Consider stopping at Château Gensac ([www.gensac.com](http://www.gensac.com)) en route to Lectoure. Heading for the Abbaye de Flaran (p741) you might swing past the beautiful 13th-century **Château de Cassaigne** (☎ 05 62 28 04 02; [www.chateaucassaigne.com](http://www.chateaucassaigne.com); Cassaigne; tours adult/child €2.50/free; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm, closed Sun morning & Mon Sep-Jun), a former bishop's residence 6.5km southwest of Condom. Then at St-Puy, 13km southeast of Condom, there's the **Château de Monluc** (☎ 05 62 28 53 51; [www.monluc.fr/en](http://www.monluc.fr/en); St-Puy; ☀ 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jun, daily Jul-Aug) **FREE** which looks more farmhouse than castle but has atmospheric vaulted cellars and a museum-like tasting room. Their locally famed Pousse Rapière is a secret-formula liqueur infused with orange-peel herbs, served as a cocktail with dry sparkling wine. But don't miss their prize-winning XO Armagnac.

views from the expansive lounge survey a sweep of oak-filled countryside 600m north of Larressingle citadel.

### Le Balcon

INTERNATIONAL €

(☎ 05 62 28 44 06; 1 place St-Pierre; mains €13.50-21, menu €26; ☀ noon-2pm Tue-Sun & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍷🍷) Upstairs, facing the cathedral, this buzzing, unfussy bistro creates delicious meals that combine locally sourced meats with wok-fried vegetable accompaniments and delectable desserts, like caramel-vanilla cream with Armagnac.

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 62 28 00 80; www.tourisme-condom.com; 5 place St-Pierre; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Opposite the cathedral; ask about guided cathedral tours and seasonal opening times for Armagnac distilleries.

### i Getting There & Away

Thrice daily except Sundays, buses go to Auch (€1.50, 50 minutes) and to Agen (€2, 50 minutes) on the Toulouse-Bordeaux train line.

## Lecture

POP 4027

This fortified hilltop town was the 14th-century seat of the Dukes of Armagnac, and retains an almost complete set of medieval lower ramparts. Also still standing are many stone mansions, some dating back even earlier to the prosperous period of English rule under the Viscounts of Lomagne. The town's central axis runs 600m between a giant **cathedral church** and the former **lords' palace**. In the latter, colonades and a painted chapel are now filled with bric-a-brac stalls. There are artists' workshops in the cellars below, and other craft, antique and decor shops occupy buildings dotted around town.

If driving to Condom, take the indirect 32km route via the pretty hamlet of **Marsolan**, which has a viewpoint terrace offering distant glimpses of the white-topped Pyrenean peaks. In lovely **La Romieu** (www.la-romieu.fr), visit the fabulous abbey church and the gardens. Before Condom, consider stopping for an Armagnac tasting at **Château Gensac**.

### Sleeping & Eating

Lecture has several *chambres d'hôte* and plenty of dining options, from several tempting bistros to the white tablecloths and poised

gastronomy of the wonderfully named **Hôtel de Bastard** (☎ 05 62 68 82 44; www.hotel-de-bastard.com; rue Lagrange; vegetarian/meat mains from €15/24; ☀ 12.15-1.30pm Wed-Sun & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat, open daily Jul-Aug, closed Jan; 🍷).

### ★ L'Hôtel Particulier Guilhon B&B €€

(☎ 06 27 17 81 65; www.hotel-particulier-guilhon.com; 95 rue Nationale; ste incl breakfast €160-270; 🍷🍷🍷) Stunning! Discreetly hidden behind a large grey door, this stylishly restored 17th-century mansion feels like a luxurious private club with its splendid lounge, honesty bar and veritable gallery of 20th-century art. The five gigantic suites are all individually designed around musical themes; there's a small pool in the yard, and another, with a Jacuzzi, lies indoors within a former medieval kitchen.

### i Getting There & Away

Bus 932 to Auch (€7.70, 50 minutes) and Agen (€7.90, one hour) runs up to eight times daily.

## Auch



POP 34,510



Quaint central Auch (rhymes with 'gauche') is a tangle of narrow lanes and half-timbered houses, with architectural treasures that hint at its former glory as a seat of power for Armagnac's counts.

For a self-guided walking tour, pick up a trail map from the tourist office. The office faces the grand Renaissance frontage of **Cathédrale Ste-Marie** (place de la République; choir €2; ☀ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Sep-Jun), the city's otherwise late Gothic cathedral whose astonishing choir stalls are carved with apostles, saints, Greek sages and pagan prophetesses. Behind, the cathedral's **treasury** (www.auch-tresorcathedrale.com; place Salinis; adult/child €5/free; ☀ 10.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Jun-Sep) incorporates the base of a 40m-high former prison tower which helps give Auch its distinctive skyline. Descending from here to the river is the **Escalier Monumental**, a tiered stairway of 374 stone steps flanked by little vine gardens. Part way down you'll find a chest-puffing statue of famous musketeer d'Artagnan (p740).

### Sleeping & Eating



Auch's sparkling new hostel, **Le Noctile** (☎ 05 62 64 02 32; www.lenocitile.fr; 2ter rue du 8

Mai; s/d €25/42;  ), is 800m north of the snug historic centre.

There are a couple of brasserie-cafes on the cathedral square plus several modest Gascon bar-restaurants along rue Dessoles, notably the excellent-value **L'Angelus** ( 05 62 59 68 98; 10 rue Dessoles; lunch menu €12; small/large dinner plates €8.50/15.50;  bar 10am-2am Tue-Sat, kitchen noon-2pm & 7.30-11pm), super-popular at lunch for the well-balanced €9.60 *plat du jour*.

### Hôtel de France

HISTORIC HOTEL 

( 05 62 61 71 71; [www.hoteldefrance-auch.com](http://www.hoteldefrance-auch.com); place de la Libération; s/d/ste from €71/79/152; ) About 250m west of the cathedral across Auch's large central square, Hôtel de France has the shutters and portal of a grand old-fashioned provincial hotel. Inside, the rooms are a mixed bag, from small and dated to upgraded and spacious. The main restaurant is a gem, occupying a glorious Second Empire salon.

### ★ **Domaine de Baulieu**



GASTRONOMY 

( 05 62 59 97 38; [www.ledomainedebaulieu.com](http://www.ledomainedebaulieu.com); 822 chemin de Lussan; dinner menu €34;   ) Set on a rural hilltop 2.5km east of town,

Baulieu is the best restaurant for miles around, yet the dinner menu offers dazzling creativity, spectacular presentation, several amuse-bouches and majestic flavour combinations. Even the bread is memorable.

It's also a low-rise hotel (single/double from €100/115) combining converted stone farmhouse with strikingly modern extensions and superb pool. Non-guests are welcome to dine, but do book ahead.

### Information

**Tourist Office** ( 05 62 05 22 89; [www.auch-tourisme.com](http://www.auch-tourisme.com); 3 place de la République;  10am-12.15pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & summer Sun) Facing the cathedral with an upstairs swing-seat viewing gallery.

### Getting There & Away

Auch's train/bus station is across the river, 1.2km east of the centre. Trains to Toulouse (€16.40, 1½ hours) run nine times daily. Buses serve Agen (€13.40, 1½ hours, eight times weekdays, five weekends), Condom (€1.50, 50 minutes, three daily except Sundays), Montauban (€2, 1¾ hours, daily), and Tarbes (€14.70, 1½ hours, three to five daily).

## AT A GLANCE



### POP

2.7 million

### CAPITAL

Montpellier

### BEST MARKET

Narbonne's historic  
Les Halles (p765)

### BEST VIEWPOINT

Mont Aigoual  
Observatory (p771)

### BEST SEAFOOD

Bouzigues (p763) for  
oysters and shellfish



## WHEN TO GO

### Apr–Jun

Spring blossom and green foliage in the Cévennes and Haut Languedoc; beaches and attractions are relatively quiet.

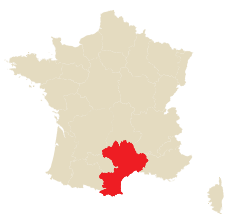
### Jul & Aug

Peak tourist season: the coastline is crammed, sights are busy and temperatures sizzle.

### Sep & Oct

Warm weather and fewer crowds; the *vendange* (grape harvest) takes over the vineyards.





# Languedoc-Roussillon

**C**urling round the Mediterranean from Provence to the Pyrenees, this sultry, sun-baked territory is all about good living: sunbathing on the sand, eating fresh seafood, exploring markets and drinking fine wine. But it's rich with history, too: once a Roman province, Cathar stronghold and part of Catalonia, it's littered with historical sights, from Roman remains to clifftop castles, ducal mansions to *hôtels particuliers*. Bas-Languedoc is home to the biggest beaches and the captivating cities of Montpellier and Nîmes. Inland lies the high country of the Grands Causses and Cévennes, with hills, caves, gorges, forests and moonscape plateaux. Roussillon shares close ties with Catalonia across the Spanish border.

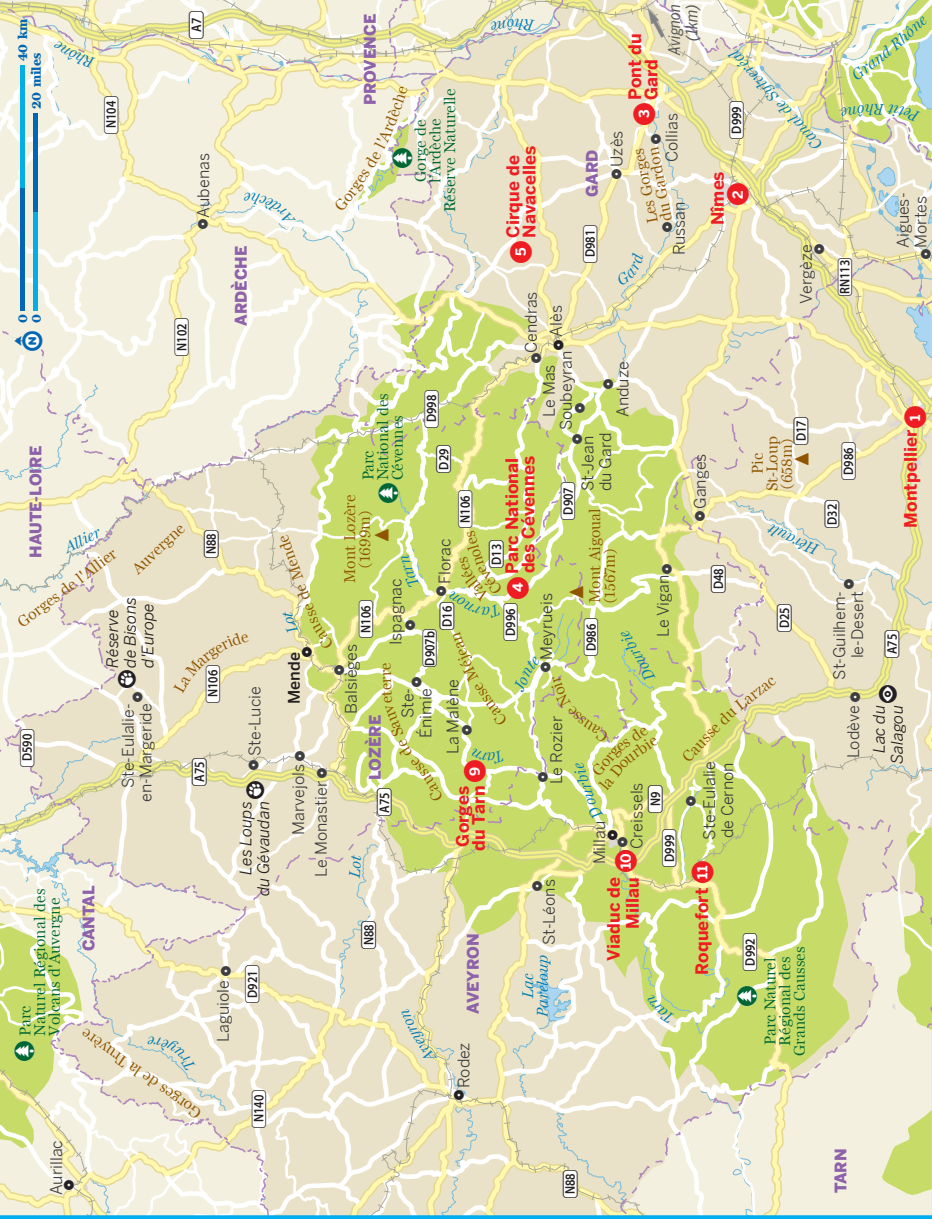
## INCLUDES

Bas-Languedoc . . . . .	748	Gorges du Tarn . . . . .	773
Nîmes . . . . .	748	Grands Causses . . . . .	774
Uzès . . . . .	753	Roussillon . . . . .	776
Montpellier . . . . .	755	Perpignan . . . . .	777
Carcassonne . . . . .	767	Têt Valley (Vallée de la Têt). . . . .	781
Parc National des Cévennes . . . . .	771	Côte Vermeille . . . . .	782



## Languedoc-Roussillon Highlights

- 1 Musée Fabre** (p.755) Browsing the stellar art collection at Montpellier's flagship museum.
- 2 Les Arènes** (p.748) Imagining yourself as a gladiator in Nîmes' monumental twin-tiered amphitheatre.
- 3 Pont du Gard** (p.752) Admiring the architectural ambition of this stunning Roman aqueduct.
- 4 The Cévennes** (p.771) Trekking in Robert Louis Stevenson's footsteps (perhaps with a donkey in tow).
- 5 Cirque de Navacelles** (p.752) Hiking through this dramatic gorge to a historic watermill.





- 6 Château de Peyrepertuse** (p780)  
Time-travelling back to the Middle Ages at this cliff-top Cathar castle.
- 7 Collioure** (p782)  
Following the Fauvists around this colourful seaside town.
- 8 Gorges d'Héric & Colombières** (p767)  
Hiking to plunge pools and high peaks in the Haut Languedoc.
- 9 Gorges du Tarn** (p773)  
Kayaking along dramatic, twisting gorges.
- 10 Viaduc de Millau** (p775)  
Driving over – or boating under – France's most fabulous bridge.
- 11 Roquefort** (p776)  
Savouring the pungent blue cheese in the limestone caves where it's aged.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

## BAS-LANQUEDOC

The broad, flat plains of Bas-Languedoc (Lower Languedoc) take in all of the Languedoc's main towns, as well as its best beaches and richest Roman remains.

During the Middle Ages, Bas-Languedoc was largely the property of the counts of Toulouse, but it now encompasses the modern-day *départements* of Gard, Hérault and Aude, which span northwards into the hills of the Haut Languedoc (Upper Languedoc).

### Nîmes

POP 151,001

Two millennia ago Nîmes was one of the most important cities of Roman Gaul, when it was known as Colonia Augusta Nemausus. Several Roman buildings can still be visited, including the best-preserved Roman amphitheatre in France and a 2000-year-old temple. The flashy Musée de la Romanité provides comprehensive historical context.

Nîmes remains a dynamic and lively southern city, with handsome, palm-lined streets and a shady old town ripe for exploring. The city is also well-placed for jaunts to the Pont du Gard.

#### Sights

Several discount cards cover sights. The best value is the **Pass Romanité** (adult/child €17/11, valid for three days), which includes admission to Les Arènes, the Musée de la Romanité, the Maison Carrée and Tour Magne (p749). The **Romanité Tour** pass (€24, valid for seven days) also includes admission to the Pont du Gard. It can be bought at any participating sight. The **Nîmes Citypass** (€29/37/39 for 2/4/7 days), sold at the tourist office, includes the city's smaller museums and a ride on a tourist train – the two-day pass doesn't include the Pont du Gard.

#### ★ Les Arènes

ROMAN SITE

(☎ 04 66 21 82 56; www.arennes-nimes.com; place des Arènes; adult/child incl audio guide €10/8; ☉ 9am–8pm Jul & Aug, to 7pm Jun, to 6.30pm Apr–Jun & Sep, to 6pm Mar & Oct, 9.30am–5pm Nov–Feb) Nothing prepares you for the sight of Nîmes' stunning, twin-tiered Roman amphitheatre, looming up in the heart of town like an abandoned set from *Gladiator*. It's one of the best preserved in the world. Built around 100 BCE, the arena once seated 24,000 spectators and staged gladiatorial contests and

public executions. An audioguide explains the site as you explore the arena, terraces, stairwells and corridors (known to Romans as *vomitoria*).

At 133m long, 101m wide and 21m high, with an oval arena encircled by two tiers of arches and columns, the amphitheatre is a testament to the skill and ingenuity of Roman architects. The seating is divided into 34 terraces; the posher you were, the closer you sat to the action. The amphitheatre's oval design meant everyone had an unrestricted view. Originally, the amphitheatre would have had a canopy that protected spectators from the weather. A system of trapdoors and hoist-lifts beneath the arena enabled animals and combatants to be put into position during the show.

Despite being adapted and plundered for stone over many centuries (during the Middle Ages, an entire neighbourhood was located inside its walls), the structure of the amphitheatre is still impressively intact. The atmosphere when it was filled to capacity must have been quite something. From the top tier, you can see right across the city all the way to the Tour Magne. Afterwards you can view replicas of gladiatorial armour and original bullfighters' costumes in the museum.

The amphitheatre is still used to stage live events, including gladiator fights during the Grands Jeux Romains (p750) and bullfights during the Férias de Nîmes (p750) in May and September.

#### Musée de la Romanité

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 48 21 02 10; 16 bd des Arènes; adult/child €8/3; ☉ 10am–8pm Jul & Aug, to 7pm Sep–Nov & Apr–Jun, to 6pm Wed–Mon Dec–Mar) To understand the city's Roman context, a visit to this futuristic steel-and-glass structure that faces Les Arènes is absolutely essential. The museum houses more than 5000 archaeological exhibits uncovered around Nîmes, including some incredible floor mosaics, funerary columns, lifelike statues and touchingly human artefacts, including coins, rings, hairpins and sewing needles.

#### Maison Carrée

ROMAN SITE

(☎ 04 66 21 82 56; www.maisoncarree.eu; place de la Maison Carrée; adult/child €6/5; ☉ 9.30am–8pm Jul & Aug, 10am–6.30pm Apr–Jun & Sep, 10am–6pm Mar & Oct, 10am–1pm & 2–4.30pm Jan, Feb, Nov & Dec) Constructed in gleaming limestone around 5 CE, this impressive temple was built to honour Emperor Augustus' two



15 BCE – the largest of a chain of towers conveying imperial power that once punctuated the city's 7km-long Roman ramparts. At the top of its 140 steps, an orientation table interprets the panoramic views over Nîmes.

### Carré d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain

GALLERY

(☎04 66 76 35 70; [www.carreartmusee.com](http://www.carreartmusee.com); 16 place de la Maison Carrée; ☺10am-6pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** The striking glass-and-steel Carré d'Art was designed by British architect Sir Norman Foster. Inside, exhibitions cover art from the 1960s onwards.

### Festivals & Events

#### Les Grands Jeux Romains

CULTURAL

([www.arenas-nimes.com](http://www.arenas-nimes.com); ☺late Apr) For three days in April, Romans reconquer the town with an encampment, staged gladiatorial battles in Les Arènes (p748) and a triumphal street parade.

#### Férias de Nîmes

FERIA

(☺May & Sep) Nîmes hosts two lively férias, the five-day Féria de Pentecôte in May and the three-day Féria des Vendanges in September, during which thousands of visitors descend on the town for music, dances and cultural events – as well as daily *corridas* (bullfights).

#### Judis de Nîmes

CULTURAL

(☺Jul & Aug) Between 6pm and 10.30pm every Thursday in July and August, food markets and gigs take over Nîmes' squares.

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

#### THE CROCODILE OF NÎMES

Wandering round Nîmes, you may spot the town's rather odd emblem – a crocodile chained to a palm tree. The design dates back to Roman times, when a coin was minted to commemorate the conquering of Egypt (represented by the crocodile) by Rome (in classical times, palm trees symbolised victory). It was revived in the 16th century by François I as Nîmes' new motto. Look out for it on the gates of the Jardins de la Fontaine, the town hall, and most noticeably, the fountain on place aux Herbes.

### Sleeping

#### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎04 66 68 03 20; [www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/nimes.html](http://www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/nimes.html); 257 chemin de l'Auberge de Jeunesse, La Cigale; camping per person €9, dm incl breakfast €24.90; ☺reception 7.30am-11pm, hostel closed Nov-Feb; 📞📶) 4km northwest of the centre, this well-managed hostel has lots in its favour: spacious four- to eight-bed dorms (some with private bathroom), double rooms, a large garden, a kitchen, a laundry and a cafe. Take bus 9, direction Alès or Villeverte, to the Stade stop.

#### Hôtel des Tuileries

HOTEL €

(☎04 66 21 31 15; [www.hoteldestuileries.com](http://www.hoteldestuileries.com); 22 rue Roussy; d €65-110, tr €74-140, ste €112-160; 📞📶) This well-priced 11-room hotel within strolling distance from Les Arènes (p748) features simple but attractively furnished rooms, some with covered balconies. Splashes of art liven up the decor. Breakfast costs €9, and there's a garage (€10 to 15), but you need to reserve spaces.

#### Hôtel de l'Amphithéâtre

HOTEL €

(☎04 66 67 28 51; [www.hoteldelamphitheatre.com](http://www.hoteldelamphitheatre.com); 4 rue des Arènes; d €85-100; 📞📶) Down a narrow backstreet leading away from Les Arènes (p748), this tall townhouse has rooms in greys, whites and taupes, some with balconies overlooking place du Marché (fear not, there's double glazing), plus great buffet breakfasts (€10) including organic honey and homemade jam. It's run by an expat Cornishman and his French wife. Unfortunately, there are lots of stairs and no lift.

### Appart' City Nîmes Arènes

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 56 60 26 70; [www.appartcity.com](http://www.appartcity.com); 1 bd de Bruxelles; d €98-185; 📞📶) A stroll away from the Arènes, this grand 19th-century Hausmann-style building has been converted into a modern aparthotel, with smart, parquet-floored rooms complete with kitchenettes and city views. There's also a sauna, laundry and gym, and a glorious double-flight staircase from the lobby. Public parking available nearby.

### Eating

For an evening *apéro*, the cafes around place aux Herbes, place de l'Horloge and place du Marché are perfect. Restaurants are dotted round the old town.



**Les Halles**

MARKET €

(www.leshallesdenimes.com; rues Guizot, Général Perrier & des Halles; ☀7am-1pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun) With over 100 stalls in 3500 sq metres, Nîmes' covered market is a wonder: local specialities include *picholine* (a local green olive) and *brandade* (salt cod).

One of the best lunch spots is **La Pie qui Couette** (☎04 66 23 59 04; www.facebook.com/la.pie.qui.couette; Les Halles, 1 rue Guizot; mains €12-18; ☀noon-2pm Tue-Sat) – 'The Snoozing Magpie' – a no-frills, no-reservations spot for super tapas, salt cod and grilled meats.

**Croquants Villaret**

BAKERY €

(☎04 66 67 41 79; http://maison-villaret.com; 13 rue de la Madeleine; from €1.90; ☀7am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, from 8am Sun) Cakes, chocolates and sweet treats of many kinds are sold at this family-run confectioner-baker, including the crunchy, orange-scented biscuits known as *croquants de Nîmes*. There's also a cute tea-room next door.

**La Marmite**

BISTRO €

(☎04 66 29 98 23; www.facebook.com/impec.cable.30; 6 rue de l'Agau; menus €14-25; ☀noon-2pm Tue-Sat & 7-11pm Thu-Sat) Wooden tables, scruffy fixtures, a long steel bar and vintage-chic furniture set the casual tone at La Marmite, which specialises in French classics driven by market produce. Nothing fancy here – just choose what sounds nice from the blackboard, and tuck in.

**★ Bird**

BISTRO €€

(☎0411834580; www.facebook.com/thebirdnimes; 2 rue Tedenat; mains €15-19; ☀7-10pm) If it's just good, honest French bistro food you're craving, The Bird is a beaut. With walls lined with wine bottles, plants dangling from the ceiling and an open kitchen hatch emblazoned above with the words 'Home Made Cuisine', this is a fine Nîmes diner. Reserve.

**Le Patio Littré**

FRENCH €€

(☎0466672250; www.restaurant-patio-litre-nimes.com; 10 rue Littre; 3-course lunch/dinner menu €21/34; ☀noon-2pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sun) Overseen by young chef Julien Barrera Labonne, this small restaurant is good for fresh, tasty, imaginative French-fusion cuisine, underpinned by seasonal market ingredients. The hot-pink-striped interior is sparse and not that easy on the eye; the shady outside patio provides the superior setting. Big bonus: it's open on Sunday, too.

**Passage de Virginie**

FRENCH €€

(☎04 66 38 29 26; 15 rue Fresque; mains €16-19; ☀noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat) You'll almost miss the alley along which this tucked-away restaurant is hidden. A vaulted dining room and a minuscule patio provide the setting for homely southwest classics like braised beef, *brandade de morue* and roast chicken. The menu is handwritten and everything's homemade by Virginie.

**Restaurant Croizard**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎04 66 67 04 99; www.restaurantcroizard.com; 17 rue des Chassaintes; menus €32-96, mains €40; ☀noon-1.45pm & 7.45-9.30pm Wed-Sun) For the fine-dining experience, Vincent Croizard's restaurant is one of Nîmes' *bonnes adresses*. The eponymous chef majors on southwest flavours with a gastronomic spin. The lamplit courtyard is a delightful surprise.

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎04 66 58 38 00; www.nimes-tourisme.com; 6 bd des Arènes; ☀9am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Sep-Jun; ⓘ) Info on Nîmes and the surrounding region. Sells the Nîmes CityPass.

**i Getting There & Around****AIR**

**Aéroport de Nîmes Alès Camargue Cévennes** (FNI; ☎04 66 70 49 49; www.aeroport-nimes.fr; St-Gilles) Nîmes' airport, 10km southeast of the city on the A54, is served only by Ryanair, which flies to/from London Luton, Brussels-Charleroi, Marrakesh and Fez.

A shuttle bus (€6.80, 30 minutes) runs to/from the train station (p752); credit card payments are accepted.

**BUS**

The **bus station** (☎08 10 33 42 73; rue St-Félicité) is next to the **train station**. Local buses are run by Edgard (www.edgard-transport.fr).

**Alès Line** 114, €1.50, 1¼ hours, one daily Monday to Saturday

**Pont du Gard Line** 121, €1.50, 40 minutes, six daily Monday to Friday, four on weekends

**Uzès Line** 152, €1.50, one hour, eight to 10 daily Monday to Friday, four on Sat, one on Sunday

**CAR**

Driving in Nîmes is a nightmare: the one-way system is very complicated, and parking is expensive. Try to find a hotel with its own car park if you're intent on driving into the city.

Major car rental companies have kiosks at the airport (p751) and the train station.

## TRAIN

TGVs run hourly to/from Paris' Gare de Lyon (from €19 to €48, three hours) from the **train station** (bd Sergent Triaire).

Local destinations:

**Arles** €6.30, 25 minutes

**Avignon** €9.90 to €13.70, 35 minutes

**Montpellier** €5 to €10, 30 minutes




## Around Nîmes

Once you've explored Nîmes' Roman sites, a visit to the Unesco World Heritage-listed Pont du Gard is an absolute must.

### Sights

#### Pont du Gard

ROMAN SITE

( 04 66 37 50 99; www.pontdugard.fr; adult/child €9.50/free, guided tour to top tier €6/free;  9am-11pm Jul & Aug, to 10pm Jun & Sep, to 9pm May, to 8pm Apr & Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar; ) The extraordinary three-tiered Pont du Gard was once part of a 50km-long system of channels built around 19 BCE to transport water from Uzès to Nîmes. The scale is huge: the bridge is 48.8m high, 275m long and graced with 52 precision-built arches. It was the highest in the Roman Empire. At the visitor centre on the left, northern bank, there's an impressive, high-tech **museum** featuring the bridge, the aqueduct and the role of water in Roman society.

Each block was carved by hand and transported from nearby quarries – no mean feat, considering the largest blocks weighed over 5 tonnes. The height of the bridge descends by 2.5cm across its length, providing just enough gradient to keep the water flowing –

an amazing demonstration of the precision of Roman engineering.

You can walk across the tiers for panoramic views over the Gard River, but the best perspective on the bridge is from downstream, along the 1.4km **Mémoires de Garrigue walking trail**. If you buy the Pass Aqueduc, you can walk the bridge's topmost tier, along which the water flowed (guided tour). **Guided tours** onto the bridge's top level cost €6. For kids, there's the Ludo play area.

The site gets extremely busy in summer; early evening is a great time to visit, as admission is cheaper (adult/child €5/free) and the bridge is stunningly illuminated after dark. Entry to the site is included with the Pass Romanité (p748) and the four- and seven-day versions of the Nîmes Citypass (p748).

It's 21km northeast of Nîmes, about a 30-minute drive.

### Activities

The River Gard flows from the Cévennes mountains all the way to the Pont du Gard, passing through the Gorges du Gardon en route. Canoeing along the river provides a unique perspective on the monument: the best time to do it is between April and June, as winter floods and summer droughts can sometimes make the river impassable.

Most of the local hire companies are based in Collias, 8km from the bridge, a journey of about two hours by kayak. Depending on the season and the height of the river, you can make a longer journey by being dropped upstream at Pont St-Nicholas (19km, about five hours) or Russan (32km, seven to eight hours); the latter option also includes a trip through the Gorges du Gardon.

## DON'T MISS

### CIRQUE DE NAVACELLES

Carved out from the surrounding limestone plateau over countless millennia by the meandering Vis River, the vast natural amphitheatre known as the Cirque de Navacelles (www.cirquenavacelles.com) numbers among the most impressive sights in the Languedoc. Encircled by scrub-covered cliffs of more than 300m high, it's an epic landscape, best explored on foot: several marked trails wind their way around the edge of the canyon, including an 11km circuit to the **Moulins de la Foux**, a cluster of 19th-century watermills teetering above a thundering cascade.

There is car parking in the village centre, but thanks to its recent classification as a Grand Site de France, you'd be best to arrive early in summer. The cirque is about 32km northeast of Uzès.

There's a minimum age of six, and you must be a competent swimmer. Life jackets are provided.

**Canoe Collias** (📞04 66 22 87 20; www.canoe-collias.com; 194 chemin de St-Privat, Collias; adult/child €23/12; ☀️8am-8pm mid-Mar-late Oct).

**Canoe Le Tourbillon** (📞04 66 22 85 54; www.canoeletourbillon.com; 3 chemin du Gardon, Collias; adult/child from €24/18; ☀️9am-7pm Apr-Sep).

**Kayak Vert** (📞04 66 22 80 76; www.kayak-vert.com; 8 chemin de St-Vincent, Collias; adult/child from €24/20; ☀️9am-6pm mid-May-Oct).

## **i** Getting There & Away

There are car parks on both banks of the river, 400m level walk from the Pont du Gard (p752).

Several buses stop in Collias and Remoulins (near the Pont du Gard), including Edgard bus 121 (€1.50, 40 minutes, six daily Monday to Friday, four on weekends) between Nîmes and Uzès.

## Uzès

POP 8491

Uzès surely stakes a claim as one of the Languedoc's prettiest towns, a symphony of honey-coloured stone, pretty squares, Renaissance buildings and a grand ducal palace. Once an important trading centre – especially for silk, linen and liquorice – the town's centrepiece is the arcaded place aux Herbes, which hosts a lively farmers market every Wednesday and Saturday.

## **👁️** Sights

### ★ Duché

CHATEAU

(📞04 66 22 18 96; www.uzes.com; place du Duché; €13, incl tour €20; ☀️10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sep-Jun) This fortified château belonged to the House of Crussol, who were the dukes of Uzès for over 1000 years until the French Revolution. The building is a Renaissance wonder, with a majestic 16th-century façade showing the three orders of classical architecture (Ionic, Doric and Corinthian). Inside, guided tours (in French) take in the lavish ducal apartments and 800-year-old cellars; you can climb the 135-step Bermonde tower for wrap-around town views.

### Jardin Médiéval

GARDENS

(Medieval Garden; <http://jardinmedievaluzes.com>; rue Port Royal; adult/child garden & Tour du Roi €6/3; ☀️10.30am-1pm & 2-6.30pm mid-Jun-mid-

Sep, 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30-1pm & 2-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Jun & late Sep, 2-5.30pm Oct, closed Nov-Mar) This delightful garden contains more than 540 plants and flowers that served a variety of purposes for their medieval planters: medicinal, nutritional and symbolic. Climbing 100 steps inside the Tour du Roi (King's Tower) rewards with panoramic views over Uzès' rooftops.

### Musée du Bonbon Haribo

MUSEUM

(Sweets Museum; 📞04 66 22 20 25; www.musee-haribo.fr; Pont des Charrettes; adult/child €8/6; ☀️10am-7pm Jul, to 8pm Aug, to 7pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun) Uzès' history as a confectionery centre lives on at this Wonka-esque museum, which explores the sweets-making process from the early 20th century through to the present day. There's a collection of antique advertising posters and vintage confectionery machinery, but inevitably it's the rainbow-coloured sweets shop that takes centre stage. Of course, kids will love it – but don't expect them to sit still on the journey home. It's 4km southeast of town.

## **🛏️** Sleeping

There are some lovely places to stay around Uzès, but they aren't cheap. Book ahead or consider basing yourself in nearby Nîmes.

### ★ La Maison Rouge

B&B €€

(📞09 50 25 91 06; www.maison-rouge-uzes.com; 6 rue de la Perrine; d €120-160; 📞📞) The Red House was built from scarlet brick in 1830 for a gentleman-about-town on the edge of old Uzès. Despite its vintage trappings (balconies, stone staircase), the house has been beautifully modernised, with wooden floors, walk-in showers and swish furniture. The owners also run the adjoining **La Maison des Marronniers** (www.maison-des-marronniers-uzes.com), which features another four stylish rooms.

### Hostellerie Provençale

HOTEL €€

(📞04 66 22 11 06; www.hostellerieprovencale.com; 1-3 rue de la Grande Bourgade; d incl breakfast €95-145; 📞📞📞) This old-style hotel is a trip back in time: the nine rooms of varying size are a mix of wonky floors, sloping ceilings, antique dressers and exposed stone, giving the place a bygone-era vibe. The downstairs restaurant, **La Parenthèse**, serves good regional cuisine (*menus* €24 to €48).

### Hôtel Entraigues

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(📞04 66 72 05 25; www.hotel-entraigues.com; rue de la Calade; d/ste from €165/235; 📞📞📞)

Occupying four private mansions dating from the 15th to 18th centuries, this swish hotel opposite the Duché makes the most of its architectural features: vaulted stone ceilings, low beams, arches and oddly angled walls. Rooms vary in size and layout; cheaper ones are small. There's a tiny rooftop terrace for dusk drinks and, somehow, space for a lift and swimming pool.

★ **La Maison d'Uzès** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€  
(☎04 66 20 07 00; www.lamaisonduzes.fr; 18 rue du Dr Blanchard; d from €240; 📞 📺 📺) In a 17th-century *hôtel particulier* (private mansion) in Uzès' historical centre, this jewel has beautiful rooms filled with light-toned vintage and contemporary furnishings, and a Michelin-starred restaurant, opening to a gorgeous linden-tree-shaded courtyard with a fountain at its centre. The pièce de résistance is the in-house spa with swimming pool set in an old Roman cellar.

## 🍴 Eating

★ **La Fabrique Givrée** ICE CREAM €  
(☎04 66 57 45 71; www.lafabriquegivree.com; 27 place aux Herbes; from €3.50; ☺10am-midnight Jun-Sep, noon-7pm Oct-May) Exquisite seasonal flavours at this late-opening artisanal *glacier* (ice-cream maker) range from chestnut, salted caramel and lemon to exotic Iranian pistachio, Guatemalan coffee, Lebanon orange flower and Tahitian vanilla.

★ **Les 2 Frères d'Uzès** BISTRO €€  
(☎09 81 12 04 00; www.les2freresduzes.com; 5 boulevard Charles Gide; tapas €4.50-7, mains €14-18; ☺10am-2.30pm, 7-9.45pm Thu-Tue) Tasty, no-fuss, home-style cooking is the cornerstone of this cosy restaurant, run by amiable brothers Renaud & Geoffroy. Tables are laid

out in the small, vaulted dining room (once the stables for the Duché), with a large selection of local wine bottles along one wall, and a blackboard of tapas and classic southwest dishes from which to choose.

★ **Le Comptoir du 7** BISTRO €€  
(☎04 66 22 11 54; www.maisonsaintgeorges.com; 5 bd Charles Gide; lunch menu €18-21, mains €17-28; ☺noon-1.30pm & 7.15-9pm Tue-Sat; 📺) Upmarket Mediterranean dining, served in a choice of barrel-vaulted dining room or courtyard garden, is what to expect at this classy address – one of Uzès' top tables. Young chef Benjamin combines traditional flavours with modern style, and everything is seasonal and market-driven. Recommended.

★ **Le Tracteur** BISTRO €€  
(☎04 66 62 17 33; Off D3B, Bord Nègre; mains €17-25; ☺noon-2pm Mon-Thu, noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Fri & Sat) A cracking lunch stop just off the D981 from Uzès, this recommended restaurant in the village of Argilliers is well worth a detour for its first-rate Mediterranean food. Sit out in the sandy courtyard garden under a majestic tree, or head inside to the art-filled warehouse space, full of quirky artworks and upcycled furniture. The namesake Massey-Ferguson tractor is outside.

★ **La Table d'Uzès** GASTRONOMY €€€  
(☎04 66 20 07 00; www.lamaisonduzes.fr/res-aurant; 18 rue du Dr Blanchard; menus €34-86; ☺12.15-1.30pm & 7.30-8.30pm Wed-Sun) Chef Christophe Ducros has earned a Michelin star at his lauded restaurant, housed inside the town's poshest hotel, La Maison d'Uzès. His sophisticated food is underpinned by the very best of local ingredients: Cévennes mushrooms, Lozère lamb and pork,

## WORTH A TRIP

### TRAIN À VAPEUR DES CÉVENNES

Chugging along a 13km stretch of track between St-Jean du Gard and Anduze (15km southwest of Alès), this fabulous **steam train** (☎04 66 60 59 00; www.trainavapeur.com; Anduze; adult/child/bike return €16.50/11.50/3; ☺Apr-Oct) follows an old line through the Gardon Valley that was in operation between 1909 and 1971. Restored by enthusiasts, the ride (40 minutes one way) traverses several arched viaducts and subterranean tunnels, including the 833m-long Tunnel d'Anduze.

Along the way, the train stops at the **Bambouseraie de Prafrance** (☎04 66 61 70 47; www.bambouseraie.com; 552 rue de Montsauve, Générargues; adult/child €12.50/8.90; ☺9.30am-7pm mid-Mar-Sep, to 6pm early-mid-Mar & Oct, to 5pm early-mid-Nov, closed mid-Nov-Feb), a sprawling garden planted by a spice merchant 160 years ago. Oak, maple, camelia, ginkgo and giant sequoias grow here alongside 240 bamboo species, and you can wander around a mock Laotian village, Japanese-style zen garden and labyrinth.

Med-caught fish. Lunch (€34 Wednesday to Friday, €44 on Saturday) is good value. Everyone wants a table in the courtyard in summer: book ahead.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 66 22 68 88; [www.pays-uzes-tourisme.com](http://www.pays-uzes-tourisme.com); place Albert 1er; ☎10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Oct-May) Just outside the old quarter. Has free leaflets (in English and French) describing walking tours of the historical centre.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Local buses are run by Edgard ([www.edgard-transport.fr](http://www.edgard-transport.fr)).

**Avignon** Line 115, €1.50, one hour, seven daily Monday to Friday, three on weekends.

**Nîmes** Line 152, €1.50, one hour, eight to 10 daily Monday to Friday, four on Sat, one on Sunday

# Montpellier

POP 286,098

Montpellier is surely one of southern France's most underrated cities. Graceful, elegant and easy-going, it's a city brimming with architectural appeal: stately *hôtels particuliers*, shady backstreets, peaceful public gardens and one of the best art museums in southwest France, the fantastic Musée Fabre.

Unusually, the city has no Roman heritage. It was founded in the 10th century by the counts of Toulouse and became a prosperous trading port as well as a scholarly centre; Europe's first medical school was established here in the 12th century. The population swelled in the 1960s when many French settlers left independent Algeria and relocated here, and it's now France's fastest-growing city, and one of its most multicultural. Students make up a third of the population, giving it a spirited, youthful vibe.

It's also a beach town. Several kilometres of sandy coastline are a bike ride away from the centre, although you'll have to put in some effort to escape the most built-up areas.

## **i** Sights

Montpellier's beating heart is the huge open square of place de la Comédie. The city's

## **i** MONTPELLIER CITY CARD

The **Montpellier City Card** (1/2/3 days €13.50/19.80/25.20, children half-price) provides unlimited travel on trams and buses, a guided walking tour, free admission to several museums, plus a €2 discount on tickets for the Musée Fabre. You can buy it online from the tourist office (p760) website and pick it up when you arrive.

finest period architecture and *hôtels particuliers* are around the old quarter, which lies to the northeast, bordered by the main roads of bd Henri IV, rue Foch and bd Pasteur.

## ★ Musée Fabre

GALLERY

(☎04 67 14 83 00; [www.museefabre.fr](http://www.museefabre.fr); 39 bd de Bonne Nouvelle; adult/child €8/5.50; ☎10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Founded in 1825 by painter François-Xavier Fabre, this exceptional museum houses one of France's richest collections of European art. The galleries collectively showcase the last 600 years of artistic activity in Europe; most of the big names are represented here. Recent renovations have transformed the museum into a light, airy and engaging space.

Of particular local interest are the works of Montpellier-born artist Frédéric Bazille (1841-70), a close contemporary of Monet, Sisley and Manet. The artist has a whole room devoted to him: look out for his portrait of Renoir, seated on a chair with legs tucked up beneath him, and a moody portrait of the artist himself by a very young Monet. Another local notable is Alexandre Cabanel (1823-89), whose striking, classical paintings explore a range of mythological and religious tales – look out for a dramatic portrait of a fallen Satan and a similarly dramatic image of a dying Moses, his soul carried away by angels.

Elsewhere around the museum, the Dutch section contains three small paintings by Rubens, while the Romantic section is strong on French artists – particularly Delacroix, Géricault and Corot. Monet, Degas, Kees van Dongen, Matisse and Delaunay are all represented in the modern section.

There is a particularly strong showing by Gustave Courbet – a close friend of Alfred Bruyas, a prominent local art collector who donated most of his personal collection to the museum (you'll see many portraits of his orange-bearded face as you wander round,



## Montpellier



including Courbet's own depiction of a meeting between the two friends). Among the museum's most prized works is Courbet's *The Bathers* (1866), which depicts a semi-nude woman displaying prominent buttocks – it caused a scandal at the Paris

Salon in 1853, and was later purchased by Courbet for 3000 francs.

Several rooms are devoted to the abstract painter and sculptor Pierre Soulages, known for his 'noir-lumière' (black-light) works.

## Montpellier

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Jardin des Plantes.....A1  
2 Musée Fabre.....D2

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Arc de Triomphe.....A3  
4 Cathédrale St-Pierre.....A1  
Hôtel de Cabrières-Sabatier  
d'Espeyran.....(see 2)  
5 Hôtel de la Vieille Intendance.....B2  
6 Hôtel de Varennes.....C3  
7 Hôtel des Trésoriers de France.....C4  
8 Hôtel St-Côme.....C4  
9 La Panacée.....C2  
Musée du Vieux Montpellier.....(see 6)

### 📍 Sleeping

- 10 Auberge de Jeunesse.....C1  
11 Baudon de Mauny.....C2  
12 Hôtel du Palais.....A2

### 📍 Eating

- 13 Anga.....B2  
14 Bistro Urbain.....A4  
Café de la Panacée.....(see 9)  
15 Green Lab.....B2  
16 Halles Castellane.....B3  
17 Halles Laissac.....B5  
18 Leclère.....A4  
19 Les Bains de Montpellier.....C5  
20 Marché Place de la Comédie.....C4  
21 Pastis.....A3

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 22 Coffee Club.....B3  
23 Glou Glou.....D1  
24 La Barbote.....D6  
25 Papa Doble.....A3  
26 Popular Brewing.....C1

Entry to the nearby **Hôtel de Cabrières-Sabatier d'Espeyran** (📍04 67 14 83 00; www.museefabre.fr; 39 bd de Bonne Nouvelle; ☺ 2-5pm Tue-Sun late-Jun-mid-Sep, 2-5pm Tue, Sat & Sun mid-Sep-late-Jun), a lavish mansion containing a rich collection of furniture and decorative arts, is included.

### Place Royale du Peyrou

GARDENS

(place Royale du Peyrou; ☺ 7am-midnight Jun-Aug, to 9.30pm Mar-May, Sep & Oct, to 8pm Nov-Feb) Completed in 1774, this wide, tree-lined esplanade is a popular place for Montpellierians to take their evening stroll. The eastern end of the park is marked by the city's 52m-high **Arc de Triomphe** (rue Foch; tours adult/child €10/5.50; ☺ tours in English 10am Tue & Sat Jul & Aug), dedicated to Louis XIV, not far away from a dramatic statue of the king on horseback. At the western end is the **Château d'Eau**, an elaborate hexagonal water tower, from where there is a superb view over the wonderful **Aqueduc de St-Clément**, spectacularly illuminated at night.

In summer, you can climb 88 steps to the top of the arch; contact the tourist office to sign up for one of the guided tours (adult/child €10/6).

### ★ Jardin des Plantes

GARDENS

(bd Henri IV; ☺ noon-8pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep, to 6pm Tue-Sun Oct-May) One of Montpellier's hidden gems, the Jardin des Plantes is the oldest botanical garden in France. Established in 1593, it was used as a model for the much better-known Jardin des Plantes in Paris, laid out nearly 30 years later. Along its

shaded paths you'll find more than 2500 species, including nine varieties of palm, 250 medicinal plants and an arboretum of rare trees, as well as a glorious greenhouse dating from 1860.

### La Panacée

GALLERY

(📍04 99 58 28 00; www.moco.art; 14 rue de l'École de Pharmacie) **FREE** Housed in a building that once belonged to the city's medical school, this contemporary art gallery hosts regular exhibitions by local painters, conceptual artists and sculptors. It also has a great café (p758) on the ground floor.

### Musée du Vieux Montpellier

MUSEUM

(📍04 67 66 02 94; 2 place Pétrarque; adult/child €3/free; ☺ 10.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun; 📞) This municipal museum has a fairly pedestrian collection of local-interest pieces ranging from furniture to paintings and antique weaponry, but it's worth a visit as it's one of the few *hôtels particuliers* open to the public.

### 📍 Sleeping

#### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(📍04 67 60 32 22; www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/montpellier.html; 2 impasse de la Petite Corraterie; dm incl breakfast €17-30; ☺ reception 10am-noon & 2pm-midnight; 📞) On the edge of the old town, Montpellier's HI-affiliated hostel is a bit basic, but it's centrally located and offers clean 2- to 10-bed dorms. There's a lounge downstairs with table football and pool, and a small garden.

## MONTPELLIER'S HÔTELS PARTICULIERS

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Montpellier's rich merchants built themselves grand *hôtels particuliers* to show off their power and wealth. The most important houses are marked by plaques; you can pick up a map in the tourist office (p760). Many have ornate inner courtyards (mostly, alas, closed to the public).

Among the most notable is the **Hôtel de Varennes** (2 place Pétrarque), a mix of medieval and Renaissance architecture; it's now home to a modest museum (p757).

Just south on rue Jacques Cœur is the 17th-century **Hôtel des Trésoriers de France**, one-time residence of King Louis XIII. Just west is the grand **Hôtel St-Côme** (Grand Rue Jean Moulin).

Further west near the **Cathédrale St-Pierre** (1 rue St-Pierre; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat) is the early-17th-century **Hôtel de la Vieille Intendance** (rue de la Vieille Intendance), built during the reign of Louis XIII.

### ★ Hôtel du Palais

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 67 60 47 38; www.hoteldupalais-montpellier.fr; 3 rue du Palais des Guilhem; s €85, d €145-155; 🏠 🚶) You couldn't ask for a prettier facade than the one at this old town beauty – complete with wrought-iron balconies, window boxes and shuttered windows, and small but elegant rooms in tasteful shades of white and grey. Try to get one overlooking the square if you can. There are preferential parking rates at the car parks on rue Foch and rue Pitot.

### Hôtel des Arceaux

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 67 92 03 03; www.hoteldesarceaux.com; 33-35 bd des Arceaux; d €75-180; 🏠 🚶) A ten-minute walk from the old town past Place Royale, this townhouse hotel sits beneath the arches of Montpellier's landmark aqueduct. The rooms are light, bright and modern; ones at the back overlook a secluded, palm-filled courtyard. Considering the steep stairs, the lack of a lift is a headache. Private parking costs €7.

### Hôtel du Parc

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 67 41 16 49; www.hotelduparc-montpellier.com; 8 rue Achille-Bégé; s €68-85, d €90-135;

🏠 🚶) A ½ kilometre walk north of the old town, this rambling 18th-century *hôtel particulier* makes a regal, if rather old-school, place to stay. It has 19 rooms of varying sizes (not all ensuite), accessed via a sweeping central staircase. The best have French windows overlooking the gated garden, where there's free parking (a big bonus in Montpellier).

### ★ Baudon de Mauny

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 67 02 21 77; www.baudondemauny.com; 1 rue de la Carbonnerie; d €145-355; ☎ reception 4-8pm, closed Feb; 🏠 🚶) A cross between a palatial B&B and a boutique hotel, this splendid 18th-century house with nine rooms has been given the full designer overhaul: original fireplaces, oak doors and sash windows sit alongside modern furniture, anglepoise lamps and butterfly wallpaper. The most convenient parking is at Parking du Corum, 500m northeast. Breakfast from €10.



## Eating

Montpellier is a great destination for foodies. You'll find plenty of cheap and cheerful joints on rue de l'Université, rue des Écoles Laïques and the surrounding streets.

The city centre has two attractive covered markets: **Halles Castellane** (rue de la Loge; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun) and **Halles Laissac** (www.montpellier.fr/4237-halles-laissac.htm; Place Alexandre Laissac; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1.30pm Sun). Outdoor food markets are held on **Place de la Comédie** (place de la Comédie; ☎ 7am-1.30pm Mon-Thu, to 6pm Fri & Sat) and **Boulevard des Arceaux** (Blvd des Arceaux; ☎ 7am-1.30pm Tue & Sat), among other locations.

### Green Lab

VEGETARIAN €

(☎ 04 67 57 39 17; www.facebook.com/greenlabmontpellier; 2 rue de l'Université; mains €6-10; ☎ noon-10pm Tue-Sat; 🚶) For a quick falafel or veggie-friendly platter, this little cafe in the middle of the old town is hard to beat for value. It's very popular – expect queues out the door at lunchtime.

### Café de la Panacée

BISTRO €

(☎ 04 99 63 45 68; www.facebook.com/cafedelapanacee; 14 rue de l'École de Pharmacie; menus €14-20, Sun brunch €18, tapas €4-8; ☎ 10am-1am Wed-Sat, to 7pm Sun) On the ground floor of La Panacée art gallery, this stylish venue is popular for lunch, weekend brunch and evening tapas. It's a big open-plan space, with a short blackboard menu of daily specials to choose from.

★ **Anga**

BISTRO €€

(☎ 04 67 60 61 65; [www.facebook.com/restaurant.anga](http://www.facebook.com/restaurant.anga); 19 rue du Palais des Guilhem; menus €23-45; ☺ noon-1.45pm & 8-9.30pm Wed-Sat) The young team at this tiny old town restaurant specialises in *vapeur en suédois* (high-pressure steam cooking), which preserves moisture and flavours. Everything is cooked fresh and the menu changes daily, but there's only a handful of tables: reservations are essential.

★ **Bistro Urbain**

BISTRO €€

(☎ 09 83 22 42 61; [www.bistrourbain.com](http://www.bistrourbain.com); 15 blvd Ledru Rollin; 2-3-course lunch €23/26, dinner menu €34; ☺ 12.30-2pm Wed-Sat, 7.30-9.30pm Thu-Sat, open every evening Jul & Aug) With a more relaxed vibe than some of the fine diners round town, Cédric Sanguineto's small, stone-walled dining room is a definite must-try. His style is 'bistronomie' (bistro meets gastronomy) – so high-class food without the exclusive price-tags. Decorative touches, like wicker baskets on the walls and deck-chairs out front, dial up the fun, playful feel.

**Les Bains de Montpellier** MEDITERRANEAN €€

(☎ 04 67 60 70 87; [www.les-bains-de-montpellier.com](http://www.les-bains-de-montpellier.com); 6 rue Richelieu; lunch/dinner menu €29/39; ☺ noon-2pm & 8-11pm Mon-Sat) What fun – a former public bathhouse turned fine French restaurant. Tables are set around the old perimeter bathrooms, with plush purple chairs and overhead chandeliers, but the best are in the interior courtyard, surrounded by ponds and palms.

**Leclère**

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 04 67 56 90 23; [www.restaurantleclere.com](http://www.restaurantleclere.com); 41 rue de la Valfère; lunch/dinner €35/45; ☺ 12.30-2pm Thu-Sat, 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat, dinner only Jul & Aug) Having trained under top chefs including Marc Veyrat and Anne Majourel, Guillaume Leclère has struck out on his own Montpellier venture, and it's a treat for fans of sophisticated, seasonal French dining. 'Cuisine d'arrivage' is the watchword – in other words, the menu is dreamt up according to what's best right now. The dining room is small and quite formal.

**Pastis**

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 04 67 66 37 26; [www.pastis-restaurant.com](http://www.pastis-restaurant.com); 3 rue Terral; lunch/dinner menu €25/44; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 8-9.30pm Tue-Sun) High-class, formal French dining defines Pastis, one of Montpellier's most highly regarded restaurants, run by young chef Daniel Lutrand (who trained at Michel Bras' stellar L'Aubrac). There's no menu: dishes are dreamt up daily by what Daniel finds at the market, and served for the whole table, so surprises are part of the experience.

**Drinking & Nightlife**

Bars cluster around rue En-Gondeau, Grand Rue Jean Moulin, place Jean Jaurès, and the intersection of rue de l'Université and rue de la Candolle.

*Sortir à Montpellier* ([www.sortiramontpellier.fr](http://www.sortiramontpellier.fr)) has nightlife listings in print and online.

**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE****MARCHÉ DU LEZ**

Every self-respecting city needs its own hipster market, and in Montpellier it's the **Marché du Lez** ([www.marchedulez.com](http://www.marchedulez.com); 1348 ave Raymond Dugrand; ☺ ships 10am-7pm Tue-Sun, food stands noon-2.30pm & 8-11pm). Situated in a former factory on the banks of its namesake river, it has all the features you'd expect: vintage clothing stalls, boutique bike shop, grocer, fruit stand and pop-up food stalls serving everything from sushi to fresh sardines, sourdough pizzas and boutique burgers. It's fairly quiet in the week – head there from Friday to Sunday for the full atmosphere. Take Tram Line 3 and get off at the Pablo Picasso stop.

While you're here, consider eating at **Terminal #1** (☎ 04 99 58 38 38; [www.terminalpourcel.com](http://www.terminalpourcel.com); 1408 Ave de la Mer; 2-/3-course lunch menu €29/39, dinner menu €49; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jul), an industrial-chic converted factory space where superchef twins Jacques & Laurent Pourcel (who previously held three Michelin stars at Montpellier's renowned Jardin des Sens), dish up their 'gourmet bistro' take on the classics.

It's a red-hot ticket: reserve ahead.

## MONTPELLIER'S BEACHES

Strolling the old quarter, it's easy to forget that Montpellier is a coastal city. Most beaches can be reached in half an hour by bus or car via the D21, or via a purpose-built cycling track that runs all the way from the city centre.

The sands run for around 10km between the concrete-heavy (and pretty ghastly) resorts of **Palavas-les-Flots** and **La Grande-Motte**. For quieter shores, head a few kilometres southeast of La Grande-Motte to **Plage de l'Espiguette** (Le Grau-du-Roi). On the west side of a headland, the lovely beach is a nature reserve, with dune systems providing a habitat for endangered birds and insects (as well as naturalists). There's little shade, though, and it's often windy: ideal for kitesurfers and kite-buggiers.

Alternatively, the wetlands around **Villeneuve-lès-Maguelone**, on the coast road to Sète, are great for flamingo-spotting; the birds stop off en route from the Camargue, 30km to the east. Tip: it also boasts a wonderfully quiet and scenic beach, **Plage du Pilou** (Villeneuve-lès-Maguelone).

Kayaking is a great way to explore; contact **Palavas Kayak de Mer** (☎04 67 50 79 84; www.palavaskayakdemer.com; Bassin de Plaisance Les 4 Canaux, Palavas-les-Flots; half-/full-day €25/35; ☺ by reservation).

### ★ GlouGlou

WINE BAR

(☎04 34 11 71 41; www.glouglou-baravins.com; 27 rue du Pila Saint Gély; ☺6pm-1am Tue-Sat) If you want to sample a few Languedoc wines, 'GlugGlug' is definitely the place – they have loads on tap, all on a self-serve basis (your bill gets totted up on a card). The long, vaulted, cellar-like room is full of atmosphere, and there are small plates if you get peckish. Not to be missed.

### Popular Brewing

CRAFT BEER

(☎09 83 36 89 35; www.facebook.com/popularbrewing; 14 rue du Pila Saint Gély; ☺6pm-1am Tue-Sat) Get your craft beer fix (including some own brews) at this trendy pub, accompanied by small plates of tapas. The solid stone walls and heavy beams add atmosphere.

### La Barbote

MICROBREWERY

(☎07 68 31 12 50; www.microbrasserielabarbote.com; 1 rue des Deux Ponts; ☺6pm-1am) This Montpellier microbrewery near the train station crafts its own ales, including a rye IPA and pumpkin ale, and serves tasty food too.

### Papa Doble

COCKTAIL BAR

(☎04 67 55 66 66; 6 rue du Petit Scel; ☺6pm-1am Mon-Sat) Papa Hemingway provides the inspiration at this speakeasy-style cocktail bar: there are several cocktails created in the great man's honour, including the De Pepe Villa (spicy tequila, lime, hazelnut and ginger beer).

### Le Parfum

COCKTAIL BAR

(☎04 67 84 86 15; www.barleparfum.com; 55 rue de la Cavalerie; ☺7pm-1am Tue-Sat) Inspired by the bestselling novel by Patrick Süskind, this moody cocktail bar crafts colourful, fragrant cocktails, served alongside *dim sum*. It's a bit out of the centre.

### Coffee Club

CAFE

(☎07 86 17 81 56; www.facebook.com/coffeeclubmontpellier; 12 rue St-Guilhem; ☺10am-7pm Tue-Sat, 11am-7pm Sun) This central espresso bar serves the city's best coffee, plus smoothies and cakes. There are a few tables on the street to watch the world go by.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 67 60 60 60; www.montpellier-tourisme.fr; 30 allée Jean de Latre de Tassigny; ☺9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) Sells the Montpellier City Card (p755) and runs guided tours.

## i Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Montpellier Airport** (MPL; ☎08 25 83 00 03; www.montpellier.aeroport.fr) 8km southeast of town, the airport has regular connections to many French cities, including Ajaccio, Bastia, Bordeaux, Brest, Lille, Nantes, Paris and Strasbourg. There are also flights to London, Amsterdam, Dublin, Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich and North Africa.

The **Navette Aéroport** (Airport Shuttle; www.montpellier.aeroport.fr/acces/en-transports



-publics-aeroport-montpellier/; one way €1.60) (line 620) runs between the airport and place de l'Europe tram stop. Buses to the airport (p760) run hourly from 5am to 8am, then half-hourly to 8pm. From the airport, they run half-hourly from 8.30am to 8.30pm, then every 45 minutes till 11.15pm. The ride takes 15 to 25 minutes. Tickets can be purchased on the bus; the fare to place de l'Europe is €1.60, or you can buy an onward tram/bus pass for €2.60.

## BUS

Buses are mainly useful for getting to the beaches, and towns not served by train. **Hérault Transport** (☎ 04 34 88 89 99; www.herault-transport.fr) runs most services for a flat rate of €1.60.

**La Grande-Motte** (20 minutes, at least hourly Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday) Catch bus 606 from place de France, in the Antigone quarter.

**Palavas-les-Flots** (10 to 20 minutes, 15 Monday to Friday, 11 on Saturday, nine on Sunday) Catch Tram 4 to Garcia Lorca and take bus 631.

## TRAIN

Montpellier now has two train mainline stations (inter-city TGVs go to both; double-check which one you've booked).

This flashy concrete-and-glass **Montpellier Sud-de-France TGV Station** (www.oui.sncf; 1521 rue de la Fontaine de la Banquière) opened in mid-2018 in the Odysseum quarter, 4km southeast of the centre. It's cut travel times to Paris Gare de Lyon to just 3 hours, but it's a long way out of the centre. To get into town, catch the Navette Aéroport (p760) bus to place de l'Europe in the Antigone quarter, then Tram 1 onwards into the city centre. The journey time is about 40 minutes including bus and tram – note that buses don't meet early or late trains (the earliest bus that stops at the station arrives at 7.15am and leaves at 8pm, and they don't stop at all on Sundays). If you arrive outside these hours, a taxi or Uber is your only option. Eventually, the

station will have its own dedicated stop on Tram Line 1, but that won't be until 2022 at the earliest.

The old city centre station, **Montpellier St-Roch** (www.ter.sncf.com; place Auge Gibert), still handles many TGV services and trains to destinations including:

**Carcassonne** €26.70, 1½ hours

**Narbonne** €17.40, one hour

**Nîmes** €10.10, 30 minutes

**Perpignan** €27.20, 1¾ hours

## Getting Around

Several high-profile designers including Christian Lacroix contributed designs for Montpellier's sleek, efficient four-line tram system. All four colour-coded lines stop at Gare St-Roch; Line 1 (Blue) & 2 (Orange) stop at place de la Comédie. A fifth line is currently under construction.

Tickets (valid on trams and buses) cost €1.60; a one-day pass costs €4.30. There are ticket machines at most tram stops, or you can buy them at the tourist office (p760) or newsagents.

Having a car is more hindrance than help in Montpellier. If your hotel doesn't offer parking, the best idea is to use one of the large car parks beside major tram stops such as Odysseum; a €4.90 ticket buys all-day parking and a return tram ticket into town.

## Sète

POP 43,609

Set alongside the Med and the saltwater lagoon of Étang du Thau, Sète is sometimes called the 'Little Venice of Languedoc' – a reference to the many canals that run through town, including the Canal du Midi, which terminates its 240km journey here from Toulouse, and the Canal du Rhône, whose 98km journey from Beaucaire also ends here.

### WORTH A TRIP

#### PIC ST-LOUP

Rising from a scrubby sea of garrigue like the prow of a limestone supertanker, the Pic St-Loup is one of the Languedoc's most recognisable mountains, and a hugely popular weekend hike for Montpellierians. At 658m, it provides a stunning panorama all the way to the Cévennes foothills and the coast; the trail to the top winds through fragrant woodland and takes about 1½ to 2 hours, but it is steep and rocky in some sections, so wear proper shoes and carry plenty of water.

At the top is a small chapel dedicated to the peak's namesake saint. It gets crowded at the top: during the summer, avoid weekends, or aim for an evening walk when the trails are usually quieter. The main car park is near the village of Cazevieille, about 32km north of Montpellier. Arrive early to be sure of a space.

Sète is a bit short on sights, but its honest, workaday atmosphere makes a refreshing change from the built-up tourist towns of the rest of the Languedoc coast. The town's showpiece event is the annual **joutes nautiques** (☺ mid-Jun–Aug), during which boat crews joust with long poles in an attempt to knock each other into the harbour. The tournaments run from mid-June and peak in late August, when accommodation is extremely hard to come by.

## Sights & Activities

Make time for walking up Mont St-Clair for panoramic views, and wandering around La Pointe Courte, the old fishermen's quarter.

Sète's string of beaches stretch west from town along the southern side of the Etang du Thau.

### **Musée Paul Valéry**

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 99 04 76 16; www.museepaulvalery-sete.fr; 148 rue François Desnoyer; adult/child €9.90/5.30; ☺ 9.30am–7pm Apr–Oct, 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Nov–Mar) Sète was the birthplace of symbolist poet Paul Valéry (1871–1945), and the town's main museum houses a small collection of his works, along with paintings and drawings by other local artists. Valéry is buried in the Cimetière Marin across the street.

### **Kayak Med**

KAYAKING

(☎ 06 95 63 12 75; www.kayakmed.com; 19 promenade Jean-Baptiste Marty; kayak/SUP rental per 3hr €15/20, kayak & SUP tours per 2½hrs from €35, bike rental per half-day/day €10/14; ☺ 10am–1pm & 2–6pm Apr–Sep) Rent kayaks and SUPs (stand-up paddleboards) or take a guided tour of Sète's waterways with this local outfit. Life jackets and waterproof containers are provided. It also offers bicycle rental.

### **Sète Croisières**

BOATING

(☎ 04 67 46 00 46; www.sete-croisieres.com; quai Général Durand; port & coast tour adult/child €12/8, Étang du Thau tour €15/8, canals €10/6; ☺ Apr–Oct) Cruise around the town's canals, port and coast, plus Étang du Thau and the local mussel and oyster farms, which you can peer at through the boat's glass-bottomed hulls.

## Sleeping

### **Grand Hôtel**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 67 74 71 77; www.legrandhotelsete.com; 17 quai Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny; d from €120; ) This 19th-century harbourfront hotel is indeed grand, from the marble lobby, filled with palms and modern art, all the

way through to rooms arranged around a palm-filled, glass-roofed interior courtyard. The best rooms overlook the harbour. There's an excellent restaurant.

### **L'Orque Bleue**

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 67 74 72 13; www.hotel-orquebleue-sete.com; 10 quai Aspirant Herber; r €89–160; ) To sense Sète as a living port, this renovated shipping magnate's mansion – a marble-clad 1880s *hôtel particulier* – is the place to sleep. Rooms with canal outlooks are prime real estate.

## Eating

Fish reigns supreme in Sète. Seafood restaurants line quai Durand and quai Maximin Licciardi, but the quality can be variable, so choose carefully. You can also have a great, simple meal in the Halles (covered market).

### **Oh Gobie**

SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 04 99 02 61 14; www.facebook.com/ohgobie; 9 quai Maximin Licciardi; mains €10–25; ☺ noon–1.30pm & 7–9.30pm Thu–Mon) Simple fish delivered daily from the harbour. The quirky terrace complete with seafaring paraphernalia is a good place to soak up the atmosphere of the seafront.

### **La Méditerranéenne**

SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 04 67 74 38 37; www.la-mediterraneenne-sete.com; 3 quai Maximin Licciardi; mains €11–19, platters €35–78; ☺ noon–2.30pm & 7–11pm) Our pick of the quayside fish restaurants, run by local chef Fouzia Sakrani. Tuck into fresh oysters or fish cooked *à la plancha* (on a hot plate) – or go for a supersized shellfish platter.

## ★ **La Coquerie**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 06 47 06 71 38; www.restaurantlacoquerie.com; 1 chemin du Cimetière Marin; 6-course meal €65; ☺ 7.30–10pm Mon–Sat Jun–Sep, noon–2pm & 7.30–10pm Thu–Sat, noon–2pm Sun Oct–May) Sète's premier restaurant has a new team in charge: chef Guilhem and wine maestro Arnaud, who are carrying on the tradition of first-rate Sèteois seafood, inspired by the market and the flavours of the Languedoc. There's no set menu, so just go with the flow and settle in for delicious food and dreamy harbour views.

## Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 04 99 04 71 71; www.tourisme-sete.com; 60 Grand Rue Mario Roustan; ☺ 9.30am–7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–5pm Sun Apr–Jun & Sep,

## ST GUILHEM-LE-DESERT

A World Heritage Site, and justifiably listed as one of France's Plus Beaux Villages (Most Beautiful Villages), this medieval hamlet was (and remains) an important way station on the Santiago de Compostela pilgrim route. Clinging improbably to a ravine, it's gloriously well-preserved, with a warren of streets and a Romanesque abbey church, complete with a stately fountain-filled square.

Immediately south of the village is the graceful **Pont du Diable** (1030), supposedly built by the devil at the mouth of the Gorges de l'Hérault.

Various trails lead from the village, including a trail to the **Cirque de l'Infernet**, a natural amphitheatre with lofty, vertigo-inducing views, and a circular route following part of the Chemin de St-Jacques pilgrims' trail. The village gets fiercely hot and busy in summer: avoid July and August.

9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Oct-Mar) Just back from the waterfront.

### **i** Getting There & Away

Trains run hourly from Montpellier (€6.30, 20 minutes) and half-hourly to Narbonne (€13.60, 40 minutes).

## Bouzigues

POP 1690

Oyster and mussel beds occupy the waters of the shimmering Étang de Thau lagoon, which surrounds this little village 15km northwest of Sète, while vineyards criss-cross the hillsides above town. Although wine has been produced here since the 6th century, shellfish farming only started in 1925, but it now anchors Bouzigues' economy.

### **o** Sights & Activities

★ **Musée Parc des Dinosauriens et de la Préhistoire** MUSEUM  
(☎04 67 43 02 80; www.dinosaure.eu; D613, Mèze; adult/child €13/11; ☉10.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 2-6pm Feb-Jun, Sep & Oct, 2-5pm Nov & Dec, closed Jan) Signs warning of dinosaurs line the drive up, but this dinosaur park is no gimmick – the biggest cache of dinosaur eggs ever discovered in Europe was found here

in 1996. Ongoing archaeological digs are unearthing more fossils and footprints. Life-size dinosaur models stand in the parkland and bilingual signs bring exhibits to life. A section of the park focuses on our prehistoric ancestors. The park's 11km west of Bouzigues via the D613.

### Musée de Site

**Gallo-Romain Villa Loupian** ROMAN SITE  
(☎04 67 18 68 18; www.loupian.fr; Loupian; adult/child €5/3.50; ☉10am-1pm & 3-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Nov & Feb) Dating from the 1st century AD, this extraordinary Roman villa was built on the Via Domitia road linking Italy and Spain. It was occupied for 600 years. Highlights include a wine cellar and the villa's dazzling preserved mosaics with Syrian and Aquitaine influences; they cover 13 ground-floor rooms. Audioguides are included with admission; free tours take place at 3pm Thursday in French, with translation sheets available. The site is 4.5km southwest of Bouzigues off the D613.

### **🍷** Sleeping & Eating

Oysters are the thing to eat in Bouzigues: the waterfront is lined with shellfish restaurants.

**Domaine Tarbouriech** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€  
(☎04 48 14 00 30; www.domaine-tarbouriech.fr; chemin des Domaines, Marseillan; d/ste from €219/269; P ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Halfway between Bouzigues and Agde, this swanky gem occupies a former *domaine viticole* (wine estate) off Étang de Thau. Everything, from its huge rooms and suites to the on-site restaurant and spa, is stylish and impeccable. And there's an oyster bar, of course.

**Chez Francine** SEAFOOD €€  
(☎04 67 78 95 84; www.restochezfrancine.fr; 11 av Louis Tudesq; menus €19-33, mains €13-19, platters €23-58; ☉noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm, closed Thu all day & Fri lunch) Platters piled high with oysters and mussels and other luscious seafood sourced from the surrounding waters are the speciality of Chez Francine. The restaurant has a picturesque setting opposite the lagoon with front-row views of the oyster and mussel beds from its pavement terrace.

**Les Demoiselles Dupuy** SEAFOOD €€  
(☎04 67 43 87 34; www.desdemoisellesdupuy.com; Chemin de la Catonnière; mains €15-30; ☉noon-3pm daily, 7pm-midnight Wed-Sat May-Oct) Run by painter-architect Gilles Marie Dupuy

(whose family have been Sètois for generations) this lagoonside spot is a good bet for sampling oysters, mussels, prawns, anchovies and plenty more besides. It's unashamedly rough-and-ready – no airs and graces here, and service can be slapdash – but the atmosphere is fun.

### Le Marin

SEAFOOD **cc**

(☎ 04 67 18 10 39; www.lemarin34.com; 8 place de la Golette; menus €24.50-53, mains €15-25; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-9pm Apr-Oct, noon-2pm Nov-Mar) This oyster farmer has its own shellfish beds right out front. Its delicacies – oyster gratin, stuffed mussels, grilled cuttlefish, and monkfish and rosemary skewers – are served in either the dining room or a lagoon-facing terrace. Sample six oysters for just €8, or splash out on a full-blown *plateaux de coquillages* (shellfish platter).

### **i** Getting There & Away

Buses are operated by Hérault Transport (p761) and leave from the main square near the town hall. Buses 603/4 link Bouzigues with Montpellier (€1.60, 40 minutes, every two hours Monday to Saturday, four on Sunday).

## Agde

POP 27,681

For most people, the only real reason to stop in the coastal town of Agde is for swimming and sunbathing. Beaches sprawl all around the headland of **Cap d'Agde**: the nicest are on the far west (especially around La Tamarière and St-Vincent) and the far east, home to France's (and the world's) largest nudist colony.

Agde has hourly trains to Montpellier (€10.30, 30 minutes) and Sète (€5.40, 10 minutes), but you'll need your own wheels to explore the coast.

### WORTH A TRIP

#### LANGUEDOC WINES

11km north of Agde, the wonderful wine warehouse of **Vinipolis** (☎ 04 67 77 00 20; www.vinipolis.fr; 5 av des Vendanges, Florensac; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon & Thu, 9am-5.30pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, 11am-3.30pm Sun) is a great place to get acquainted with Languedoc wines. Adjoining a winemaking co-operative, it stocks hundreds of local vintages.

Even better, there's a great regional restaurant right next door, **Le Bistrot d'Alex** (☎ 04 67 77 03 05; www.lebistrotalex.fr; 5 av des Vendanges, Florensac; 2-/3-course menu €19.50/23.50, with cheese €28.50; ☺ noon-1.45pm Tue-Fri & Sun, noon-1.45pm & 8-9.45pm Sat). It's deservedly popular with locals and visitors, so reservations are a good idea.

## Narbonne

POP 53,594

These days, Narbonne is a charming mid-size Languedoc market town, but wind the clock back two millennia and you'd be in a major Roman city – the capital of the province of Gallia Narbonensis. Exceptional sights include its cathedral (p765) and former archbishops' palace, as well as one of France's most magnificent covered markets. The town is a popular stop-off for boaters: the Canal de la Robine runs through town, connecting the Étang de Bages-Sigean with the Canal du Midi.

Narbonne's Roman heritage will be explored at NarboVia, a new museum designed by star architect Norman Foster, on Ave de Gruissan just outside the town centre. Ask at the tourist office for updates, or visit [musees-occitanie.fr](http://musees-occitanie.fr).

### **o** Sights

Several large beaches sprawl to the south-east of Narbonne, stretching along the edge of the Gruissan lagoon and its celebrated salt flats. They're usually quieter than those along the coast near Agde and Montpellier, although they are wind-prone.

### Palais des Archevêques

PALACE

(Archbishops' Palace; place de l'Hôtel de Ville; all museums €10, s museum €6; ☺ 10am-6pm Jun-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Mon Oct-May) Once home to the city's archbishops, this sprawling edifice looms up at the centre of the old town. It's mainly worth visiting for the chance to climb up to the top of the keep for fabulous views across the countryside around Narbonne. Outside on place de l'Hôtel de Ville, look out for a preserved section of the Via Domitia, the Roman road which once ran right across Gallia Narbonensis, all the way from Rome to Spain.

The palace also houses several archaeological museums, although the collections will change after the opening of Narbo-Via. Most interesting is the Horreum, with an underground gallery of Gallo-Roman shops.

### Cathédrale St-Just

CATHEDRAL

(entry on rue Armand Gauthier; treasury €6; ☉ 9am-noon & 2-6pm, treasury 10-11.45am & 2-5.45pm) Narbonne's most distinctive landmark is actually only half-finished: construction was halted in the 14th century, and only the towers and choir reached final completion. Its treasury has a beautiful Flemish tapestry of the Creation, while fantastical gargoyles leer down upon the 16th-century cloister.

### ★ Abbaye de Fontfroide

MONASTERY

(☎ 04 68 45 11 08; www.fontfroide.com; chemin de Fontfroide, Fontfroide; adult/child €11.50/7; ☉ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Nov-Mar) Founded by Cistercian monks in 1093, the glorious Fontfroide Abbey became one of southern France's most powerful ecclesiastical centres during the Middle Ages. It's incredibly well preserved: highlights include the tranquil chapter hall, refectory, cloister and monks' dormitory, as well as a rose garden added during the 18th century. You can take a guided tour, or explore accompanied by a tablet included with admission.

Fontfroide also produces its own renowned wine, which you can sample in the on-site wine shop or, better still, in the beautiful vaulted **restaurant** (☎ 04 68 41 02 26; www.fontfroide.com; chemin de Fontfroide, Fontfroide; 2-/3-course lunch menu €22/26, dinner menu €35/39; ☉ noon-2pm Feb-Dec, open for dinner Tue-Sat in Jul & Aug only). It's 15km south-west of Narbonne via the D613.

### Réserve Africaine de Sigean

WILDLIFE RESERVE

(☎ 04 68 48 20 20; www.reserveafricainesigean.fr; 19 chemin Hameau du Lac, Sigean; adult/child €31/22; ☉ 9am-6pm May-Aug, to 5pm Sep, Oct & Apr, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar) Opened in 1974, this 300-hectare wildlife reserve aims to recreate the atmosphere of the African savannah – a climate not dissimilar to the Languedoc's dry, dusty plains. Lions, white rhinos, warthogs, giraffes and zebras are some of the 160 resident species. The reserve is off the A9, 17km south of Narbonne.

## WORTH A TRIP

### GRUISSAN SEA SALT

To the south of Narbonne lies the small fishing village of Gruissan, situated on the edge of a sprawling saltwater lagoon whose water is tinted pink, rather like a pale rosé wine, by a variety of algae (*dunaliella salina*) that thrives in the salty conditions. For centuries, the area has been known for its pink *fleur de sel*, a fine sea salt that is evaporated from the salt beds and prized by chefs all over France.

Tours of the salt flats at **Le Salin de Gruissan** (☎ 04 84 25 13 24; www.lesalindegruissan.fr; Gruissan; adult/child €8.90/6.90; ☉ 4 tours daily Jun-Sep, 3 daily Apr, May, Oct & Nov, 2 on Fri, Sat & Sun Feb & Mar) explore the production process, which is still practised in much the same way as it was centuries ago. There's also a restaurant on-site, **La Cambuse du Saunier**, where you can try meat and fish cooked *en croûte de sel* (salt crust).

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ La Maison de Gustave

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 06 63 48 29 75; www.lamaisongustave.com; 3-5 rue Gustave Fabre; d €99-149; ☉ reception open 4-7.30pm; ☎☎) This character-filled townhouse just opposite the cathedral is the best place to stay in town, with five fun rooms decorated with an eye for retro design (swoopy lamps, Pop Art colours, mid-century furniture).

Most have a view over the garden and, unusually, rates include breakfast.

### ★ Les Halles

MARKET €

(www.narbonne.halles.fr; 1 cours Mirabeau; ☉ 7am-2pm) Narbonne's covered market is one of the most beautiful in France. Built at the turn of the 20th century, it's a masterpiece of art nouveau style, with panels of frosted glass, decorative stonework and a wonderful cast-iron roof. Inside, more than 70 stalls sell cheese, charcuterie, poultry, meat and fish as well as fruit, flowers and wine.

Diner-style **Chez Bébelles** (☎ 06 85 40 09 01; www.chez-bebelles.fr; 1 bd Docteur Ferroul, Les Halles; mains €14-19; ☉ noon-2.30pm Tue-Sat) is



legendary for its grilled meats, served with homemade fries and tasty salads.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 68 65 15 60; www.narbonne-tourisme.com; 31 rue Jean Jaurès; ☀ 9am-7pm Apr-mid-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat mid-Sep-Mar)

## **i** Getting There & Away

Frequent **trains** (av Carnot) serve Narbonne en route from Béziers (€6, 15 minutes), Montpellier (€17.70, one hour) and Perpignan (€12.40 to €14.80, one hour).

## Béziers

POP 76,493

Hilltop Béziers is a great surprise. It's small enough not to be overwhelming, yet has plenty of character, with a lovely cathedral, a vast esplanade and picturesque streets lined with handsome buildings – not to mention an enticingly ramshackle old town.

Béziers has a long history: founded by the Romans and razed during the Albigensian Crusade, it's now best known as the birthplace of Paul Riquet, the brains behind the Canal du Midi. A lively Spanish-style *féria* spans five days in August.

## **o** Sights

The heart of town is elegant Allées Paul Riquet, from where the shady lanes of the old town extend to the west. To the south-east lies the **Plateau des Poètes**, a lovely, English-style 19th-century park, with several striking sculptures by the local artist Injalbert.

West from the old town is the **Pont-Canal**, a 19th-century aqueduct over the Orb River that affords stupendous views of the cathedral and the city.

## Écluses de Fonseranes

ARCHITECTURE

(www.beziers-in-mediterranee.com/en/the-9-locks-of-fonseranes; rue des Écluses; parking incl audioguide €7; ☀ 3D cinema & shop 10am-7pm mid-Mar-Oct) One kilometre southwest of town, this stepladder of eight locks and nine gates is one of the most celebrated features of the Canal du Midi. The locks were built to negotiate a drop of 21.5m from the canal down to the level of the River Orb. You can wander along the banks, take a boat cruise or hire an electric boat; the site is connected to the centre of Béziers by a 2km path.

## **h** Sleeping

### Hôtel des Poètes

HOTEL €

(☎ 04 67 76 38 66; www.hoteldespoetes.net; 80 allées Paul Riquet; d €60-78, f €90; **P** **☎**) A decent budget bet, this tall townhouse is down a leafy cul-de-sac just off allées Paul Riquet. Rooms are fairly basic but decent value – the nicest overlook Plateau des Poètes to the front, but the steep stairs make carrying your luggage a real chore, and soundproofing isn't the best. Private parking is €10.

### Le XIX

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 67 48 04 00; www.hoteldixneuf.com; 19 place Jean Jaurès; d €95-145; **☎** **☎**) This smart hotel overlooks the fountain on place Jean Jaurès, and offers light, minimalist rooms, with parquet flooring, mauve-and-grey colour schemes and swish bathrooms. There's Pica Pica, a tapas restaurant and ice-cream shop on the ground floor; and parking (€11) is available at the underground car park nearby.

### ★ L'Hôtel Particulier

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 67 49 04 47; www.hotelparticulierbeziers.com; 65bis av du 22 Août 1944; d €140-220; **P** **☎** **☎** **☎**) To do Béziers *en luxe*, nowhere tops this stately 19th-century mansion, offering nine chic, immensely comfortable rooms, with thoughtful touches including espresso machines, slippers and plug adaptors. There's a relaxing garden complete with a lap pool at the back.

## **h** Eating

### Le Chameau Ivre

TAPAS €€

(☎ 04 67 80 20 20; 15 place Jean Jaurès; menus €20-25, tapas €6.50-9, mains €14-24; ☀ noon-2pm & 6-11pm Tue-Sat) Easily Béziers' most attractive wine and tapas bar, the legendary Drunken Camel serves the best tapas in town – and don't the locals know it. They rush here for the delicate tapas platters and tasty mains. Wine lovers, take note: the wine list has about 3000 vintages. Don't miss it.

### L'Orangerie

BISTRO €€

(☎ 04 67 49 07 20; www.lorangeriebeziers.fr; 5 rue Barthélemy Guibal; 2-/3-course lunch menu €18/22, mains €15-20; ☀ 8.30am-3pm Tue-Sat, 7-11pm Thu-Sat) Easy, tasty southwest dining is the order of the day here: chunky Aubrac beef fillets, confit duck or lemony chicken-and-chips served in a small dining room with wine bottles and wooden planks arranged like artworks on the walls. Nothing fancy, and all the better for it.

## PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL DU HAUT-LANQUEDOC

The mountains, forests and valleys of the Parc Naturel Régional du Haut-Languedoc ([www.parc-haut-languedoc.fr](http://www.parc-haut-languedoc.fr)) are a hiker's dream come true. Among the most impressive sights are the **Gorges d'Héric**, a chain of canyons slashed out from the surrounding Massif du Caroux. The sheer walls are a magnet for rock-climbers, but most people come to bathe in the sparkling, stepped pools gouged out by the River Orb. A paved path leads for 7km from the car park near Mons-la-Trivalle to a seasonal cafe in a converted farmhouse. From here, it's possible to strike out on longer hikes (bring water, food and decent boots). The car park costs €3.50 a day, but arrive early in summer, when it's often full by 9am.

Ten kilometres west, the **Gorges de Colombières** are wilder and less accessible, but much quieter as a result, allowing you to explore the wild scenery in relative peace. You can clamber over boulders to discover plunge pools and cascades. A 13km trail leads up into the peaks, but it's for experienced hikers only.

If you've worked up an appetite, a meal at **La Mécanique des Frères Bonano** (☎ 04 67 97 30 52; [www.lamecaniquedesfreresbonano.fr](http://www.lamecaniquedesfreresbonano.fr); Colombières-sur-Orb; bistro mains from €10, restaurant menus €45-115; ☺ lunch Fri-Tue, dinner Thu-Tue) is highly recommended: run by a pair of chef brothers, it's one of the best restaurants in the Haut Languedoc.

### ★ La Maison de Petit Pierre BISTRO €€€

(☎ 04 67 30 91 85; [www.lamaisondepetitpierre.com](http://www.lamaisondepetitpierre.com); 22 Ave Pierre Verdier; 2-/3-course lunch menu €17/25, dinner tasting menu €42; ☺ noon-2pm Mon-Sat, dinner 7-9pm Thu-Sat) Bistro meets gastronomic at Pierre Augé's attractive Béziers restaurant, co-run with his wife Fanny. Black-and-white family photos, old-school lampshades and reclaimed wood conjure a relaxed, living-room-like feel, and there's a sweet garden for sunny days. The food looks – and tastes – fantastic, and the vibe is way less stuffy than many high-end establishments.

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 99 41 36 36; [www.beziers-in-mediterranee.com](http://www.beziers-in-mediterranee.com); place du Forum; ☺ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) There's an annexe at Écluses de Fonseranes (p766).

### i Getting There & Away

Regular **trains** (Bd de Verdun) run from Montpellier (€6 to €13.50, 45 minutes) en route to Narbonne (€6, 15 minutes).

## Carcassonne

POP 45,895

Perched on a rocky hilltop and bristling with zigzag battlements, stout walls and spiky turrets, the fortified city of Carcassonne looks like something out of a children's storybook when seen from afar. A Unesco World Heritage Site since 1997, it's

most people's idea of the perfect medieval castle – but come in the hectic high summer, when the mega-touristy Cité Médiévale is swamped by thousands of visitors, and the storybook sheen wears off pretty fast. Better to visit in spring or autumn – or at a push, late in the day when the worst of the crowds have thinned.

In 2018, the Aude River was subject to some of the worst floods in more than a century. You may still see the effects, especially around the Ville Basse.

### 👁 Sights

Carcassonne is actually a city of two parts. The fortified Cité Médiévale sits on a hilltop on the left bank of the Aude River. The **Ville Basse** sits on the right bank, a mostly modern town with a grid of streets radiating out around a medieval heart: the 13th-century Bastide St-Louis and its central square, place Carnot.

The two banks are linked by bridges including the pedestrianised **Pont-Vieux** (Map p768), one of the few surviving medieval bridges in France, prized for its graceful arches and compact dimensions.

### Cité Médiévale

AREA

(Map p770; enter via Porte Narbonnaise or Porte d'Aude; ☺ 24hr) **FREE** Built on a spur of rock, Carcassonne's rampart-ringed fortress dates back more than two millennia. The fortified town is encircled by two sets of battlements and 52 stone towers, topped by distinctive 'witch's hat' roofs (added by architect

## Carcassonne (Ville Basse)



## Carcassonne (Ville Basse)

## 📍 Sights

- 1 Pont-Vieux.....D4

## 🚣 Activities, Courses &amp; Tours

- 2 Carcassonne Croisière.....B1  
3 Le Cocagne.....B1

## 🏠 Sleeping

- 4 Carcassonne Townhouse.....D4

## 🍴 Eating

- 5 Brasserie à Quatre Temps.....B4  
6 La Table de la Bastide.....B4  
7 Le Bistro d'Alice.....B3  
8 Les Halles.....B3

Viollet-le-Duc during 19th-century restorations). The citadel's interior is a maze of cobbled lanes and courtyards, now lined by a touristy middle of shops and restaurants. Access to the ramparts is via the 12th century **Château et Remparts** (Map p770; www.

remparts-carcassonne.fr; 1 rue Viollet le Duc, Cité Médiévale; adult/child €9.50/free; 🕒10am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Oct-Mar), originally built for the viscounts of Carcassonne.

## 🚣 Activities

Several companies offer cruises along the Canal du Midi, providing a beautiful way to appreciate Carcassonne's architecture from afar while surrounded by gorgeous countryside. The 240km-long canal was awarded Unesco World Heritage Site status for being a marvel of engineering.

The main operators are **Carcassonne Croisière** (Map p768; ☎06 80 47 54 33; www.carcassonne-navigationcroisiere.com; Port de Plaisance; 1½hr cruise adult/child €8.50/6.50; 🕒10.30am & 2pm Jul & Aug, 10.30am & 2.30pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) and **Le Cocagne** (Map p768; ☎06 50 40 78 50; Port de Plaisance; 1½hr cruise adult/child €8/6; 🕒2pm & 6pm daily Jul & Aug, 2pm & 6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct). Standard

cruises last around 1¼ hours, but there are longer trips available. All trips leave from the Port de Plaisance in the Ville Basse.

An alternative is to hire a bike and cycle the towpaths: contact **Evadeo Cycles** (☎ 04 34 42 88 32; www.evadeocycles.com; 14 rue Jean Monnet; bike hire per 2hr/day from €17/25; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 1.30-6pm).

## Sleeping

Staying inside the Cité is a pain; hotels will pick up your luggage for you from the car, but it's much more practical – and peaceful – to stay somewhere in the Ville Basse. Prices rocket in summer.

**Hotel du Pont Vieux** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 04 68 25 24 99; www.hotelpontvieux.com; 32 rue Trivaille; d from €99, f from €125; @☎) This vintage hotel is a compromise between old and new towns – it's a short walk to both. Rooms are on the small side and some are a little dark, but they're attractively decorated, and there's a sweet courtyard garden for breakfast and a rooftop terrace with views of the Cité.

★ **Carcassonne Townhouse** B&B €€  
(Map p768; ☎ 06 88 48 59 39; www.carcassonne.townhouse.com; 4 rue Bellevue; d €99-135; ☎) Without doubt the most beautifully presented B&B in Carcassonne, run by English couple Rachael and Mark. The 1850 townhouse has been renovated with painstaking attention to period detail – old-school radiators, decorative floor tiles, retro armchairs, heritage bedsteads and all. The two Cité-view suites are the pick, but all rooms are lovely, and breakfast is a spoil.

★ **Hotel Le Pont-Levis** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€  
(Map p770; ☎ 04 68 72 08 08; www.pontlevishotel.com; 40 chemin des Anglais; d €160-280, ste €220-335; 📞☎☎) Carcassonne has plenty of upscale hotels, but this stylish place (co-owned by super-chef Franck Putelat) offers the best price-pamper ratio, especially out of season. The twelve rooms are spacious, private and colour-splashed; all have sleek bathrooms and Nespresso machines, some in-room bathtubs. The terraced garden is a joy (complete with outdoor pool) and there are dreamy Cité views. A spoil.

**Hôtel du Château** HOTEL €€€  
(Map p770; ☎ 04 68 11 38 38; www.hotelduchateau.net; 2 rue Camille St-Saëns; d from €175, ste from €275; 📞☎☎) You get the best of both

worlds at this super-stylish hotel: knockout views of the Cité Médiévale's (p767) ramparts (including from the heated pool and garden), coupled with the undeniable convenience of staying outside the walled city. The 16 colourful rooms are a little cramped for the price, but the decor is boutique standard.

## Eating

Most of the restaurants in the Cité are overpriced and short on quality – you'll find higher standards and better value in the Ville Basse. Several big-name Michelin-starred chefs have premises here – including Franck-Putelat (Le Parc) and Jérôme Ryon (La Barbacane) – but you'll need deep pockets and reservations.

Carcassonne's version of the southwest stew known as *cassoulet* contains confit duck and Toulouse sausage. The recipe is hotly contested with nearby Castelnaudry.

The town's **covered market** (Map p768; place Eggenfelden; ☎ 7.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sat) in the Ville Basse is a little disappointing, with just a few stalls.

**Le Bistro d'Alice** BISTRO €€  
(Map p768; ☎ 04 68 47 25 51; 26 rue Chartrand; mains €14-22; ☎ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Unpretentious, traditional French bistro food in a rather charming dining room, complete with the essential wooden bar, mirrors and checked tablecloths. Classic steaks-frites, braised pork, coq au vin and fish dishes are chalked up on the blackboard, and there's a good selection of wines by the glass.

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

#### LAC DU SALAGOU

Created in 1968 by damming the Salagou River, this man-made **reservoir** is popular for hiking, horse-riding and summer picnics. Covering 750 hectares, it's known for its crimson-orange rock and strangely shaped islands, rather like a lake might look on Mars. It's 48km northwest of Montpellier.

Just to the south, a natural amphitheatre called the **Cirque de Mourèze** offers hiking amongst rock chimneys and old coppiced oak forest, plus a fine view over the lake from the rocky rim.

## Carcassonne (Cité Médiévale)

LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON CARCASSONNE



## Carcassonne (Cité Médiévale)

## 📍 Sights

- 1 Château et Remparts ..... B2  
2 Cité Médiévale ..... C2

## 🏠 Sleeping

- 3 Hôtel du Château ..... D2  
4 Hotel Le Pont-Levis ..... C4

## 🍴 Eating

- 5 La Barbacane ..... A4  
6 La Table d'Alais ..... C3

## La Table de la Bastide

BISTRO €€

(Map p768; ☎ 06 01 40 63 86; 55 rue Aimé Ramond; mains €14-18; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Popular with locals – always a good sign, but especially in touristy Carcassonne – this small, family-run restaurant offers traditional provincial cooking, underpinned by ingredients sourced daily from the cov-

ered market opposite. There's a cellar dining room and modern art livens up the decor.

## Brasserie à Quatre Temps

BRASSERIE €€

(Map p768; ☎ 04 68 11 44 44; www.brasserie4temps.com; 2 blvd Barbès; 3-course lunch/dinner menu €19/32, mains €21-30; ☺ 7am-10pm) The prices at Franck Putelat's double-Michelin-starred Le Parc may be out of reach, but a smidgen of the chef's magic dust is sprinkled over his brasserie in the Ville Basse. Tuck into dishes like lamb cutlets, beef fillet, cassoulet, pan-fried scallops and poached sea bass, with a view over place du Général de Gaulle. It's popular; bookings are advised.

## ★ La Table d'Alais

FRENCH €€

(Map p770; ☎ 04 68 71 60 63; www.latabledalais.fr; 32 rue du Plô, Cité Médiévale; menus €23-40, mains €21-30; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Fri-Tue; ☎) Chef Jérémy Thomann and partner Mélanie have made regional flavours the cornerstone



of their refined restaurant – if you want to try classic cassoulet, there's no better place to do it (they even offer takeaway). The food looks beautiful and, unusually, there's a vegetarian menu. It's our pick in La Cité.

### ★ La Barbacane

GASTRONOMY €€€

(Map p770; ☎ 04 68 71 98 71; www.cite-hotels.com/en/etablisements/restaurant-la-barbacane.html; place Auguste-Pierre-Pont, Cité Médiévale; lunch menu €41, dinner mains €50-68; ☀ 12.30-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm) Jérôme Ryon's Michelin-starred premises at the grand Hôtel de la Cité is the town's most regal place to dine, with an antique-filled dining room gleaming with carved wood and stained glass. Rich, indulgent, classical French cookery is the M.O. – dinner is eye-wateringly expensive, but the lunch menu (including two glasses of wine) offers real value.

### i Information

**Cité Médiévale Tourist Office** (Map p770; ☎ 04 68 10 24 30; www.tourisme-carcaonne.fr; impasse Agnès de Montpellier, Cité Médiévale; ☀ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 9.30am-1pm & 1.30-5.30pm Oct-Mar)

**Ville Basse Tourist Office** (Map p768; ☎ 04 68 10 24 30; www.tourisme-carcaonne.fr; 28 rue de Verdun; ☀ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar)

### i Getting There & Around

#### AIR

**Carcassonne Airport** (CCF; ☎ 04 68 71 96 46; www.aeroport-carcaonne.com) Situated 5.5km west of town, Ryanair serves UK cities including London Stansted and Manchester, plus Cork, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin, Brussels and Porto.

The Navette Aéroport (airport shuttle; €6, 30 minutes) leaves from the train station and the Cité Médiévale (p767).

#### TRAIN

Carcassonne's **station** (av Henri Fabre) is on the main line from Toulouse.

**Montpellier** €10 to 19, 1½ hours, one hourly

**Narbonne** €5 to €11, 30 minutes, one hourly

**Perpignan** €10 to €21, 1½ hours; change in Narbonne, one hourly

**Toulouse** €7 to €16.80, one hour, up to two hourly

## PARC NATIONAL DES CÉVENNES

A range of rumpled hills, forested ravines and quiet hamlets, this national park represents one of the loveliest landscapes of the Languedoc. Dry, hot and extensively wooded (mostly by beech, oak and sweet chestnut), the Cévennes has more in common with Mediterranean lands than the Auvergne to its north. It's a hotspot of biodiversity, with 2300 plant species and 2410 animal species so far recorded. Encouragingly, many animals that had previously disappeared from the area due to hunting or habitat loss – including vultures, beavers, otters, roe deer and golden eagles – have been reintroduced, either by conservationists or as a result of natural migration. In recognition of its natural assets, it's been a Unesco Biosphere Reserve since 1985 and, since 2011, has formed part of one of France's largest Unesco World Heritage sites, **Causses et Cévennes** (www.causses-et-cevennes.fr).

### 📍 Sights & Activities

Hiking, canoeing and wildlife-spotting are the key activities here. The pretty, peaceful rural village of **Florac** (population 2069) makes the most practical base; it sits roughly in the centre of the park at the confluence of three rivers, the Tarnon, Mimente and Tarn. It's the most useful base for exploring the Cévennes and the upper Gorges du Tarn.

### ★ Mont Aigoual Observatory

VIEWPOINT

(☎ 04 67 42 59 83; www.aigoual.fr; Valleraugue; ☀ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm May, Jun & Sep) **FREE** Looming 37km south of Florac off the D18 is the prominent peak of Mont Aigoual (1567m). Its lofty 1894-opened observatory is the last remaining mountain-based meteorological station in France. Inside, you can learn the science behind weather forecasting and cloud formation. There's also an orientation table from where you can take in the wrap-around views of the central Cévennes and beyond. On the best days, the eye sweeps from the Alps to the Mediterranean and south to the Pyrenees.

### Mont Lozère

MOUNTAIN

At 1699m, Mont Lozère is the highest summit in the Cévennes. Shrouded in cloud and ice in winter, bright with blossom in spring and summer, it's criss-crossed by walking trails. The surrounding granite range is the

## THE GR70, OR CHEMIN DE STEVENSON

The author Robert Louis Stevenson trekked across the Cévennes in 1878 with his recalcitrant donkey Modestine, a journey recounted in his classic travelogue, *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*.

His route forms the backbone of the **GR70** ([www.chemin-stevenson.org](http://www.chemin-stevenson.org)), which runs for 272km from Le Puy-en-Velay to Alès (slightly longer than Stevenson's route). It's one of the best long-distance routes in France, travelling from the forests of the Cévennes across the Mont Lozère massif into the farmland and valleys of Gévaudan and Velay. To do the full route takes around two weeks, but you can easily tackle individual sections too.

The official website provides excellent planning information; GR70 Stevenson ([www.gr70-stevenson.com](http://www.gr70-stevenson.com)) is another useful resource. Pamphlets and trail maps are available from tourist offices, or you can buy the comprehensive *The Robert Louis Stevenson Trail*, published by Cicerone.

You don't even need a donkey to carry your baggage these days, as **La Malle Postale** (☎04 71 04 21 79, 06 67 79 38 16; [www.lamallepostale.com](http://www.lamallepostale.com); per luggage item from €8) provides luggage-transfer services.

source of the River Tarn, which flows in its early stages through the Gorges du Tarn.

### Hiking, Biking & Canyoning

Hiking is the main activity in the Cévennes: there are more than 600km of trails to tackle. The GR70, also known as the Chemin de Stevenson, is the most celebrated, but sections of the GR4, 6, 7, 70 and 700 also traverse the park. The IGN Top25 map series covers most of the national park area.

The Maison du Tourisme in Florac has plenty of information on local trails.

### Donkey Trekking

Keeping alive the spirit of Robert Louis Stevenson, donkey treks are also popular in warmer months (you don't have to ride them; they can just carry your gear).

Several companies around Florac provide donkeys for hire by the day or week, or organised multi-day treks, with accommodation in backcountry *gîtes* (self-catering cottages or hostels).

### Gentiâne

TREKKING

(☎04 66 41 04 16; <http://ane-et-randonnee.fr>; Castagnols; donkey trekking per day €57; ☺Mar-Nov) Situated 39km east of Florac on the D998, Gentiâne offers donkey trekking on well-marked trails. It also has B&B accommodation (double €70) and camping (free; half-board per person €27).

### Sleeping & Eating

The town of Florac makes the most convenient base. Alternatively, *gîtes* and B&Bs are scattered in and around the Cévennes; the

Maison du Tourisme (p773) in Florac has a list.

### Camping Chantemerle

CAMPGROUND €

(☎04 66 45 19 66; [www.camping-chantemerle.com](http://www.camping-chantemerle.com); Lieu dit la Pontèze, Bédouès; sites for 2 people €15-22; ☺Apr-Oct; ☎☎) Riverside pitches, a private 'beach' and an on-site grocery store, restaurant and bar are highlights of this secluded campground 4.5km northeast of Florac in the village of Bédouès on the banks of the Tarn River. Canoeing, kayak rental and hiking trips can be organised.

### La Ferme des Cévennes

FARMSTAY €

(☎04 66 45 10 90; [www.lafermedescévennes.com](http://www.lafermedescévennes.com); La Borie; s €34-43, d €43-55, f €80-95; ☺Apr-Oct; ☎☎) This large farm boasts an adorable setting on a hillside 5km southeast of Florac. The main building is full of nooks and crannies, and harbours 15 rustic-style rooms of varying sizes and shapes. Organic meals using home-grown produce are available (breakfast/dinner €7/20). Depending on the season, you can milk goats and help make traditional cheese. Great for families.

### Hôtel Les Gorges du Tarn

HOTEL €

(☎04 66 45 00 63; [www.hotel-gorgesdutarn.com](http://www.hotel-gorgesdutarn.com); 48 rue du Pêcher; d €70-95; ☺Easter-Oct; ☎☎☎) This modern Logis de France hotel in Florac is a reliable choice, with three room categories – the nicest are the Florales, which are smart, functional and colourful. Its restaurant is among the best in town.

### Les Tables de la Fontaine

FRENCH €€

(☎04 66 65 21 73; [www.tables-de-la-fontaine.com](http://www.tables-de-la-fontaine.com); 31 rue du Therond; 2-/3-course menu €20/23;

☉ noon-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) Red-umbrella-shaded tables are scattered around a natural spring in the courtyard adjoining this homely regional restaurant, which serves delicacies such as locally caught trout and Aubrac beef. Upstairs are four simple guest rooms (doubles half-board €120).

## **i** Information

The **Maison du Tourisme** (☎ 04 66 45 01 14; www.cevennes-gorges-du-tarn.com; place de la Gare; ☉ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) in Florac is the main point of information on the park. See www.cevennes-parcnational.fr for more.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### BUS

Public transport is limited in the Cévennes. The only regular options are the 252 bus (Monday to Saturday only) between Alès and Ispagnac, which stops at Florac, and the daily 251 between Florac and Mende.

In July and August, there are buses between Florac, Ste-Énimie and Le Rozier, and between Florac and Mt Lozère (€2 flat-rate).

### CAR

By car, the most spectacular route from the east is the Corniche des Cévennes, a ridge road that winds along the mountain crests of the Cévennes for 56km from St-Jean du Gard to Florac.

If you're approaching Florac from Mende and the north, leave the N106 at Balsièges and drive the much quieter, even prettier D31. This crosses the wild, upland Causse de Sauveterre, then

descends to Ispagnac, where you turn left to rejoin the main N106.

Note that petrol stations are few and far between – there are service stations in Florac and Ste-Énimie, but prices inevitably tend to be high. Fuel up beforehand.

## GORGES DU TARN

The plunging canyons of the Gorges du Tarn wind for some 50km through the high limestone plateaux west from Florac. Steep cliffs carve through sparkling blue-green waters and limestone escarpments. En route are two villages: **Ste-Énimie** (a good base for canoeing and walking along the gorges) and riverside **La Malène**, smaller, quieter but equally attractive.

The most spectacular section of the gorges starts at Ste-Énimie, and then winds southwest to Le Rozier, where the River Jon-te flows into the Tarn. Motorists and cyclists can take in staggering panoramas from the narrow and twisting cliffside road (expect traffic jams in summer), but piloting your own kayak or canoe is by far the best way to experience the amazing scenery.

## Sleeping & Eating

Most accommodation and dining options around the gorges only open between April and October. Camping is very popular in summer; there are several large sites along the riverside road towards St-Énimie.

### Hôtel Doussière

HOTEL €

(☎ 05 65 62 60 25; www.hotel-restaurant-gorges-dutarn.com; Le Rozier; d€50-95, f€75-98; ☉ Apr-Oct;

## DON'T MISS

### CANOEOING THE TARN

Canoeing the Tarn is best in high summer, when the river is lower and the water calmer. You can canoe as far as the impassable Pas de Souci, a barrier of boulders about 9km downriver from La Malène.

From Ste-Énimie, destinations include Rives Basses near La Malène (from €20, 13km, about four hours) and Cirque des Baumes (from €24, 22km, about six hours). For longer trips, buses transport you upriver to start in Prades, Montbrun or Ispagnac.

There are dozens of companies in Ste-Énimie and La Malène, including **Canoe 2000** (☎ 04 66 48 57 71; www.canoe2000.fr; La Malène; ☉ 8am-7pm Apr-Oct), **Locanoë** (☎ 04 66 48 55 57; www.gorges-du-tarn.fr; Castelbouc), **Canoe Méjean** (☎ 04 66 48 58 70; www.canoe-mejean.com; rte des Gorges du Tarn) and **Le Canophile** (☎ 04 66 48 57 60; www.canoe-tarn.com; rte de Florac). Most open from April to late September.

If you'd rather someone else did the work, let **Les Bateliers de la Malène** (☎ 04 66 48 51 10; www.gorgesdutarn.com; La Malène; per 4 people €92; ☉ 9am-noon & 1.30-5pm Apr-Oct) punt you down an 8km stretch of the gorge in a traditional small barge.

## WOLVES & BISON OF THE LOZÈRE

There are a couple of wild experiences on offer north of the Cévennes. Wolves once prowled freely through the local forests, but today you'll only see them at **Les Loups du Gévaudan** (☎ 04 66 32 09 22; www.loupsdugevaudan.com; Ste-Lucie; adult/child €12/9, night visits €18/13; ☀ 10am-5pm or 5.30pm Apr-mid-Nov, open till 7.30pm Jul & Aug) in Ste-Lucie, 36km northeast of Mende. The 25-hectare park sustains around 80 Mongolian, Canadian, Siberian, Arctic and Polish wolves living in semi-freedom. It's an apt location for a wolf sanctuary: a local legend tells of the fearsome Beast of Gévaudan which terrorised the area between 1764 and 1767. It's generally believed to have been a supersized wolf.

Alternatively, near the village of Ste-Eulalie-en-Margeride, 45km north of Mende, around 30 free-roaming bison wander around the **Réserve de Bisons d'Europe** (☎ 04 66 31 40 40; www.bisoneurope.com; Ste-Eulalie-en-Margeride; adult/child horse-drawn carriage €16/8.50, summer walking path €6/4; ☀ 10am-5pm Jan-early Nov). Trips are conducted by horse-drawn carriage in summer, or by sleigh in winter; you can walk round the edge of the reserve in summer.

(☎ ☎) In little Le Rozier, this great value hotel has sixteen rooms split over two buildings: six in Le Doussière, another ten in the Pink House (most have at least some view over the Jonte river). Standards are simple, but the drawcard is the super restaurant, **L'Alicant**, offering some of the best regional food in the area (2-/3-course menu €22/28) and a fine river-view terrace.

### Yelloh Village Camping Nature et Rivière

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 04 66 48 57 36; www.camping-nature-riviere.com; rte des Gorges du Tarn; sites for 2 people for 2 nights €36-44, 4-/6-person chalets for 2 nights from €118; ☀ late Apr-early Sep; ☎ ☎) It's worth paying extra for a riverside site at this small forest campground 3km southwest of Ste-Énimie. Its 57 pitches spread out below beech trees with plenty of space set aside for each site; families also have the option of self-catering timber chalets and cottages.

### Le Bel Été

FRENCH €

(☎ 04 66 45 20 75; rue Basse, Ste-Énimie; menus €16-20; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) Set back from the riverside road in Ste-Énimie, this friendly spot specialises in regional dishes. Try the *patate lozérienne* (potato gratin) or grilled sausage. Its shady terrace is a plus.

### L'Auberge du Moulin

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 66 48 53 08; www.aubergedumoulin48.com; rue de la Combe, Ste-Énimie; d €71-100; ☀ Apr-mid-Nov; ☎ ☎ ☎) With its pistachio-coloured shutters and reassuring stone frontage, this central hotel in Ste-Énimie is tempting, particularly thanks to the super regional restaurant. Six rooms overlook the village,

four have terraces over the valley, and one is squeezed into the attic.

## i Information

The Ste-Énimie **tourist office** (☎ 04 66 48 53 44; www.cevennes-gorges-du-tarn.com; rte de Mende; ☀ 9.15am-12.15pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-12.15pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sat Apr-Jun & Sep, closed Oct-Mar) is the main point of contact for the gorges. In high summer, it's joined by a small **annexe** (☎ 04 66 45 01 14; La Malène; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, closed Sep-Jun) in La Malène.

## i Getting There & Around

Your own wheels are the best way to explore the gorges. In July and August, there are daily shuttle buses between Florac, Ste-Énimie and Le Rozier (€2).

## GRANDS CAUSSES

The wild, eerie mountain plateaux known as the Grands Causses form part of the same geological formation as the Massif Central to the north. Scorched in summer and windswept in winter, each of the four *causses* – Sauveterre, Méjean, Noir and Larzac – has its own unique habitat and geological make-up, but all feel spectacularly deserted for much of the year. Apart from the occasional passing shepherd and flock, you can go hours exploring the local trails on foot or by bike, and never pass another soul. The area is particularly popular with cavers, who come to explore underground

caverns carved out from the limestone by water erosion.

These remote, sparsely populated plateaux are also an important wildlife haven: wild vultures can be seen soaring above the cliffs of the Gorges de la Jonte (p776).

## Sights

### Causse de Sauveterre

The northernmost of the *causses* is a gentle, hilly plateau dotted with a few isolated farms and traversed by hiking trails. Every possible patch of fertile earth is cultivated, creating irregular, intricately patterned wheat fields.

### Causse Méjean & Causse Noir

Causse Méjean, the highest *causse*, is also the most barren and isolated. Defined to the north by the Gorges du Tarn and to the south by the Gorges de la Jonte, it's mainly poor pasture enriched by fertile depressions, where streams gurgle down into the limestone through sinkholes, funnels, fissures and many caves.

### Aven Armand

CAVE

(☎04 66 45 61 31; www.aven-armand.com; Hures-la-Parade, Causse Méjean; adult/child €12.50/8.30, combination ticket with La Cité des Pierres €17/10.70; ☀9.30am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 1.30-5pm late Mar-Jun & Sep-early Nov) This cavern contains the world's greatest concentration of stalagmites, including a gallery of stone columns known as the Forêt Vierge (Virgin Forest). Colourful illuminations create an eerie atmosphere. The cave is

accessed via a funicular that drops 60m into the gloom. Guided visits last about one hour. Combination tickets with La Cité des Pierres are also available.

### Causse Noir

Rising east of Millau, the Causse Noir (Black Causse) is best known for the system of canyons known as the Chaos de Montpellier-le-Vieux, or La Cité des Pierres, as it's been redubbed.

### La Cité des Pierres

GORGE

(Montpellier-le-Vieux; ☎05 65 60 66 30; www.lacitedepierres.com; Le Maubert; adult/child €7.90/4.90, combination ticket with Aven Armand €17/10.70; ☀9.30am-6.30pm mid-Jul-Aug, to 5pm or 5.30pm May-mid-Jul & Sep-Oct) Situated 18km northeast of Millau, this maze of canyons was formed by countless millennia of water erosion, which has created more than 120 hectares of tortured limestone formations with fanciful names such as the Sphinx and the Elephant. Five walking trails, lasting one to three hours, cover the site (or you can cheat and catch a tourist train). There is also a network of via ferrata routes to tackle (€29).

### Causse du Larzac

The Causse du Larzac is the largest of the *causses*. Known as the 'French Desert', it's a landscape of rocky steppes broken up by medieval villages, such as Ste-Eulalie de Cernon, long the capital of the Larzac region, and La Cavalerie. Both were built by the Knights Templar.

## DON'T MISS

### VIADUC DE MILLAU

Millau's incredible road bridge is as much a work of imagination as it is of cutting-edge engineering: it looks like something dreamt up for a sci-fi movie. Seven slender pylons support 2.5km of the A75 motorway, and despite its heavyweight construction (127,000 cubic metres of concrete, 19,000 tonnes of steel, 5000 tonnes of cable), the bridge somehow contrives to appear as delicate as a gossamer thread.

At its northern end (in Brocuéjols, about 5km west of the centre of Millau), the **Viaduc Expo visitor centre** (☎05 65 61 61 54; www.leviaducdemillau.com; Aire du Viaduc de Millau, A75; guided tour adult/child €4.50/2.50; ☀visitor centre 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar) **FREE** explores the story of the bridge's construction and offers 45-minute guided visits (in English on request). There's an upmarket cafeteria (with a menu by superstar chef Michel Bras, no less), but the real reason to visit is the chance to walk out onto the panoramic viewpoint, from where you can properly appreciate the bridge's mind-bending dimensions.



## Gorges de la Jonte

The 20km-long Gorges de la Jonte cleave east-west from Meyrueis to Le Rozier, dividing Causse Noir from Causse Méjean. They're much more lightly trafficked – though busy enough in summer – than the more famous Gorges du Tarn, and make for a spectacular loop drive in combination with their better-known neighbour.

### Maison des Vautours

VIEWPOINT

(📞 05 65 62 69 69; [www.lozere-tourisme.com/maison-des-vautours/meyrueis/loiloz048fs0005a](http://www.lozere-tourisme.com/maison-des-vautours/meyrueis/loiloz048fs0005a); Le Truel; adult/child €6.20/2.70; 🕒 9.30am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) Just west of Le Truel on the D996, more than 200 reintroduced vultures have taken up residence on the limestone cliffs. You can watch the birds gliding above the Gorges de la Jonte from the viewing point, which also has a live video feed from the nesting sites.

### Grotte de Dargilan

CAVE

(📞 04 66 45 60 20; [www.grotte-dargilan-48.com](http://www.grotte-dargilan-48.com); Dargilan; adult/child €12.50/8; 🕒 10.15am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10.30am-5pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 2-4pm Oct) Just south of the Gorges de la Jonte, Grotte

de Dargilan is known as La Grotte Rose (Pink Cave) for its rosy colouring. The most memorable moment of the one-hour, 1km tour through this vast chasm – apart from the copious stalagmites and stalactites – is a sudden, dazzling exit onto a ledge, with a dizzying view of the gorge below.

## ROUSSILLON

Dusty scrubland, crimson towns and scorching summer temperatures give Roussillon a distinctly Spanish flavour. Also known as French Catalonia, it incorporates busy beach towns and coastal villages along the Mediterranean as well as the abandoned abbeys and crumbling Cathar strongholds inland among the fragrant garrigue.

Today, the area corresponds roughly to the *département* of Pyrénées-Orientales. The area's main town is Perpignan, with an impressive castle built by the old kings of Mallorca. To the southwest, vineyards stretch out along the coast to the seaside towns of Collioure and Banyuls-sur-Mer, just a couple of miles from the Spanish border.

### WORTH A TRIP

#### ROQUEFORT

The village of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon is synonymous with its blue cheese, made from sheep's milk and aged in local limestone caves. Marbled with blue-green veins caused by a mould called *Penicillium roqueforti*, the cheese is famous for its pungent flavour and rich, creamy taste. Roquefort has been produced here for centuries: in 1407 Charles VI granted exclusive cheesemaking rights to the villagers, and Roquefort became the first French cheese awarded an AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) in 1925, redesignated as an AOP (Appellation d'Origine Protégée) in 1996.

The special moulds are initially grown on leavened bread, then added during the cheesemaking process. The limestone caves are an important part of the process: draughts of air called *fleuries* flow through, encouraging the fungi to eat the cheese curds. Legend claims the cheese was discovered by accident, when a local lad became distracted by a girl and left a wheel of cheese behind in one of the caves. When he returned, it was covered in mould that turned out to be surprisingly tasty. It's now France's second-most-popular cheese after Comté, with an annual production of around 19,000 tonnes.

There are seven AOP-approved producers, three of which offer cellar visits:

**Roquefort Société** (📞 05 65 58 54 38; [www.roquefort-societe.com](http://www.roquefort-societe.com); 2 av François Galtier; adult/child €6/4; 🕒 10am-noon & 1.30-5pm Apr-Sep, no lunch break in Aug) The largest producer, responsible for 60% of the world's supply.

**Gabriel Coulet** (📞 05 65 59 24 27; [www.gabriel-coulet.fr](http://www.gabriel-coulet.fr); 3 av de Lauras; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 9.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Oct-Mar) **FREE** A more intimate tasting experience, with four varieties to try.

**Papillon** (📞 05 65 58 50 00; [www.visite-roquefort-papillon.com](http://www.visite-roquefort-papillon.com); 8bis av de Lauras; 🕒 10am-6pm) **FREE** Smaller producer with three Roqueforts on offer.

## History

Roussillon's history is bound up with Spain's. After flourishing as the capital of the kingdom of Mallorca, it fell under Aragonese rule for much of the late Middle Ages. In 1640 the Catalans on both sides of the Pyrenees revolted against the rule of distant Madrid. Peace came in 1659 with the Treaty of the Pyrenees, defining the border between Spain and France, and ceding Roussillon (until then the northern section of Catalonia) to the French, much to the indignation of the locals.

Although it's no longer officially part of Catalonia, Roussillon retains its Catalan identity. The *sardane* folk dance is still performed, and the Catalan language, related to Provençal, is still spoken.

## Perpignan

POP 121,875

Framed against the snow-topped peaks of the Pyrenees, Perpignan is a sultry, sun-baked town with a distinctly Spanish flavour. Palm-shaded squares, Catalan flags and shabby tenements painted in shades of lemon, peach and tangerine characterise the attractive old town, with a web of streets that are ideal for exploring on a blazing summer's day.



Historically, the city (Perpinyà in Catalan) was capital of the kingdom of Mallorca, a Mediterranean power that stretched northwards as far as Montpellier and included all the Balearic Islands. The Mallorcan kings' palace still stands guard at the southern end of the old town.

Today, it's a lively, fiesta-friendly city with a slightly shabby edge: parts of the old town are fairly run-down, although a programme of restoration is underway. The town is also rugby-mad: USA (Union Sportive des Arlequins) Perpignanais was founded all the way back in 1902 and, despite mixed fortunes in recent years, continues to inspire a passionate following.


## Sights

Perpignan's old town is roughly contained within the main ring roads of bd des Pyrénées in the west, bd Thomas Wilson in the north, bd Anatole France in the east and bd Henri Poincaré in the south. Its shallow canal skirts its western edge.

## Palais des Rois de Majorque PALACE

( 04 68 34 96 26; [www.ledepartement66.fr/99-palais-des-rois-de-majorque.htm](http://www.ledepartement66.fr/99-palais-des-rois-de-majorque.htm); 4 rue des Archers; adult/child €4/2;  10am-6pm Jun-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-May) Perpignan's most dominant monument, the Palace of the Kings of Mallorca sprawls over a huge area to the south of the old town. Built in 1276, the castle was later re-fortified with massive red-brick walls by Louis XIV's military engineer, Vauban. These days the star-shaped citadel is sparsely furnished, but its great battlements and strategic defences still give a sense of the Mallorcan kings' might. Views from the ramparts stretch over Perpignan's terracotta rooftops to the coast.

## **Cathédrale St-Jean** CATHEDRAL

(place Gambetta;  7.30am-6pm) Perpignan's most impressive church was begun in 1324 but not completed until 1509. Topped by a Provençal wrought-iron bell cage, the cathedral has a flat façade of red brick and smooth, zigzagging river stones. Inside, the fine carving and ornate altarpiece are characteristically Catalan, and the simple statue of the Virgin and child in the north aisle is a venerated relic. Adjacent to the cathedral is a lovely cloister.

## Sleeping

### **Auberge de Jeunesse** HOSTEL €

( 04 68 34 63 32; [www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/perpignan.html](http://www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/perpignan.html); 3 allée Marc Pierre; dm/tw/q incl breakfast €22/44/84;  reception 8-11am & 5-9pm mid-Apr-mid-Oct, hostel closed mid-Oct-mid-Apr;    Perpignan's modern, well-run HI-affiliated hostel has a handy location just north of Parc de la Pépinière, 300m west of the bus station (p779). Single-sex dorms are spartan but well kept; private rooms have showers (but not toilets) and there's a kitchen.

### **Campanile Perpignan Centre** HOTEL €

( 04 68 61 42 10; [www.campanile.com](http://www.campanile.com); 18 bd Jean Bourrat; d from €69;    Sure, it's a chain hotel, but you'll be hard-pressed to find a more efficient, comfortable base in Perpignan than this. Rooms are bright and colourful, bathrooms sleek and modern, and facilities include a gym and restaurant. Parking is pricey (€15), but a boon in the drivers' nightmare that is Perpignan.

### **Nyx** HOTEL €€

( 04 68 34 87 48; [www.nyxhotel.fr](http://www.nyxhotel.fr); 62bis av Général de Gaulle; d €86-149;    About 500m east



## Perpignan

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Palais des Rois de Majorque..... C6

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Cathédrale St-Jean..... D2  
3 Place de la Loge..... C3

### 🍴 Eating

- 4 Halles Vauban..... B3  
5 La Famille..... C4  
6 Le 17..... D2  
7 Le Figuier..... D3

local produce, this is the kind of place where you pop in for a pastry and emerge an hour later with charcuterie, ripe fruit, desserts and five different cheeses. There's a varied choice of food – burgers, sushi, shellfish – and a lively bar to boot.

### ★ La Famille

BISTRO €€

(☎ 04 48 89 13 29; <https://fr-fr.facebook.com/lafamilierestau>; 3 bis rue François Marie Voltaire; mains €12-18; ☎ 10:30am-3pm, 6pm-midnight Tue-Sat) Run by a young, friendly team, this attractive diner is one of the best places to eat in the old town. Retro furniture, brushed concrete, reclaimed knick-knacks and potted plants make for a laid-back, cafe-style vibe, but the food (produced in the open-plan kitchen next to the bar) is restaurant-standard.

### Le Figuier

TAPAS €€

(☎ 04 68 63 14 82; [www.facebook.com/restaurant.perpignan.lefiguier](http://www.facebook.com/restaurant.perpignan.lefiguier); 7 rue du Figuier; 2-/3-course lunch menu €15/18, mains €14-18; ☎ noon-2pm Tue-Sat, 7:30-10pm Wed-Sat) The alleyway doesn't look that promising, but stick with it: you'll come to a sweet, bamboo-shaded courtyard, a peaceful spot for Spanish-inspired tapas, steaks and seafood. Gourmet it isn't, but the food is honest and tasty, and the setting 100% Perpignan.

### ★ Le 17

FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 68 38 56 82; [www.restaurant-le17-perpignan.fr](http://www.restaurant-le17-perpignan.fr); 1 rue Cité Bartissol; 2-/3-course lunch menu €20/25, mains €14-20; ☎ noon-2pm Mon-Sat, 7:30-9:30pm Thu-Sat) 'Bistronomique' cuisine is the watchword at this smart address right next to the cathedral. Dishes are beautifully presented: the lunch special changes daily, and there's a choice of three starters, mains and desserts for dinner. Seafood is particularly strong. The best tables are in the shady little courtyard.

## 📍 Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 04 68 66 30 30; [www.perpignantourisme.com](http://www.perpignantourisme.com); place de la Loge; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Oct-May) Just west of the historical centre atop a covered section of the canal.

## 📍 Getting There & Away

### AIR

Perpignan's **airport** (PGF; ☎ 04 68 52 60 70; [www.aeroport-perpignan.com](http://www.aeroport-perpignan.com); av Maurice Bellonte) is 5km northwest of the town centre. Current destinations include Paris Orly, Brussels Charleroi and Marrakesh.

The **Navette Aéroport** (Airport Shuttle; one way €1.30) bus 7 links the airport with place de Catalogne on the northwestern edge of the old town (20 minutes, every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday, three services Sunday). You can reserve a seat on the airport website.

### BUS

Buses anywhere in the Pyrénées-Orientales *département* cost a flat-rate €1. Perpignan's **bus station** (☎ 04 68 80 80 80; bd St-Assisclé) is next to the **train station** (bd St-Assisclé).

**Côte Vermeille** (five daily Monday to Saturday, one on Sunday) Bus 540/541 trundles to Collioure (50 minutes), Port-Vendres (65 minutes) and Banyuls-sur-Mer (80 minutes).

**Tech Valley** (four or five daily Monday to Saturday) Bus 530 runs to Céret (35 minutes).

**Têt Valley** (every two hours Monday to Saturday) Bus 520/21 runs to Villefranche-de-Conflent (1¼ hours) and Vernet-les-Bains (1½ hours).

### TRAIN

Frequent direct trains serve destinations in France and across the border in Spain.

**Banyuls-sur-Mer** €7.90, 30 minutes

**Barcelona** from €37, 1½ hours

**Collioure** €6.30, 20 minutes

**Montpellier** €16 to €27.80, 1¼ hours

**Narbonne** €12.40, one hour

**Paris Gare de Lyon** €26.99 to €85, 5½ hours

## Céret

POP 7747

Tucked away in the Pyrenean foothills just off the Tech Valley, the charming little town of Céret conceals an unexpected surprise – the Musée d'Art Moderne, with a collection of stellar canvases donated by some of the 20th century's foremost names from cubism to neorealism. It's currently closed for

renovation works – for the latest updates, see <http://musee-ceret-expo.com>.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel des Arcades


HOTEL €

(☎04 68 87 12 30; [www.hotelarcadesceret.fr](http://www.hotelarcadesceret.fr); 1 place Picasso; d €60-78; ) This heart-of-town hotel is simple and a little dated, but is a decent base for an overnight jaunt to the art museum. The best rooms overlook the main square of place Picasso and its century-old plane trees. There's a very small roof terrace. Breakfast costs €7.50; parking is €6.

### ★ Le Relais des Chartreuses

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎04 68 83 15 88; [www.relais-des-chartreuses.fr](http://www.relais-des-chartreuses.fr); 106 av d'en Carbouner, Le Boulou; r €140-

235; ) Sleek and smart, but with an old-fashioned edge, this country hotel makes for a glorious getaway. The stone Catalan-style house has been impeccably modernised, but retains its charm: the best rooms have balconies with sweeping views over the garrigue-cloaked hills, and there's a lovely garden, pool and *table d'hôte* restaurant. It's 12.5km east of Céret via the D618.

### La Praline

TEAHOUSE €

(☎04 68 87 71 21; [www.lapraline.zenchef.com](http://www.lapraline.zenchef.com); 15 bd Maréchal Joffre; mains €12.50; ☺10am-2.30pm & 4.30-7pm Tue-Fri, 9am-2.30pm Sat) For a quick lunch or something sweet and sinful, this *salon de thé* (teahouse) opposite the art museum serves inventive salads, homemade tarts and delicious desserts – not to mention a copious choice of teas.

## WORTH A TRIP

### PAYS CATHARE

Dotted across the parched plains of Languedoc are many castles left behind by the Cathars, an ultra-devout Christian sect who were persecuted during the 12th century and eventually crushed by the forces of Pope Innocent III during the Albigensian Crusade.

Perched on rocky outcrops surrounded by orange scrubland, the castles are hugely atmospheric, but many are fast crumbling into dust. They can be explored on a long day's drive from Perpignan or Carcassonne – but pack plenty of water and a hat, as temperatures soar in summer. You'll need your own wheels.

The **Pays Cathare** ([www.payscathare.org](http://www.payscathare.org)) website has background info. If you're visiting several castles, pick up the **Passeport des Sites du Pays Cathare** (€4), which gives €1 off admission at each château, and other sites.

The easternmost castle, **Château d'Aguilar** (☎04 68 45 51 00; [www.tuchan.fr](http://www.tuchan.fr); Tuchan; adult/child €4/2; ☺10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10.30am-5.30pm May, Jun & Sep, 11am-5pm Apr & Oct, 11am-4pm Feb & Mar), is about 35km northeast of Perpignan. Take the D117, then detour north onto the D611, signed to Tuchan. Rising over the surrounding Fitou vineyards, it's the smallest of the castles, and crumbling fast, although you can still make out the corner turrets and hexagonal outer wall.

22km east along the D14 is the dramatic **Château de Peyrepertuse** (☎04 30 37 00 77; [www.chateau-peyrepertuse.com](http://www.chateau-peyrepertuse.com); Duilhac-sous-Peyrepertuse; adult/child €7/4; ☺9am-8pm Jul & Aug, 9am-7pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-6pm Mar & Oct, 10am-4.30pm or 5pm rest of year), teetering at the top of a sheer rock ridge with a drop of 800m on either side. Several of the original towers and many sections of ramparts are still standing.

12km southwest past the village of Cucugnan along the D14 and D123, the hilltop **Château de Quéribus** (☎04 68 45 03 69; [www.cucugnan.fr](http://www.cucugnan.fr); Cucugnan; adult/child €7.50/4.50; ☺9am-8pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-7pm May, Jun & Sep, 10am-6pm or 6.30pm Apr & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) was the site of the Cathars' last stand in 1255. The structure is well-preserved, with a slender tower rising from a rocky spur, and there are mind-blowing views stretching to the Mediterranean and the Pyrenees from the top.

Back on the D117, about 33km west of Cucugnan, the turreted **Château de Puilaurrens** (☎04 68 20 65 26; [www.chateau-puilaurrens.com](http://www.chateau-puilaurrens.com); Lapradelle; adult/child €7/4; ☺9am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm May, Jun & Sep, 10am-5pm Apr & Oct–mid-Nov) is perhaps the most dramatic fortress, with double walls, four corner towers and crenellated battlements.

If you're crossing into the Pyrenees, it's worth visiting Château de Montségur, another classic (and important) Cathar stronghold.



## GORGES DE GALAMUS

Languedoc's soft limestone has created plenty of eye-popping gorges, but for heart-in-the-mouth views, the **Gorges de Galamus** ([www.gorgesdegalamus.fr](http://www.gorgesdegalamus.fr)) near the village of St-Paul-de-Fenouillet are hard to beat. Gouged out by the River Agly, the gorge is spanned via a terrifyingly narrow road, cut by hand into the cliff face at the end of the 19th century. There are car parks at either end, from where you can hike up to the photogenic **Hermitage Saint Antoine de Galamus**, clinging halfway up the cliff face.

Built in the 18th century on the foundations of a much earlier monastic site, the chapel provided a home for ascetic hermits until as recently as the 1930s. From the top of the gorge, you can see clear to Mont Canigou on a fine day.

From Perpignan, follow the D117 for about 44km to St-Paul-de-Fenouillet, followed by a 6km detour on the D7 to the southern gorge car park. There is another car park on the gorge's northern side, about 3.5km south of Cubières-sur-Cinoble on the D10. The distance between the two car parks is about 2km; if you don't feel like walking, in summer, electric shuttles called *diablines* can be hired for €1 per person each way.

If time allows, it's worth stopping at the **Musée de Préhistoire de Tautavel** (Tautavel Prehistory Museum; ☎ 04 68 29 07 76; [www.450000ans.com](http://www.450000ans.com); av Léon Jean Grégory, Tautavel; adult/child €8/4; ☀ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sep-Jun), 34km northwest of Perpignan. The surrounding cliffs have yielded many prehistoric finds, most notably a human skull unearthed in the Arago Cave estimated to be 450,000 years old (one of Europe's oldest).

### ★ L'Atelier de Fred

BISTRO €€

(☎ 04 68 95 47 41; <https://en-gb.facebook.com/LAtelier-de-Fred-295497940562513>; 12 rue St-Ferréol; mains €24-30; ☀ 12.15-1.45pm & 7.45-9pm Tue-Sat) People travel for miles to dine at 'Fred's Workshop': the eponymous chef and his team work wonders with local ingredients (many from his own vegetable plot), crafting artful dishes with a nod to traditional Languedoc flavours. Inside, the restaurant feels like a living room, with art on the walls, wine crates and a patio garden.

### i Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 04 68 87 00 53; [www.vallespir-tourisme.fr](http://www.vallespir-tourisme.fr); 5 rue St-Ferréol; ☀ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun Jul-mid-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm or 6pm Mon-Sat rest of year)

### i Getting There & Away

Bus 530 runs to Perpignan (35 minutes, four or five daily Monday to Saturday) from near the tourist office.

## Têt Valley (Vallée de la Têt)

Fruit orchards carpet the lower reaches of the Vallée de la Têt, which winds westwards into the mountains and eventually crosses the border into Spanish Catalonia and Andorra.

The main sight is the Unesco-listed town of Villefranche-de-Conflent, hemmed in by tall cliffs at the strategic confluence of the valleys of the Têt and Cady rivers. Also worth a stop is the pretty medieval village of Eus, whose narrow, winding streets offer spellbinding views of the Pyrenees.

The spa town of Vernet-les-Bains is the launchpad for reaching the top of Mont Canigou (2784m), which looms over the valley and is considered sacred by Catalan people.

### 👁 Sights & Activities

#### Fort Liberia

FORT

(☎ 04 68 96 34 01; [www.fort-liberia.com](http://www.fort-liberia.com); adult/child €7/4.20; ☀ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-7pm May & Jun, 10am-6pm Sep-Apr) Villefranche's mighty fortress dominates the skyline above town. Built by Vauban in 1681, it was heavily refortified by Napoléon III between 1850 and 1856. You can wander around its corner turrets and battlements, as well as the defensive keep, the powder magazine and a former prison. A shuttle bus from town (adult/child return €11/5.50) saves you a steep climb up 844 steps in an underground tunnel or a 20-minute walk on a path.

#### Mont Canigou

MOUNTAIN

At 2784m, this lofty peak is hard to miss – its snow-capped summit is frequently glimpsed as you travel west across Roussillon towards the Pyrenees. Unsurprisingly, it's a popular

target for hikers and mountain bikers, but it's mainly significant for its importance to Catalan people: a cross and Catalan flag stand at the summit, and every year on 23 June, a beacon known as the Flama del Canigó (Flame of Canigou) is lit, setting off a chain of similar beacons across Catalonia.

It's a long old slog to the top: you can get a head start by catching a 4WD up the mountain as far as Les Courtalets (2175m), from where the summit is a three- to four-hour return hike. Contact **Canigou En 4x4** (☎04 68 05 99 89; www.canigou-en-4x4.com; one way adult/child €30/20; ☹ by reservation) or **Garage Villacèque** (☎04 68 05 51 14; louis.villaceque@orange.fr; rue du Conflent; one way adult/child €30/20; ☹ Jun-Sep).

### Orgues d'Ille-sur-Têt

NATURAL FEATURE

(☎04 68 84 13 13; http://lesorgues.ille-sur-tet.com; chemin de Regleilles, Ille-sur-Têt; adult/child €5/4; ☉ 9.15am-8pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 9.30am-7pm Apr-mid-Jun & mid-Sep-mid-Oct, 10am-6pm Feb-Mar & mid-Oct-mid-Nov, 2-5.30pm mid-Nov-Jan) These striking rock formations were formed when erosion wiped out the softer sandstone covering harder rock, leaving behind isolated pinnacles reaching heights of up to 15m. The name suggests their similarity to the pipes of a church organ, although depending on your point of view (and how dirty your mind is), they could be said to resemble giant mushrooms, or something rather more phallic. Various trails wind

around the site, which is about 2km north of Ille-sur-Têt (follow the signs).

## **i** Getting There & Away

Villefranche-de-Conflent is a 51km drive from Perpignan. The only practical public transport is bus 520/21 (every two hours Monday to Saturday), which stops in Villefranche-de-Conflent (1¼ hours) and Vernet-les-Bains (1½ hours).

## Côte Vermeille

Named for the distinctive crimson-coloured rock of its coastline, the Côte Vermeille (Vermilion Coast) runs south from Collioure to Cerbère on the Spanish border, where the Pyrenees foothills dip to the sea. Framed against a backdrop of vineyards and pinched between the Mediterranean and the mountains, it's riddled with rocky bays and little ports – a long way from the glitzy glamour and fleshpot resorts of the Côte d'Azur. Most beaches are shingly, rather than sandy, but still fine for a sunbathe – and the snorkelling is often good.

The main town here is Collioure, an attractive seaside town set around an imposing castle, much favoured by artists. Three kilometres south is Port-Vendres, Roussillon's only natural harbour and deep-water port. The little town of Banyuls-sur-Mer is known for wine production and is surrounded by steeply terraced vineyards.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Buses and trains run regularly along the coast from Perpignan. If you're driving, you can follow the lovely coastal roads all the way to Banyuls-sur-Mer.

## Collioure

POP 2633

A confection of pastel-tinted houses, shady streets and a seafront castle, Collioure is by far the prettiest of the Côte Vermeille towns, and has long provided a favourite backdrop for painters. Fauvists Henri Matisse and André Derain were among the first to hole up here, followed later by others including Picasso and Braque. For many years it was also the adopted home of the British naval writer Patrick O'Brien (author of the Jack Aubrey novels including *Master & Commander*, among many others).

Today the town has more than 30 galleries and workshops, including many on rue

### DON'T MISS

#### LE TRAIN JAUNE

Nicknamed Le Canari (the Canary) thanks to its bright yellow carriages, the **Train Jaune** (☎04 68 96 63 62; www.ter.sncf.com/occitanie/loisirs/patrimoine-culture/train-jaune; place de la Gare; one way €4.50-22.50) trundles from Villefranche-de-Conflent (427m) through spectacular Pyrenean scenery to Latour de Carol (1231m). One of France's most famous and popular train trips, it doesn't take bookings and attracts some 400,000 passengers annually – in summer, arrive a good hour before departure. It makes scheduled stops at eight of its 22 stations; others are request-only. At Latour de Carol you can return to Villefranche or change for Toulouse or Barcelona.

de la Fraternité: a marked walking trail, the **Chemin du Fauvisme**, takes in several locations around town depicted by the Fauvists ('Wild Beasts'), who were entranced by the almost psychedelic colours and fierce light.

The town's other claim to fame are its locally caught *anchois* (anchovies); they feature in many local recipes, and you'll see colourful little tins of them sold in shops all over town.

## Sights & Activities

Like most beaches along the Côte Vermeille, Collioure's main town beach is shingly, but pleasant enough for a paddle.



### Château Royal

CHATEAU

( 04 68 82 06 43; [www.ledepartement66.fr/98-chateau-royal-de-collioure.htm](http://www.ledepartement66.fr/98-chateau-royal-de-collioure.htm); Port Plaisance; adult/child €4/3;  9.30am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) Collioure's most prominent monument is its seaside castle, built on the site of a former Roman *castrum* between 1266 and 1344 by the counts of Roussillon and the kings of Aragon. It was later occupied by the Mallorcan court, although the outer wall was the work of Vauban in the 17th century. Interior furnishings are minimal, but the hybrid Spanish-French architectural styles are striking and the coastal views lovely.



### Musée d'Art Moderne

GALLERY

( 04 68 82 10 19; 4 rte de Port-Vendres; adult/child €3/2;  10am-noon & 2-6pm Jun-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Oct-May) Collioure's little art museum is a pleasant surprise, covered in ivy and set back from the waterfront. Boat sketches by Matisse and Edouard Pignon along with coastal canvases by Henri Martin and Henri Marre are among the highlights.

### Fort St-Elme

FORTRESS

( 06 64 61 82 42; [www.fortsaintelme.fr](http://www.fortsaintelme.fr); rte Stratégique; adult/child €7/free;  10.30am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm mid-Feb-Mar & Oct-early Nov) Rising on a wooded hilltop high above town, this star-shaped fortress was built between 1538 and 1552 by Spanish king Charles V as part of his coastal defence system. A trail winds up to the castle from the seafront, passing the 14th-century **Moulin de Collioure** ([www.lemoulindecollioure.com](http://www.lemoulindecollioure.com); Parc Pams) windmill en route. Fine views over Collioure's terracotta-tinged rooftops unfurl as you climb.

## Sleeping

### Hôtel Princes de Catalogne

HOTEL €

( 04 68 98 30 00; [www.hotel-princescatalogne.com](http://www.hotel-princescatalogne.com); rue des Palmiers; d from €83, f from €146;  closed mid-Jan-mid-Feb;   ) Down an alleyway off the seafront, this solid if unspectacular hotel makes a reasonably priced base in Collioure. Rooms are in generic greys with minimal furnishings; only the pricier upper-floors have coastal views. On-site parking is free, but spaces are limited.

### Villa Miranda

B&amp;B €€

( 04 68 98 03 79; [www.villamiranda.fr](http://www.villamiranda.fr); 15 rte du Pla de les Forques; d €105-115;  Apr-Oct;  ) Simple but sweet, this B&B has five rooms decked out in cheery stripes, with blonde-wood floors and bright bathrooms; Xaloc, Marinade and Migjorn have their own private sea-view patios, and there's a shared panoramic terrace on the 1st floor.

### ★ Casa Païral

HOTEL €€



( 04 68 82 05 81; [www.hotel-casa-pairal.com](http://www.hotel-casa-pairal.com); impasse des Palmiers; d from €125;   ) Set around a courtyard filled with fragrant blooms, this 18th-century manor house is steps from the beach, and offers smart rooms decorated in both traditional and modern styles (insist on a balcony to make the most of the setting). Breakfast is pricey (€16), but served in the dreamy garden when it's sunny.

## Eating & Drinking

Choose carefully along the waterfront, as the quality can suffer at busy times. There are several good options tucked away in the backstreets of the centre.



### ★ Chez Paco

TAPAS €

( 04 68 82 90 91; 18 rue Rièrè; tapas €5-14;  11am-2pm & 6-10.30pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep) Tasty tapas plates of cheese, fish and charcuterie are whipped up at this lively backstreet bar, accompanied by a great selection of local wines by the glass. There's not much room inside, but the action spills out onto the street on warm summer nights.

### Casa Leon

SEAFOOD €€

( 04 68 82 10 74; 2 rue Rièrè; lunch menu €18, mains €16-28;  noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm) This cosy Catalan cafe serves honest, filling food, such as generous platters of prawns, squid and scallops, ideally washed down with a crisp local white or rosé.

★ **El Capillo**

FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 68 82 48 23; 2 rue Pasteur; lunch menu €14.50, 3-course dinner menus €19.50-27.50, mains €12-24; ☺ noon-2.30pm, 7.30-10pm Wed-Sun) The lively young team here have made this little place a local favourite in the old quarter. Specialities include *brochettes* (kebabs), seafood *à la plancha* (cooked on a hot plate) and – fittingly enough for Collioure – an *asiette anchoïis* (anchovy platter).

**Le Neptune**

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 04 68 82 02 27; www.leneptune-collioure.com; 9 rte de Port-Vendres; lunch menu €29, dinner menu €39-99, mains €20-55; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Apr-Oct, noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Thu-Mon Nov-Mar; ☎ ☹) For lunch with a view, nowhere in Collioure tops the Neptune: the dining room and panoramic terrace look right out over Collioure's brilliant blue bay and red rooftops. Expect high-class gastronomic cooking; lunch is great value. The style is formal, so you'd best dress up.

★ **Les Templiers**

BAR

(☎ 04 68 98 01 24; www.hotel-templiers.com; 12 Quai de l'Amirauté; ☺ 9am-11pm) This old sea-front cafe was Patrick O'Brian's preferred drinking hole: the bar is covered with a fabulous collection of canvases by former patrons (look out for the picture of Picasso and owner Monsieur Pous behind the bar).

## WORTH A TRIP

**AUBERGE DU VIEUX Puits**

For a true gourmet spoil in the Languedoc, Gilles Goujon's triple Michelin-starred **Auberge du Vieux Puits** (☎ 04 68 44 07 37; www.aubergeduvieuxpuits.fr; 5 av St-Victor, Fontjoncouse; menus €125-215; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 8-9.30pm Wed-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun Apr-Nov, closed Dec-Mar) is unquestionably the address. Tucked away in the hilltop village of Fontjoncouse, between Narbonne and Perpignan, the Old Well Inn is one of Languedoc's most celebrated restaurants – and while undeniably upmarket, it feels surprisingly relaxed. Goujon is known for his passion for local ingredients such as Bigorre pork, Galician beef, seasonal game and, of course, seafood. The *menus* stretch between four and seven courses and include a 'chariot of cheese' that almost defies belief.

It's perfect for an evening tippie, and simple food is served if you're peckish.

**i Information**

**Tourist office** (☎ 04 68 82 15 47; www.collioure.com; place du 18 Juin; ☺ 9.15am-6.45pm Jul-Sep, to 5.45pm Mon-Sat, 10.15am-5.45pm Sun Apr-Jun & Oct, 9.15am-12.30pm & 2-5.15pm Nov-Mar) On the northern side of town near quai de l'Amirauté. It arranges guided tours (€7).

**i Getting There & Away**

Hourly **trains** (rue du Lavoisier) link Collioure with Perpignan (€6.30, 20 minutes) and Banyuls-sur-Mer (€2.40, seven minutes, hourly).

**Banyuls-sur-Mer**

POP 4766

Banyuls began as a fishing port, but is now best known for its wines (Banyuls, Banyuls Grand Cru and Collioure). Grapes grow on the slopes around town on steep, rocky terraces divided by drystone walls, which help retain water and prevent erosion.

It's a lovely spot, with three shingly but superb beaches (Centrale, Les Elmes and Centre Hélios Marin) with translucent turquoise waters, and an important marine reserve, the Réserve Naturelle Cerbère-Banyuls, 6km southeast of town, where you can snorkel and scuba dive. Banyuls is also a convenient stop-off if you're heading over the border into Spain, 14km to the south.

**o Sights & Activities****L'Anse de Paulilles**

ARCHITECTURE

(www.ledepartement66.fr/60-le-site-de-paulilles.htm; D914; ☺ Director) **FREE** Part industrial relic, part nature walk, this 35-hectare coastal site is remote, as you'd expect of a one-time dynamite factory. It was set up by Nobel Prize founder Alfred Nobel in 1870 and subsequently abandoned in 1984. Haunting photos inside the former director's house depict the hard lives and close community of Catalan workers, whose explosives helped to blast the Panama Canal, Trans-Siberian Railway and Mont Blanc Tunnel. It's 3.2km north of Banyuls-sur-Mer.

**Biodiversarium**

AQUARIUM

(☎ 04 68 88 73 39; www.biodiversarium.fr; 1 av Pierre Fabre; adult/child aquarium €9.50/7.50, joint ticket with Jardin Méditerranéen €12/10; ☺ 10am-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sep-Jun) At the southern end of Banyuls' seafront

promenade, this aquarium houses an intriguing collection of Mediterranean marine life, from seahorses to sea anemones.

Combination tickets are available with the **Jardin Méditerranéen du Mas de la Serre** (☎04 68 88 73 39; www.biodiversarium.fr; rte des Crêtes; adult/child garden only €6/3, joint ticket with Biodiversarium €12/10; ☺guided visits 9.30am Tue-Thu Jul-Aug, 9.30am Wed, self-guided visits 2-6.30pm Sat & Sun Apr-Jun), a hilltop garden filled with all kinds of outlandish plants.

### Terres des Templiers

WINE

(☎04 68 98 36 92; www.terresdestempliers.fr; rte des Crêtes; ☺10.15am-7.30pm late Mar-early Nov) The best place to try Banyuls' wines is this vineyard 1.5km west of the seafront via the D86. Free 30-minute guided tours take in the century-old oak vats. Tours in English (€5) depart at 2.30pm, 4pm and 5.30pm.

### Aquablue Plongée

SNORKELLING

(☎04 68 88 17 35; www.aquablue-plongee.com; 5 quai Georges Petit; snorkelling trips with/without guide €25/35; ☺Apr-early Nov, by reservation) The Réserve Naturelle Cerbère-Banyuls is a favourite with underwater photographers

for its abundant sea life, from sea anemones to colourful octopi. This outfit offers snorkelling trips and daily dives at 9am and 2pm.

## Eating

### ★ La Littorine

MEDITERRANEAN €€€

(☎04 68 88 03 12; www.hotel-des-elmes.com/en/littorine-restaurant-banyuls; Plage des Elmes; menus from €32, mains €25-40; ☺noon-1.30pm & 7-9pm) This sleek establishment at the Hôtel des Elmes is without doubt the pick of Banyuls' restaurants, with a luminous sea-view dining room overlooking the bay, and swish Mediterranean-influenced dishes courtesy of respected chef Michel Vedrines. The wine list is a corker, with plenty of local choices.

Swish rooms (€90 to €146) are available, too: the suites (€203-256) have balconies and sea-view spa baths.

## Getting There & Away

**Trains** (av de la Gare) link Banyuls-sur-Mer with Perpignan (€7.90, 30 minutes, hourly) via Collioure (€2.40, seven minutes).





BELIKOVA ONSANA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



**1.** Palais des Rois de Majorque (p777), Perpignan **2.** Les Arènes (p748), Nîmes **3.** Château et Remparts (p768), Carcassonne  
**4.** Château Royal (p783), Collioure



ROLF E. STAERK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

2

## Languedoc-Roussillon Architecture

The Languedoc landscape is strewn with spectacular structures that provide a fascinating insight into the region's past.

During the 2nd century CE, the Languedoc was part of the province of Gallia Narbonensis, a strategically important region of Roman Gaul. As its name suggests, the province's capital was Narbonne, but the most impressive Roman ruins are in Nîmes, including a wonderfully preserved Roman temple (p748) and a 24,000-seat amphitheatre now known as Les Arènes (p748). Just outside the city, the three-tiered Pont du Gard (p752) aqueduct was built to transport water between Uzès and Nîmes, and ranks as one of the great achievements of Roman engineering.

Long after the Romans, the Languedoc remained a strategically important frontier. The legacy of this can be seen in the region's numerous castles and fortified towns – most notably the fortress (p767) of Carcassonne, with its distinctive 'witch's hat' turrets, and the lonely hilltop castles (p780) left behind by the Cathars, an ultra-devout Christian sect persecuted by Rome during the 13th-century Albigensian Crusade.

For much of the medieval era, the neighbouring province of Roussillon was Catalanian rather than French. In 1276, Perpignan became capital of the Kingdom of Mallorca, and it still has a mighty Spanish-style castle, the Palais des Rois de Majorque (p777), where the kings and their families lived. A smaller fortress, the Château Royal (p783), can be seen in nearby Collioure. Even today, Roussillon still shares strong ties with Catalonia, with *fèrias* (bullfighting festivals) an important part of the festive calendar.



IAKOV FILMONOV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

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TRAVELLIGHT/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

2.9 million

### BIGGEST NATURE RESERVE

Parc National du Mercantour (p846)

### BEST MARKET

Marché d'Arles (p817)

### BEST WINE TASTING

Domaine de la Solitude (p830)

### BEST SCENIC DRIVE

Route des Crêtes (p847)



### WHEN TO GO

#### Apr–Jun & Sep–Oct

Fewer crowds, more tolerable temperatures, plus cowboy culture in the Camargue (May).

#### Jul & Aug

Provence at its busiest, with crowds at major attractions and fully booked hotels.

#### Nov–mid-Mar

Much of Provence shuts down; some hotels and B&Bs close. It's truffle-hunting season.

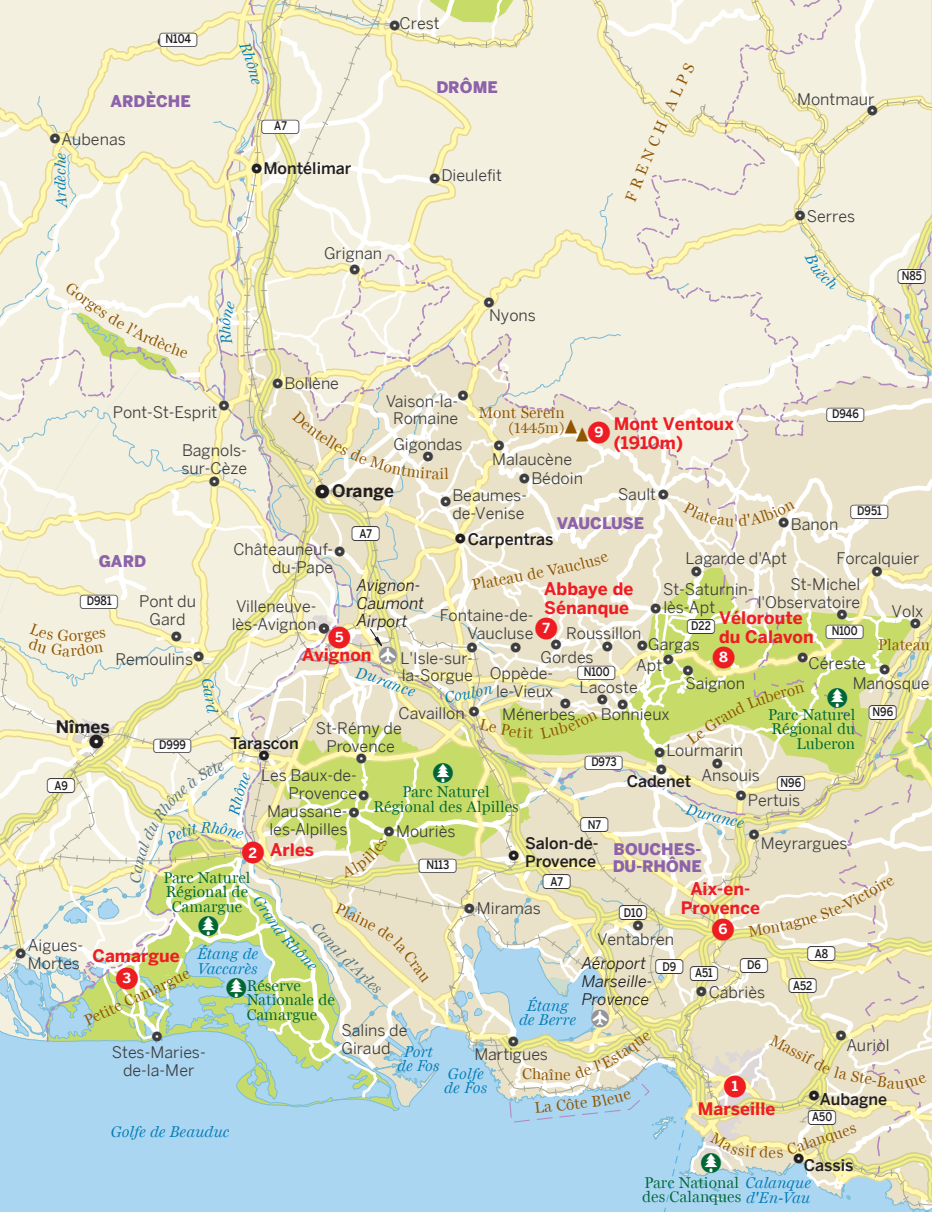


## Provence

**F**or many people, the pastoral landscapes of Provence are a French fantasy come true. Provence seems to sum up everything enviable about the French lifestyle: fantastic food, hilltop villages, legendary wines, bustling markets and a balmy climate. For decades, it's been a hotspot for holidaymakers and second-homers, inspired by the vision of the rustic good life depicted in Peter Mayle's classic 1989 travelogue, *A Year in Provence*. For the quintessential Provençal countryside, the best place to begin is inland around the valleys and hills of the Luberon and Var. Further inland rises Provence's highest peak, Mont Ventoux, and beyond it, the snow-capped peaks of the Hautes-Alpes.

### INCLUDES

Marseille . . . . .	792	Orange . . . . .	832
Aix-en-Provence . . . . .	808	Vaison-la-Romaine . .	833
The Camargue . . . . .	813	Carpentras . . . . .	836
Arles . . . . .	813	The Luberon . . . . .	838
Camargue Wetlands . .	818	Apt . . . . .	838
Les Alpilles . . . . .	821	Le Petit Luberon . . .	842
Vaucluse . . . . .	824	Le Grand Luberon . .	844
Avignon . . . . .	825	Alpes-de-Haute-Provence . . . . .	845



## Provence Highlights

- 1 Marseille** (p792)  
Delving into the multicultural melting pot of this dynamic port city.
- 2 Arles** (p813) Sitting in the stalls of one of the

- world's best-preserved Roman amphitheatres.
- 3 Camargue** (p813) Spotting candy-pink flamingos amid biologically rich wetlands.

- 4 Gorges du Verdon** (p847) Enjoying the awe-inspiring views on cliffside walks through this dramatic river canyon.
- 5 Avignon** (p825)





Exploring the history of papal power at the magnificent Palais des Papes.

**6 Aix-en-Provence** (p808)  
Tracing the footsteps of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne.

**7 Abbaye de Sénanque** (p840)  
Strolling through fields of fragrant lavender at this lovely abbey.

**8 Véloroute du Calavon**

(p839) Cycling through classic Luberon countryside.

**9 Mont Ventoux** (p835)  
Admiring the view from the summit of *le géant de Provence*.

## MARSEILLE

POP 864,000

Grit and grandeur coexist seamlessly in Marseille, an exuberantly multicultural port city with a pedigree stretching back to classical Greece and a fair claim to the mantle of France's second city. Once seen as somewhat dirty and dangerous, and lacking the glamour of Cannes or St-Tropez, this black sheep of the Provençal coastline has blossomed in cultural confidence since its 2013 stint as the European Capital of Culture.

Marseille's heart is the vibrant Vieux Port (old port), mast-to-mast with yachts and pleasure boats. Just uphill is the ancient Le Panier neighbourhood, the oldest section of the city. Also worth an explore is the République quarter, with its stylish boutiques and Haussmannian buildings, and the Joliette area, centred on Marseille's totemic Cathédrale Sainte-Marie-Majeure de Marseille (p793).




### Sights

Greater Marseille is divided into 16 *arrondissements* (districts), which are indicated in addresses (eg 1er for the first *arrondissement* and so on). The city's main thoroughfare, La Canebière (from the Provençal word *canebe*, meaning 'hemp', after the city's traditional rope industry), in the 1st *arrondissement*, stretches eastwards from the Vieux Port towards the train station, a 10-minute walk or two metro stops from the water. North is Le Panier, Marseille's oldest quarter; south is the bohemian concourse of cours Julien; and southwest is the start of the coastal road.

### Central Marseille


#### ★ Vieux Port

PORT

(Old Port; Map p796;  Vieux Port) Ships have docked for millennia at Marseille's birthplace, the vibrant Vieux Port. The main commercial docks were transferred to the Joliette area in the 1840s, but the old port remains a thriving harbour for fishing boats, pleasure yachts and tourist boats. Guarded by the forts **St-Jean** (Map p796;  Vieux Port) and **St-Nicolas** (Map p796; 1 bd Charles Livon;  83), both sides of the port are dotted with bars, brasseries and cafes, with more to be found around place Thiars and cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves, where the action continues until late.

#### ★ Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde



BASILICA

(Montée de la Bonne Mère; Map p802;  04 91 13 40 80; www.notredamedelagarde.com; rue Fort du Sanctuaire; ☀7am-6.30pm;  60) Occupying Marseille's highest point, La Garde (154m), this opulent 19th-century Romano-Byzantine basilica is Marseille's most-visited icon. Built on the foundations of a 16th-century fort, which was itself an enlargement of a 13th-century chapel, the basilica is ornamented with coloured marble, superb Byzantine-style mosaics, and murals depicting ships sailing under the protection of La Bonne Mère (The Good Mother). The campanile supports a 9.7m-tall gilded statue of said Mother on a 12m-high pedestal, and the hill-top gives 360-degree panoramas of the city.

The basilica is a steep 1km walk from the Vieux Port; alternatively, take bus 60 or the tourist train.


#### Musée d'Histoire de Marseille

MUSEUM

(History Museum of Marseille; Map p796;  04 91 55 36 00; http://musee-histoire.marseille.fr; 2 rue Henri-Barbusse; adult/child €6/free; ☀9am-6pm Tue-Sun;  Vieux Port) This intriguing 15,000-sq-metre museum traces the story of 'France's Oldest City' from prehistory to the present day, across 12 chronological multimedia-filled exhibitions. The complex was built beside the remains of a Greek harbour uncovered during construction of the Bourse shopping centre. Highlights include the remains of a 14m-long 6th-century merchant vessel discovered in the Vieux Port in 1974, paintings depicting the horrific plague of 1720 and film footage from WWII.

#### ★ Le Panier

AREA

(Map p796;  Vieux Port) 'The Basket' is Marseille's oldest quarter – site of the original Greek settlement and nicknamed for its steep streets and buildings. Its close, village-like feel, artsy ambience, cool hidden squares and sun-baked cafes make it a delight to explore. Rebuilt after destruction in WWII, its mishmash of lanes hide artisan shops, *ateliers* (workshops) and terraced houses strung with drying washing. Its centrepiece is La Vieille Charité.

#### La Vieille Charité

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p796;  04 91 14 58 80; www.vieille-charite-marseille.com; 2 rue de la Charité; museums adult/child €6/free; ☀10am-6pm Tue-Sun;  Joliette) In the heart of Marseille's Le Panier quarter is this grand and gorgeous almshouse, built

by Pierre Puget (1620–94), an architect and sculptor born just a couple of streets away who rose to become Louis XIV's architect. With its neoclassical central chapel and elegant arcaded courtyard, it's a structure of great harmony and grace. Entry is free, although there's a charge to visit the excellent **Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne** (Museum of Mediterranean Archaeology; Map p796; ☎04 91 14 58 59; www.culture.marseille.fr; 2 rue de la Charité; adult/child €6/free; ☀10am–6pm Tue–Sun; 🗺 Joliette) and **Musée d'Arts Africains, Océaniques et Américains** (Museum of African, Oceanic & American Indian Art; Map p796; ☎04 91 14 58 38; www.culture.marseille.fr; 2 rue de la Charité; adult/child €6/free; ☀10am–6pm Tue–Sun; 🗺 Joliette), both housed within.

### ★ Musée des Civilisations

**de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée** MUSEUM (MuCEM, Museum of European & Mediterranean Civilisations; Map p802; ☎04 84 35 13 13; www.mucesm.org; 7 promenade Robert Laffont; adult/child incl exhibitions €11/free; ☀11am–6pm Nov–Apr, to 7pm May, Jun & Oct, 10am–8pm Jul–Sep, closed Tue year-round; 🗺; 🗺 Vieux Port, Joliette) The icon of modern Marseille, this stunning museum explores the history, culture and civilisation of the Mediterranean region through anthropological exhibits, rotating art exhibitions and film. The collection sits in a bold, contemporary building designed by Algerian-born, Marseille-educated architect Rudy Ricciotti, and Roland Carta. It is linked by a vertigo-inducing footbridge to the 13th-century Fort St-Jean (p792), from which there are stupendous views of the Vieux Port and the surrounding sea. The fort grounds and gardens are free to explore.

### Villa Méditerranée

MUSEUM (Map p796; esplanade du J4, off bd du Littoral; 🗺; 🗺 Vieux Port, Joliette) **FREE** This eye-catching white structure next to MuCEM is no ordinary 'villa'. Designed by architect Stefano Boeri in 2013, the sleek white edifice sports a spectacular cantilever overhanging an ornamental pool. The interior is currently closed to the public but will reopen in 2022 as a museum housing a replica of the Cosquer Cave, complete with 500 handpainted prehistoric illustrations (depicting works created 19,000 to 27,000 years ago).

### Musée des Beaux Arts

MUSEUM (☎04 91 14 59 30; http://musees.marseille.fr; 7 rue Édouard Stephan; adult/child €6/free; ☀9am–6pm Tue–Sun; 🗺; 🗺 Cinq Avenues-Longchamp,

☎Longchamp) Set in the lavish, colonnaded Palais de Longchamp, Marseille's oldest museum owes its existence to an 1801 decree of pre-Napoleonic France's short-lived Consulate, which established 15 museums across the country. A treasure trove of 16th- to 19th-century Italian and Provençal painting and sculpture, it's set in parkland popular with local families seeking shade in Marseille's treeless centre.

The spectacular fountains, constructed in the 1860s, in part disguise the water tower at which the Roquefavour Aqueduct terminates.

### Cathédrale Sainte-Marie-Majeure de Marseille

CATHEDRAL

(La Major; Map p796; ☎04 91 90 52 87; www.marseille.catholique.fr/La-Major-cathedrale; place de la Major; ☀10am–6.30pm Apr–Sep, to 5.30pm Oct–Mar; 🗺 Joliette) Standing guard between the old and new ports is the striking 19th-century Cathédrale de la Major. After its foundation stone was laid by Napoleon III in 1852, the 'New Major' took over 40 years to complete. It boasts a Byzantine-style striped façade made of local Cassis stone and green Florentine marble.

Beneath the church are **Les Voûtes de la Major**, 19th-century vaulted warehouses repurposed as restaurants and boutiques, while the grand staircase on the northern side makes an impressive gateway to La Joliette.

### La Joliette

AREA

(Map p802; 🗺 Joliette, 🗺 Joliette) The old maritime neighbourhood of La Joliette, moribund

### ISLAND FORTRESS

Commanding access to Marseille's Vieux Port, photogenic **Château d'If** (☎06 03 06 25 26; www.chateau-if.fr; Île d'If; adult/child €6/free; ☀10.30am–5.15pm Tue–Sun) was immortalised in Alexandre Dumas' 1844 classic *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Many political prisoners were incarcerated here, including the Revolutionary hero Mirabeau and the Communards of 1871. Other than the island itself, there's not a great deal to see, but it's worth visiting just for the views of the Vieux Port. **Frioli If Express** (Map p796; ☎04 91 22 41 22; http://lebateau-frioli-if.fr; 1 quai de la Fraternité) runs boats (return €11, 20 minutes, up to 12 daily) from Quai de la Fraternité.

# Vieux Port

## AN ITINERARY

Start with an early-morning coffee on the balcony at La Caravelle, with views of the boats bobbing in the harbour and Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde across the way.

Mosey down the quay to the sparkling **1 MuCEM** and its cantilevered neighbour **2 Villa Méditerranée** for a morning of art and culture. You'll enter through Fort St-Jean, and wind through rooftop gardens to reach the state-of-the-art museums.

Alternatively, take in green-and-white striped **3 Cathédrale de la Major** then explore the apricot-coloured alleys of **4 Le Panier**, browsing the exhibits at the **5 Centre de la Vieille Charité**, and shopping in the neighbourhood's tiny boutiques.

In the afternoon, hop on the cross-port ferry to the harbour's south side and take a **6 boat trip** to Château d'If, made famous by the Dumas novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

Or stroll under Norman Foster's mirrored pavilion, then wander into the **7 Abbaye St-Victor**, to see the bones of martyrs enshrined in gold.

As evening nears, you can catch the sunset from the stone benches in the **8 Jardin du Pharo**. Then as the warm southern night sets in, join the throngs on cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves, where you can drink pastis and people-watch beneath a giant statue of a lion devouring a man – the **9 Milo de Croton**.



### Cathédrale de la Major

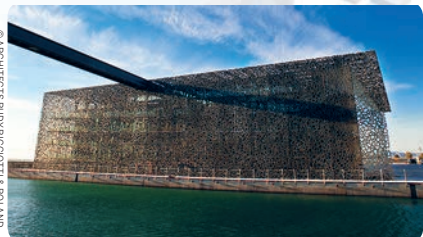
The striped façade of Marseille's cathedral is made from local Cassis stone and green Florentine marble. Its grand north staircase leads from Le Panier to La Joliette quarter



### Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM)

Explore the icon of modern Marseille. This stunning museum was designed by Rudy Ricciotti and Roland Carta, and is linked by a vertigo-inducing footbridge to 13th-century Fort St-Jean. You'll get stupendous views of the Vieux Port and the Mediterranean.

© ARCHITECTS RUDY RICCIOTTI & ROLAND CARTA/MUCEM PHOTO BY LISARICCIOTTI





### Centre de la Vieille Charité

Before the 18th century, beggar hunters rounded up the poor for imprisonment. The Vieille Charité almshouse, which opened in 1749, improved their lot by acting as a workhouse. It's now an exhibition space and only the barred windows recall its original use.

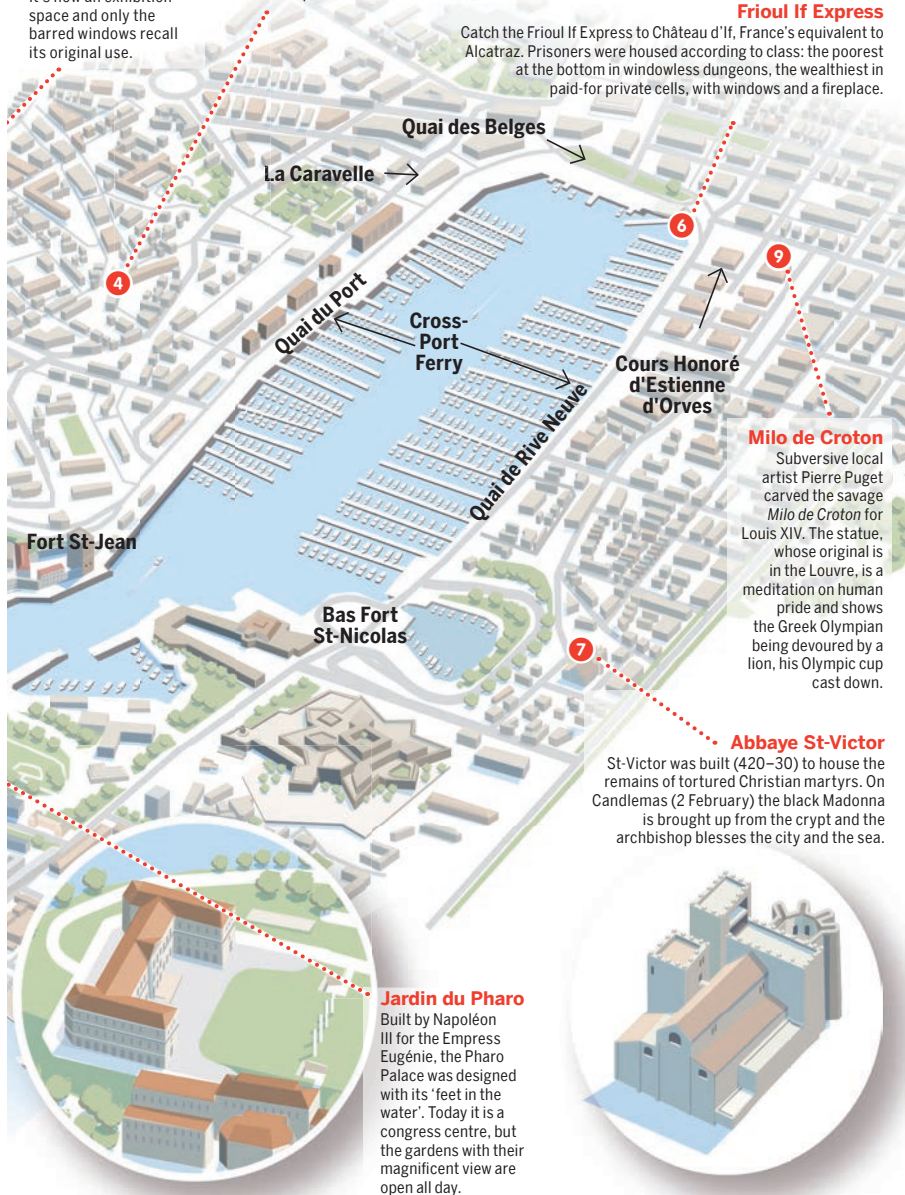
### Le Panier

The site of the Greek town of Massilia, Le Panier woos walkers with its sloping streets. Grand Rue follows the ancient road and opens out into place de Lenche, the location of the Greek market. It is still the place to shop for artisanal products.



### Frioul If Express

Catch the Frioul If Express to Château d'If, France's equivalent to Alcatraz. Prisoners were housed according to class: the poorest at the bottom in windowless dungeons, the wealthiest in paid-for private cells, with windows and a fireplace.



### Milo de Croton

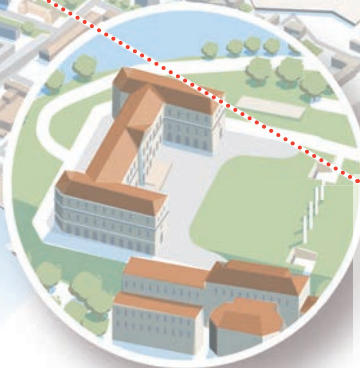
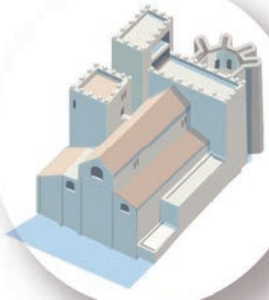
Subversive local artist Pierre Puget carved the savage *Milo de Croton* for Louis XIV. The statue, whose original is in the Louvre, is a meditation on human pride and shows the Greek Olympian being devoured by a lion, his Olympic cup cast down.

### Abbaye St-Victor

St-Victor was built (420–30) to house the remains of tortured Christian martyrs. On Candlemas (2 February) the black Madonna is brought up from the crypt and the archbishop blesses the city and the sea.

### Jardin du Pharo

Built by Napoléon III for the Empress Eugénie, the Pharo Palace was designed with its 'feet in the water'. Today it is a congress centre, but the gardens with their magnificent view are open all day.





## Central Marseille





## Central Marseille

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 La Vieille Charité.....C1
- 2 Le Panier.....D2
- 3 Vieux Port.....D5

### 📍 Sights

- 4 Cathédrale Sainte-Marie-Majeure de Marseille.....B2
- 5 Fort St-Jean.....A4
- 6 Fort St-Nicolas.....A7
- 7 Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne.....C1
- 8 Musée d'Arts Africains, Océaniens & Amérindiens.....C1
- 9 Musée d'Histoire de Marseille.....F3
- 10 Musée du Santon.....C6
- 11 Villa Méditerranée.....A3

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 12 Croisières Marseille Calanques.....F4
- 13 Icard Maritime.....E4

### 📍 Sleeping

- 14 Alex Hotel.....H1
- 15 Hotel Bellevue.....E4

- 16 Hotel Carré Vieux Port.....F4
- 17 Hôtel St-Louis.....G4
- 18 Maison Montgrand.....F7
- 19 Vertigo Vieux-Port.....E7

### 📍 Eating

- 20 La Passarelle.....C6
- 21 Bar des 13 Coins.....B2
- 22 Les Halles de la Major.....A2
- 23 Sylvain Depuichaffray.....F6
- 24 Vanille Noire.....C3

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 25 Bar Gaspard.....E7
- 26 La Caravelle.....E4
- 27 Polikarpov.....F5

### 📍 Entertainment

- 28 Opéra Municipal de Marseille.....F5

### 📍 Shopping

- 29 Four des Navettes.....B7
- 30 Maison de la Boule.....B2
- 31 Maison Empereur.....G4
- 32 Marché des Capucins.....H3

after the decline of the 19th-century docks, has been revitalised by bars, shops and restaurants. Ferries still depart for ports around the Med, but the long sweep of 19th-century commercial facades along Quai de la Joliette has been given an impressive scrub. Here you'll find **Marché de la Joliette** (Map p802; place de la Joliette; ☺ 8am-1.30pm & 3-7pm Tue, 8am-1.30pm Wed-Sat; 🕒 Joliette), one of Marseille's buzziest markets, and **Les Docks** (Map p802; ☎ 04 91 44 25 28; www.lesdocks-marseille.com; 10 place de la Joliette; ☺ 10am-7pm; 🕒 Joliette, 🗺 Joliette) – abandoned 19th-century warehouses now filled with boutiques and galleries. Nearby, **Les Terrasses du Port** is a vast new shopping mall filled with upmarket international chains. It has a huge public terrace on level 2 with fab views of the port and coast.

### Musée du Santon

MUSEUM

(Map p796; ☎ 04 91 13 61 36; www.santonsmarcelcarbonel.com; 49 rue Neuve Ste-Catherine; ☺ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sat; 🕒 Vieux Port) **FREE** One of Provence's most enduring Christmas traditions is its *santons* (plaster-moulded, kiln-fired nativity figures), first created by Marseillais artisan Jean-Louis Lagnel (1764–1822). This tiny museum displays a collection of 18th- and 19th-century *santons* (from the Provençal word *santoun*, meaning 'little saint'), and runs visits to its workshops. Its boutique sells everything

from nail-sized dogs and pigs to a complete *mas* (Provençal farmhouse).

## 📍 Along the Coast

Mesmerising views of another Marseille unfold along **corniche Président John F Kennedy**, the coastal road that cruises south to the small, beach-volleyball-busy **Plage des Catalans** (Map p802; 3 rue des Catalans; ☺ 8.30am-8pm Apr-Oct, to 6.30pm Nov-Mar; 🕒 81, 82) and the boat-filled fishing cove of **Vallon des Auffes** (Map p802; 🕒 83).

Further south, the vast **Prado beaches** are marked by Jules Cantini's 1903 marble replica of Michelangelo's *David*. The beaches, all tiny pebbles, were created from backfill from the excavations for Marseille's metro. They have a world-renowned **skate park**. Nearby lies expansive **Parc Borély** (av du Parc Borély; 🕒 19 or 83, stop Parc Borély).

Promenade Georges Pompidou continues 8km south to **Cap Croisette**, from where the beautiful Parc National des Calanques (p807) can be reached on foot.

To head down the coast, take bus 83 from the Vieux Port. At av du Prado switch to bus 19 to continue further. Espace Infos RTM (p808) sells tickets for ferries between the Vieux Port and La Pointe Rouge, just to the south of the Prado beaches; the City Pass does not cover the ticket.

## Tours

Marseille is a natural launch pad for exploring the nearby Parc National des Calanques (p807). Several boat tours depart from the Vieux Port.

**Marseille Provence Greeters** WALKING  
(www.marseilleprovincengreeters.com) A great idea: free walking tours led by locals, covering street art, history, food shops, football culture and lots more. Sign up in advance online and check whether your guide speaks English.

## Sleeping

**★ Vertigo Vieux-Port** HOSTEL €  
(Map p796; ☎04 91 54 42 95; www.hotelvertigo.fr; 38 rue Fort Notre Dame; dm/tw €28/75; 🏠🚰; 🚿) (M Vieux Port) This award-winning hostel shows a swanky sleep is possible on a shoe-string budget – for your euro you can expect breakfast, murals by local artists, vintage furniture and original architectural details such as exposed wooden beams and stone arches. It has a kitchen, a lounge and an inviting bar and restaurant (with good Belgian beers on tap).

**★ Mama Shelter** DESIGN HOTEL €€  
(☎04 84 35 20 00; www.mamashelter.com; 64 rue de la Loubière; d €122-195; 🏠🚰; 🚿) (M Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien) Part of a funky mini-chain of design-forward hotels, Marseille's Mama Shelter offers 125 Philippe Starck–imagined rooms over five floors. It's all about keeping the cool kids happy here – with sleek white-and-chrome colour schemes, a live stage and bar, and a giant *babi foot* (fussball) table. Smaller rooms are oddly shaped, however, and it's a walk from the Vieux Port.

**Alex Hotel** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€  
(Map p796; ☎04 13 24 13 24; www.hotelalex.fr; 13 place des Marseillaises; d from €130; 🏠🚰; 🚿) (M St-Charles) A stone's throw from the Gare St-Charles, the Alex Hotel offers boutique style without breaking the bank. Rooms are small but boast a vibrant contemporary style, and the comfy mattresses, rain showers, decent sound insulation (the road out front is quite busy) and quality service add to the value. It has an elegant lounge bar with outdoor terrace, a spa and a small fitness room.

**Hôtel Edmond Rostand** DESIGN HOTEL €€  
(Map p802; ☎04 91 37 74 95; www.hoteledmondrostand.com; 31 rue Dragon; s/d/tr €100/120/140; 🏠🚰🚿; 🚿) (M Estrangin-Préfecture) Push past the

unassuming facade of this great-value hotel in the Quartier des Antiquaires to find a stylish interior in olive-grey and citrus, with a communal lounge area, a cafe and 15 rooms dressed in crisp white and soothing natural hues. Some rooms overlook a tiny private garden and others the Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde.

**★ Hôtel St-Louis** HOTEL €€  
(Map p796; ☎04 91 54 02 74; www.hotel-st-louis.com; 2 rue des Récollettes; d €113; 🏠🚰; 🚿) (M Noailles, 🚿 Canebière Garibaldi) The elegant stuccoed façade and wrought-iron balconies of this charming hotel pay homage to its 19th-century origins. Fully renovated in 2019, the bright and modern rooms are well equipped (fridge, table and chairs, electric tea kettle) and the best have (soundproofed) French doors that open onto grand views over old Marseille.

**Maison Montgrand** HOTEL €€  
(Map p796; ☎04 91 00 35 20; www.hotel-maison-montgrand.com; 35 rue Montgrand; d €135-180; 🚿) (M Estrangin-Préfecture) Spread across several buildings south of the Vieux Port, this imaginative hotel offers stylish but minimalist rooms and ample distractions hidden behind its vintage facades. Among the surprises are a huge hidden courtyard garden, a tea salon, a bistro and a Mediterranean-inspired home-decor store with changing art exhibitions.

### WORTH A TRIP

#### ARCHITECTURE-BUFF PILGRIMAGE

**La Cité Radiieuse** (Unité d'Habitation; ☎04 91 16 78 00; www.marseille-cite-radiieuse.org; 280 bd Michelet; ☎9am-6pm; 🚰) (M 21, 83, stop Le Corbusier) Visionary modernist architect Le Corbusier redefined urban living in 1952 with the completion of this vertical 337-apartment tower, popularly known as La Cité Radiieuse (The Radiant City). Its purpose was to increase residential density to allow for more green space. Today the apartments are joined by the Hôtel Le Corbusier, the high-end restaurant Le Ventre de l'Architecte and a rooftop terrace. English-language tours (10am Friday and Saturday; adult/child €10/5) can be booked through the tourist office (p806). It's about 5km south of central Marseille, along av du Prado.

## **i** PICNIC PERFECT

Shop for French-chic foodstuffs, fresh bread and traditional orange-perfumed *navettes de Marseille*, then follow the local crowd to the grassy **Jardin du Pharo** (Map p802; 58 bd Charles Livon; ☀ 8am-9pm; 📞 81, 82, 83). With unparalleled views over old Marseille, the gardens are a perfect picnic (and sunset-watching) spot.

**Marché Paysan** (Map p802; cours Julien; ☀ 8am-1pm Wed; 🏠 Notre Dame du Mont) Every Wednesday morning the farmers' market along cours Julien squawks with life, colour and accordion music as traders flog mounds of organic vegetables, jars of homemade fruit jam, hand-collected quail eggs and bouquets of fragrant herbs.

**Four des Navettes** (Map p796; 📞 04 91 33 32 12; www.fourdesnavettes.com; 136 rue Sainte; ☀ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Sun; 🏠 Vieux Port) Opened in 1781, this is the oldest bakery in Marseille; it's been passed down between three families, and it still uses the original 18th-century oven. It is *the* address to pick up Marseille's signature biscuits, the orange-perfumed *navettes de Marseille*, as well as *calissons* (Provençal almond biscuits), nougat and other delights.

**Le Bar à Pain** (Map p802; 📞 06 45 17 37 33; 18 cours Joseph Thierry; ☀ 11am-7pm Mon-Sat; 🏠 Canebière) Selling arguably the best baguettes in the city, this charming organic bakery in the Chapitre neighbourhood also rustles together tasty midday snacks like flaky courgette tarts and toasty tomato pizzas, all to be enjoyed on its suntrap of a terrace.

**Sylvain Depuichaffray** (Map p796; 📞 04 91 33 09 75; www.sylvaindepuichaffray.fr; 66 rue Grignan; pastries €3-5.50; ☀ 8am-4pm Mon, to 7pm Tue-Sat; 🏠 Vieux Port) This smart *boulangerie* and patisserie with an attached *salon de thé* (tearoom) produces some of Marseille's best pastries.

### **Hotel Carré Vieux Port**

(Map p796; 📞 04 91 33 02 33; www.hotel-carre-vieux-port.com; 6 rue Beauvau; s/d/tr €90/105/140; 📞 📞; 🏠 Vieux Port) Sitting pretty between the quai des Belges and place Général de Gaulle, this well-maintained hotel rates as one of the old port's top choices. Its rooms are bright and comfortable, and you'll enjoy nice touches like frying-pan-sized showerheads, cube-shaped bath goodies, complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits; and (naturally) the fibreglass bull in reception.

HOTEL €€

### **Hotel Bellevue**

(Map p796; 📞 04 96 17 05 40; www.hotelbellevuemarseille.com; 34 quai du Port; s/d €110/165; 📞 📞; 🏠 Vieux Port) Rooms at this enduring 1950s hotel are tastefully decorated with midrange simplicity, but the portside views are million-dollar. The hotel's portside cafe La Caravelle (p804) is a Marseille highlight.

HOTEL €€

### **Le Ryad**

(Map p802; 📞 04 91 47 74 54; www.leryad.fr; 16 rue Sénac de Meilhan; d/ste from €110/160; 📞 📞; 🏠 Noailles, 🏠 Canebière Garibaldi) Morocco comes to Marseille at this stylish hotel, which takes its inspiration from the *riads* (traditional houses) of North Africa, all woven cushions, patterned rugs and colourful throws. There's a palm-filled garden, which

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€

is a perfect setting for the Moroccan breakfast (€12 extra per person) – featuring North African crepes and fresh fruit.

## **Eating**

The Vieux Port and surrounding pedestrian streets teem with cafe terraces, but choose carefully (some rely on tourists to pay too much for average food). For world cuisine, try cours Julien and nearby rue des Trois Mages. For pizza, roast chicken and Middle Eastern food under €10, nose around the streets surrounding **Marché des Capucins** (Marché de Noailles; Map p796; place des Capucins; ☀ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat; 🏠 Noailles, 🏠 Canebière Garibaldi).

### **★ El Santo Cachon**

(📞 06 95 99 45 93; 40 rue Ferrari; mains €16-20; ☀ 7.30pm-midnight Mon-Sat; 🏠 Eugene Pierre) Arrive early or reserve a table at Marseille's only Chilean restaurant, because this place fills fast – and after a pisco sour (or three), you'll see why. If you want to make it out of the door walking, combat the frothy cocktail's effects with deliciously heavy fried-cheese empanadas. The *ceviche mixto* of fresh fish and octopus is great too.

CHILEAN €

### **Les Halles de la Major**

(Map p796; 📞 04 91 45 80 10; www.leshallesdelamajor.com; 12 quai de la Tourette; mains €12-20;

MARKET €



☎ 11am-2.45pm & 3-5pm; ☑ 82) This upscale food market inside the newly renovated vaults of La Major Cathedral is great for foodies, self-caterers and simple browsers. Each stall serves a selection of small plated specialties such as local cheeses, freshly shucked oysters and Provençal 'tapas'. It has seating and a terrace for taking in the street scene.

### Les Grandes Tables

INTERNATIONAL €

☎ 04 95 04 95 85; [www.lesgrandestables.com](http://www.lesgrandestables.com); 41 rue Jobin, La Friche La Belle de Mai; mains €14-17; ☎ noon-2pm Sun-Wed, noon-2pm & 7-10pm Thu-Sat; ☑ 49, 52) The vast former canteen at the vibrant La Friche La Belle de Mai cultural centre manages to pull off the trick of seeming both intimate and stylish. Working with local producers, a young and friendly team serves imaginative food, such as candied lamb shank with parmesan polenta, or seared tuna with thyme, sesame and chickpea puree, to clued-up diners at communal tables.

### Bar des 13 Coins

BRASSERIE €

(Map p796; ☎ 04 91 91 56 49; 45 rue Ste-Françoise; mains €14-18; ☎ 9am-11pm; ☑ Vieux Port) Night and day, this corner bar is a classic Le Panier hang-out whether you're old, young, hip or in need of a hip replacement. It's on a quiet backstreet with tables on the square, and serves bistro standards like entrecôte, bruschetta and charcuterie plates – but it's the chilled vibe you come for, best enjoyed over an evening pastis.

### ★ Sépia

FRENCH €€

(Map p802; ☎ 09 83 82 67 27; <http://restaurant-sepia.fr>; 2 rue Vauvenargues; mains €18-26, menu €41; ☎ noon-2pm & 6-8.45pm Tue-Sat) Atop Puget hill with glorious views over the waterfront, chef Paul Langlère has transformed an old snack bar into a foodie haunt

featuring seasonal, market-fresh fare and no shortage of culinary creativity (skills Langlère undoubtedly honed working for famed chef Alain Ducasse). The three-course menu changes regularly, though usually features at least one outstanding octopus dish – among the best in Marseille.

### ★ L'Arôme

FRENCH €€

(Map p802; ☎ 04 91 42 88 80; 9 rue de Trois Rois; menus €23-30; ☎ 7.45-11.30pm Mon-Sat; ☑ Notre Dame du Mont) Reserve ahead to snag a table at this fabulous little restaurant just off cours Julien. From the service – relaxed, competent and friendly without over-familiarity – to the street art on the walls and the memorable food, it's a complete winner. Well-credentialed chef-owner Romain achieves sophisticated simplicity in dishes such as roast duckling served with polenta and a pecorino *beignet* (doughnut).

### La Passarelle

PROVENÇAL €€

(Map p796; ☎ 04 91 33 03 27; 52 rue Plan Fourmiguier; mains €16-25; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 8-10.30pm Mar-Oct, shorter hours rest of year; ☑ 82, 83, ☑ Vieux Port) This admirably unpretentious bistro grows most of its organic veggies in its own *potager* (kitchen garden), from tomatoes to courgettes, salad leaves and aubergines. It's a cosy, friendly place for sampling delicious Mediterranean flavours, with mix-and-match tables and chairs arranged on a decked terrace beneath a spreading sail. Charming and simple.

### Le Chalet du Pharo

MEDITERRANEAN €€

(Map p802; ☎ 04 91 52 80 11; [www.le-chalet-du-pharo.com](http://www.le-chalet-du-pharo.com); 58 bd Charles Livon, Jardin du Pharo; mains €24-32, menus €50-65; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-3pm Sun; ☑ Vieux Port) Only Marseillais and the cognoscenti are privy

## DON'T MISS

### BOUILLABAISSE

Originally cooked by fisherfolk from the scraps of their catch, bouillabaisse is Marseille's signature dish. True bouillabaisse includes at least four kinds of fish, and sometimes shellfish. Don't trust tourist traps that promise cheap bouillabaisse; the real deal costs at least €50 per person. It's served in two parts: the *soupe de poisson* (broth), rich with tomato, saffron and fennel; and the cooked fish, de-boned tableside and presented on a platter. On the side are croutons, *rouille* (a bread-thickened garlic-chilli mayonnaise) and grated cheese, usually Gruyère. Spread *rouille* on the crouton, top with cheese and float it in the soup. Be prepared for a huge meal and tons of garlic.

The *bouillabaisse* at swanky, Michelin-starred **L'Epusette** (Map p802; ☎ 04 91 52 17 82; [www.l-epusette.com](http://www.l-epusette.com); 158 rue du Vallon des Auffes; lunch/bouillabaisse menu €75/105; ☎ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat; ☑ 83) – with knock-out sea views to boot – is considered by many to be the finest out there.

## Marseille





## Marseille

### Top Sights

- 1 Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde ..... E7
- 2 Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée ..... C4

### Sights

- 3 Jardin du Pharo ..... C5
- 4 La Joliette ..... D1
- 5 Plage des Catalans ..... B6
- 6 Vallon des Auffes ..... A7

### Sleeping

- 7 Hôtel Edmond Rostand ..... G6
- 8 Le Ryad ..... G3

### Eating

- 9 Café Populaire ..... G6
- 10 L'Arôme ..... B1
- 11 Le Chalet du Pharo ..... C5
- 12 L'Épuiette ..... A7
- 13 Marché de la Joliette ..... D1
- 14 Sèpia ..... E6

### Drinking & Nightlife

- 15 La Dame du Mont ..... B3
- 16 Waaw ..... B2

### Entertainment

- 17 Espace Julien ..... A1
- 18 Videodrome 2 ..... A2

### Shopping

- 19 Chez Laurette ..... G6
- 20 Le Bar à Pain ..... H3
- 21 Les Docks Village ..... D1
- 22 Marché Paysan ..... A2

to this little chalet with a very big view, secreted in the Jardin du Pharo. Its hillside terrace, shaded by pines and parasols, stares across the water to Fort St-Jean, MuCEM and the Villa Méditerranée beyond. Grilled fish and meat dominate the menu. Online reservations are essential, and cards aren't accepted.

### Café Populaire

BISTRO €€

(Map p802; ☎04 91 02 53 96; 110 rue Paradis; mains €18-34; ☀noon-2pm & 7.30-11pm Mon-Sat; 🍷Estrangin-Préfecture) Vintage furniture, latticed blinds, old books and antique soft-drink bottles lend a retro air to this style-conscious, 1950s-styled jazz *comptoir* (counter) – a restaurant in all but name. The crowd is chic, and smiling chefs in the open kitchen churn out international dishes like *tagliata* (steak strips with rocket and parmesan) and black cod with miso and yuzu (Japanese citrus).



## Drinking & Nightlife

In the best tradition of Mediterranean cities, Marseille embraces the cafe-lounger lifestyle. Near the Vieux Port, head to place Thiers and cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves for cafes that bask in the sun by day and buzz into the night. Cours Julien is a fine place on a sunny day to watch people come and go at the many characterful shops, cafes and restaurants in one of Marseille's most interesting neighbourhoods. Le Panier, place de Lenche and rue des Pistoles are ideal places to while away an afternoon soaking up the area's boho charms.

### ★ Waaw

BAR

(Map p802; ☎04 91 42 16 33; www.waaw.fr; 17 rue Pastoret; ☀4pm-midnight Tue-Sat; 🍷Notre Dame du Mont) Marseille's creative chameleon and the heart of the cours Julien scene, Waaw (What an Amazing World) has everything you could possibly want for a night out, whether that's a cold cocktail, a late-night dancehall DJ set or an innovative dinner made from local market produce. The city's unofficial cultural headquarters also offer music, film, festivals and much more.

### ★ Bar Gaspard

COCKTAIL BAR

(Map p796; ☎06 88 23 86 66; www.facebook.com/bargaspard; 7 bd Notre-Dame; ☀7pm-midnight; 🍷Vieux Port) Stirring up some of the best cocktails in town, slender Gaspard draws a convivial crowd to a slender, creatively configured space (with touches of retro Tiki blended with industrial chic). The well-balanced libations feature surprising ingredients, fresh spices and creative touches from the Far East (like matcha green tea or the citrus fruit yuzu). Delectable snacks and good mocktails too.

### La Caravelle

BAR

(Map p796; ☎04 91 90 36 64; www.lacaravelle-marseille.com; 34 quai du Port; ☀7am-2am; 🍷; 🍷Vieux Port) On the 1st floor of Hôtel Bellevue, this lovely little bar is styled with rich wood and leather, with a zinc bar and yellowing murals that hint at its 1920s pedigree. If it's sunny, snag a coveted spot on the port-side terrace, and sip a pastis as you watch the throng below. On Wednesday and Friday there's live jazz from 9pm (€3 admission).

### La Dame du Mont

BAR

(Map p802; ☎04 91 47 35 76; 30-32 place Notre Dame du Mont; ☀4.30pm-1.30am; 🍷Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien) Regular DJs bring reggae, soul, funk, rock and much else besides to

this friendly, bustling hang-out. Craft beers, cocktails and bonhomie are in ample supply, especially during happy hours (7pm to 9pm).

### Polikarpov

BAR

(Map p796; ☎04 91 52 70 30; www.facebook.com/bar.polikarpov; 24 cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves; ☀8am-1.30am; 📍Vieux Port) Scarcely shut, this al fresco bar with buzzing pavement terrace just a couple of blocks from the Vieux Port markets itself as 'Massilia vodkabar'. From 9pm DJs range across house, electro, R&B and other styles, depending on the night.

## ★ Entertainment

Cultural events are covered in www.journalventilo.fr. Tickets for some events are sold at the tourist office (p806).

### ★ La Friche la Belle de Mai

ARTS CENTRE

(☎04 95 04 95 95; www.lafriche.org; 41 rue Jobin; ☀ticket kiosk 11am-6pm Mon, to 7pm Tue-Sat, from 1pm Sun; 📍49, 56) This 45,000-sq-metre former tobacco factory is now a vibrant arts centre with an exhibition gallery, theatre, cinema, bar, bookshop, artists' workshops, skateboard ramps, electro- and world-music parties and much more. Check the programme online. The on-site restaurant, Les Grandes Tables (p801), is a great bet for interesting, locally sourced food.

The quickest way to get here by public transport is to catch the metro to Gare St-Charles and walk along rue Guibal, or take line M1 to Cinq Avenues Longchamp, cross Parc Longchamp and then take Rue Bénédit.

### ★ Videodrome 2

CINEMA

(Map p802; ☎04 88 44 41 84; www.videodrome2.fr; 49 cours Julien; tickets from €5; ☀5pm-midnight Tue-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, 3pm-midnight Sun; 📍Notre Dame du Mont) Fewer video shops would have gone the way of the dodo if they'd followed the lead of Videodrome 2: simultaneously a DVD rental shop, bar-bistro and tiny arthouse movie theatre, it's a treat for gregarious cinephiles. As well as stocking some excellent local beers, the cinema shows rare and cult films and runs retrospectives on notable auteurs.

### Opéra Municipal de Marseille

OPERA

(Map p796; ☎04 91 55 11 10; http://opera.marseille.fr; 2 rue Molière; ☀box office 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.15pm Tue-Sat; 📍Vieux Port) Built in the 1920s on the site of its 18th-century predecessor, this 1800-seat neoclassical theatre has seen the French premieres of many

## DON'T MISS

### BLACK ICE

#### Vanille Noire (Map p796; ☎07 77

33 68 19; www.vanillenoire.com; 13 rue Caisserie; ice cream €3-6; ☀12.30-7pm Apr-Oct, to 10.30pm Fri & Sat Jun-mid-Jul & Sep, to 10.30pm daily mid-Jul-Aug; 📍Vieux Port) There are plenty of ice-cream shops around Marseille, but there's only one that sells black ice cream (coloured by vanilla pods, which lend a unique, bittersweet, custardy flavour). There are around 24 other rotating flavours of ice cream and sorbet to try, all made on-site with organic ingredients. Go for the pastis or lavender to keep it Provençal.

notable operas, and hosted some of its most famous performers. The season runs from October to June.

### Espace Julien

LIVE MUSIC

(Map p802; ☎04 91 24 34 10; www.espace-julien.com; 39 cours Julien; €19-32; 📍Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien) Rock, *opérock*, alternative theatre, reggae, hip-hop, Afro groove and other cutting-edge entertainment all appear on the bill at this mainstay of the cours Julien scene. See the website for the program and to buy tickets.



## Shopping

### Chez Laurette

FASHION &amp; ACCESSORIES

(Map p802; ☎04 88 04 31 70; www.chez-laurette.com; 16 rue Edmond Rostand; ☀2-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Sat; 📍Estrangin-Préfecture) The first concept store in Marseille dedicated entirely to products made in France features apparel, accessories, food items and objects for the home rarely found elsewhere. In all, some 60 different brands are represented, from scented La Belle Mèche candles and Maison Louve lingerie to bohemian chic jewellery by Colette and artfully designed ceramics by Atelier Janvier.

### Maison Empereur

HOMEWARES

(Map p796; ☎04 91 54 02 29; www.empereur.fr; 4 rue des Récolettes; ☀9am-7pm Mon-Sat; 📍2, 3) If you only have time to visit one shop in Marseille, make it this one. Run by the same family since 1827, France's oldest hardware store remains a one-stop shop for beautifully made homeware items including Opinel cutlery, Savon de Marseille soaps, wooden toy sailing boats and ceramic shaving bowls.



## **i** GAY & LESBIAN MARSEILLE

Visit [www.actu-gay.com](http://www.actu-gay.com) for information on Marseillais gay life. It's a small scene that is in constant flux and only really converges on weekends, but the city is generally gay-friendly. Some 9km south of the old port, **Mont Rose** (☎ 19, Madrague de Montredon stop) is Marseille's best-known nude gay beach (more of a rocky outcropping than a proper beach).

### ★ Maison de la Boule

GIFTS & SOUVENIRS

(Map p796; ☎ 04 88 44 39 44; [www.laboulebleue.fr](http://www.laboulebleue.fr); 4 place des 13 Cantons; ☀ 10am-7pm, closed Aug; ☎ 49, 🚶 Vieux Port) Pick up a set of handmade boules (complete with matching carry bag), plus plenty of other souvenirs of France's iconic game. It also has an indoor court and a little museum exploring the history of the sport, including the curious figure of Fanny (tradition dictates if you lose a game 13 to nil, you must kiss her bare bum cheeks).

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (Map p796; ☎ info 08 26 50 05 00, tour booking 04 91 13 89 16; [www.marseille-tourisme.com](http://www.marseille-tourisme.com); 11 La Canebière; ☀ 10am-5pm; 🚶 Vieux Port) Marseille's useful tourist office has plenty of information on everything, including guided city tours (by foot, bus, electric tourist train or boat) and trips to Les Calanques. There's free wi-fi too.

**Marseille Expos** ([www.marseilleexpos.com](http://www.marseilleexpos.com)) The outstanding arts organisation Marseille Expos distributes an excellent map of hot galleries and sponsors the festival *Printemps de l'Art Contemporain* each May. Its website lists what's on.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Aéroport Marseille-Provence** (Aéroport Marseille-Marignane; MRS; ☎ 08 20 81 14 14; [www.marseille.aeroport.fr](http://www.marseille.aeroport.fr)) is 25km northwest of Marseille in Marignane. There are regular year-round flights to major French cities, plus hubs in the UK, Germany, Belgium, Italy and Spain.

### BOAT

**Gare Maritime de la Major** (Marseille Fos; [www.marseille-port.fr](http://www.marseille-port.fr); quai de la Joliette; 🚶 Joliette), the passenger ferry terminal, is just west of place de la Joliette.

**Corsica Linea** (☎ 08 25 88 80 88; [www.corsica.linea.com](http://www.corsica.linea.com); quai du Maroc; ☀ 8.30am-8pm) has regular ferries from Marseille to Corsica and

Sardinia, plus long-distance routes to Algeria and Tunisia.

### BUS

The **bus station** (Gare Routière Saint-Charles; Map p802; ☎ 04 91 08 16 40; [www.rtm.fr](http://www.rtm.fr); 3 rue Honnorat; 🚶 Gare St-Charles) is on the northern side of the train station. Buy tickets here or from the driver. Services to some destinations, including Cassis, use the Halte Routière Sud (p807), south of the centre.

For most destinations along the Côte d'Azur, it's faster and easier to catch the train, but for some smaller towns and villages (especially inland), buses are an alternative. There are several different companies, but you can find comprehensive timetable information on the website *Le Pilote* ([www.lepilote.com](http://www.lepilote.com)). Sample destinations:

**Aix-en-Provence** (€10, 40 minutes, every 10 minutes Monday to Saturday, less frequent Sunday) Cartreize line 50 express bus leaves from Gare St-Charles. Line 51 also runs frequently to Aix.

**Cassis** (€2.20, 45 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday) La Marcouline line M06.

**Nice** (€36, three to five hours, up to five per day) LER line 20.

There are also international services from **Eurolines** (Map p796; [www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com); 3 allées Léon Gambetta; 🚶 Noailles).

### TRAIN

**Eurostar** ([www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)) offers two to 10 weekly services between Marseille and London (from €220, 6½ to nine hours) via Lille or Paris. As always, the earlier you book, the cheaper the fare.

Regular and TGV trains serve **Gare St-Charles** (☎ 04 91 08 16 40; [www.rtm.fr](http://www.rtm.fr); rue Jacques Bory; 🚶 Gare St-Charles SNCF), which is a junction for both metro lines. The **left-luggage office** (Consignes Automatiques; Map p802; ☀ 8.15am-9pm) is next to platform A. Sample fares:

**Avignon** (€23, 1½ hours, hourly)

**Nice** (€38, 2¾ hours, up to six per day)

**Paris Gare de Lyon** (from €79, 3½ hours, at least hourly)

## **i** Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

**Navette Marseille** (Map p802; [www.marseille.aeroport.fr](http://www.marseille.aeroport.fr); one way/return €10/16; ☀ 4.10am-midnight) buses link the airport and Gare St-Charles (30 minutes) every 15 to 20 minutes.

The airport's train station has direct services to several cities including Arles and Avignon – a free shuttle bus runs to/from the airport terminal.

## BICYCLE

With **Le Vélo** (📞 English-language helpline 01 30 79 29 13; [www.levelo-mpm.fr](http://www.levelo-mpm.fr)) bike-share scheme, you can pick up and drop off bikes from 130 stations across the city and along the coastal road to the beaches. Users must first subscribe online (€1/5 per week/year), and then the first 30 minutes of every hire is free, after which bikes cost €1 per hour. Stations only take credit cards with chips.

## BOAT

Boats run from the old port to the Îles du Frioul (p793), as well as to the Parc National des Calanques. There's also a **ferry** (Map p796; [www.rtm.fr/ferry-boat](http://www.rtm.fr/ferry-boat); one way €0.50; 🕒 7.30am-8.30pm; 🚢 Vieux Port) across the Vieux Port.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Marseille has two metro lines (Métro 1 and Métro 2), two tram lines (yellow and green) and an extensive bus network. Bus, metro or tram tickets

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

## LES CALANQUES

It feels like a miracle to find a refuge such as the **Parc National des Calanques** (📞 04 20 10 50 00; [www.calanques-parcnational.fr](http://www.calanques-parcnational.fr); 141 av du Prado, Bâtiment A, Marseille) only a short distance from grimy, pressured Marseille. In parts of this diminutive 85-sq-km patch of scrubby, convoluted promontories, it's easy to believe you're miles from civilisation. This is where the Marseillais come for the sun, to hike over pine-strewn promontories, to mess about on boats and to refresh their souls. The region is hugely popular in summer, visited by boats and hikers who schlep for hours to the secluded fishing villages.

Of the many *calanques* along the coastline, the most easily accessible are **Calanque de Sormiou** and **Calanque de Morgiou**, while remote inlets such as **Calanque d'En Vau** and **Calanque de Port-Miou** take dedication and time to reach – either on foot or by kayak.

From October to June the best way to see the *calanques* (including the 500 sq km of the rugged inland **Massif des Calanques**) is to hike the many lined trails through the maquis (scrub). Marseille's tourist office (p806) leads guided walks (ages eight and over) and has information about trail and road closures. It also offers an excellent hiking map of the various *calanques*, as does Cassis' **tourist office** (📞 08 92 39 01 03; [www.ot-cassis.com](http://www.ot-cassis.com); quai des Moulins; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun May-Aug, shorter hours rest of year; 📞).

From June to September trails may close due to fire danger.

Operators such as **Destination Calanques Kayak** (📞 06 07 15 63 86; [www.destination-calanques.fr](http://www.destination-calanques.fr); half/full day €40/65; 🕒 Apr-Oct) and **Raskas Kayak** (📞 04 91 73 27 16; [www.raskas-kayak.com](http://www.raskas-kayak.com); impasse du Dr Bonfils, Auberge de Jeunesse Marseille; half/full day €45/80) organise sea-kayaking tours; local tourist offices have details of lots of other hire companies. **Calanc'O** (📞 06 25 78 85 93; [www.calanco-kayak-paddle.com](http://www.calanco-kayak-paddle.com); 9 ave Joseph Liautaud, Cassis; half/full day €35/55; 🕒 9am-7pm) also offers stand-up paddleboarding.

During July and August the only real option for accessing individual *calanques* is to take a boat tour with **Croisières Marseille Calanques** (Map p796; 📞 04 91 58 50 58; [www.croisieres-marseille-calanques.com](http://www.croisieres-marseille-calanques.com); 1 La Canebière, Vieux Port; 🚢 Vieux Port) from Marseille or Cassis. Check in advance if you're hoping to be able to stop for a swim, as only a few tours allow this, such as the one offered by **Icard Maritime** (Map p796; 📞 04 91 33 36 79; [www.visite-des-calanques.com](http://www.visite-des-calanques.com); quai des Belges; adult/child from €24/19; 🚢 Vieux Port).

## Getting There & Away

For access to the *calanques* closest to Marseille, drive or take bus 19 from Marseille's **Castellane bus stop** (Halte Routière Sud; Map p802; place Castellane; 🚢 Castellane) down the coast to its terminus at La Madrague, then switch to bus 20 to Callelongue (note that the road to Callelongue is only open to cars on weekdays from mid-April to May and closed entirely from June to September). From there you can walk to Calanque de la Mounine and Calanque de Marseilleveyre along spectacular trails over the clifftops.

Calanque de Sugiton is also easy to access without a car. Take bus 21 from Castellane towards Luminy and get off at the last stop. From there follow the 3.5km path (about a 45-minute walk).

## **i** CENT SAVER

The **Marseille City Pass** ([www.marseille-tourisme.com/en/experience/citypass](http://www.marseille-tourisme.com/en/experience/citypass); 24/48/72hr €27/37/43) covers admission to city museums and public transport, and includes a guided city tour and a Château d'If boat trip, plus other discounts. It's not necessary for children under 12, as many attractions are greatly reduced or free. Buy it online (to save 10%) or at the tourist office.

(one/10 trips €1.70/15) are available from machines in the metro, at tram stops and on buses. Most buses start in front of the **Espace Infos RTM** (Map p796; ☎ 04 91 91 92 10; [www.rtm.fr](http://www.rtm.fr); 6 rue des Fabres; ☉ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri; 🚶 Vieux Port), where you can obtain information and tickets.

The metro runs from 5am to 12.30am daily. Trams operate from 5.10am to 1am.

## AIX-EN-PROVENCE

POP 143,000

A pocket of left-bank Parisian chic deep in Provence, Aix (pronounced like the letter X) is all class: its leafy boulevards and public squares are lined with 17th- and 18th-century mansions, punctuated by gurgling moss-covered fountains. Haughty stone lions guard its grandest avenue, cafe-laced cours Mirabeau, where fashionable Aixois pose on polished pavement terraces, sipping espresso. While Aix is a student hub, its up-market appeal makes it pricier than other Provençal towns.

The part-pedestrianised centre of Aix' old town is ringed by busy boulevards, with several large car parks dotted on the edge of town. Whatever you do, don't try to drive into the centre.

## **👁** Sights

A stroller's paradise, the highlight is the mostly pedestrianised old city, **Viell Aix**. South of cours Mirabeau, the **Quartier Mazarin** was laid out in the 17th century, and is home to some of Aix' finest buildings and a square: **place des Quatre Dauphins**, with its fish-spouting fountain (1667), is enchanting. Culture and architecture abound in Aix. Of special note are the town's many fountains. Some, like the 1860 **Fontaine de la Rotonde** (p; du Général de Gaulle), are quite

grand. Others have simpler charms, such as the 1819 **Fontaine du Roi René** (cours Mirabeau) and the 1734 **Fontaine Moussue** (cours Mirabeau) – the former features the king holding a bunch of grapes, while the latter has temperate 18°C (64.4°F) water from a spring and is covered in moss.

## **Cours Mirabeau**

STREET

No streetscape better epitomises Provence's most graceful city than this 440m-long, fountain-studded street, sprinkled with Renaissance *hôtels particuliers* (private mansions) and crowned with a summertime roof of leafy plane trees. It was laid out in the 1650s and later named after the Revolutionary hero the Comte de Mirabeau. Cézanne and Zola used to hang out at cafes along this stretch.

## **Viell Aix**

HISTORIC SITE

One of Aix' great charms is its historical centre: ramble through it, drinking in divine streetscapes as you choose which historical, cultural or culinary highlight to sample next. North of the graceful cours Mirabeau, the city's main artery, is the oldest part of town; to the south, the 17th-century **Quartier Mazarin** is home to some of Aix' finest buildings and streets, including the **Place des Quatre Dauphins**, ennobled by a baroque fountain of the same name.

## ★ **Musée Granet**

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 42 52 88 32; [www.museegranat-aixenprovence.fr](http://www.museegranat- aixenprovence.fr); place St-Jean de Malte; adult/child €8/free; ☉ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Oct, noon-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-May) Aix established one of France's first public museums here, on the site of a former Hospitallers' priory, in 1838. Nearly 200 years of acquisitions (including bequests by the eponymous François Marius Granet, himself a painter of note) have resulted in a collection of more than 12,000 works, including pieces by Picasso, Léger, Matisse, Monet, Klee, Van Gogh and, crucially, nine pieces by local boy Cézanne. This fabulous art museum sits right near the top of France's artistic must-sees.

## ★ **Caumont Centre d'Art**

HISTORIC BUILDING

(☎ 04 42 20 70 01; [www.caumont-centredart.com](http://www.caumont-centredart.com); 3 rue Joseph Cabassol; adult/child €6.50/5, incl temporary exhibitions €14.50/10; ☉ 10am-7pm May-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Apr) The Caumont is a stellar art space housed inside the Mazarin quarter's grandest 18th-century *hôtel particulier*. While there are three quality exhibitions each year (with additional entrance

fees), plus concerts and other events, it's the building itself that's the star of the show. Built from local honey-coloured stone, its palatial rooms are stuffed with antiques and objets d'art attesting to the opulence of the house's aristocratic past.



## Festivals & Events

### ★ Festival d'Aix-en-Provence

MUSIC

(📞 04 34 08 02 17; [www.festival-aix.com](http://www.festival-aix.com); 🕒 Jul) Established in the spirit of rebirth following WWII, this world-renowned festival brings opera, orchestral works, chamber music and even buskers to Aix throughout July. The wonderfully atmospheric **Théâtre de l'Archevêché**, created for the first festival in 1948 and still its principal venue, occupies the courtyard of the former Archbishop's Palace.

## 🛏 Sleeping

### Hôtel Cardinal

HOTEL €

(📞 04 42 38 32 30; [www.hotel-cardinal-aix.com](http://www.hotel-cardinal-aix.com); 24 rue Cardinale; d/ste €82/120; 📶) Pleasantly removed from the hustle of central Aix, yet close enough to walk to most sights, this 18th-century Mazarin quarter hotel is surprisingly elegant, considering the price, with heritage rooms featuring original fireplaces, antiques and swag curtains. There are also six large suites in the annexe up the street, each with a kitchenette and dining room – ideal for longer stays.

### ★ Hôtel les

#### Quatre Dauphins

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(📞 0442381639; [www.hotel-aix-lesquatre-dauphins.fr](http://www.hotel-aix-lesquatre-dauphins.fr); 54 rue Roux Alphéran; s €100, d €110-130; 📶) This sweet 13-room hotel slumbers

## DON'T MISS

### TRAILING CÉZANNE

Local lad Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) is revered in Aix. To see where he lived, ate, drank, studied and painted, follow the **Circuit de Cézanne** (Cézanne Trail), marked by bronze plaques embedded in the footpath. The essential English-language guide to the circuit, and other artist-related sites, *In the Steps of Cézanne*, is free at the tourist office.

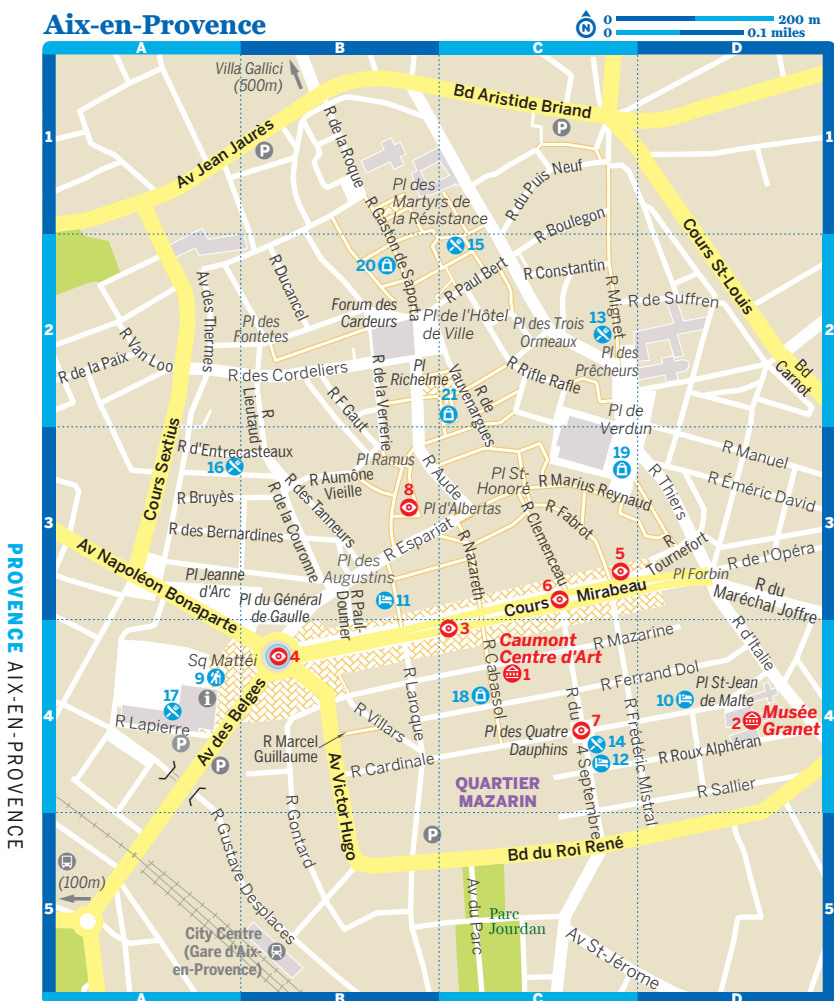
**Atelier Cézanne** (📞 04 42 21 06 53; [www.atelier-cezanne.com](http://www.atelier-cezanne.com); 9 av Paul Cézanne; adult/child €6.50/free, audio guide €3; 🕒 9.30am–6pm Jun–Sep, 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Apr & May, 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–5pm Tue–Sat Oct–Mar; 📍 5, 12) Cézanne's last studio, where he worked from 1902 until his death four years later, has been painstakingly preserved. Some elements have been recreated: not all the tools and still-life models strewn around the room were his. Though the studio is inspiring, and home to periodic exhibitions, none of Cézanne's works actually hang there. It's a leisurely walk to the studio at Lauves hill, 1.5km north of central Aix, or you can take the bus.

**Terrain des Peintres** ([www.terrain-des-peintres-aix-en-provence.fr](http://www.terrain-des-peintres-aix-en-provence.fr); 49 av Paul Cézanne; 📍 5, 12) A wonderful terraced garden perfect for a picnic, from where Cézanne, among others, painted the Montagne Ste-Victoire. The view of the jagged mountain is inspirational – Cézanne painted over 80 renditions of it, nine of which are immortalised in stone. The gardens are opposite 62 av Paul Cézanne. You'll find them a 15-minute walk uphill from the Atelier Cézanne stop (bus 5 or 12).

**Carrières de Bibemus** (Bibémus Quarries; 📞 04 42 16 11 61; [www.cezanne-en-provence.com](http://www.cezanne-en-provence.com); 3090 chemin de Bibémus; 3hr tour incl Atelier Cézanne €35; 🕒 tour 9.30am Mon, Tue & Sat Apr–Oct; 📍) In 1895 Cézanne rented a *cabanon* (cabin) at the Carrières de Bibemus, east of Aix, where he painted 27 works. Atmospheric tours of the ochre quarry take visitors on foot through the dramatic burnt-orange rocks that Cézanne captured so vividly on canvas. As of 2020, the only way to visit was by bilingual three-hour tours that depart by shuttle from the tourist office and include a stop at the Atelier Cézanne.

**Montagne Ste-Victoire** ([www.grandsitesaintevictoire.com](http://www.grandsitesaintevictoire.com)) East of Aix rises Cézanne's favourite haunt, the magnificent silvery ridge of Montagne Ste-Victoire, its dry slopes carpeted in *garrigue* (scented scrub), bristling with pines, crossed by stone-walled paths and concealing sites such as the 17th-century Sainte-Victoire Priory. The burnt-orange soil supports Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence vineyards, and hiking, mountain-biking and other activities can be arranged through the Aix tourist centre. Many hike the 1011m-mountain's north side, but the south side, though steeper, is quite beautiful.

## Aix-en-Provence



in a former 19th-century mansion in one of the loveliest parts of town. Rooms are fresh and clean, decorated with a great eye and equipped with excellent modern bathrooms. Those with sloping, beamed ceilings in the attic are quaint, but are not for those who don't pack lightly – the tiled staircase is steep.

### Hôtel des Augustins

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 42 27 28 59; [www.hotel-augustins.com](http://www.hotel-augustins.com); 3 rue de la Masse; d €110-250; ♿) Once a 15th-century Augustinian convent – the magnificent stone-vaulted lobby makes visible use of an earlier, 12th-century chapel – this

charismatic hotel has volumes of history. Martin Luther even stayed here after his excommunication. Sadly, there's not so much heritage to be found in the modern carpeted rooms, though pricier suites have antique furniture and private terraces beneath the bell tower.

### ★ Villa Gallici

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 42 23 29 23; [www.villagallici.com](http://www.villagallici.com); 18 av de la Violette; r from €315; ♿) Baroque and beautiful, this fabulous villa was built as a private residence in the 18th century and still feels marvellously opulent. Rooms are more like museum pieces, stuffed with



## Aix-en-Provence

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Caumont Centre d'Art .....C4  
2 Musée Granet .....D4

### 📍 Sights

- 3 Cours Mirabeau .....C4  
4 Fontaine de la Rotonde .....B4  
5 Fontaine du Roi René .....C3  
6 Fontaine Moussue .....C3  
7 Place des Quatre Dauphins .....C4  
8 Vieil Aix .....B3

### 🚗 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 9 Circuit de Cézanne .....A4

### 🏠 Sleeping

- 10 Hôtel Cardinal .....D4

- 11 Hôtel des Augustins .....B3  
12 Hôtel les Quatre Dauphins .....C4

### 🍴 Eating

- 13 Farinoman Fou .....C2  
14 Jardin Mazarin .....C4  
15 Le Bistrot .....C2  
16 Le Petit Verdot .....A3  
17 Maison Nosh .....A4

### 🛒 Shopping

- 18 Book in Bar .....C4  
19 Flea Market .....C3  
20 Le Roy René .....B2  
21 Morning Market .....C2

gilded mirrors, toile de Jouy wallpaper and filigreed furniture. It has a lovely lavender-filled garden to breakfast in, plus a pool, a superb restaurant and a wine cellar.

## 🍴 Eating

Aix excels at Provençal cuisine. Restaurant terraces spill out across dozens of charm-heavy old-town squares, many pierced by ancient stone fountains; place des Trois Ormeaux, place des Augustins, place Ramus and vast Forum des Cardeurs are particular favourites.

### ★ Farinoman Fou

BAKERY €

(www.farinomanfou.fr; 3 rue Mignet; bread €1.60-3.50; ☺ 7am-7pm Tue-Sat) To appeal to bread connoisseurs, in Aix as in any part of France, you need to know your dough. Judging by the lines typically spilling out of this shop onto place des Prêcheurs, artisanal *boulangier* Benoît Fradette clearly does.

### Le Bistrot

BISTRO €

(☎ 04 42 23 34 61; 5 rue Campra; lunch plat du jour/menu €11/17, mains €15-22; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm) Locals pack into the tiny vaulted dining room of this hard-to-find place for the superb-value lunch *menus*. All the bistro boxes are ticked: red-and-white tablecloths, friendly old-school service, a chuffing coffee machine and menu classics like *daube provençal* (meat stew), chicken fricassée and grilled entrecôte.

### Maison Nosh

CAFE €

(☎ 06 52 86 22 39; www.maison-nosh.com; place François Villon; mains €9-16; ☺ 10am-5pm) This breezy, youthful cafe is a fine spot for healthy breakfasts, flavour-packed salads, smoked

trout sandwiches and other light lunch fare, or for satisfying cappuccino or chai latte. Excellent vegetarian options.

### ★ Le Petit Verdot

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎ 04 42 27 30 12; www.lepetitverdot.fr; 7 rue d'Entrecasteaux; mains €20-25; ☺ 7pm-midnight Mon-Sat) It's all about hearty, honest dining here, with tabletops made out of old wine crates, and a lively chef-patron who runs the place with huge enthusiasm, happily showing how good Provençal food and wine can be. Expect dishes such as *onglet* (skirt steak) in green-pepper sauce or Pata Negra pork with mustard and honey, accompanied by great wines and seasonal veggies.

## AIX-ELLENT MARKETS

At the daily **food market** (Marché aux Légumes; place Richelme; ☺ 7am-noon), trestle tables groan each morning under the weight of marinated olives, goat's cheese, garlic, lavender, honey, peaches, melons, cherries and a bounty of other sun-kissed fruit, veggies and seasonal food. Plane trees provide ample shade on the atmospheric T-shaped square, endowed with a couple of corner cafes where Aixois catch up on the gossip over *un café* once their shopping is done.

**Flower markets** fill place des Prêcheurs (Sunday morning) and place de l'Hôtel de Ville (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings).

The **flea market** (Marché Forain; place de Verdun; ☺ Tue, Thu & Sat mornings) has quirky vintage items three mornings a week.

## Jardin Mazarin

FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 42 58 11 42; 15 rue du 4 Septembre; lunch/dinner menus €24/32; ☀ noon-3pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat) This elegant restaurant is set perfectly on the ground floor of a handsome 18th-century *hôtel particulier* in the Quartier Mazarin. Two salons sit beneath splendid beamed ceilings, but the real gem is the verdant fountain-centred garden, which comes into its own in summer. Expect knowledgeable treatment of local, seasonal produce (such as truffles and asparagus) from the kitchen.

★ **La Table de Pierre Reboul** GASTRONOMY €€€  
(☎ 04 42 52 27 27; www.chateaudelapioline.com; 260 rue Guillaume du Vair, Château de la Pioline; lunch/dinner menus from €59/119; ☀ noon-1.15pm & 8-9.15pm) Pierre Reboul's renowned restaurant is tucked inside the aristocratic Château de la Pioline, a suitably smart location for his high-class cuisine. The rich, indulgent French fare meets flavours and ingredients cherry-picked from across the globe (like tempura prawns, or the day's fish with goat's curd and spinach). Rooms are sumptuous too (doubles from €165).

The chateau is 5km southwest of town on the D65 towards the TGV station.

## Drinking & Nightlife

The scene is fun but fickle. For nightlife, hit the student-friendly drinking dens on rue de la Verrerie and place Richelme. Open-air cafes crowd the city's squares, especially Forum des Cardeurs, place de Verdun and place de l'Hôtel de Ville (our favourite, for its more intimate scale and shady trees).

## Shopping

★ **Book in Bar** BOOKS  
(☎ 04 42 26 60 07; www.bookinbar.com; 4 rue Joseph Cabassol; ☀ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; ☎)

Bibliophiles rejoice: this brilliant Anglophile bookshop has a huge selection of English-language books for sale (among works in other languages) and a thoroughly pleasant tearoom to boot. Look out for occasional book readings, jazz evenings and an English-language book club on the last Thursday of the month (from 5.30pm).

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 42 16 11 61; www.aix-provencetourism.com; 300 av Giuseppe Verdi, Les Allées; ☀ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat Apr-Sep, to 1pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar; ☎) Touchscreens add a high-tech air to the usual collection of brochures. Sells tickets for guided tours and cultural events, and has a shop selling regional souvenirs.

## Getting There & Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Aéroport Marseille-Provence (p806) is 25km southwest and served by regular L40 buses (€10, 33 minutes, from 4.50am to 11.25pm) from the **bus station** (Gare routière; ☎ 08 91 02 40 25, 04 42 91 26 80; 6 bd Coq).

### BICYCLE

About a 10-minute walk south of cours Mirabeau. **Aixprit Velo** (☎ 04 42 21 24 05; www.aixpritvelo.com; 8 av St Jérôme; bike per half/full day from €10/16; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat; ☎) rents out city bikes, mountain bikes, road bikes and e-bikes, as well as child carriers and baggage racks.

### BUS

**Aix en Bus** (www.aixenbus.fr) runs local buses. Most run until 8pm. La Rotonde is the main hub. The tourist office has schedules.

Buses (number 40) link Aix' bus station and the TGV station (€6) with the airport (€10) from 4.50am to 11.25pm; they run every 15 to 30 minutes.

## WORTH A TRIP

### A QUINTESSENTIAL PROVENÇAL LUNCH

The delightful hilltop village of Ventabren lies 15km west of Aix-en-Provence, providing a perfect lazy day trip. It's the gorgeous medieval town itself, built as protection from Saracen raids from the 10th century, that's the attraction – but the perfect way to conclude a day exploring its narrow, cobbled lanes is to dine at **Dan B** (La Table de Ventabren; ☎ 04 42 28 79 33; www.danb.fr; 1 rue Frédéric Mistral; menu lunch €54, dinner €81-117; ☀ kitchen noon-1.15pm Thu, Fri & Sun & 7.45-9.15pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, shorter hours Oct-Apr). Many restaurants with stunning views rest on their laurels in the kitchen: not so at this Michelin-starred restaurant. With a canvas-canopied terrace that's nothing short of magical on summer evenings, Ventabren's most celebrated dining room serves exquisite food. Chef Dan Bessoudo creates inventive French dishes and out-of-this-world desserts.

## TRAIN

The **city centre train station** (☎ 08 00 11 40 23; [www.ter.sncf.com/paca](http://www.ter.sncf.com/paca); av Maurice Blondel; ☀ 5am-1am Mon-Sat, from 6am Sun), at the southern end of av Victor Hugo, serves Marseille (€8.30, 45 minutes).

Aix' **TGV station** (☎ 08 92 35 35 35; [www.sncf.com](http://www.sncf.com); rte Départementale 9; ☀ 5.30am-1am), 15km from the centre, is a stop on the high-speed Paris-Marseille line. Destinations include Avignon (from €18, 25 minutes, one or two per hour), Lyon (from €45, 1½ hours, around hourly) and Dijon (from €80, 3¼ hours, one or two daily).

Bus 40 runs from the TGV station to Aix' bus station (€6, 15 minutes, every 15 minutes).

## THE CAMARGUE

Where the Petit Rhône and Grand Rhône meet the Mediterranean, the Camargue arises: 930 sq km of *sansouïres* (salt flats), *étangs* (small saltwater lakes) and marshlands, interspersed with farmland.

Forget all about time in this hauntingly beautiful part of Provence, roamed by black bulls, white horses and pink flamingos. This is slow-go country, a timeless wetland chequered with silver salt pans, waterlogged rice paddies and traditional *gardians* (cowboys). But birds are perhaps the delta's greatest feature – flamingos are the obvious star attraction, but there are countless other species to spot.

The main town of the region, diminutive Arles, is a show-stopper. Wander the narrow golden-hued streets, the same ones that famously inspired Van Gogh, to find the town's lovely restored Roman amphitheatre, top-notch art and history museums, and world-class restaurants.

Other key Camargue towns are the seaside pilgrims' outpost Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer and, to the northwest, the walled town of Aigues-Mortes.

## Arles

POP 52,600

Roman treasures, tree-shaded squares and plenty of Camarguais culture make Arles a seductive stepping stone into the Camargue. And if its colourful sun-baked houses evoke a sense of déjà vu, it's because you've seen them already on a Van Gogh canvas – the artist painted 200-odd works around town, though sadly his famous little 'yellow house'

## CALISSONS D'AIX

Aix' sweetest treat since King René's wedding banquet in 1473 is the marzipan-like local speciality, *calisson d'Aix*, a small, diamond-shaped, chewy delicacy made on a wafer base with ground almonds and fruit syrup, and glazed with icing sugar. Traditional *calissonniers* still make them, including **La Maison du Roy René** (☎ 04 42 26 67 86; [www.calisson.com](http://www.calisson.com); 13 rue Gaston de Saporta; calisson boxes from €4.90; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-7pm Sun-Thu, 10am-7pm Fri & Sat).

at 2 place Lamartine, which he painted in 1888, was destroyed during WWII.

Arles' Saturday market is also a must-see – it's one of Provence's best.

## 📍 Sights

### ★ Les Arènes

ROMAN SITE

(Amphithéâtre; ☎ 08 91 70 03 70; [www.arennes-arles.com](http://www.arennes-arles.com); Rond-Point des Arènes; adult/child incl Théâtre Antique €9/free; ☀ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug, to 7pm May, Jun & Sep, shorter hours Oct-Apr) In Roman Gaul, every important town had an amphitheatre, where gladiators and wild animals met their (usually grisly) ends. Few examples have survived, but Arles (like nearby Nîmes) has preserved its colosseum largely intact. At 136m long, 107m wide and 21m tall, built around 90 CE, the oval-shaped amphitheatre would have held 21,000 baying spectators. Though the structure has suffered down the centuries, it's still evocative of the might and capabilities of Roman civilisation.

Entry is on the northern side.

### ★ Fondation Vincent Van Gogh

GALLERY

(☎ 04 90 93 08 08; [www.fondation-vincentvan-gogh-arles.org](http://www.fondation-vincentvan-gogh-arles.org); 35ter rue du Docteur Fanton; adult/child €9/free; ☀ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 11am-6pm Sep-Jun) Housed in a listed 15th-century manor, now twice repurposed (its other incarnation was as a bank), this Van Gogh-themed gallery is a must-see, as much for the architecture as the art. It has no permanent collection – rather, it hosts one or two excellent exhibitions a year, always with a Van Gogh theme and always including at least one Van Gogh masterpiece.

### Musée Réattu

GALLERY

(☎ 04 90 49 37 58; [www.museereattu.arles.fr](http://www.museereattu.arles.fr); 10 rue du Grand Prieuré; adult/child €6/free;

## Arles



## Arles

## 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Fondation Vincent Van Gogh..... A2  
 2 Les Arènes ..... D2

## 📍 Sights

- 3 Cryptoportiques ..... B3  
 4 Église St-Trophime ..... B3  
 5 Musée Réattu ..... B1  
 6 Théâtre Antique ..... C3

## 🏠 Sleeping

- 7 Hôtel de l'Amphithéâtre ..... C3  
 8 Hôtel du Musée ..... B1  
 9 Hôtel Jules César ..... C4

- 10 Le Calendal ..... D3  
 11 Le Cloître ..... C3

## 🍴 Eating

- 12 À Côté ..... B4  
 13 Glacier Arelatis ..... B2  
 14 L'Atelier Jean-Luc Rabanel ..... B3  
 15 L'Autruche ..... A3  
 Le Comptoir du Calendal ..... (see 10)  
 16 Le Gibolin ..... A3  
 L'Épicerie du Cloître ..... (see 11)  
 17 Marché d'Arles ..... D4

## 🍷 Drinking &amp; Nightlife

- 18 Le Café Van Gogh ..... B2

🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 5pm Nov-Feb) This superb 150-year-old museum, housed in an exquisitely renovated 15th-century Hospitaller priory by the Rhône, might be assumed old-fashioned, yet its modern collection is truly top-notch. Among its holdings are

works by 18th- and 19th-century Provençal artists, two paintings and 57 sketches by Picasso, and of course some works from its namesake, Jacques Réattu. It also stages wonderfully curated cutting-edge exhibitions.

## Musée Départemental

### Arles Antique

MUSEUM

(☎04 13 31 51 03; [www.arles-antique.cg13.fr](http://www.arles-antique.cg13.fr); av de la Première Division Française Libre; adult/child €8/free; ☀10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 📍) This striking cobalt-blue museum perches on the edge of what used to be the Roman chariot-racing track (hippodrome), southwest of central Arles. The collection of pagan and Christian finds includes stunning mosaics and an entire wing of treasures highlighting Arles' commercial and maritime prominence. Permanent collections reach back to prehistory, through the arrival of the Greeks in 600 BCE to the Roman period and beyond. If you love a proper museum, full of artefacts and history, this is for you.

### Théâtre Antique

ROMAN SITE

(☎04 90 49 59 05; rue de la Calade; adult/child, incl entry to Les Arènes, €9/free; ☀9am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Mar, Apr & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) It's easy to admire the grace and engineering of this theatre – built at the behest of the unofficial first Roman Emperor, Augustus, in the 1st century BCE, despite a semi-ruinous state brought on by centuries of pilfering. It still serves as one of Arles' premier venues, staging summertime concerts and plays where lighting, seating for 10,000 and the few remaining pillars create a magical atmosphere. The entrance and ticket office is on rue de la Calade.

### Cryptoportiques

ROMAN SITE

(place de la République, Hôtel de Ville; adult/child €4.50/free; ☀9am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Mar, Apr & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) The origins of these fascinating underground chambers, now sitting below the current city centre, go at least back to the first Roman colony in Arles in 46 BCE, and most likely extend to much older Greek caverns. It's a wonderfully literal 2000-year excursion to take the stairs from the gleaming administrative heart of modern Arles, down to three vaulted chambers that may have housed shops or storage cellars under the Roman forum.

### Les Alyscamps

CEMETERY

(av des Alyscamps; adult/child €4.50/free; ☀9am-7pm May-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) Testament to the significance of Roman Arles, this grand processional avenue of tombs and sarcophagi holds more than 1500 years of corpses (which Roman custom insisted were buried outside the city). Van Gogh and Gauguin both painted this necropolis, at the eastern end of which stands the marvellously atmospheric, unfinished 11th-century St-Honorat chapel.

## DON'T MISS

### NEW KID ON THE CULTURAL BLOCK

**Fondation Luma** (☎04 90 47 76 17; [www.luma-arles.org](http://www.luma-arles.org); 45 chemin des Minimes) Arles' already-bulging cultural landscape avidly awaits this new cutting-edge gallery and arts centre, rising inexorably at a defunct railway depot in the city's southeastern quarter. Funded by the Swiss-based Luma Foundation, and designed by Frank Gehry, it's set for a high-profile opening in 2021.

### Église St-Trophime

CHURCH

(6 place de la République; ☀9am-noon & 2-6pm) Named for Arles' semi-mythical first archbishop, this Romanesque-style church, built over a 5th-century basilica, was a cathedral until the bishopric moved to Aix in 1801. Built between the 12th and 15th centuries, it's considered a masterpiece of Provençal Romanesque. Look for the intricately sculpted western portal, topped by a tympanum depicting the Apocalypse (and St Trophime himself, brandishing his crozier). Inside, the **treasury** contains bone fragments of Arles' bishops. Occasional exhibitions are hosted in the neighbouring cloister, **Cloître St-Trophime**. Tickets to exhibitions in the cloister are sold at the town hall or the tourist office.



## Festivals & Events

### Fête des Gardians

CULTURAL

(☀1 May) Mounted *gardians* parade and hold games in central Arles during this festival, which affords a fascinating insight into the region's traditions. The show, put on by the Brotherhood of the Gardians, founded in 1512, culminates in the Arena d'Arles.

### Fêtes d'Arles

CULTURAL

([www.festivarles.com](http://www.festivarles.com); ☀mid-Jun-early Jul) Races, parades, costumes, theatre and music come to Arles over several weeks from mid-June. Highlights include La Course de Satin, a bareback race on purebred Camargue horses dating from 1529; and the Pegoulado, a torchlight procession of participants dressed in traditional Provençal costume that has wended its way through town to the Roman theatre since at least 1830.

### Les Suds

MUSIC

(☎04 90 96 06 27; [www.suds-arles.com](http://www.suds-arles.com); ☀Jul) This wonderfully imaginative and



## FÉRIA D'ARLES

While it unavoidably centres on the repugnant 'sport' of bullfighting, the Féria d'Arles is also unavoidably one of the highlights of the city's calendar. Or rather, two of them: one in Easter marking the beginning of the bullfighting season, and one in September, called the Féria du Riz (Festival of Rice), but also involving bullfighting.

Over half a million visitors and bullfighting aficionados descend on Arles for the Easter Féria, with 50,000 cramming into the Roman amphitheatre Les Arènes to see the fights (and the less cruel bull-leaping). But it's in the streets of Arles that the true Féria unfolds: music, feasting, parties, traditional costumes and instruments are all abundant.

multifaceted world-music festival makes use of Arles venues as diverse as the Roman theatre and the abandoned industrial complex Parc des Ateliers. While the main festival occurs over a week in July, the organisers stay busy throughout the year with live events, workshops and more.

**Les Rencontres d'Arles Photographie** ART (www.rencontres-arles.com; ☺ Jul-Sep) This internationally renowned photography festival, with a pedigree stretching to 1970, makes great use of a number of heritage sites around Arles for its many exhibits, debates, performances and workshops.

## Sleeping

Arles has a great range of reasonably priced hotels. For something completely different, you can overnight in a colourful *roulotte* (a wooden caravan; doubles from €100) at the Patio de Camargue Gypsy Village (p817).

**Camping City** CAMPGROUND € (☎ 04 90 93 08 86; www.camping-city.com; 67 rte de Crau; 1/2-person sites €18/20; ☺ Apr-Sep; 📶) On the road to Marseille, 1.5km south-east of town, well-equipped Camping City is the closest campground to Arles. To get here, take bus 12 to the Hermite stop.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** HOSTEL € (☎ 04 90 96 18 25; www.hifrance.org; 20 av Maréchal Foch; dm incl breakfast & linen €20.50; ☺ Mar-Oct, check-in 7am-10am & 5-11pm) Modern, shiny and neat, this efficient if uninspiring

hostel's drawcard is its location, 10 minutes' walk south of the city centre. It has a kitchen, lounge, cafe and dorms of varying sizes, plus a bar and bike hire. Bedding is provided, towels aren't, and the doors are locked at 11pm.

**Le Calendal** HOTEL €€ (☎ 04 90 96 11 89; www.lecalendal.com; 5 rue Porte de Laure; s/d/tr/q €109/149/159/209; 📶📶📶) Hotel, spa and restaurant, this cosy bolthole opposite the Théâtre Antique has bright, uniquely designed rooms and an inviting stone-walled garden. Breakfast and meals are available in **Le Comptoir du Calendal** (☎ 04 90 96 11 89; www.lecalendal.com; 5 rue Porte de Laure; mains €12-20; ☺ 8am-8.30pm; 📶). A soak in the small Roman-inspired thermal pool overlooking Les Arènes is always a good idea.

**Hôtel de l'Amphithéâtre** HISTORIC HOTEL €€ (☎ 04 90 96 10 30; www.hotelamphitheatre.fr; 5-7 rue Diderot; s from €80, d €95-175; 📶@📶) This elegant address across from the amphitheatre is quite a bargain: the standard of design here far outreaches the reasonable price tag. Antiques, rugs, fireplaces and staircases speak of the building's history, while minimal rooms nod to modern trends, and several have super views over Les Arènes and Arles' rooftops (although you'll pay for the privilege).

**Hôtel du Musée** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€ (☎ 04 90 93 88 88; http://hoteldumusee.net; 11 rue du Grand Prieuré; s/d from €95/120; 📶📶) In a sensitively preserved 16th- to 17th-century building, this impeccable hotel has 28 peaceful rooms decorated with simple, high-quality furnishings, a chequerboard-tiled breakfast room (breakfast €12) and a patio garden brimming with pretty blossoms.

★ **Le Cloître** DESIGN HOTEL €€ (☎ 04 88 09 10 00; www.hotelduclotre.com; 18 rue du Cloître; r €185; 📶@📶) The traditional Mediterranean courtyard that greets you on arrival at 'The Cloister' is charming enough, but doesn't betray the inventiveness of the warm, colourful design within. Its 19 rooms are all distinct, with Italian showers and unusual furniture that sacrifices no comfort. There's a panoramic rooftop terrace and excellent meals are available from the neighbouring Épicerie du Cloître.

★ **Hôtel Jules César** DESIGN HOTEL €€€ (☎ 04 90 52 52 52; www.hotel-julescesar.fr; 9 bd des Lices; r from €205; 📶📶📶) It's not often



you can say you've stayed somewhere designed from scratch by a world-famous fashion icon – but that's what you get at this luxe address (part of Sofitel's MGallery collection), renovated by couturier Christian Lacroix. Once a convent for Carmelite nuns, it's now a temple to fashion, glittering with over-the-top mirrors, Roman busts, modern art and vibrant textiles.

## Eating

Arles and its environs are foodie heaven; reserve ahead. Hours are reduced in winter.



### ★ **Marché d'Arles**

MARKET €

( 04 90 49 36 36; bd des Lices;  8am-1pm Sat) Plan to be in Arles for the whopping Saturday morning market. You'll find all of Camargue's best produce: salt, rice, goat's cheese, *saucisson d'Arles* (bull-meat sausage) and so much more. Stalls line both sides of the street as visitors and locals alike browse, sample and buy everything from lavender honey to baby chicks.



### **Glacier Arelatis**

ICE CREAM €

( 06 50 05 74 39; 8 place du Forum; 1/2 scoops €2.50/4;  1-10pm) Thirty-eight flavours of artisanal ice cream and sorbet are the mainstays of this *glacier* on busy place du Forum. Flavours change, but there are always a few distinctly Provençal ones like *miel de lavande* (lavender honey) and *châtaigne* (chestnut).



### ★ **Le Gibolin**

BISTRO €€

( 04 88 65 43 14; 13 rue des Porcelets; 2-/3-course menu €29/36;  12.30-2pm & 8-10.30pm Tue-Sat Apr-Jul & Oct, shorter hours rest of year) After spending three decades plying Paris with their passion for organic wines, owners Brigitte and Luc decided to head south and do the same for Arles. Unsurprisingly, it's become a much-loved local fixture, known for its hearty home cooking and peerless wine list (racked up temptingly behind the bar and mostly available by the glass).

### **L'Épicerie du Cloître**

TAPAS €€

( 04 88 09 10 10; 22 rue du Cloître; dishes €8-12;  noon-9pm Wed-Sun, to 7pm Oct-Apr) Beneath a century-old Paulownia tree, this small convivial spot has become a firm Arlésian favourite for a chilled evening of eating and drinking in the courtyard of the hotel Le Cloître. It specialises in shared tapas-like 'little plates' – oysters, octopus in herb-tomato sauce, pork in Asian broth – ordered to share. Arrive early for a prime table.

### ★ **L'Atelier**



#### **Jean-Luc Rabanel**

GASTRONOMY €€€

( 04 90 91 07 69; www.rabanel.com; 7 rue des Carmes; menus €95-165;  seatings 12.15-1pm & 7.30-8.15pm Wed-Sun) As much an artistic experience as a double-Michelin-starred adventure, this is the gastronomic flagship of charismatic chef Jean-Luc Rabanel. Many products are sourced from the chef's veggie patch, and wine pairings are an experience in themselves. Saturday-morning cooking classes are also available, working with the kitchen brigade (€200). Next door, Rabanel's **À Côté** ( 04 90 47 61 13; www.bistro-acote.com; 21 rue des Carmes; mains €28-32, menu €49;  seatings 12.15-1pm & 7.30-8.15pm Wed-Sun) offers bistro fare.

### ★ **L'Autruche**

MODERN FRENCH €€€

( 04 90 49 73 63; 5 rue Dulau; menus from €36;  noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm Tue-Sat) 'The Ostrich', run by husband-and-wife team Fabien and Ouria, is a family restaurant in the best tradition. Market-fresh produce is assured, as is the ability of their Michelin-experienced chef to treat it with skill – perhaps please with cocoa beans or silky asparagus soup with nuts.



## Drinking & Entertainment



### **Le Café Van Gogh**

CAFE




(Le Café La Nuit;  04 90 96 44 56; 11 place du Forum;  11am-3pm & 6-11pm) Immortalised in Van Gogh's 1888 *Terrasse du Café le Soir*, this cafe trades on its plum spot on the place du Forum and its association with the adopted Arlésian painter. Shaded by plane trees, it turns into a giant terrace at lunch and dinner during summer.

### **Patio de Camargue Gypsy Village**

LIVE MUSIC

( 06 59 62 18 73; www.patiodecamargue.com; 49 chemin de Barriol; mains €16-26, lunch menu €18-24;  noon-2pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sun May-Sep) Established in 1995 by Chico, co-founder of the Gypsy Kings, on a patch of industrial wasteland by the banks of the Rhône, this is now a wonderful riverside grill and bar. It's quite festive, especially on Friday and Saturday nights when there's a special tapas, paella and barbecue menu and live music.

## Information

**Tourist Office** ( 04 90 18 41 20; www.arles-tourisme.com; 9 blvd des Lices;  9am-1.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 9am-1pm & 2-4.45pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar; )

## **i** CENT SAVER

Buy a pass for multiple sights at the Arles tourist office or any Roman site: the **Pass Avantage** (€16) covers the museums, both theatres, the baths, crypt, Les Alyscamps and the Cloître St-Trophime; the **Pass Liberté** (€12) gives you the choice of a total of six sights, including two museums.

## **i** Getting There & Around

### BUS

Buses leave from either the central **bus station** (Gare Routière; www.lepilote.com; av Paulin Talabot) near the train station, or the more central **stop on bd Clémenceau** (bd Clémenceau); many stop at both. There are several different companies, though service is limited. For up-to-date timetables consult www.tout-envia.com, http://zou.maregionsud.fr or www.lepilote.com.

**Stes-Marie-de-la-Mer** Envia line 50, €1, 50 minutes, four daily from the central bus station. **St-Remy de Provence** ZOU! line 54, €2.50, one hour, three daily Monday to Saturday.

### TRAIN

The **train station** (av Paulin Talabot) has services to Nîmes (from €7, 22 minutes, hourly), Marseille (€17, one hour, at least hourly) and Avignon (€8, 20 minutes, every one to two hours). The closest TGV stations are in Avignon and Nîmes.

## Camargue Wetlands

Travelling around the Camargue is tantamount to frolicking with a zillion mosquitoes in a giant nature park. Almost all the Camargue's wetlands are protected by the 863-sq-km Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue, created to preserve its fragile ecosystems by maintaining an equilibrium between ecological considerations and economic mainstays: agriculture, salt and rice production, hunting, grazing and tourism. Pick up information on walking, birdwatching and other activities at the park-run Musée de la Camargue (p818), 10km south of Arles on the D570.

On the periphery, the 600-sq-km lagoon **Étang de Vaccarès** and nearby peninsulas and islands form the 135-sq-km **Réserve Nationale de Camargue** (☎04 90 97 00 97; www.snppn.com/reservedecamargue; C134, rte de Fiérouse, La Capelière). Get the full low-down on the reserve and its activities at the **information centre** (☎04 90 97 00 97; www.snppn.com/reservedecamargue; C134, rte de Fiérouse, La Capelière, permits adult/child €4/2; ☀9am-1pm & 2-6pm Apr-Sep, to 4.30pm Wed-Mon Oct-Mar) in La Capelière.

## **o** Sights & Activities

### Musée de la Camargue

MUSEUM

(Musée Camarguais; ☎04 90 97 10 82; www.museedelacamargue.com; D570, Mas du Pont de Rousty; adult/child €7/4; ☀9am-12.30pm & 1-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 1-5pm Thu-Tue Oct-Mar) Inside a 19th-century sheep shed 10km southwest of Arles, this recently expanded museum evokes traditional life in the Camargue, with exhibitions covering history, culture, ecosystems, farming techniques, flora and fauna. *Horizons* by Japanese artist Tadashi Kawamata – aka a wooden observatory shaped like a boat – provides a bird's-eye view of the agricultural estate, which is crossed by a 3.5km walking trail. The headquarters of the **Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue** (PNRC; www.parc-camargue.fr) are also based here.

### ★ Domaine de la Palissade

PARK

(☎horse riding 06 27 13 63 41, info 04 42 86 81 28, kayak tour 06 73 11 28 99; www.palissade.fr; 36 chemin Départemental; adult/child €3/free, horse trekking 1hr/2hr €30/55, kayak tour 90min €24; ☀9am-6pm Jul-Sep, to 5pm Mar-Jun & Oct, to 5pm Wed-Sun Feb & Nov; 📄) This remote nature centre, 12km south of Salin de Giraud, organises fantastic forays through 702 hectares of protected marshland, scrubby glasswort, flowering sea lavender (in August) and lagoons on foot and horseback (call ahead to book horse treks). Before hitting the scrub, rent binoculars and grab a free map of the estate's three marked walking trails (1km to 8km) from the office.

### La Maison du Guide

OUTDOORS

(☎06 12 44 73 52, 04 66 73 52 30; www.camargue.fr/site/maisonduguide; 154 rue du Château de Montcalm, Montcalm; guided tours adult/child €20/free, 4-person cottage per week €320-550; ☀office 9am-noon Mon; 📄) Discovery weekends by naturalist Jean-Marie Espuche embrace birdwatching, cycling, horse riding and sunrise nature walks. You'll find 'secret' parts of the Camargue and see much more birdlife than you otherwise might.

## **🛏** Sleeping

Ranch-style motel accommodation lines the D570 heading into Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer. The tourist offices can point you towards

self-catering *cabanes de gardian* (traditional whitewashed cowboy cottages) and farmstays.

### Mas de la Forge

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 97 00 76; www.masdelaforge.fr; Quarter Villeneuve, rte de Gageron, Villeneuve; d/ste €125/140; ♿ ♻️) The kindhearted owners of La Telline (p819) rent out three handsomely furnished guestrooms overlooking a garden, just a short walk from their restaurant. The breakfasts, featuring seasonal fruits and homemade products, make a great start to the day.

### ★ Le Mas de Peint

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 90 97 20 62; www.masdepeint.com; rte de Salin de Giraud, Le Sambuc, Manade Jacques Bon; d from €275; ☺ mid-Mar–mid-Nov; ♿ ♻️) This 17th-century farmhouse has managed to become an upmarket hotel without jettisoning design elements that nod to its rural roots: solid beams, wooden furniture, saddles on the walls, and a bull's head in the lobby. But it's the superb **restaurant** (☎04 90 97 20 62; www.masdepeint.com; rte de Salin de Giraud, Manade Jacques Bon; menus lunch €39, dinner €41-69; ☺ lunch & dinner Sat & Sun, dinner only Fri-Tue Apr–mid-Jun & Sep–Nov; lunch daily, dinner Fri-Wed mid-Jun–Aug) many come for – watch chefs work from the dining room, or eat on the lovely poolside terrace.



## Eating

### ★ Le Mazet du Vaccarès

SEAFOOD €€

(Chez Hélène et Néné; ☎04 90 97 10 79; www.mazet-du-vaccarès.fr; rte Albaron Villeneuve; menu €40; ☺ noon-3pm & 7-10pm Fri & noon-3pm Sun; ♿) Shuddering along the low ribbed road past flamingos and Camargue ponies is totally worth it for the seafood at this legendary lakeside cabin. Memorabilia from Hélène and Néné's days as lighthouse keepers in Beauduc fill the restaurant with soul. The jovial couple cook up one fixed *menu*, built from the catch of local fishers. Reserve ahead and bring cash (no credit cards).

### ★ La Telline

FRENCH €€

(☎04 90 97 01 75; www.restaurantlatelline.fr; Quarter Villeneuve, rte de Gageron, Villeneuve; mains €29; ☺ 7.30-9pm Thu, noon-1.15pm & 7.30-9pm Fri-Mon; ♿) A true local favourite, this isolated cottage restaurant with sage-green wooden shutters is one of the best places to sample genuine Camargue food. Summer dining is in a small and peaceful flower-filled garden, where straightforward starters such as *tellines* (molluscs), salad or terrine are followed

by grilled fish or meat, or a beef or bull steak. Cash only.

The owners also run several *chambres d'hôte* (doubles from €125).

### Chez Bob

FRENCH €€

(☎04 90 97 00 29; www.restaurantbob.fr; Mas Petite Antonelle, rte du Sambuc, Villeneuve; menu €50; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-9pm Wed-Sun; ♿) This house restaurant is an iconic address adored by Arlésians. Feast on grilled bull chops, mullet eggs and *anchoïade* (a powerful Provençal garlic and anchovy emulsion) beneath trees or inside between walls plastered in photos, posters and other memorabilia collected over the years by Jean-Guy, aka 'Bob'. It's 18km south of Arles; reserve ahead.

### ★ La Chassagnette

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎04 90 97 26 96; www.chassagnette.fr; rte du Sambuc, Domaine de L'Armière; menu lunch/dinner €67/105; ☺ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Jun-Sep, noon-1.30pm Thu-Mon & 7-9.30pm Sat Oct-May; ♿) Surrounded by a vast *potager*, which supplies practically all the restaurant's produce, this renowned gourmet table is run by Armand Amal, a former pupil of Alain Ducasse. The multicourse *menus* are full of surprises, and the bucolic setting is among the loveliest anywhere in the Camargue. There's a vegetarian *menu* (unfortunately available only at lunch).

## Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer

POP 2400

The saints who give their name to this whitewashed seaside town are Marie-Salomé and Marie-Jacobé, persecuted early Christians who escaped here from Palestine. With them, the legend says, was their handmaiden Sara, whose sanctification as Saint Sara the Black makes this a significant place of pilgrimage for Roma and other 'gypsy' peoples, for whom she is considered a patron saint. Stes-Maries has a rough-and-tumble holidaymaker feel, with salt-licked buildings crowding dusty streets. During its Roma pilgrimages, street-cooked pans of paella fuel chaotic crowds of carnivalesque guitarists, dancers and mounted cowboys.

## 📍 Sights & Activities

Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer is fringed by 30km of fine sand beaches, easily reached by bicycle. Nudist beaches surround the Gacholle lighthouse off the Digue à la Mer.

## Église des Stes-Maries

CHURCH

(📍 04 90 97 80 25; [www.sanctuaire-des-saintes-maries.fr](http://www.sanctuaire-des-saintes-maries.fr); 19 place Jean XXIII; rooftop €3; 🕒 8am-7pm) Built on the potential first site of Christianity in the Camargue, this fortified church is of uncertain vintage, but probably hails from the 12th century. It draws legions of pilgrims to venerate the statue of Sara, their revered patron saint, during the Pèlerinage des Gitans (p820). The relics of Sara and those of Marie-Salomé and Marie-Jacobé, all found in the crypt by King René in 1448, are enshrined in a wooden chest, stashed in the stone wall above the choir. Don't miss the panorama from the **rooftop terrace**.

## ★ Parc Ornithologique du Pont du Gau

WILDLIFE RESERVE

(📍 04 90 97 82 62; [www.parcornithologique.com](http://www.parcornithologique.com); D570, Pont du Gau; adult/child €7.50/5; 🕒 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Mar; 📄 📄) Flamingos are a dime a dozen in the Camargue, but this park is one of the best places to see the many other migratory and seasonal species that thrive in these wetlands. Herons, storks, egrets, teals, avocets and grebes are just some you may spot, depending on the time of year. The reserve has 7km of trails, giving you every chance to see its avian inhabitants, and a care centre for sick and

injured birds. Follow the D570 4km north from Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

## La Digue à la Mer

NATURAL FEATURE

This 2.5m-high, 20km-long dyke was built in the 19th century to cut the delta off from the sea, making the southern Camargue arable. A walking and cycling track runs along its length, linking Stes-Maries with the 1882 lighthouse **Phare de la Gacholle**, some 12km away. The trail continues another 17km to Salin de Giraud. Footpaths cut down to lovely sandy beaches and views of pink flamingos strutting across the marshy planes are second to none.

## Manade des Baumelles

FARM

(📍 04 90 97 84 14; [www.manadedesbaumelles.fr](http://www.manadedesbaumelles.fr); D38; tour with/without lunch adult €45/25, child €23/13; 🕒 tours 10.30am Tue-Sun; 📄) Located on the Petit Rhône, this *manade* (bull farm) lets visitors enter the world of the *gardians*, and watch their strenuous work from the safety of a truck. The braver can ride horses, join in the farm work, go canoeing and play traditional *gardian* games. Tours end with an optional farm lunch and a gift shop stocked with Camargue specialities. Find the *manade* a few kilometres north of Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer, at the end of a gravel track off the D38 towards Aigues-Mortes.

## ★ Festivals & Events

### Pèlerinage des Gitans

RELIGIOUS

(Roma pilgrimages; 🕒 24-25 May) 'Gypsies' (Romanies, Manouches, Tziganes and Gitans) pour into town for three days from 24 May and again on the Sunday closest to 22 October to celebrate their patron saint, Sara, who according to legend helped bring Christianity to European shores. The festival, rooted in medieval times, still sees the pilgrims camp throughout the town and on the beach.

## 🛏 Sleeping

### Camping Le Clos du Rhône

CAMPGROUND €

(📍 04 90 97 85 99; [www.camping-leclos.fr](http://www.camping-leclos.fr); rte d'Aigues Mortes; site €34, cottage per week €875; 🕒 late Mar-mid-Nov; 📄 📄 📄) Right by the beach (yet lavishly embellished with an onshore water park), this large and well-equipped campground sports a range of accommodation options: tent sites, wooden chalets and self-catering cottages.

### Hôtel Méditerranée

HOTEL €

(📍 04 90 97 82 09; 4 av Frédéric Mistral; d/tr €80/120; 🕒 mid-Mar-mid-Nov; 📄 📄) This

## THE FLAMINGOS OF THE CAMARGUE

Each year in the Camargue some 10,000 to 15,000 pink or greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) couples nest on the **Étang du Fangassier**. This artificial lagoon, created in 1970 as a flamingo-breeding colony, is one of the rare spots in Europe that guarantees the flamingo protection from predators.

This well-dressed bird stands between 1.5m and 2m tall and has an average wingspan of 1.9m. When the flamingo feels threatened, its loud hiss is similar to the warning sound made by a goose. Flamingo courtship starts in January, with mating taking place from March to May. Come the end of August or early September, thousands of birds take flight for Spain, Tunisia and Senegal where they winter in warmer climes before returning to the Camargue in February. Over 6000 flamingos, however, remain in the Rhône delta year-round.



whitewashed cottage hotel, festooned with an abundance of flower pots and just steps from the sea, is truly a steal. Its 14 rooms – three with their own little terrace garden – are spotlessly clean, and breakfast (€9) is served in summer on a pretty vine-covered patio garden, complete with strawberry plants, geraniums and other potted flowers.

### ★ Cacharel Hotel

HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 97 95 44; [www.hotel-cacharel.com](http://www.hotel-cacharel.com); rte de Cacharel, D85A; s/d/tr €140/160/172; @☎☎) This isolated farmstead, 400m down an unpaved track off the D85A just north of Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer, perfectly balances modern-day comforts with rural authenticity. Photographic portraits of the bull herder who created the hotel in 1955 (son Florian runs the three-star hotel with much love today) give the vintage dining room soul. Rooms sit snug in whitewashed cottages, some overlooking the water.

### ★ Lodge Sainte Hélène

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 90 97 83 29; [www.lodge-sainte-helene.com](http://www.lodge-sainte-helene.com); chemin Bas des Launes; d for 2 nights from €510; ☎Jan–mid-Nov; ☎☎☎☎) These pearly-white terraced cottages on a peninsula on the Étang des Launes are prime real estate for birdwatchers and romance seekers. It's so quiet you can hear flamingos flapping past. The charming rooms have terraces overlooking the water (perfect spot for a sunowner, with tapas and drinks available).

Staff can arrange horse riding and mountain biking, and there's also a heated pool. Prices drop outside high season, when single-night stays are also possible.

### ✂ Eating

#### La Cabane aux Coquillages

SEAFOOD €€

(☎06 10 30 33 49; 16 av Van Gogh; seafood €10-22; ☎noon-3pm & 5-11pm Apr-Nov) Attached to the excellent Ô Pica Pica restaurant, this informal little *cabane* (hut) specialises, unsurprisingly, in *coquillages* (shellfish): oysters, *palourdes* (clams), *coques* (cockles), and *tellines* (a type of local shellfish known elsewhere in France as *pignons*). Or, you could opt for perfectly cooked *fritures* (battered baby prawns, baby squid or anchovies) and a very cooperative glass of wine.

### ★ Ô Pica Pica

SEAFOOD €€€

(☎06 10 30 33 49; 16-18 av Van Gogh; mains €18-27; ☎noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mar-Nov) Fish and shellfish do not come fresher than this. Watch them get gutted, filleted and grilled

## WORTH A TRIP

### AIGUES-MORTES

Set in flat marshland and encircled by high stone walls, the picturesque town of Aigues-Mortes was established in the mid-13th century by Louis IX to give the French crown a Mediterranean port under its direct control. Cobble streets inside the walls are lined with restaurants, cafes and bars, giving the town a festive atmosphere and making it an ideal spot from which to explore the Camargue. It's actually located over the border from Provence in the Gard *département*, 28km northwest of Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer at the western extremity of the Camargue.

The **tourist office** (☎04 66 53 73 00; [www.ot-aiguesmortes.fr](http://www.ot-aiguesmortes.fr); place St-Louis; ☎10am-6pm Jul & Aug, to 5pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar) is inside the walled city.

in the 'open' glass-walled kitchen, then devour your meal on the sea-facing pavement terrace or out the back in the typically Mediterranean garden. Simplicity is king here: plastic glasses, fish grilled *à la plancha*, and shellfish platters. No coffee and no credit cards.

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 90 97 82 55; [www.saintesmaries.com](http://www.saintesmaries.com); 5 av Van Gogh; ☎9am-8pm Jul & Aug, to 7pm Apr-Jun & Sep, to 6pm Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar)

### i Getting There & Around

**Le Vélo Saintois** (☎04 90 97 74 56; [www.levelosaintois.com](http://www.levelosaintois.com); 19 rue de la République; per day adult/child/ebike €16/14/35; ☎9am-6pm Mar-Nov) hires bicycles.

Envia ([www.tout-envia.com](http://www.tout-envia.com)) runs buses to/from Arles (Line AGGLO 50, €1, 50 minutes, four daily). It makes several stops in town, including at the useful Les Razeteurs stop on av d'Arles, a couple of blocks northwest of the place des Gitanes.

## LES ALPILLES

A silvery chain of low, jagged mountains strung between the Rivers Durance and Rhône, the craggy limestone peaks of Les Alpilles rise impressively to the south of the

chic town of St-Rémy de Provence. Designated as the Parc Naturel Régional des Alpilles in 2007, the area's hill villages are best explored by car – or better still on foot, along one of the trails that wind among the peaks. While you walk, look out for eagles and Egyptian vultures soaring overhead.

Covered with scrubby maquis and wild almond and olive trees, the area was immortalised by Vincent van Gogh, who created many much-loved paintings here during the later period of his life – especially while he was a resident at the sanatorium of Monastère St-Paul de Mausole.

## St-Rémy-de-Provence

POP 9900

Ravishing St-Rémy is about as cultured and chi-chi as Provence gets, and yet somehow – and in stark contrast to some of the flashier coastal towns (St-Tropez, we're looking at you) – it's managed to cling on to its heart and soul during the gentrification process. Built from honey-coloured stone, and centred on a lovely, plane-shaded square lined by cafes, St-Rémy is a favourite summer haunt of the jet-set – and yet, even in mid-summer, it's possible to find pockets of peace and quiet along the streets of the old town.

South of town, the rugged hills of Les Alpilles rise along the horizon, and one of Provence's most impressive Roman ruins can be explored – the incredibly well-preserved ancient town of Glanum.

### Sights

Pick up the free Carte St-Rémy at the first sight you visit, get it stamped, then benefit from reduced admission at St-Rémy's other sights.

★ **Site Archéologique de Glanum** RUINS  
(☎04 90 92 23 79; www.site-glanum.fr; rte des Baux-de-Provence; adult/child €7.50/free, parking €4; ☀9.30am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Mar, closed Mon Oct-Mar) It might lack the scale and ambition of some of Provence's better-known Roman monuments, but for a glimpse into everyday life in Gaul, this ancient town has no equal. A Roman colony founded around 27 CE, the remains of this once-thriving town have been excavated – complete with baths, forum, columns, marketplace, temples and houses.

Two monuments mark the entrance, 2km south of St-Rémy – a mausoleum (from

around 30 BCE) and France's oldest triumphal arch, built around 20 CE.

### ★ **Monastère St-Paul de Mausole**

HISTORIC SITE

(☎04 90 92 77 00; www.saintpauldemausole.fr; chemin St-Paul; adult/child €6/free; ☀10.15am-noon & 1-5.15pm Apr-Dec) This monastery turned asylum is famous for one of its former residents – the ever-volatile Vincent van Gogh, who admitted himself in 1889. Safe within the monastery's cloistered walls, Vincent enjoyed his most productive period, completing 150-plus drawings and around 150 paintings, including his famous *Irises*. A reconstruction of his room is open to visitors, as are a Romanesque **cloister** and **gardens** growing flowers that feature in his work.

### **Hôtel de Sade**

MUSEUM

(☎04 90 92 64 04; www.hotel-de-sade.fr; 1 rue du Parage; adult/child €4/free; ☀10am-1pm & 2-6pm Jun-Sep, shorter hours Oct-May) Reopened after an expensive program of renovations, this impressive Renaissance *hôtel particulier* was built in 1513 by Balthazar de Sade (ancestor of the much more notorious Marquis de Sade). Since the early 20th century it has housed the most important archaeological finds from the Roman town of Glanum – including an amazing array of sculptures discovered at the site, such as a striking bust of Livia, wife of Emperor Augustus, thought to have been made between 4 and 14 CE.

### Sleeping

#### ★ **Le Sommeil des Fées**

B&B €

(☎04 90 92 17 66; www.angesettes-stremy.com; 4 rue du 8 Mai 1945; incl breakfast s €55-70, d €70-90; ☎) Upstairs from La Cuisine des Anges (p823), this cosy, colourful B&B has five rooms all named after characters from Arthurian legend, blending Provençal and Andalucian decorative details. Good value.

#### ★ **Sous les Figuiers**

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎04 32 60 15 40; www.hotelsouslesfiguiers.com; 3 av Gabriel St-René Taillandier; d €95-220; ☎☎☎☎) 'Under The Fig Trees' nicely captures the languid, leisurely, home-away-from-home feel of this charming, country-chic house a five-minute walk from the town centre. All the rooms are decorated with great style, blending distressed wood, warm colours and ethnic textiles; some are in the main house, while others are in the gorgeous garden and have cute, private patios.

**La Maison du Village** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€  
 (☎04 32 60 68 20; www.lamaisonduvillage.com; 10 rue du 8 Mai 1945; d €198-285; 🍷🍴) The epitome of classy St-Rémy, this 1750s townhouse hotel is like a design magazine come to life. All five suites have their own eclectic décor – four of them have sitting rooms and one has a freestanding tub with a view of the village church tower. The walled garden is a bucolic setting for breakfast.

## Eating

St-Rémy has some superb cafes and bakeries, but restaurant prices tend to be on the high side. Market day is on Wednesday and is a magnet for sightseers and locals alike.

**Da Peppe** ITALIAN €€  
 (☎04 90 92 11 56; www.dapeppe.fr; 2 av Fauconnet; pizza €14-20, mains €18-32; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun; 🍷) Has a tip-top reputation for pizzas fired up in a wood-burning oven, plus delectable risottos and pastas as well as a few fish and meat dishes (try the pan-fried sea bass cooked in grappa). The wonderful rooftop terrace is the bit that seals the deal.

**La Cuisine des Anges** BISTRO €€  
 (☎04 90 92 17 66; www.angesetfees-stremy.com; 4 rue du 8 Mai 1945; 2-course menu €28-30, 3-course menu €34; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7.30-11pm Mon, Wed, Sat & Sun, 7.30-11pm Thu & Fri; 🍷🍴) You can't really go wrong at the Angels' Kitchen – at least if you're looking for solid, Provençal cooking with a hearty dash of creativity. Tuck into dishes like poached sea bream with saffron, ravioli with ricotta and white truffle, or baked St-Marcellin cheese with thyme, and dine either in the courtyard or the stone-walled dining room.

**Gus** BISTRO €€  
 (☎04 90 90 27 61; www.gussaintremy.com; 31 bd Victor Hugo; mains €20-33; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sun) This bright, breezy restaurant is a favourite for the chi-chi summer crowd, and with good reason: the food is classy and the ambience is buzzy, with overtones of a Parisian street cafe. It's particularly good on seafood – big *fruits de mer* platters, lobsters and plates of oysters – but there's a blackboard of French specials too.

## Shopping

**Joël Durand** CHOCOLATE  
 (☎04 90 92 38 25; www.joeldurand-chocolatier.fr; 3 bd Victor Hugo; ☺9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2.30-7.30pm Sun)

## FÊTE DE LA TRANSHUMANCE

Every spring throughout parts of southern France, an incredible migration known as the **Transhumance** (☺May/June) takes place as thousands of sheep are led from the coast to the mountains to summer on alpine pastures. The journey takes about six days, and sheep, goats and donkeys block many tertiary routes to the Alps, leading to the amusement or annoyance of many a tourist.

In St-Rémy de Provence on Pentecost Monday this tradition is honoured as shepherds kitted out in traditional dress lead about 3000 sheep through St-Rémy's streets on their way to the mountains, and market-day festivities fill the town.

Among France's top chocolatiers, using Provençal herbs and plants – lavender, rosemary, violet and thyme – with unexpected flavours such as Earl Grey.

**L'Épicerie du Calanquet** FOOD  
 (☎04 32 62 09 01; www.moulinducalanquet.fr; 8 rue de la Commune; ☺10am-1pm & 2.30-7pm, closed Sun & Mon Oct-Mar) A delectable grocery and fine food emporium, made out to resemble a traditional village shop, and owned by the same people who run the olive-oil mill **Moulin à Huile du Calanquet** (☎04 32 60 09 50; www.moulinducalanquet.fr; vieux chemin d'Arles; ☺9am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 3-6pm Sun, closed Sun Oct-Mar) outside town. Its own olive-oil range takes centre stage, of course, alongside other goodies from the area – and there are tasting sessions and events on the patio during summer.

## Information

**St-Rémy Tourist Office** (☎04 90 92 05 22; www.alpillesenprovence.com; place Jean Jaurès; ☺9.15am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat)

## Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

Cycling is a great way to explore the area around St-Rémy – although you'll need strong legs if you want to make it all the way up into Les Alpilles.

There are several bike-rental companies around town, most of which will deliver within a 20km radius of St-Rémy; contact **Telecycles**

(☎ 04 90 92 83 15; [www.telecycles-location.fr](http://www.telecycles-location.fr); per day €20-30) or **Vélo-Passion** (☎ 04 90 92 49 43; 1 impasse de la 1ère; per day €20, electric bikes from €35; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat).

Alternatively, battery-assisted electric bikes can be hired from **Sun e-Bike** (☎ 04 32 62 08 39; [www.location-velo-provence.com](http://www.location-velo-provence.com); 2 rue Camille Pelletan; per day €38; ☀ 9am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, to 6pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar) and **Vélo-Passion** (from €35).

## BUS

**ZOU!** (<http://zou.maregionsud.fr>) Buses depart from place de la République.

**Arles** (€2.50, one hour, three daily Monday to Saturday) Line 54; also goes north to Cavailon for onward travel into the Luberon Valley.

**Avignon** (€3.80, 50 minutes, at least one every two hours).

## Les Baux-de-Provence

POP 360

Clinging precariously to an ancient limestone *baou* (Provençal for 'rocky spur'), this fortified hilltop village is one of the most visited in France (best seen as a day trip, and avoid the summer crowds if you can). It's easy to understand its popularity: narrow cobbled streets wind car-free past ancient houses, up to a splendid ruined castle.

### Sights

#### Château des Baux

RUIN

(☎ 04 90 49 20 02; [www.chateau-baux-provence.com](http://www.chateau-baux-provence.com); adult/child €8/6; ☀ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug, to 7pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Mar) Crowning the village of Les Baux, these dramatic, maze-like ruins date from the 10th century. The cliff-top castle was largely destroyed in 1633, during the reign of Louis XIII, and is a thrilling place to explore – particularly for rambunctious kids. Climb crumbling towers for incredible views, descend into disused dungeons and flex your knightly prowess with giant medieval weapons dotting the open-air site.

#### ★ Carrières de Lumières

GALLERY

(☎ 04 90 49 20 02; [www.carrieres-lumieres.com](http://www.carrieres-lumieres.com); rte de Maillane; adult/child €14/12; ☀ 9.30am-7pm or 7.30pm Apr-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-Jan & Mar) Inside the chilly galleries of a former limestone quarry, this peculiar but intriguing attraction is like an underground audiovisual art gallery, with giant projections illuminating the walls, floor and ceiling, accompanied by an oration and swelling music. Programs change annually and there are joint tickets

(adult/child €20/16 in summer) with the Château des Baux. Dress warmly.

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ L'Oustau de Baumanière

GASTRONOMY ccc

(☎ 04 90 54 33 07; [www.baumaniere.com](http://www.baumaniere.com); D27; menu lunch €150-240, dinner €250; ☀ noon-1.45pm & 7.30-9.15pm Mar-Dec; 🍷🍷) Boasting three Michelin stars, this legendary hotel-restaurant is the most exclusive place to dine in this corner of Provence. Glenn Viel, voted chef of the year in 2020, revels in the rich flavours of classic French cooking. Vegetarians can come for the lunchtime *menu légumes*. The less formal La Cabro d'Or serves outstanding meals (lunch/dinner menu from €66/87) overlooking the garden.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 90 54 34 39; [www.lesbauxdeprovence.com](http://www.lesbauxdeprovence.com); Maison du Roy, rue Porte Mage; ☀ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5.30pm Sat & Sun)

## Getting There & Away

In July and August only, bus 57, operated by ZOU! (<http://zou.maregionsud.fr>), connects Les Baux-de-Provence with Arles (€2.50, 38 minutes), St-Remy-de-Provence (€1.10, 12 minutes) and Avignon (€5, one hour). There are six buses daily.

If you come by car, parking can be hellish. Find metered parking spaces (€5/7 for one/four hours) far down the hill at the village's edge; there's free parking outside Carrières de Lumières. Go early to get a space!

## VAUCLUSE

Named after France's most powerful natural spring, which wells up outside Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, the Vaucluse *département* sits on Provence's west side, sandwiched between the rumpled mountains of the Hautes-Alpes and the rocky Var coastline. Crossed by three great rivers – the Rhône, the Durance and the Sorgue – Vaucluse is renowned for its lavender fields and its vineyards, including the legendary Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The area has been occupied since ancient times, but it was the Romans who left the greatest mark in the form of Orange's ancient theatre and the remains of two Roman towns, Glanum and Vasio Vocontiorum. Centuries later, Avignon became the seat of papal power, and

its crenellated ramparts and monumental Palais des Papes provide a glimpse of medieval majesty.

These days visitors come to explore Vaucluse's hilltop villages, elegant towns and excellent restaurants – as well as the snow-capped summit of the *géant de Provence*, Mont Ventoux.

## Avignon

POP 91,900

For 70-odd years of the early 1300s, the Provençal town of Avignon was the centre of the Roman Catholic world, and though its stint as the seat of papal power only lasted a few decades, it's been left with an impressive legacy of ecclesiastical architecture, most notably the soaring, World Heritage-listed fortress-cum-palace known as the Palais des Papes.

Avignon is now best known for its annual arts festival, the largest in France, which spans several weeks in July. The rest of the year, its rampart-ringed old town, medieval bridge, leafy squares and superb restaurants are the main attractions.


## History

Avignon first gained its ramparts – and reputation for arts and culture – during the 14th century, when Pope Clement V fled political turmoil in Rome. From 1309 to 1377, seven French-born popes invested huge sums in the papal palace and offered asylum to Jews and political dissidents. Pope Gregory XI left Avignon in 1376, but his death two years later led to the Great Schism (1378–1417), during which rival popes (up to three at one time) resided at Rome and Avignon, denouncing and excommunicating one another. Even after the matter was settled and an impartial pope, Martin V, established himself in Rome, Avignon remained under papal rule. Avignon and Comtat Venaissin (now the Vaucluse *département*) were ruled by papal legates until 1791.

## Sights


### Palais des Papes

PALACE

(Papal Palace;  tickets 04 32 74 32 74; [www.palais-des-papes.com](http://www.palais-des-papes.com); place du Palais; adult/child €12/10, with Pont St-Bénézet €14.50/11.50; ☀ 9am–8pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Sep–Jun) The largest Gothic palace ever built, the Palais des Papes was erected by Pope Clement V, who abandoned Rome in 1309 in the wake of violent

disorder after his election. Its immense scale illustrates the medieval might of the Roman Catholic church.

Ringed by 3m-thick walls, its cavernous halls, chapels and antechambers are largely bare today – but tickets include tablet 'Histopads' revealing virtual-reality representations of how the building would have looked in all its papal pomp.

The palace served as the seat of papal power for seven decades. Highlights include 14th-century chapel frescos by Matteo Giovannetti, and the Chambre du Cerf with medieval hunting scenes. It can be hard to take it all in, so it might be worth joining one of the regular **guided tours** ( reservations 04 32 74 32 74; [www.avignon-tourisme.com](http://www.avignon-tourisme.com); 41 cours Jean Jaurès; tours from €18) run by the tourist office.

The palace was designated a World Heritage site by Unesco in 1995. Look out for special events during the Festival d'Avignon (p828), and special *son et lumière* (sound and light) shows from mid-August to September.

Tickets can be booked in advance online.

### Place du Palais

SQUARE

This vast, impressive square surrounding the Palais des Papes provides knockout photo ops. On top of the Romanesque 17th-century cathedral stands a golden statue of the Virgin Mary (weighing 4.5 tonnes), while next to the cathedral the hilltop **Rocher des Doms** gardens provide great views of the Rhône, Mont Ventoux and Les Alpilles. Opposite the palace is the 17th-century **Hôtel**

### CENT SAVER

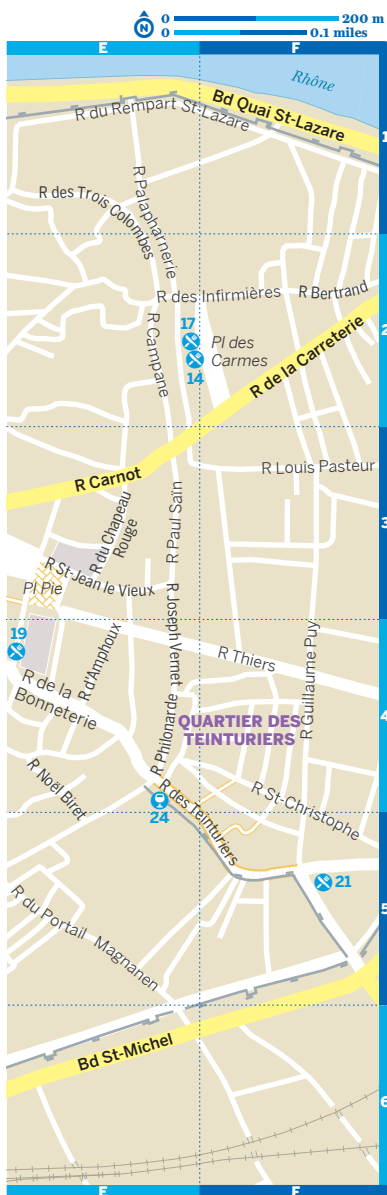
If you plan to visit some of the major attractions in Avignon and elsewhere in Vaucluse, you can save money buying a discount card. The Avignon City Pass, valid for 24 hours, costs €21 and gives free admission to the Palais des Papes, the Pont d'Avignon and the Musée Angladon, as well as various sites in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon. A 48-hour version costs €28.

There's also a Vaucluse Provence Pass (2/3/5 days €29/35/48) that includes sites in Orange, Apt and Gordes, as well as those in Avignon and Villeneuve-lès-Avignon.

The pass also covers a couple of tours too, and is available at the tourist office (p831) and at museums.







### ★ Pont St-Bénézet

BRIDGE

(Pont d'Avignon; ☎ tickets 04 32 74 32 74; bd de la Ligne; adult/child €5/4, with Palais des Papes €14.50/11.50; 🕒 9am-8pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours Sep-Jun) Legend says Pastor Bénézet (a former shepherd) had three visions urging him to build a bridge across the Rhône.

## Avignon

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Musée du Petit Palais ..... C1
- 2 Palais des Papes ..... D2
- 3 Pont St-Bénézet ..... C1

### 📍 Sights

- 4 Musée Angladon ..... D4
- 5 Musée Calvet ..... B4
- 6 Place du Palais ..... C2

### 🚶 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 7 Avignon Guided Tours ..... C5

### 🏠 Sleeping

- 8 Hôtel Boquier ..... C5
- 9 Hôtel de l'Horloge ..... C3
- 10 Hôtel La Mirande ..... D2
- 11 Le Colbert ..... D5
- 12 Le Limas ..... C2
- 13 Les Jardins de Baracane ..... D5

### 🍴 Eating

- 14 Au Jardin des Carmes ..... E2
- 15 E.A.T. .... B2
- 16 Ginette et Marcel ..... D5
- 17 Hygge ..... E2
- Le Marmiton ..... (see E10)
- 18 Le Potard ..... D4
- 19 Les Halles ..... E4
- 20 Maison Violette ..... D5
- 21 Numéro 75 ..... F5
- 22 Restaurant L'Essentiel ..... C3
- 23 Sevin ..... D3

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 24 L'Explo ..... E4
- 25 Milk Shop ..... D5

Completed in 1185, the 900m-long bridge linked Avignon with Villeneuve-lès-Avignon. It was rebuilt several times before all but four of its 22 spans were washed away in the 1600s, leaving the far side marooned in the middle of the Rhône. There are fine (and free) views from Rocher des Doms park, Pont Édouard Daladier and Île de la Barthesse's chemin des Berges.

### Musée Angladon

GALLERY

(☎ 04 90 82 29 03; www.angladon.com; 5 rue du Laboureur; adult/child €8/3; 🕒 1-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, Tue-Sat Nov-Mar) Tiny Musée Angladon harbours an impressive collection of realist, impressionist and expressionist treasures, including works by Cézanne, Sisley, Manet, Modigliani, Degas and Picasso – but the star piece is Van Gogh's *Railway Wagons*, the only painting by the artist on display in Provence.

## Musée Calvet

GALLERY

(📍) 04 90 86 33 84; [www.musee-calvet.org](http://www.musee-calvet.org); 65 rue Joseph Vernet; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon)

**FREE** The elegant Hôtel de Villeneuve-Martignan (built 1741-54) provides a fitting backdrop for Avignon's fine-arts museum, with 16th- to 20th-century oil paintings, compelling prehistoric pieces, 15th-century wrought iron, and the elongated landscapes of Avignonnais artist Joseph Vernet.

## ★ Festivals & Events

### ★ Festival d'Avignon

PERFORMING ARTS

(📍) 04 90 27 66 50; [www.festival-avignon.com](http://www.festival-avignon.com);

🕒 (Jul) The three-week annual Festival d'Avignon is one of the world's great performing-arts festivals. Over 40 international works of dance and drama play to 100,000-plus spectators at venues around town. Tickets don't go on sale until springtime, but hotels sell out by February.

### Festival Off

PERFORMING ARTS

([www.avignonleoff.com](http://www.avignonleoff.com)); 🕒 (Jul) The Festival d'Avignon is paralleled by a simultaneous fringe event, Festival Off, with eclectic experimental programming and performances all across town.

## 🛏 Sleeping

### Hôtel Boquier

HOTEL €

(📍) 04 90 82 34 43; [www.hotel-boquier.com](http://www.hotel-boquier.com); 6 rue du Portail Boquier; s €70, d €84-94, tr €94, q €110-150; 📞 (📍) It sits on a rather shabby side street, but the owners' infectious enthusiasm and the colourful rooms at this small hotel compensate; try for themed rooms Morocco or Lavender. A couple of the rooms feel a bit squeezed in under the building's eaves.

### Péniche Le Hasard

HOUSEBOAT €€

(📍) 06 11 62 02 73; [www.peniche-le-hasard.fr](http://www.peniche-le-hasard.fr); chemin des Canotiers, Île de la Barthelasse; r incl breakfast €125; 📞 (📍) Avast, landlubbers: how about spending a night on a riverboat? This lovingly restored *péniche* bobs on the river about 2km from the old town. Two rooms here: the boatman's wheelhouse and the captain's cabin, both quirkily decorated and squeezed into the boat's odd-angled architecture – and up top there's a lovely deck terrace and, believe it or not, a pool.

### Le Colbert

HOTEL €€

(📍) 04 90 86 20 20; [www.lecolbert-hotel.com](http://www.lecolbert-hotel.com); 7 rue Agricole Perdiguier; s €70-140, d €90-160;

🕒 Apr-Oct; 📞 (📍) One of several hotels on a shaded side street off rue de la République, this pleasant, old-fashioned hotel has 15 rooms decked out in art posters and zingy shades of yellow, terracotta and tangerine. Rooms are fairly standard, but the vine-fringed interior patio with trickling fountain is a nice spot to unwind – and a memorable setting for breakfast (€8 extra).

### ★ Les Jardins de Baracane

B&amp;B €€

(📍) 06 03 41 06 91; [www.lesjardinsdebaracane.fr](http://www.lesjardinsdebaracane.fr); 12 rue Baracane; r €160-240; 📞 (📍) This 18th-century house near place des Corps Saints is owned by an architect, so it's been sensitively and tastefully renovated. Wood beams, stone walls and period detailing feature in all rooms, but the best are the two suites, which are posh enough for a pope. There's a great pool, and breakfast is served in the garden under a huge wisteria tree.

### Hôtel de l'Horloge

HOTEL €€

(📍) 04 90 16 42 00; [www.hotel-avignon-horloge.com](http://www.hotel-avignon-horloge.com); 1 rue Félicien David; d €120-280; 📞 (📍) A refined choice: a spacious and well-run hotel in a lovely building near the town hall (and its clock, hence the name), handily placed just off Avignon's main thoroughfare. The decor is fairly standard – beige walls, tasteful prints – but the terrace rooms are worth the extra for their knockout views (room 505 overlooks the Palais des Papes).

### Le Limas

B&amp;B €€

(📍) 06 69 00 60 37; [www.le-limas-avignon.com](http://www.le-limas-avignon.com); 51 rue du Limas; ste €155-230; 📞 (📍) This chic B&B in an 18th-century townhouse, like something out of *Vogue Living*, is everything designers strive for when mixing old and new: a state-of-the-art kitchen and minimalist white decor complementing antique fireplaces and 18th-century spiral stairs. Breakfast on the sun-drenched terrace is divine, darling.

### ★ Hôtel La Mirande

HOTEL €€€

(📍) 04 90 14 20 20; [www.la-mirande.fr](http://www.la-mirande.fr); 4 place de l'Amirande; d €520-754, ste €1320; 📞 (📍) The address to sleep in Avignon *en luxe*. It's located literally in the shadow of the palace, and stepping inside feels more like entering an aristocrat's château than a hotel, with oriental rugs, gold-threaded tapestries, marble statues and oil paintings everywhere you look. Rooms are equally opulent, and the best overlook the interior garden where afternoon tea is served.

Its renowned restaurant, **Le Marmiton** (4 place de l'Amirande; menus lunch €60, dinner €90-135), offers cooking classes (from €125).

## Eating

Place de l'Horloge is crammed with touristy restaurants that don't offer the best cuisine or value in town. Delve instead into the pedestrianised old city where ample pretty squares tempt: place des Châtaignes and place de la Principale are two particularly beautiful restaurant-clad squares.

### ★ **Maison Violette**

BAKERY €

(☎06 59 44 62 94; place des Corps Saints; pastries from €2; ☀7am-7.30pm Tue-Sat) We simply defy you to walk into this bakery and not instantly be tempted by the stacks of baguettes, *ficelles* and *pains de campagnes* loaded up on the counter; not to mention the orderly ranks of éclairs, millefeuilles, fruit tarts and cookies lined up irresistibly behind the glass. Go on, a little bit of what you fancy does you good, *non?*

### **Les Halles**

MARKET €

(☎06 43 36 98 59; www.avignon-leshalles.com; place Pie; ☀6am-1.30pm Tue-Fri, to 2pm Sat & Sun) Over 40 food stalls showcase seasonal Provençal ingredients. Seasonal highlights, cooking demonstrations and other events happen regularly (check the website under '*les animations*'). Outside on place Pie, admire Patrick Blanc's marvellous vegetal wall.

### **Hygge**

CAFE €

(☎04 65 81 06 87; 25 place des Carmes; mains €12; ☀8am-4pm Mon-Wed, to 4pm & 7-10pm Thu-Sat) ☂ Having worked at a smorgasbord of high-flying restaurants (including Copenhagen's Noma and Avignon's Le Marmiton), Jacques Pampiri opened his own place in Avignon, and it's a big hit with the locals. Hearty, wholesome organic food is dished up canteen-style to keep costs down, and the mix-and-match thrift-shop decor is great fun. Arrive early for a prime table on the square.

### **E.A.T.**

BISTRO €

(Estaminet, Arômes et Tentations; ☎04 90 83 46 74; www.restaurant-eat.com; 8 rue Mazan; lunch menu €17, mains €13-22; ☀noon-1.45pm & 7-9.30pm Thu-Tue May-Sep, also closed Sun Oct-Dec & Feb-Apr) Weird name; great food. This back-alley bistro near place Crillon is a strong locals' tip. It's very French, but borrows flavours and spices freely: smoked hake with pear compote, perhaps, or one-pot veal in a rich,

oozy sauce. There's not much space, though: definitely elbows-in dining.

### **Ginette et Marcel**

CAFE €

(☎04 90 85 58 70; 27 place des Corps Saints; tartines €5-10; ☀10.30am-11pm; ♿) Set on one of Avignon's most happening plane-tree-shaded squares, this vintage cafe styled like a 1950s grocery is a charming spot to hang out and people-watch over a *tartine* (open-face sandwich), tart, salad or other light dish – equally tasty for lunch or an early-evening *apéro*. Kids adore Ginette's cherry- and violet-flavoured cordials and Marcel's glass jars of old-fashioned sweets.

### **Le Potard**

BURGERS €

(☎04 90 82 34 19; www.lepotard.com; 19-21 place de la Principale; burgers €15-19; ☀noon-2.30pm & 8-10pm Tue-Sat) Gourmet brioche-based burgers come in a multitude of guises (including a vegetarian option), loaded with tempting goodies from smoked bacon and St-Nectaire cheese to caramelised onions, crunchy rocket and sundried tomato caviar. There's also a range of salad plates served with mini-burgers. It's set in an atmospheric 14th-century chapel.

### ★ **Restaurant L'Essentiel**

FRENCH €€

(☎04 90 85 87 12; www.restaurantlessentiel.com; 2 rue Petite Fusterie; menus €36-48; ☀noon-2pm & 7-9.45pm Tue-Sat) In the top tier of Avignon's restaurants for many a year, this elegant restaurant remains (as its name suggests) as essential as ever. First there's the setting: a lovely, honey-stoned *hôtel particulier* with a sweet courtyard garden. Then there's the food: rich, sophisticated French dining of the first order, replete with the requisite foams, veloutés and reductions.

## **STREET OF DYERS**

Canalside rue des Teinturiers (literally 'street of dyers') is a picturesque pedestrian street known for its alternative vibe in Avignon's old dyers' district. A hive of industrial activity until the 19th century, populated by weavers and tapestry-makers, the street today is renowned for its bohemian bistros, cafes and gallery-workshops. Stone 'benches' in the shade of ancient plane trees make the perfect perch to ponder the irresistible trickle of the River Sorgue, safeguarded since the 16th century by Chapelle des Pénitents Gris.

**Au Jardin des Carmes**

FRENCH €€

(☎ 09 54 25 10 67; www.aujardindescarmes.com; 21 place des Carmes; mains €20-28; ☀ noon-10pm Tue-Sat) There's one standout reason to lunch at this homey restaurant, and that's the delightful courtyard garden, shaded by sails, tall bamboo and climbing plants. The food is honest rather than *haute cuisine*, but it's prettily presented and packed with flavour.

**Numéro 75**

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 90 27 16 00; www.numero-75.com; 75 rue Guillaume Puy; menus lunch €32, dinner €39-45, mains €19-28; ☀ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Mon-Sat) The chic dining room, in the former mansion of absinthe inventor Jules Pernod, is a fitting backdrop to the stylised Mediterranean cooking. *Menus* change nightly and include just a handful of mains, but brevity guarantees freshness. On balmy nights, reserve a table in the elegant courtyard garden.

★ **Sevin**

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 04 84 88 51 27; www.restaurantsevin.fr; 10 rue de Mons; menus €60-145; ☀ noon-1.30pm &

7.30-9pm Fri-Mon Jul & Aug, Fri-Tue Sep-Jun) If it's the full-blown, fine-dining French experience you're after, then this much-vaunted (and Michelin-starred) restaurant is the place to go. It's the real deal: truffles and foie gras galore, and the kind of multicourse *menus* that demand a second mortgage. It's a bit dated inside: go for the lovely, leafy terrace for fine views of the medieval building.

**Drinking & Nightlife**

Chic yet laid-back Avignon is awash with gorgeous, tree-shaded pedestrian squares buzzing with cafe life. Favourite options, loaded with pavement terraces and drinking opportunities, include place Crillon, place Pie, place de l'Horloge and place des Corps Saints.

Students tend to favour the many bars dotted along the aptly named rue de la Verrierie (Glassware St).

**Milk Shop**

CAFE

(☎ 09 82 54 16 82; 26 place des Corps Saints; ☀ 8.30am-6.30pm; ☕) Keen to mingle with

**WORTH A TRIP****CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE**

Even in the world of fine wines, Châteauneuf-du-Pape retains a special cachet. It's arguably the best-known of the Rhône appellations, prized by oenophiles the world over. It's mostly based on grenache grapes, with dashes of syrah and mourvèdre sometimes added to the mix. Needless to say, there are numerous vineyards around town offering opportunities to taste.

As its name hints, the hilltop château after which the wine is named was originally built as a summer residence for Avignon's popes, but it's little more than a ruin now – plundered for stone after the Revolution, and bombed by Germany in WWII for good measure. Even so, the wrap-around views of the surrounding Rhône valley are epic, stretching all the way to Mont Ventoux.

The **tourist office** (☎ 04 90 83 71 08; www.chateauneuf-du-pape-tourisme.fr; 3 rue de la République; ☀ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, closed lunch Oct-Apr) has a list of wine-producing chateaux and estates such as **Château Mont-Redon** (☎ 04 90 83 72 75; www.chateaumontredon.com; chemin de Maucoil; ☀ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, reduced hours Oct-Mar) or **Domaine de la Solitude** (☎ 04 90 83 71 45; www.domaine-solitude.com; rte de Bédarides, D192; ☀ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, by appointment Sat & Sun) who welcome visitors (to taste and buy). In the village, the best place to learn about Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines and refine your palate is the **École de Dégustation** (Tasting School; ☎ 04 90 83 56 15; www.oenologie-mouriesse.com; 2 rue des Papes; 2hr class €50). There are regular classes on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings in French, or if you can get together a group, a bespoke course can be arranged in English.

The local lunch tip-off for Châteauneuf aficionados is **Le Verger des Papes** (☎ 04 90 83 50 40; www.vergerdespapes.com; 4 rue du Château; menus €23-35; ☀ 11am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 4pm Sun Jul & Aug, to 5.30pm Tue-Sat, to 4pm Sun Sep-Jun), a working vineyard with an excellent restaurant. Dine on typical Provençal country food, with a divine view over the town's rooftops, then educate yourself in the cellars.

By car from Avignon (18km, 30 minutes) take D907 north to D17. From Orange (10km, 15 minutes) take D68 south.



Avignon students? Make a beeline for this *salon au lait* ('milk bar') where super-thick ice-cream shakes (€4.50) are slurped through extra-wide straws. Bagel sandwiches (€8), cupcakes and other American snacks create a deliberate US vibe, while comfy armchairs and wi-fi encourage hanging out.

### L'Explo

CRAFT BEER

(2 rue des Teinturiers; ☎ 5pm-1am Tue-Sat) It's a sunny evening and your inner beer nerd is in the market for a dry rye, hoppy IPA or boozy Belgian wheat beer. Well you're in luck; this groovy little bar on happening rue des Teinturiers serves a big range of artisanal beers, many made locally.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 32 74 32 74; www.avignon-tourisme.com; 41 cours Jean Jaurès; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Mar) Offers guided walking tours and information on other tours and activities, including boat trips on the River Rhône and wine-tasting trips to nearby vineyards.

## i Getting There & Away

### BUS

Avignon's **bus station** (☎ 04 90 82 07 35; www.pemavignon.fr/en/home; 5 av Monclar; ☎ information window 7am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) is a major bus hub for the Vaucluse *département*. Long-haul company **Eurolines** (☎ 04 90 82 07 35; www.eurolines.com) has an office at the far end of the bus platforms and serves places like Barcelona. **ZOU!** (<http://zou.maregionsud.fr>) offers regional bus services in the Avignon area.

### TRAIN

Avignon has two train stations: **Gare d'Avignon Centre** (42 bd St-Roch), on the southern edge of the walled town, and **Gare d'Avignon TGV** (Courtine), 4km southwest in Courtine.

Local shuttle trains link the two every 15 to 30 minutes (€1.60, six minutes, 6am to 11pm). Note that there is luggage storage just outside the central station, but not at the TGV train station.

**Eurostar** (www.eurostar.com) services operate one to five times weekly between Avignon TGV and London St Pancras (from €125, 8 hours) en route to/from Marseille.

**Aix-en-Provence** €18 to €30, 22 minutes

**Arles** €8, 17 minutes

**Marseille** €16 to €30, 36 minutes

**Marseille-Provence airport** Vitrolles station, €22 to €34, one to 1½ hours

**Nice** €45 to €72, 3½ hours

**Nîmes** €8, 25 minutes

**Orange** €5 to €9, 22 minutes

**Paris Gare du Lyon** €50 to €90, 3½ hours

## i Getting Around

### BICYCLE

**Vélopop** (☎ 08 00 45 64 56; www.velopop.fr; per half-hour €0.50) Shared-bicycle service, with 17 stations around town. Membership is €1/5 per day/week.

**Provence Bike** (☎ 04 90 27 92 61; www.provence-bike.com; 7 av St-Ruf; bicycles per day/week from €15/70, scooters €35/160; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, plus 10am-1pm Sun Jul) Rents out city bikes, mountain bikes, scooters and motorcycles.

## Villeneuve-lès-Avignon

POP 11,700

Across the Rhône from Avignon, compact Villeneuve-lès-Avignon has monuments to rival Avignon's but none of the crowds. Meander the cloisters of a medieval monastery, take in hilltop views from Fort St-André and lose yourself in spectacular gardens at Abbaye St-André – reason enough to visit.

## i Sights

The Avignon City Pass (p825) is valid here.

### ★ Abbaye et

#### Jardins de l'Abbaye

MONASTERY, GARDENS

(☎ 04 90 25 55 95; www.abbayesaintandre.fr; Fort St-André, rue Montée du Fort; adult/child abbey €14/13, garden €7/6; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Mar & Oct, to 6pm Apr) The resplendent vaulted halls of this 10th-century abbey, within Fort St-André, can only be visited by guided tour. The stunning terrace gardens, however – built atop the abbey vaults and classed among France's top 100 gardens – can be freely roamed. Pathways meander among fragrant roses, iris-studded olive groves, wisteria-covered pergolas and the ruins of three ancient churches.

The views of Avignon and the Rhône are spectacular.

### Fort St-André

FORT

(☎ 04 90 25 45 35; www.fort-saint-andre.fr; rue Montée du Fort; adult/child €6/free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Jun-Sep, to 5pm Oct-May) King Philip the Fair (aka Philippe le Bel) wasn't messing around when he built defensive 14th-century Fort St-André on the then border between France and the Holy Roman Empire: the walls are 2m thick! Today you can

walk a small section of the ramparts and admire 360-degree views from the **Tour des Masques** (Wizards' Tower) and **Tours Jumelles** (Twin Towers). You can also tour the Abbaye et Jardins de l'Abbaye (p831).

### Chartreuse du Val de Bénédiction

MONASTERY

(☎04 90 15 24 24; www.chartreuse.org; 58 rue de la République; adult/child €8/free; ☀9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, to 10am-5pm Oct-Mar) Shaded from the summer heat, the three cloisters, 24 cells, church, chapels and nook-and-cranny gardens of the Chartreuse du Val de Bénédiction make up France's biggest Carthusian monastery, founded in 1352 by Pope Innocent VI, who was buried here 10 years later in an elaborate mausoleum.

### Tour Philippe-le-Bel

LANDMARK

(☎04 32 70 08 57; montée de la Tour; adult/child €3.50/free; ☀10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, 2-5pm Feb-Apr & Nov) King Philip commissioned the Tour Philippe-le-Bel, 500m outside Villeneuve, to control traffic over Pont St-Bénézet to and from Avignon. The steep steps spiralling to the top reward climbers with stunning river views.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 90 03 70 60; 1 place Charles David; ☀9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Runs guided tours in English in July and August.

## i Getting There & Away

Orizo bus 5 links Villeneuve-lès-Avignon (tourism office stop) with several stops in Avignon, including Porte de l'Oulle and the Gare d'Avignon Centre. You can also walk to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon from Avignon; it's only 3km from the Palais des Papes, but dull walking.

## Orange

POP 28,900

Two thousand years ago, Orange – then known as Arausio – was one of the major settlements in this sunbaked corner of the Gallo-Roman empire. To cement its status, townsfolk constructed an impressive series of structures, including the town's mighty ancient theatre. Once the largest in Gaul, it still steals the show and is rightly (along with Orange's triumphal arch) a World Heritage Site.

The modern town itself isn't quite as starry – in fact, in places it looks positively

unloved – so there's no real reason to spend the night unless you have to.

## 📍 Sights

### ★ Théâtre Antique

HISTORIC SITE

(Ancient Roman Theatre; ☎04 90 51 17 60; www.theatre-antique.com; rue Madeleine Roch; adult/child €9.50/7.50; ☀9am-7pm Jun-Aug, to 6pm Apr, May & Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Oct, 9.30am-4.30pm Nov-Feb) Orange's monumental, Unesco-protected Roman theatre is unquestionably one of France's most impressive Roman sights. It's one of only three intact Roman theatres left in the world (the others are in Syria and Turkey), and its sheer size is awe-inspiring: designed to seat 10,000 spectators, its stage wall is 37m high, 103m wide and 1.8m thick. Little wonder that Louis XIV called it 'the finest wall in my kingdom'.

### ★ Colline St-Eutrope

GARDENS

For bird's-eye views of the theatre – and phenomenal vistas of Mont Ventoux and the Dentelles de Montmirail – follow montée Philbert de Chalons or montée Lambert up Colline St-Eutrope (St Eutrope Hill; elevation 97m), once the Romans' lookout point. En route, pass ruins of a 12th-century **château**, once the residence of the princes of Orange.

### Arc de Triomphe

HISTORIC SITE

(ave de l'Arc de Triomphe, N7) Orange's 1st-century-CE monumental arch, the Arc de Triomphe – 19m high and wide, and 8m thick – stands on the Via Agrippa. Restored in 2009, its brilliant reliefs commemorate Roman victories in 49 BCE with carvings of chained, naked Gauls.

### Musée d'Art et d'Histoire

MUSEUM

(www.theatre-antique.com; rue Madeleine Roch; entry incl with Théâtre Antique; ☀9.15am-7pm Jun-Aug, to 6pm Apr, May & Sep, shorter hours Oct-Mar) This small museum contains various finds relating to the theatre's history, including plaques and friezes that once formed part of the scenery, a range of amphoras, busts, columns and vases, and a room displaying three rare engraved *cadastres* (official surveys) dating from 77 BCE.

## 🌟 Festivals & Events

### Les Chorégies d'Orange

PERFORMING ARTS

(www.choregies.fr; ☀Jul & Aug) The Théâtre Antique comes alive with all-night concerts, weekend operas and choral performances.

Reserve tickets months ahead, and rooms the year before.

## Sleeping & Eating





### **Hôtel Saint Jean**

HOTEL €

(☎04 90 51 15 16; www.hotelsaint-jean.com; 1 cours Pourtoles; s/d/tr/q €70/90/105/125;    ) An attractive option with bags of Provençal character, half-built into the hillside of the Colline St-Eutrope. Inside, there are checked fabrics and cosy rooms, with windows overlooking a little patio; outside, the building is all yellow stone and pistachio-coloured shutters. A few of the rooms have walls cut straight into the hill.

### ★ **Le Mas Julien**

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 34 99 49; www.mas-julien.com; 704 chemin de St Jean; d €125-165;    ) Out in the countryside between Orange and Châteauneuf-du-Pape, this delightful farmhouse is the stuff of Provençal dreams: wisteria-clad façade, gorgeous pool, quiet location and rooms that blend contemporary style with rustic charm. Families with kids under 16 not allowed apart from the more private *chambre de titouan*.

### **Les Saveurs du Marché**

FRENCH €€

(☎04 90 69 56 89; 24 place Sylvain; menu lunch/dinner €16/31; ☀ noon-1.40pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) As the name suggests, market flavours underpin the menu here, from delicious homemade tapenades to pan-seared red mullet drizzled with olive oil and fragrant pesto. The menu changes regularly, but quality can suffer a bit when it gets over-busy, so arrive early.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 90 34 70 88; www.orange-tourisme.fr; place des Frères Mounet; ☀ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat) Has lots of brochures and handles hotel bookings, and also sells the Pass Nîmes-Orange.

## Getting There & Around

### **BICYCLE**

**Nature & Bike** (☎04 90 34 75 08; www.nature-bike-provence.com; 1 place de la République; bike/electric bike per day €18/35) Reputable bike outfitter with loads of suggested one-day and multi-day itineraries for making the most of the region.

### **BUS**

Most buses depart from Orange's **bus station** (☎04 90 34 15 59; 201 cours Pourtoles).

## CENT SAVER

The **Pass Nîmes-Orange** (adult/child €18.50/14) is a joint ticket that allows access to Orange's Roman theatre and museum, plus Nîmes' Les Arènes, the Maison Carrée and Tour Magne. It's valid for one month, and you can buy it at any of the venues.

**Avignon** €2.60. ZOU! Line 2, one hour, hourly Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday

**Vaison-la-Romaine** €2.60. ZOU! Line 4, one hour, nine daily Monday to Saturday, two on Sunday

### **TRAIN**

Orange's **train station** (av Frédéric Mistral) is 1.5km east of the town centre.

**Arles** €13, 40 minutes

**Avignon** €7, 22 minutes

**Marseille** €27, 1¾ hours

**Marseille-Provence airport** Vitrolles station; €23, 1¼ hours

## **Vaison-la-Romaine**

POP 6100

Tucked between seven hills, Vaison-la-Romaine has long been a traditional exchange centre, and it still has a thriving Tuesday market. The village's rich Roman legacy is obvious – 20th-century buildings rise alongside France's largest archaeological site. A Roman bridge crosses the River Ouvèze, dividing the contemporary town's pedestrianised centre and the spectacular walled, cobbled-street hilltop Cité Médiévale – one of Provence's most magical ancient villages – where the counts of Toulouse built their 12th-century castle. Vaison is a good base for jaunts into the Dentelles de Montmirail or to Mont Ventoux, but tourists throng here in summer: reserve ahead.

## Sights & Activities

Vaison's location is ideal for village-hopping by bicycle. There are suggested itineraries on La Provenc à Velo (www.provence-a-velo.fr).

### ★ **Gallo-Roman Ruins**

RUINS

(☎04 90 36 50 48; www.provenceromaine.com; adult/child incl all ancient sites, museum & cathedral €9/4; ☀ 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm) The ruined remains of Vasio Vocontiorum, the Roman city that flourished here between the 6th and 2nd centuries BCE, fill two central

Vaison sites. Two neighbourhoods of this once opulent city, Puymin and La Villasse, lie on either side of the tourist office and av du Général de Gaulle. Admission includes entry to the 12th-century Romanesque cloister at **Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Nazareth** (☉9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mar-Dec), a five-minute walk west of La Villasse and a soothing refuge from the summer heat.

In **Puymin**, see houses of the nobility, mosaics, workers' quarters, a temple and the still-functioning, 6000-seat **Théâtre Antique** (c 20 CE). To make sense of the remains (and collect your audioguide; €3), head for the **Musée Archéologique Gallo-Roman**, which revives Vaison's Roman past with incredible swag – superb mosaics, carved masks and statues that include a 3rd-century silver bust and marble renderings of Hadrian and wife Sabina.

The Romans shopped at the colonnaded boutiques and bathed at **La Villasse**, where you'll find **Maison au Dauphin**, which has splendid marble-lined fish ponds.

### ★ Cité Médiévale

HISTORIC SITE

Wandering around Vaison-la-Romaine's wonderful medieval quarter, you could be forgiven for thinking you've stepped into a forgotten set from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Ringed by ramparts and accessed via the pretty **Pont Romain** (Roman Bridge), it's a fascinating place to explore, criss-crossed by cobbled alleyways. Look out for the elaborate carvings around many of the doorways as you climb up towards the 12th-century **château** and its wrap-around vistas.

### Sleeping

**Camping du Théâtre Romain** CAMPGROUND € (☎04 90 28 78 66; www.camping-theatre.com; chemin de Brusquet; sites per 2 people with tent & car €17-28; ☉mid-Mar-mid-Nov; 🚻🚰) This large, well-run campsite opposite the Théâtre Antique gets lots of sun, and it has a pool, playground and games area (billiards, ping pong, table football).

### ★ Hôtel Burrhus

HOTEL €

(☎04 90 36 00 11; www.burrhus.com; 1 place de Montfort; d €69-98, apt €140; 🚻🚰🚰) From the outside, this looks like a classic town hotel: shutters, stonework and a prime spot on the town square. But inside, surprises await: the arty owners have littered it with modern art, sculptures, funky furniture and

colourful decorative details, although the white-walled rooms themselves sometimes feel stark. On sunny days, take breakfast on the plane-tree-shaded balcony overlooking the square.

### L'École Buissonnière

B&B €

(☎04 90 28 95 19; www.buissonniere-provence.com; D75, Buisson; s/d/tr/q €65/88/105/112; 🚻) Five minutes north of Vaison, in the countryside between Buisson and Villedieu, hosts Monique and John have transformed their stone farmhouse into a tastefully decorated three-bedroom B&B, which is big on comfort. Breakfast features homemade jam, and there's an outdoor summer kitchen.

### Hostellerie Le Beffroi

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 36 04 71; www.le-beffroi.com; rue de l'Évêché; d €110-210, tr €205-230; ☉Apr-Jan; 🚻🚰) This hotel on the narrow streets of the old town wins hands-down for atmosphere, but you might not feel so enthusiastic once you've lugged your luggage up from the car park. Still, it's awash with history: the two buildings date from 1554 and 1690, and rooms feel appropriately old-fashioned. It has a delightful rose garden and (rather improbably) even a pool.

### Eating

Brasseries on place de Montfort vary in quality; restaurants on cours Taulignan are generally better. Dining in Cité Médiévale is limited and pricey.

### Maison Lesage

BAKERY €

(2 rue de la République; pastries from €2; ☉7am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 7am-1pm Sun) For picnics by the river, this excellent bakery has no shortage of foodie fare: big baguettes, homemade pastries and nougat, and the house speciality, bun-sized meringues in a rainbow of flavours.

### ★ Bistro du'O

BISTRO €€

(☎04 90 41 72 90; www.bistroduo.fr; rue Gaston Gévaudan; lunch/dinner menus from €28/39; ☉noon-2pm Tue, noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Wed-Sat; 🚻) For fine dining in Vaison, this is everyone's tip. The setting is full of atmosphere, in a vaulted cellar in the medieval city (once the château stables), and the chef Philippe Zemour takes his cue from Provençal flavours and daily market ingredients. Top-class food, top setting, tops all round.

Owners Philippe and Gaëlle Zemour also offer lodging in three handsomely furnished

guestrooms, which includes an excellent breakfast served on the panoramic terrace (double €120 to €140).

### Le Moulin à Huile

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎04 90 36 04 56; [www.lemoulinahuile84.fr](http://www.lemoulinahuile84.fr); quai Maréchal Foch, rte de Malaucène; menus €33-49; ☀12.15-1.30pm Mon, to 1.30pm & 7.15-9pm Thu-Sun) This renowned restaurant is still a destination address in Vaison, if only for its lovely riverside setting in a former olive-oil mill. The menus are affordable, and stocked with organic, sustainably raised goodies, such as river trout, foie gras, and beef and pork from local farms.

Le Moulin à Huile also manages three attractive guestrooms (doubles from €115).

### i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 90 36 02 11; [www.vaison-ventoux-tourisme.com](http://www.vaison-ventoux-tourisme.com); av du Général de Gaulle; ☀9.30am-noon & 2-5.45pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 9.30am-noon Sun Apr-Sep)

### i Getting There & Away

The **bus stop** is on av des Choraliés, 400m east of the tourist office. Several services are provided by **Zou!** (☎08 09 40 00 13; <http://zou.maregionsud.fr>).

**Carpentras** €2.60, ZOU! Line 11, 55 minutes, five daily Monday to Saturday

**Orange** €2.60, ZOU! Line 4, one hour, nine daily Monday to Saturday, two on Sunday

## Mont Ventoux

Visible for miles around, Mont Ventoux (1910m) stands like a sentinel over northern Provence. From its summit, accessible by road between May and October, vistas extend to the Alps and, on a clear day, the Camargue.

Because of the mountain's dimensions, every European climate type is represented here, from Mediterranean on its lower southern reaches to Arctic on its exposed northern ridge. As you climb, temperatures can plummet by 20°C, and the fierce mistral wind blows 130 days a year, sometimes at speeds of 250km/h. Bring warm clothes and rain gear, even in summer. You can ascend by road year-round, but you cannot traverse the summit from 15 November to 15 April.

The mountain's diverse fauna and flora have earned the mountain Unesco Biosphere Reserve status. Some species live

nowhere else, including the rare snake eagle. Three gateways – Bédoin, Malaucène and Sault – provide services in summer, but they're far apart.

### Cycling

Tourist offices distribute *Les Itinéraires Ventoux*, a free map detailing 11 itineraries – graded easy to difficult – and highlighting artisanal farms en route. Most cycle-hire outfits also offer electric bikes. You can also arrange transport to the top (€70) and then descend by mountain bike with **Bédoin Location** (☎04 90 65 94 53; [www.bedoin-location.fr](http://www.bedoin-location.fr); 20 rte de Malaucène; mountain or road bike per day from €35, electric bike from €40; ☀9am-6pm Wed-Mon Mar-Nov).

### Station Ventoux Sud Bikepark

CYCLING

(☎04 90 61 84 55; [www.stationventouxsud.com/bike-park.php](http://www.stationventouxsud.com/bike-park.php); Chalet Reynard; half/full day €10/14; ☀10am-5pm Sat & Sun, hours vary Mon-Fri) Near the Mont Ventoux summit, at Chalet Reynard, mountain bikers ascend via rope tow (minimum age 10 years), then descend ramps and jumps down three trails (5km in total). In winter it's possible to mountain bike on snow. Bring a bike, helmet and gloves or rent all gear at Bédoin Location (p835), at the foot of Mont Ventoux.

Call to check opening times, which are highly weather dependent.

### Hiking

The GR4 crosses the Dentelles de Montmirail before scaling Mont Ventoux' northern face, where it meets the GR9. Both traverse the ridge. The GR4 branches eastwards to Gorges du Verdon; the GR9 crosses the Vaucluse Mountains to the Luberon. The essential map for the area is *3140ET Mont Ventoux*, by IGN ([www.ign.fr](http://www.ign.fr)). Bédoin's tourist office stocks maps and brochures detailing walks for all levels.

In July and August tourist offices in Bédoin and Malaucène facilitate night-time expeditions up the mountain to see the sunrise (participants must be over 15 years old).

### Les Ânes des Abeilles

TOURS

(☎04 90 64 01 52; <http://abeilles.ane-et-rando.com>; rte de la Gabelle, Col des Abeilles; day/weekend from €50/95) A novel means of exploring the Gorges de la Nesque, a spectacular limestone canyon, or nearby Mont Ventoux, is alongside a donkey from Les Ânes des Abeilles. Beasts carry up to 40kg (ie small children or bags).



## **i** Information

**Bédoïn Tourist Office** (☎ 04 90 65 63 95; www.ventouxprovence.fr; Espace Marie-Louis Gravier, 1 rte de Malaucène; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat mid-Apr-mid-Oct, reduced hours mid-Oct-mid-Apr) Excellent source of information on all regional activities; also helps with lodging.

**Malaucène Tourist Office** (☎ 04 90 65 22 59; http://villagemalaucene.free.fr; place de la Mairie; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Mon-Sat) Small village office with info on Mont Ventoux, but otherwise rather limited.

**Sault Tourist Office** (☎ 04 90 64 01 21; www.ventoux-sud.com; av de la Promenade; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Good resource for Mont Ventoux information.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Getting up the mountain by public transport isn't feasible – you'll need a car or, if you're feeling fit, a bike.

## Carpentras

POP 28,400

Carpentras is a rather run-of-the-mill agricultural town, but it's worth a detour for one very compelling reason – an absolutely wonderful Provençal market, which takes over the entire town every Friday morning, with more than 350 stalls laden with bread, honey, cheese, olives, fruit and a rainbow of *berlingots*, Carpentras' striped, pillow-shaped, hard-boiled sweets. In winter, it's also an important truffle-trading town.

## **👁** Sights

★ **Synagogue de Carpentras** SYNAGOGUE  
(☎ 04 90 63 39 97; http://synagoguecarpentras.fr; 15 place Maurice Charretier; ☀ visits 10am, 11am, 2pm & 3pm Mon-Fri, also 4pm Mon-Thu) Carpentras' remarkable synagogue dates from 1367 and is the oldest still in use in France. Although Jews were initially welcomed into papal territory, by the 17th century they had to live in ghettos in Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon and L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue. The synagogue is deliberately inconspicuous. The wood-panelled prayer hall was rebuilt in 18th-century baroque style; downstairs are bread-baking ovens, used until 1904. For access, ring the doorbell on the hour.

★ **Arc Romain** HISTORIC SITE  
Hidden behind Cathédrale St-Siffrein, the Arc Romain was built under Augustus in the

1st century CE and is decorated with worn carvings of enslaved Gauls.

**Cathédrale St-Siffrein** CATHEDRAL  
(place St-Siffrein; ☀ 9.30-11.45am & 2-5pm Mon, from 8am Tue-Sat) Carpentras' cathedral was built between 1405 and 1519 in meridional Gothic style, but is crowned by a distinctive contemporary bell tower. Its **Trésor d'Art Sacré** (Treasury of Religious Art) holds precious 14th- to 19th-century religious relics that you can only see during the Foire de St-Siffrein (27 November) or on guided walks with the tourist office.

## **🛏** Sleeping & Eating

**Hôtel du Fiacre** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 04 90 63 03 15; www.hotel-du-fiacre.com; 153 rue Vigne; d €80-150, f €110-150; 📺 📶) Frills, swags and canopies abound at this grand old dame of a hotel, where the old-style decor takes its cue from the 18th-century architecture. Contemporary it ain't, but charming it most surely is. The marble staircase is a thing of beauty too.

★ **Metafort** B&B €€€  
(☎ 04 90 34 46 84; www.metafort-provence.com; 31 Montée du Vieil Hôpital, Méthamis; d €180-250; 📺 📶) This palatial pad pulls out all the

### WORTH A TRIP

#### GIGONDAS

Wine cellars and cafes surround the sun-dappled central square of Gigondas, famous for prestigious red wine. Wine tasting here provides an excellent counterpoint to Châteauneuf-du-Pape: both use the same grapes, but the soil is different. In town, **Caveau de Gigondas** (☎ 04 90 65 82 29; www.gigondas-vin.com; 9 place Gabrielle Andéol; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-6pm) represents 100 small producers and offers free tastings – most bottles cost just €12 to €20. The **tourist office** (☎ 04 90 65 85 46; www.gigondas-dm.fr; rue du Portail; ☀ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat; 📺) has a complete list of wineries.

Above the central square, along the Cheminement de Sculptures, enigmatic outdoor sculptures line narrow pathways, leading ever upward to castle ruins, campanile, church and cemetery with stunning vistas.

stops in terms of architecture, design and out-and-out luxury. It's in a 17th-century village house in Méthamis, 17km southeast of Carpentras, but the design is unabashedly 21st-century: strikingly minimal rooms, modern art, Scandi-style furniture and an eye-popping rooftop pool overlooking the rocky, maquis-covered hills of the Nesque Valley. Three-night minimum stay.

### ★ La Maison Jouvaud

PASTRIES €

(☎04 90 63 15 38; www.patisserie-jouvaud.com; 40 rue de l'Évêché; boxes of sweets from €12; ☺9am-7.30pm) If you suffer from a sweet tooth, it's best not to even step inside this patisserie palace, where the glass cases brim with tempting things – from homemade chocolates, petits-fours and cakes to quite possibly the most impressive meringues you will ever see. It's vintage through and through – even the hot chocolate is *à l'ancienne* (old-fashioned).

### Chez Serge

FRENCH €€

(☎04 90 63 21 24; www.chez-serge.com; 90 rue Cottier; menu lunch €20, dinner €30-50; ☺noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Jun-Sep, noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Oct-May; 🍷🍷) Run by renowned sommelier Serge Ghokassian, this hip restaurant feels somewhat out of step with the rest of Carpentras: it's more Parisian chic than Provençal rustic, all sombre tones, swoopy plastic chairs, exposed stone and murals of crocodiles and elephants. The menu zings with southern flavours and, as you'd expect, the wine list is first-rate.



## Shopping

### ★ Marché du Vendredi

MARKET

(ave Jean Jaurès; ☺8am-12.30pm Fri) If you do nothing else in Carpentras, make sure you find time to visit the fabulous Friday market, when several hundred stalls fill rue d'Inguibert, ave Jean Jaurès and many side streets. It's an institution, and as Provençal as it gets. Not to be missed.



## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 90 63 00 78; www.carpentras-ventoux.com; 97 place du 25 Août 1944; ☺9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue; 🗺)



## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Buses stop outside the train station, a 10-minute walk southwest of the old centre.

ZOU! (p835) provides bus services in the network. Nearly all local destinations cost a flat-rate €2.60.

**Avignon** €2.60, Line 5, 45 minutes, every 30 to 45 minutes Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday  
**Marseille-Provence airport** €20.40, ZOU! LER Line 17, two hours 25 minutes, three daily; also travels via L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, Cavaillon and Aix-en-Provence.

**Orange** €2.60, Line 10, one hour, nine daily Monday to Saturday

**Vaison-la-Romaine** €2.60, Line 11, 45 minutes, five daily Monday to Saturday

There are also a number of local buses run by **Trans'CoVe** (☎04 84 99 50 10, service on demand 08 00 88 15 23; www.transcove.com; 270 ave de la Gare) to destinations including Gigondas, Malaucène and the Venasque – but these are mainly geared around school timetables, although you can reserve bus transport on most routes by calling ahead a day in advance.

### TRAIN

Local trains connect Carpentras' **train station** (av de la Gare) to Avignon Centre station (€6.10, 30 minutes, hourly) and Avignon TGV station (€7, 38 minutes).

## Fontaine-de-Vaucluse

POP 600

Since ancient times, the surging natural spring known as La Fontaine de Vaucluse has been a source of wonder and mystery: to prehistoric people it was a site of healing and mysticism, and even to their modern-day counterparts, it's an undeniably impressive sight. The miraculous appearance of this crystal-clear fluid draws 1.5 million tourists each year – aim to arrive early in the morning before the trickle of visitors becomes a deluge.

As the origin of the River Sorgue, the village also makes a good base for kayaking and canoeing, with lots of activity providers around town. Indeed, there is no more enchanting means of meandering from Fontaine-de-Vaucluse 8km downstream to neighbouring L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue than in a canoe or kayak (it can also be done in reverse). Life jackets are provided, but children must be able to swim 25m. Afterwards you're returned by minibus to your car. Trips run from late April to October with **Canoe Évasion** (☎04 90 38 26 22; www.canoe-evasion.net; rte de Fontaine-de-Vaucluse/D24; adult/child €20/10) or **Kayak Vert** (☎04 90 20 35 44; www.canoe-france.com/la-sorgue; Quartier la Baume; adult/child €20/10).

## L'ISLE-SUR-LA-SORGUE

The Island in the Sorgue is an apt name for this ancient mid-river town, surrounded by a moat of flowing water. L'Isle dates from the 12th century, when fishermen built huts on stilts above what was then a marsh. By the 18th century, canals lined with 70 giant wheels powered silk factories and paper mills. Many of them have been left in place; you'll see them as you walk around the edge of the old town.

These days the 'Venice of Provence' is known for antiques. It's home to several antique villages, housing 300 dealers between them. Sunday is the big market day, with antique vendors participating as well, while Thursday offers a smaller market through the village streets.

L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue has plenty of restaurants, including romantic Michelin-starred **Le Vivier** (☎04 90 38 52 80; www.levivier-restaurant.com; 800 cours Fernande Peyre; menus lunch €36, dinner €70-120; ☺ noon-1.30pm Wed-Sun, 7.30-10pm Thu-Sun, closed Sun evening Oct-Apr), with riverside tables shaded by weeping willows and overhanging oaks.

The village was also once home to the Italian poet Petrarch (1304-74), who wrote his most famous works here: sonnets to his unrequited love, Laura.

### **i** Information

A **tourist office** (☎04 90 20 32 22; www.oti-delasorgue.fr; 4 rte de Cavaillon; ☺ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri) brochure details three easy back-roads biking routes. Bike shops in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue deliver to Fontaine.

### **i** Getting There & Away

**ZOU!** bus line 21 connects Fontaine-de-Vaucluse with L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue (€2.10, 12 to 20 minutes, five daily).

## THE LUBERON

Named after the mountain range running east-west between Cavaillon and Manosque, the Luberon is a Provençal patchwork of hilltop villages, vineyards, ancient abbeys and mile after mile of fragrant lavender fields. It's a rural, traditional region that still makes time for the good things in life – particularly fine food and even finer wine. Nearly every village hosts its own weekly market, packed with stalls selling local specialties, especially olive oil, honey and lavender.

Covering some 600 sq km, the Luberon massif itself is divided into three areas: the craggy Petit Luberon in the west, the higher Grand Luberon mountains, and the smaller hills of the Luberon Oriental in the east. They're all worth exploring, but whatever you do, don't rush – part of the fun of exploring here is getting lost on the back lanes,

stopping for lunch at a quiet village cafe, and taking as much time as you possibly can to soak up the scenery.

## Apt

POP 11,400 / ELEV 250M

The Luberon's principal town, Apt is edged on three sides by sharply rising plateaus surrounding a river that runs through town. Its Saturday-morning market is full of local colour (and produce), but otherwise Apt is a place you pass through to get somewhere else. Nonetheless, it makes a decent base, if only for a night or two.

Apt is known throughout France for its *fruits confits* (candied fruits, sometimes also known as glacé or crystallised fruit). Strictly speaking, they're not sweets: they're made with real fruit, from which the water is removed and replaced with a sugar syrup to preserve them. As a result, they still look (and more importantly taste) like pieces of the original fruit. There are several makers around town where you can try and buy.

It's also a hub for the 1650-sq-km **Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon** (www.parcduluberon.fr), a regional nature park criss-crossed by hiking trails.

## **i** Sights & Activities

### Musée d'Apt

MUSEUM

(Industrial History Museum; ☎04 90 74 95 30; 14 place du Postel; adult/child €5/free; ☺ 10am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, to 5.30pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jun) Apt's various industries – ochre-mining, *fruits confits* and faïences (glazed ceramics) – are explored at this modest but well-curated museum in the middle

of town. Exhibits include a reconstructed potter's workshop.

### La Maison du Fruit Confit

TOURS

(☎04 90 76 31 66; www.lesfleurons-apt.com; 538 D900, Quartier Salignan; ☺shop 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug) Allegedly the largest *fruits confits* maker in the world, this factory 2.5km outside of Apt produces sweets under the prestigious Les Fleurons d'Apt brand. Free tastings are offered in the shop, and you can watch the process in action on guided factory tours. Call for the latest times and to reserve a spot.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel le Palais

HOTEL €

(☎04 90 04 89 32; www.hotel-restaurant-apt.fr; 24bis place Gabriel-Péri; tw/d/tr/q €60/70/80/90; ☺) Don't go expecting many luxuries at this bargain-basement hotel above a terrace restaurant – but if price is more important than frills, it's a decent option. Rooms are small and very plain, but you're right in the middle of town, and breakfast is a bargain at €6.

### ★ Le Couvent

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 04 55 36; www.loucouvent.com; 36 rue Louis Rousset; d €105-150; @☺☺) Hidden behind a wall in the old town, this enormous *maison d'hôte* occupies a 17th-century former convent. Staying here is as much architectural experience as accommodation: soaring ceilings, stonework and a grand staircase, plus palatial rooms (one has a sink made from a baptismal font). There's a sweet garden with a little pool, and breakfast is served in the old convent refectory.

### Grand Marché d'Apt

MARKET €

(☺8am-1pm Sat) Apt's huge Saturday-morning market takes over the entire old

town, and attracts hordes of locals and tourists alike. If you really want to see what a *marché* Provençal is all about, then make it a date in your diary.

There is also a **farmers' market** every Tuesday morning along cours Lauze de Perret.

### L'Intramuros

FRENCH €€

(☎04 90 06 18 87; 120-124 rue de la République; mains €18-22; ☺noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat) What fun this place is: an offbeat French restaurant that's stocked to the gunwales with the owners' bric-a-brac finds, from vintage movie posters, antique shop signs and old radios to a collection of sardine cans. It's run by a father-and-son team, and the food is filling – expect things like rabbit, duck breast and lamb, plus a choice of pastas.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 90 74 03 18; www.luberon-apt.fr; 788 av Victor Hugo; ☺9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, also 9.30am-12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug) One kilometre northwest of the old centre, the town's tourist office is an excellent source of information for activities, excursions, bike rides and walks.

**Maison du Parc du Luberon** (☎04 90 04 42 00; www.parcduluberon.fr; 60 place Jean Jaurès; ☺8.30am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat Apr-Sep, shorter hours Oct-Mar) A central information source for the Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon, with maps, walking guides and general info. There's also a small fossil museum.

## Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (Gare Routière; 250 av de la Libération) is just a few blocks east of the town centre. ZOU! (p835) operates regional buses.

## LUBERON BY PEDAL POWER

Don't be put off by the hills – the Luberon is a fantastic destination for cyclists. Several bike routes criss-cross the countryside, including **Les Ogres à Vélo**, a 51km route that takes in the ochre villages of Apt, Gargas, Rustrel, Roussillon and Villars, and the **Véloroute du Calavon**, a purpose-built bike path that follows the route of a disused railway line for 37km between Robion in the west (10km southeast of l'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue), via Apt, to the edge of St-Martin-de-Castillon in the east.

For longer trips, **Le Luberon à Vélo** (☎04 90 76 48 05; www.veloloisirprovence.com) has mapped a 236km itinerary that takes in pretty much the whole Luberon. Tourist offices stock detailed route leaflets and can provide information on bike rental, luggage transport, accommodation and so on.

Several companies offer e-bikes, which have an electric motor. They're not scooters – you still have to pedal – but the motor helps on the ascents.

**Avignon** (€2.60, line 15, 1¼ hours, eight daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday) Six of the eight buses (three on Sunday) continue on to Avignon's TGV station.

**Bonnieux** (€2.10, 20 minutes, three daily) Line 9 stops in Bonnieux, before continuing to Aix-en-Provence (€2.60, one hour).

## Gordes & Around

POP 1780

Arguably the scenic queen of the Luberon's hilltop villages, the tiered village of Gordes seems to teeter improbably on the edge of the sheer rock faces of the Vaucluse plateau from which it rises. A jumble of terracotta rooftops, church towers and winding lanes, it's a living postcard – but unfortunately it's also seethingly popular in summer, so arrive early or late to avoid the worst crowds. Better still, stay for sunset when the village looks at its most beautiful as its honey-coloured stone glows like molten gold.

### Sights

#### ★ Abbaye Notre-Dame de Sénanque

CHURCH

(☎04 90 72 18 24; www.senanque.fr; off D177; guided/unguided tour €8/9.50; ☀10-11.30am & 1-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-5.30pm Sun) If you're searching for that classic postcard shot of a medieval abbey surrounded by a sea of purple lavender, look no further. This sublime Cistercian abbey provides one of the most iconic shots of the Luberon, and it's equally popular these days for selfies. The best displays are usually in July and August. You can wander around the grounds on your own or

join a guided tour in French, offered several times daily; either way, reserve ahead online.

#### Moulin des Bouillons

DISTILLERY

(☎04 90 72 22 11; www.moulinesbouillons.com; rte de St-Pantaléon; adult/child €5/3.50; ☀10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Oct) Heading 3.5km south from Gordes along rte de St-Pantaléon (D148), you hit this marvellous rural museum: an olive-oil mill with a 10m-long Gallo-Roman press weighing 7 tonnes – reputedly the world's oldest. The adjoining stained-glass museum showcases beautiful translucent mosaics; a joint ticket costs adult/child €7.50/5.50.

#### Village des Bories

ARCHITECTURE

(☎04 90 72 03 48; adult/child €6/4; ☀9am-sunset) Beehive-shaped *bories* (stone huts) bespeckle Provence, and at the Village des Bories, 4km southwest of Gordes, an entire village of them can be explored. Constructed of slivered limestone, *bories* were built during the Bronze Age, inhabited by shepherds until 1839, then abandoned until their restoration in the 1970s. Visit early in the morning or just before sunset for the best light. Note that the lower car park is for buses; continue to the hilltop car park to avoid hiking uphill in the blazing heat.

#### Musée de la Lavande

MUSEUM

(☎04 90 76 91 23; www.museedelalavande.com; 376 rte de Gordes, D2; adult/child €8/free; ☀9am-7pm Jun-Aug, to 1pm & 2-6pm Apr, May, Sep & Oct, 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Nov-Mar, closed Jan) To get to grips with Provence's most prestigious crop, this excellent eco-museum makes an ideal first stop. An audioguide and video (in

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

#### ONCE IN A LIFETIME IN PROVENCE

For a once-in-a-lifetime Provençal experience, look no further than the **Domaine de Fontenille** (☎04 13 98 00 00; www.domainedefontenille.com; rte de Roquefraiche; r from €326;  ) , a glorious hotel 2km northwest of Lauris, at home in an 18th-century mansion framed by sweeping, cypress-filled parkland. Contemporary rooms are elegant; there is a luxurious spa; and then there's **Le Champ des Lunes** (☎04 13 98 00 00; www.domainedefontenille.com; rte de Roquefraiche; menus €88-118; ☀12.30-1.30pm Fri-Sun & 7.30-9pm Mon & Wed-Sun).

Overseen by Jérôme Faure, who won his first Michelin star at 30, this stellar restaurant is one of the Luberon's most prestigious places to eat. Expect high-class haute cuisine, with impeccably presented dishes dressed with foams, reductions, edible flowers and textural surprises.

**La Cuisine d'Amélie**, the hotel's other restaurant, focuses on simple country flavours and is another lovely spot for lunch (mains €16 to €28).



English) explain the lavender harvest, and giant copper stills reveal extraction methods. Afterwards you can take a guided tour of the fields (1pm and 5pm daily May to September). The on-site boutique is an excellent (if pricey) one-stop shop for top-quality lavender products.

There's also a picnic area in the lavender-laden garden. It's located about 7.5km southwest of Gordes on the D2, in the direction of Coustellet.

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ Auberge de Carcarille

HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 72 02 63; www.carcarille.com; D2, Les Gervais; d €114-173, tr €213, q €233;    ) Old outside, new inside: this country hotel marries the atmosphere of a traditional *bastide familiale* (family house) with spotless, modern rooms. There's a delightful garden to wander, and the restaurant serves superior Provençal food (three-course lunch/dinner menu €27/49). It's 3km from Gordes, at the bottom of the valley.

### Bastide de Gordes

HERITAGE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 90 72 12 12; www.aires.com; 61 rue de la Combe; r from €310;    ) Impeccably restored, this deluxe hotel is one of the Luberon's star turns, from the boater-wearing bellboys through to the beamed lobby stuffed with antiques, oil paintings and bookcases. Rooms are enormous and aristocratic (a valley view is essential); spa, gardens, an incredible pool and a trio of restaurants (one Michelin-starred) ice this most indulgent of cakes.

### Le Mas

PROVENÇAL €€€

(☎04 90 04 03 57; www.lemasrestaurantgordes.com; chemin de St-Blaise, Les Imberts; menu lunch/dinner €27/49; ☀12.30-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Jul-Sep, 7.30-9.30pm Thu, 12.30-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Fri-Mon Oct-Jun) One of the Luberon's culinary highlights, Le Mas is heavy on Provençal flavours: lots of stuffed aubergines, slow-roasted tomatoes and lashings of olive oil and *herbes de Provence*. The garden setting is lovely. It's 3.5km south of Gordes off the D2.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 90 72 02 75; www.luberoncoeurdeprovence.com; Place Genty Pantaly; ☀9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, from 10am Sun, closed Sun & Mon Oct-Mar) Inside Gordes' medieval château, which was enlarged and given its defensive Renaissance towers in 1525.

## Getting There & Away

**ZOU!** Bus line 17 (€2.60, four daily July to September; one daily Monday to Friday from October to June) stops in Gordes on its way from Apt to Cavailon. It also stops in Roussillon along the way.

## Roussillon

POP 1320

Red by name, red by nature, that's Roussillon – once the centre of local ochre mining, and still unmistakably marked by its crimson colour (villagers are required to paint their houses according to a prescribed palette of some 40 tints). Today it's home to artists' and ceramicists' workshops, and its charms are no secret: arrive early or late.


During WWII the village was the hideout for playwright Samuel Beckett, who helped the local Resistance by hiding explosives at his house and occasionally going on reconnaissance missions.

Parking (€4 March to November) is 300m south of the village.

## Sights & Activities

### Ôkhra Conservatoire des Ogres et de la Couleur

ARTS CENTRE

(L'Usine d'Ocre Mathieu; ☎04 90 05 66 69; www.okhra.com; rte d'Apt; tours adult/student €7/6; ☀10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 2-5pm Nov & Dec, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Feb & Mar; ) This art centre is a great place to see ochre in action. Occupying a disused ochre factory on the D104 east of Roussillon, it explores the mineral's properties through hands-on workshops and guided tours of the factory. The shop upstairs stocks paint pigments and other artists' supplies.

### Mines de Bruoux

HISTORIC SITE

(☎04 90 06 22 59; www.minesdebruoux.fr; rte de Croagnes, Gargas; adult/child €9.50/6.50; ☀10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) In Gargas, 7km east of Roussillon, this former mine has more than 40km of underground galleries where ochre was once extracted. Around 650m are open to the public, some of which are as much as 15m high. Visits are only by guided tour; reserve ahead as English-language tours are at set times.

### ★ Sentier des Ogres

HIKING

(Ochre Trail; adult/child €3/free; ☀9.30am-6.30pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Mar & Oct, 11am-3.30pm Feb, Nov & Dec; ) In Roussillon village, groves of

## PROVENCE'S COLORADO

Reds and oranges, scarlets and yellows, purples and crimsons – the fiery colours burned into the earth between Roussillon and Rustrel are astonishing. They're the result of the area's rich mineral deposits, especially hydrated iron oxide, otherwise known as ochre, which has been mined in this part of the Luberon since Roman times. Ochre was traditionally used to colour earthenware and paint buildings. Around the late 18th century, the extraction process was industrialised, and large mines and quarries sprang up. In 1929, at the peak of the ochre industry, some 40,000 tonnes of ochre was mined around Apt.

There are several ochre-themed sites to visit around Roussillon, but for the full technicolour experience, head for the **Colorado Provençal** (☎ 04 32 52 09 75; <http://coloradoprovencal.fr>; off D22; per car/bicycle/pedestrian €5/2/2; ☀ 10.30am-4.30pm Feb & Mar, 9am-5pm Apr, 9am-6pm May-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Oct, 10am-4pm Nov & Dec), a quarry site where ochre was mined from the 1880s until 1956. With its weird rock formations and rainbow colours, it's like a little piece of the Southwest USA plonked down amid the hills of Provence. The site is signposted south of Rustrel village, off the D22 to Banon.

For extra thrills, try the treetop assault courses on offer at nearby **Colorado Adventures** (☎ 06 32 85 64 66; <http://coloradoaventures.com>; Quartier Notre Dame des Anges, Rustrel; adult/child €20/15; ☀ 9am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, 1.30-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct).

chestnut and pine surround sunset-coloured ochre formations, rising on a cliff-top. Two circular trails, taking 30 or 50 minutes to complete, twist through mini-desert landscapes – it's like stepping into a Georgia O'Keeffe painting. Information panels highlight 26 types of flora to spot, the history of local ochre production, and so on.

## Sleeping & Eating

### La Coquillade

FRENCH €€€

(☎ 04 90 74 71 71; [www.coquillade.fr](http://www.coquillade.fr); Le Perrotet; meals €25-95; ☀ noon-3pm & 7.30-10pm mid-Apr-mid-Oct) Overnighting at this luxurious hill-top estate won't suit everyone's budget, but three excellent restaurants make a fine destination for culinary-minded travellers. It offers fine dining on innovative small plates at La Coquillade, a more casual Italian-style bistro (with a wood-burning oven) called Il Ristorante, and a lovely outdoor terrace restaurant featuring garden-to-table Provençal cuisine at Les Vignes et Son Jardin.

It's a 5km drive south of Roussillon on the D108; look out for signs. The hotel itself is a stunner, with luxurious rooms (doubles from €450) overlooking a sea of vines.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 90 05 60 25; <http://otroussillon.pagesperso-orange.fr>; place de la Poste; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat) General information on the village's history and suggestions for walking routes through the surrounding area.

## Getting There & Away

Roussillon is served by ZOU! bus 17 (€2.60, four daily; one daily weekdays October to June), which stops in Apt, Gordes and Cavaillon.

## Le Petit Luberon

The westernmost extent of the Luberon massif, the Petit Luberon's craggy hills are interspersed with wooded valleys, vineyards and rural farms. It's separated from Le Grand Luberon by the slash of the river canyon Combe de Lourmin, which cuts north-south through the mountains and is tracked by the D943 between Bonnieux and Lourmarin.

## Bonnieux

POP 1320

Settled during the Roman era, Bonnieux is another bewitching hilltop town that still preserves its medieval character. It's intertwined with alleys, cul-de-sacs and hidden staircases: from place de la Liberté, 86 steps lead to 12th-century **Église Vieille du Haut**. Look out for the alarming crack in one of the walls, caused by an earthquake.

The pleasure here is just to wander – especially if you time your visit for the lively Friday market, which takes over most of the old town's streets.

In the scrubby hills about 6km south of Bonnieux, a twisty back road slopes up to a wonderful **cedar forest**, whose spreading boughs provide welcome relief from

Provence's punishing summer heat. Various paths wind through the woods, including a nature trail that's accessible for wheelchairs. The trip up to the forest is worth the drive by itself: the wrap-around views of the Luberon valley and its *villages perchés* (hilltop towns) are out of this world. Take the D36 towards Buoux and look out for the signs.

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ **La Couleur des Vignes** B&B €€

(☎06 07 90 07 04; [www.lacouleurdesvignes.com](http://www.lacouleurdesvignes.com); r €130-160;   ) On the northern edge of the village, this is the kind of place that inspires serious life envy. It feels wonderfully secluded, with fragrant lavender-filled gardens overlooking the Luberon hills, and five rooms named after local villages and stuffed with rustic-chic features (thick walls, beams, tiles, fireplaces). But it's the eye-popping 20m infinity pool that has the real wow factor.

### ★ **Absoluit Valvert** B&B €€€

(☎06 72 22 37 89; [www.absoluitvalvert.com](http://www.absoluitvalvert.com); rte de Marseille; d €215-250, tree house €310;  ) Wow – for our money, this could well be the most stylish B&B in the Luberon. On an 18th-century *mas* and lovingly renovated by Belgian owner Cathy, it's straight out of a designer magazine: neutral-toned rooms, natural fabrics, solar-heated pool and fabulous buffet breakfast. For maximum spoils, go for the ultra-romantic tree house.

Breakfast is a lavish spoil, with cold meats, cheeses, pastries and local jams.

### **Marché de Bonnieux** MARKET €

(☉8am-1pm Fri) Bonnieux' huge Friday-morning market is (along with Apt's) one

## ROMAN WONDER

Situated 6km north of Bonnieux, near the junction of the D36 and D900, is one of the Luberon's most impressive Roman landmarks. Dating from around 3 BCE, the 85m-long **Pont Julien** was built to allow the region's main Roman road, the Via Domitia, to traverse the Calavon River. Amazingly, the bridge's three graceful tiers were still carrying cars as recently as 2005 – a testament to the ingenuity and skill of its engineers.

Thankfully, it's now off-limits to all traffic except bikes and sightseers.

of the biggest and best in the Luberon. It sprawls over several streets in the village centre, with local farmers and producers selling everything from local cheeses, hams and charcuterie to the reddest, ripest tomatoes you could ever hope to see.

### ★ **L'Arôme** FRENCH €€€

(☎04 90 75 88 62; [www.laromerestaurant.com](http://www.laromerestaurant.com); 2 rue Lucien Blanc; menu €49; ☉noon-2pm & 7-9pm Fri-Tue, 7-9.30pm Thu) Lodged in a charming vaulted cellar in Bonnieux, L'Arôme is a pricey but prestigious address, run by well-respected chef Jean-Michel Pagès. The menu revolves around gourmet ingredients with impeccable local provenance, dashed with spice and surprises, and the romantic stone-walled setting is a winner.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 90 75 91 90; <http://en.luberon-apt.fr>; rue Victor Hugo; ☉9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat) Covers the entire Petit Luberon.

## Getting There & Around

**Apt** (€2.10, 30 minutes, two daily Monday to Friday, three daily Saturday) Coming from Apt, ZOU! Bus Line 18 stops first in Bonnieux before continuing west to Ménerbes and Cavillon.

**Aix-en-Provence** (€2.60, 40 minutes, three daily Monday to Saturday, one on Sunday) From Apt, ZOU! bus 9 stops in Bonnieux before going to its terminus at Aix-en-Provence.

## **Ménerbes**

POP 1010

Hilltop Ménerbes is another wonder for wandering, with a maze of cobbled alleyways that afford sudden glimpses over the surrounding valleys. It became famous as the home of expat British author Peter Mayle, whose books *A Year in Provence* and *Toujours Provence* recounted his tales of renovating a farmhouse just outside the village in the late 1980s. He later moved to the nearby villages of Lourmarin and Vauignes, and died in 2018.

## Sights & Activities

### **Musée du Tire-Bouchon** MUSEUM

(☎04 90 72 41 58; [www.domaine-citadelle.com](http://www.domaine-citadelle.com); 601 rte de Cavillon; adult/child €5/free; ☉10am-noon & 2-6pm daily May-Oct, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Apr) You have to be a real wine buff to appreciate this museum – dedicated to the art of the humble corkscrew. There

are more than 1200 of them on display at Domaine de la Citadelle, a winery on the D3 towards Cavaillon, where you can sample Côtes du Luberon.

### Maison de la Truffe et du Vin WINE

(House of Truffle & Wine; ☎04 90 72 38 37; www.vin-truffe-luberon.com; place de l'Horloge; ☀10am-5pm) In the middle of Ménerbes, opposite the town's 12th-century church, this establishment is home to the Brotherhood of Truffles and Wine of the Luberon, and represents 60 local *domaines*. From April to October, there are free wine-tasting sessions daily, and afterwards you can buy the goods at bargain-basement prices. Winter brings truffle workshops.

## Sleeping & Eating

### La Bastide de Marie BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 90 72 30 20; www.labastidedemarie.com; 64 chemin des Peirelles; d from €356;    ) Run by renowned hotelier Jocelyne Sibuet, this uber-luxurious Provençal bolthole oozes designer style from every corner, from the effortlessly elegant rooms through to the just-so rustic charm of the restaurant. It's all spoils: two-tiered swimming pool (one heated), four-poster beds and an utterly lavish breakfast. It even has a swanky villa and cute *routotte* (wooden caravan) for rent. It's about 5km east of Ménerbes along the D3.

### Bistrot Le 5 BISTRO €€

(☎04 90 72 31 84; www.bistrotle5.com; 5 place Albert Roure; mains €26-56; ☀noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Jun-Sep, noon-2.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-May) Lunch with a view? *Mais oui* – and what a view. On the village's edge, this popular bistro boasts a grandstand, tree-shaded terrace overlooking classic Luberon countryside. The food is decent – mainly French bistro standards – and service can be slapdash, but on a warm summer's night, it'll be hard to take your attention away from the scenery anyway.

## Getting There & Away

**ZOU!** Bus Line 18 (€2.60, two daily Monday to Saturday) runs buses from Apt to Bonnieux, Lacoste, Ménerbes and Oppède-le-Vieux en route to Cavaillon.

## Oppède-le-Vieux

POP 1300

Jutting from a craggy hilltop 3km from the modern town of Oppède, Oppède-le-Vieux

was abandoned in 1910, when villagers moved down the hill to the valley to cultivate the plains.

From the car parks (€3), a wooded path leads up to the village's snaking, atmospheric alleyways. At the very top of town, the village's ruined castle provides a formidable vantage point over the surrounding valley – although the ruins themselves are off limits while the village raises funds for the castle's restoration.

Several artists and ceramicists have set up their studios here, and sell their wares during the summer. Signs from the car parks also direct you to the **Sentier Vigneron**, a 1½-hour viticulture trail through olive groves, cherry orchards and vineyards.

**Le Petit Café** (☎04 90 76 74 01; www.lepetitcafe.fr; place de la Croix, Oppède-le-Vieux; menu €32, mains €16-25; ☀10am-10.30pm; ) serves inventive Provençal dishes on the village square: homemade tapenades, onion tarts, fish and meat in herby sauces and more besides. There's a vintage cafe feel, with cast-iron tables and reclaimed crockery.

## Getting There & Away

The village is best visited on a day trip from Apt, Gordes or the surrounding area. The only bus that stops in Oppède is **ZOU!** Line 18 (€2.60, two daily Monday to Saturday), which travels from Apt via Bonnieux and Ménerbes on its way to Cavaillon.

## Le Grand Luberon

Divided from the hills of the Petit Luberon to the west by a deep river canyon, the Combe de Lourmarin, the scenic hills of the Grand Luberon are made for exploring. The main villages of note are Buoux, known for its small medieval fort, and Saignon, a sleepy place with impressive views. Take your time along the winding back roads: the scenery deserves to be savoured.

## Buoux

POP 70

Dominated by the ruins of its eponymous Fort de Buoux, the tiny village of Buoux sits across the divide from Bonnieux, 8km south of Apt. The village itself is little more than a collection of a few tumbledown houses, but the valley has spectacular views. The sheer cliffs here are popular with local rock climbers.

## Sights

### Fort de Buoux

RUINS

(📍04 90 74 25 75; [www.lefortdebuoux.e-monsite.com](http://www.lefortdebuoux.e-monsite.com); adult/child €5/4; 🕒10am-5pm Feb-Nov) Occupied since prehistoric times, the site of this cliff-top fortress commands an incredible view over the surrounding valley. Abandoned in the 17th century, it's an atmospheric place to wander – but is accessed by a winding, crumbling staircase, so take care as you hike up. Note that due to its exposed position, the fort is closed during heavy rain, snow, fog or high winds.

### Distillerie Les Agnels

DISTILLERY

(📍04 90 04 77 00; [www.lesagnels.com](http://www.lesagnels.com); rte de Buoux, btwn Buoux & Apt; adult/child €6/free; 🕒10am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat Jun, 10am-1pm & 2-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sep & Oct) This distillery on the edge of Buoux uses locally grown lavender, cypress and rosemary in its products. It also rents out three gorgeous self-contained cottages (from €1400 per week) that share a glorious heated pool covered by a greenhouse roof.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Auberge des Seguins

HOTEL €€

(📍04 90 74 16 37; [www.aubergedeseguins.com](http://www.aubergedeseguins.com); dm incl half-board €44, s €79-89, d €118-138, tr €159-179, q €220; 🕒Mar-mid-Nov; 📞📧📧) Hunkered at the bottom of the valley 2.5km below Buoux, surrounded by sheer cliffs, this lovely old inn feels remarkably secluded. It offers simple, TV-less rooms (some with shared bathrooms) and a dorm in four stone-walled buildings, all with fine valley views. The Provençal restaurant (menu €25) is popular, especially for Sunday lunch; room rates include half-board.

## Getting There & Away

There are no buses to Buoux, so the only way to get here is by car or (if you're up to the hills) by bike.

### Saignon

Even in a land of heart-stoppingly pretty villages, little Saignon still manages to raise an admiring eyebrow. Perched on a rocky flank, surrounded by lavender fields and overlooked by a crumbling medieval castle, its cobbled streets and central square (complete with fountain) are the stuff of Provençal dreams.

A short trail leads up to the castle ruins and the aptly titled **Rocher de Bellevue**, a

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

### LAZY BOAR LUNCH DATE

#### Le Sanglier Paresseux (📍04 90 75

17 70; [www.sanglierparesseux.com](http://www.sanglierparesseux.com); 2 rte de Viens, Caseneuve; menus lunch €32, dinner €43-75; 🕒12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Wed-Sun Jun-Sep, shorter hours Oct-mid-Nov & Mar-May, closed mid-Nov-Feb) There's one reason to make a detour to hilltop Caseneuve, 10km east of Saignon, and that's to eat at the Lazy Boar, one of the Luberon's most talked-about tables. Cuisine is inventive, unfussy, seasonal and the perfect showcase for regional ingredients – and the view from the vine-shaded terrace is really unforgettable. Reservations essential.

fabulous viewpoint overlooking the entire Luberon range all the way to Mont Ventoux.

### L'Auberge du Presbytère

HOTEL €€

(📍04 32 52 15 28; [www.laubergedupresbytere.com/en](http://www.laubergedupresbytere.com/en); place de la Fontaine; d €95-140, q €165-200; 📞📧📧) In the heart of the village, this ivy-covered beauty has comfortable rooms, which are spacious though rather lacking in personality. The terrace restaurant is a fine place to linger over a meal on clear days.

Saignon has no public transport.

## ALPES-DE-HAUTE-PROVENCE

Provence might conjure up images of rolling fields and gentle hills, but east of the Luberon you'll find yourself travelling through altogether more dramatic landscapes. Rising like a tooth-lined jawbone along the border with Italy, just an hour's drive north of Nice, lie the Alps – France's most famous mountain range, a haven for mountaineers, hikers and wildlife spotters, and home to some of the region's most unforgettable scenery.

Cloaked in snow well into springtime, the mountains of Haute-Provence are divided by six main valleys, connected by some of the highest and most hair-raising road passes anywhere in Europe – an absolute must for road-trippers. At the heart of the area sprawls the huge Parc National du Mercantour, home to a host of rare wildlife, sky-top villages and pristine natural habitats. Make



## PARC NATIONAL DU MERCANTOUR

Created in 1979, this vast national park covers seven alpine valleys and a total area of 685 sq km. Pocked by deep valleys and spiked with jagged peaks, and dominated by the Cime du Gêlas (3143m), the third-highest mountain in the Alps-Maritimes, it's a haven for outdoor activities: skiing and snowboarding in winter, hiking and biking in summer, and pretty much everything else besides.

It's also celebrated for its flora and fauna, including rare species such as the ibex, the mouflon, the golden eagle and wild grey wolves, which you can see at the excellent **Alpha wolf park** (☎04 93 02 33 69; www.puremontagne.fr; Le Boréon; adult/child €14/12; ☀10am-6pm Jul & Aug, to 5pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct; 📍) near the mountain village of St-Martin-Vésubie. The park is currently at the forefront of the debate over the return of the wild wolf to France: after more than a century of absence, wolf numbers are increasing – a cause of celebration for conservationists, and of deep anger for local farmers.

Fascinating sites lie outside the park's extents. For an arresting glimpse into the forces of nature, a hike up to the massive, fractured stone blocks of **Les Grès d'Annot**, above the town of Annot, is well worth the effort. Caused by volcanic activity around 35 million years ago, they've been sculpted into all kinds of weird and wondrous forms by millennia of erosion. In total, the site covers an area of around 150 hectares criss-crossed by several hiking trails.

Deep, high-sided gorges also make for spectacular driving, especially along plunging canyons such as the **Gorges de Daluis** (located south of Guillaumes along the D2202) where the rock glows red from mineral deposits.

Note that mountain passes connecting the valleys are usually closed by snow from October to May – roads leading up to the passes indicate whether they are open to road traffic.

sure you keep the camera close to hand: there's a picture around every corner.

## Pays de Forcalquier

An oft-overlooked area between the Luberon valley and the Alpine foothills, the Pays de Forcalquier is well off the main tourist radar, meaning that its hilltop villages and rolling farms are usually relatively tranquil even in high summer.

It's the portal to Haute-Provence from the Luberon, and the fastest way in from Marseille too. At its heart lies namesake Forcalquier, famous for its market and absinthe. Saffron grows here, as well as swaths of lavender.

### 📍 Sights

★ **Prieuré de Salagon** MONASTERY  
(☎04 92 75 70 50; www.musee-de-salagon.com; adult/child €8/6; ☀10am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Oct-mid-Dec & Feb-Apr; 📍) Situated 4km south of Forcalquier near Mane, this peaceful priory dates from the 13th century. It's well worth a visit to wander around its medieval herb gardens, fragrant with native lavender, mint, mugwort and other medicinal

plants. There's also a show garden of plants from around the world, and a *jardin de senteurs* that's been planted especially for its fragrances.

**Château de Simiane-la-Rotonde** CASTLE  
(☎04 92 73 11 34; www.simiane-la-rotonde.fr; Simiane-la-Rotonde; adult/12-18yr/under 12yr €5.50/3.50/free; ☀12.30-6.30pm May-Aug, 10am-1pm & 1.30-4.30pm Wed-Sun Mar, Apr & Sep-mid-Nov) Forming part of the 12th-century fortified castle built by the Simiane-Agout family, who were one of the region's most powerful medieval dynasties, this castle is notable for its magnificent central cupola, graced by a soaring dome, 12 supporting ribs and a forest of decorative columns and intricate stonework. It's a masterpiece of medieval engineering, and every August provides the unforgettable setting for classical-music festival **Les Riches Heures Musicales de la Rotonde**.

**Ecomusée l'Olivier** MUSEUM  
(☎04 86 68 53 15; www.mb-1830.com/fr/ecomusee-olivier; ancienne rte de Forcalquier, Volx; ☀10.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat) 🆓 If all the olive groves around Provence have inspired your curiosity, head 15km southeast of Forcalquier to Volx, where this intriguing

eco-museum explains the extraction process and the olive tree's importance to Mediterranean culture. There's also a posh shop where you can pick up souvenirs, and taste various olive-oil varieties, as well as an excellent Provençal restaurant, **Le Petit Ribier** (☎06 06 86 04 83; www.lepotagermoderne.fr; Écomusée l'Olivier, Volx; 2-/3-course menu from €18/25; ☺ noon-2pm Tue-Thu, to 2pm & 7-9pm Fri & Sat), which is perfect for lunch.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Relais d'Elle** B&B €  
(☎06 75 42 33 72; www.relaisdelle.com; rte de la Brillane, Niozelles; s/d/q/apt from €70/80/100/135; ☐ ☑ ☒) For peace and tranquillity, you can't really quibble with this cosy, ivy-covered farmhouse, surrounded by lovely gardens and a cracking pool. The rooms err towards the traditional rather than the fashionable, with old furniture and rather dated decor – but the gorgeous grounds and friendly owners make up for what the house lacks in luxury.

*Table d'hôte* dinners are available by reservation, and are served in the garden in summer.

**Bistrot de Niozelles** PROVENÇAL, ITALIAN €€  
(☎04 92 73 10 17; www.bistrot-niozelles.fr; place du Village, Niozelles; set menu €28; ☺ 12.30-2.30pm & 7-9pm Thu-Tue; ☒) For just-like-mama-made-it French cuisine, it's worth the 5km drive from Forcalquier to this unapologetically old-school bistro in Niozelles. You'll need an appetite, and a taste for all the traditional trimmings, like offal, tripe and sheep trotters, but you won't find a more authentic French meal in the Pays de Forcalquier.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 92 75 10 02; www.haute-provence-tourisme.com; 13 place du Bourguet; ☺ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat)

## Getting There & Around

**Bachelas Cycles** (☎04 92 75 12 47; www.bachelasbikeshop.com; 5 av de la République; per day/week from €19/85; ☺ 9am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Tue-Sat) rents out mountain, road and electric bicycles.

ZOU! (<http://zou.maregionsud.fr>) operates LER (regional express line) buses to/from Forcalquier.

**ZOU! LER Line 25** (three daily Monday to Saturday, two on Sunday) Runs direct from Marseille (€19, two hours) and Aix-en-Provence

(€15, 1½ hours) to Forcalquier, stopping at Manosque and Volx.

**ZOU! LER Line 22** Travels to Avignon (€17, 2¼ hours, four daily Monday to Saturday, one on Sunday), and to Digne-les-Bains (€10, 1¼ hours, three daily Monday to Saturday) in the opposite direction.

## Gorges du Verdon

For sheer, jaw-dropping drama, few sights in France can match the epic Gorges du Verdon. The 'Grand Canyon of Europe' slices a 25km swath through Haute-Provence's limestone plateau all the way to the foothills of the Alps. Etched out over millions of years by the Verdon River, the gorges have formed the centrepiece of the Parc Naturel Régional du Verdon since 1997. With their sheer, plunging cliffs – in some places 700m high, twice the height of the Eiffel Tower – the gorges are a haven for birds, including a colony of reintroduced *vautours fauves* (griffon vultures).

The main gorge begins at Rougon, near the confluence of the Verdon and Jabron Rivers. The most useful jumping-off points are Moustiers Ste-Marie, in the west, and Castellane, in the east.

## Cycling & Driving

A complete circuit of the Gorges du Verdon from Moustiers Ste-Marie involves 140km of driving, not to mention a relentless series of hairpin turns. There's a cliffside road on either side of the gorges, but passing spots are rare, roads are narrow and rockfalls are possible – so take it slow and enjoy the scenery.

Spring and autumn are ideal times to visit: the roads can be traffic-clogged in summer and icy in winter. The Route des Crêtes, along the northern rim of the gorge, is snowbound from mid-November to mid-March.

The only village en route is La Palud-sur-Verdon (930m), so make sure you've got a full tank of petrol before setting out.

**★Route des Crêtes** DRIVING TOUR  
(D952 & D23; ☺ mid-Mar–mid-Nov) A 24km-long loop with 14 lookouts along the northern rim with drop-dead vistas of the plunging Gorges du Verdon. En route the most thrilling view is from **Belvédère de l'Escalès** – one of the best places to spot vultures overhead.

You'll see signs for the route as you drive through La Palud-sur-Verdon. Note that the road is generally closed outside April to October due to snowfall.

## Outdoor Sports

Castellane is the main water-sports base (April to September); its tourist office (p849) has lists of local operators. Outfitters like **Raft Session** (☎ 07 63 63 69 50; www.raftsession.com; chemin des Hautes Listes; ☀ Apr-Sep) charge similar rates for rafting, canyoning, kayaking and aqua-trekking (heading down a river *sans* boat!); around €50 for two hours, €55 for a half-day and €75 to €90 for a full day. Safety kit is provided, but you'll get (very) wet, so dress appropriately. Reservations are required.

Lac de Castillon's beaches are popular for swimming and paddle boating, while St-André-les-Alpes, on the lakeshore, is France's leading paragliding centre.

## Walking & Hiking

Dozens of blazed trails traverse the wild countryside around Castellane and Moustiers. Tourist offices carry the excellent, English-language *Canyon du Verdon* (€5), detailing 28 walks, as well as maps of five principal walks.

Note that wild camping anywhere in the gorges is illegal. Don't cross the river, except at bridges, and always stay on marked trails, lest you get trapped when the upstream dam opens, which happens twice weekly. Check water levels and the weather forecast with local tourist offices before embarking.

### ★ Verdon Nature

WALKING

(☎ 06 82 23 21 71; www.verdon-nature.com; per person €15 to €30) Local man Laurent Pichard runs excellent guided walks into the gorges, including vulture-spotting trips, nature hikes and guided routes following several classic hiking paths. He also offers a sunset walk and a night sleeping under the stars

including the gorges' highest summit, Le Grand Margès.

## Sleeping & Eating

Most accommodation is located in or around the main towns of Moustiers Ste-Marie and Castellane, at the western and eastern ends of the gorges respectively.

### Gîte de Chasteuil

B&B €

(☎ 06 63 07 03 87; www.gitedechasteuil.com; Hameau de Chasteuil; d €75-95, tr & q €97-110, f €105-125; ☀ Mar-Dec) Around 12km west of Castellane, this excellent-value *chambre d'hôte* run by Nancy and Pascal resides in a former schoolhouse with gorgeous mountain views. It is an ideal stop for hikers along the GR4. You're welcome to bring in your own food for dinner, and they'll pack you a hiker's picnic for €12.

### Gîte de la Baume

B&B €€

(☎ 04 92 83 70 82; www.gite-de-la-baume.com; La Baume; d €75-90, tr €120;  ) What a cracking retreat this is, 9km north of Castellane. It's a friendly *auberge* (country inn) that offers surprisingly smart rooms (nearly all with some kind of a view) and a delicious, rustic set menu dinner (€22) in its restaurant, Aux Delices du Verdon. Half-board rates are available if you're staying overnight, or you can just visit for supper.

### ★ La Fabrique

B&B €€

(☎ 06 95 36 08 31; www.lafabrique04360.com; La Maladrerie, rte de Riez; d €98-135, f €135-150;  ) If you enjoy architectural grand designs, you'll adore this wonderful B&B. Inside the handsome brick shell (a former factory) are gorgeous, clean-lined, screamingly elegant rooms, with industrial touches like exposed

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

### STARGAZING IN HAUTE-PROVENCE

Driving through the scrubby back roads south of Forcalquier, an unexpected sight appears on the hills: the **Observatoire de Haute-Provence** (☎ 04 92 70 65 40; www.obs-hp.fr; adult/child €5.50/3; ☀ guided visits 2.30pm, 3.30pm & 4.30pm Tue-Thu Jul & Aug, Wed Apr-Jun & Sep), a small dome-shaped observatory built in 1937 near the village of St-Michel-Observatoire to take advantage of Haute-Provence's wonderfully clear night skies. Several times a week in summer (and on Wednesdays in spring and early autumn), you can take a guided tour of the observatory and learn more about its work. Sometimes, there are night-time star-spotting sessions, too.

Tickets are sold at the **tourist office** (☎ 04 92 76 69 09; astronomie@haute-provence-tourisme.com; place de la Fontaine; ☀ 2-5.30pm Tue-Fri Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, Tue-Sat Jul & Aug) in St-Michel-Observatoire. Tours are generally in French, but some guides speak some English: ask at the tourist office when you buy your ticket.

brick and sliding doors. Downstairs is the former factory floor; now a design-mag dream. There's a vast refectory table where a hearty dinner is available (€25 including drinks) and breakfast is served.

★ **La Bastide de Moustiers** GASTRONOMY €€€ (☎04 92 70 47 47; [www.bastide-moustiers.com](http://www.bastide-moustiers.com); chemin de Quinson; menus €65-90; ☀12.15-1.30pm & 7.15-8.30pm, closed Oct-Feb) A legendary table of Provence, founded by chef supremo Alain Ducasse. As you'd expect from this Michelin-starred, much-lauded restaurant, it's a temple to French cuisine – from the playful *amuses bouches* to the rich, sauce-heavy mains and indulgent desserts. Much of the produce comes from the inn's own kitchen garden. Dress very smartly, and reserve well ahead.

The views from the terrace are dreamy too. It's 500m down a country lane, signposted off the D952 to Ste-Croix de Verdon. Rooms (doubles from €295 to €530) are spacious and luxurious, and nearly all have valley views.

## **i** Information

**Castellane Tourist Office** (☎04 92 83 61 14; [www.castellane-verdoutourisme.com](http://www.castellane-verdoutourisme.com); rue Nationale; ☀9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri Nov-Mar) On the east side of the gorges, Castellane's tourist office is the best source for info on river trips and climbing expeditions, as well as general info on the Gorges du Verdon.

**Moustiers Ste-Marie Tourist Office** (☎04 92 74 67 84; [www.moustiers.fr](http://www.moustiers.fr); passage du Cloître; ☀10am-noon & 2-6pm Apr-Sep, closes around 5pm Oct-Mar; 📶) This pretty town acts as the gateway point to the western side of the gorges, and its tourist office is extremely well informed, organises activities and has free wi-fi too.

**Verdon Tourisme** ([www.verdoutourisme.com](http://www.verdoutourisme.com)) Excellent online resource for exploring the gorges.

## THE STAR OF PROVENCE

Huddled at the base of soaring cliffs, the picturesque village of Moustiers Ste-Marie is unquestionably the prettiest spot anywhere near the Gorges du Verdon, for which it serves as a useful gateway. Lining either side of a river valley, the village's main claim to fame is the **Chapelle Notre Dame de Beauvoir**, a 14th-century chapel that teeters precariously on the edge of a steep canyon.

A steep trail climbs beside a waterfall to the chapel, passing 14 stations of the cross en route. High above, a 227m-long chain bearing a shining gold star is stretched between the cliff walls – a tradition, legend has it, begun by the Knight of Blacas, in return for his safe return from the Crusades. It gives rise to the village's local nickname, 'Étoile de Provence' (Star of Provence).

## **i** Getting There & Away

Public transport in the gorges is limited, but the useful line **BV1** runs between Riez and Castellane, stopping at Roumoules, Moustiers-Sainte-Marie, La Palud-sur-Verdon and Point Sublime. From La Palud-sur-Verdon, the **Navette Blanc-Martel** (☎04 92 77 32 02) runs to La Maline, where you can access the stunning Blanc-Martel trail. The trail ends at Point Sublime, where you can reconnect with onward transport. Services on these shuttle lines run twice daily in July and August and on weekends April to June and in September.

Further afield, **ZOU! LER Bus 27** runs three times daily Monday to Saturday between Marseille and Riez (€17.50, two hours).



## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

1.84 million

### KILOMETRES OF COASTLINE

Approximately 885km

### BEST BEACHES

Île Sainte-Marguerite (p869)

### BEST PLACES TO FEEL RICH & FAMOUS

Casino de Monte Carlo (p890)

### BEST ICONIC DRIVES

The Three Corniches



### WHEN TO GO

**May** Cannes' film festival and Monaco's Grand Prix are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities – but beware inflated hotel prices!

**Jul** Balmy beach weather, a busy festival calendar and *slightly* less insane crowds than in August.

**Sep** Near-perfect swimming conditions, fewer people, lower prices and the wine harvest begins.







## The Côte d'Azur & Monaco

**P**icasso, Matisse and innumerable other artists have been drawn to this glamorous stretch of Mediterranean coast for its light, pouring down from often sunny skies, reflecting off blue seas and refracting off the not-so-distant Alps. This string of dazzling beaches and rocky coves extends from St-Tropez to the Italian border and is framed by offshore islands on one side and lively cities, medieval hilltop villages, historic gardens and hiking paths on the other. Throw in the Italian-tinged cuisine and no wonder the rich and famous flock here. From Monte Carlo's casino and Nice's Promenade des Anglais to the Cannes film festival and St-Tropez's yacht harbour, the Côte d'Azur holds a captivating beauty and prestige unrivalled in Europe's collective consciousness.

### INCLUDES

Nice .....	854	Vence .....	876
Cannes.....	865	Corniche de l'Estérel .	879
Antibes.....	871	St-Tropez .....	881
Mougins & Mouans-Sartoux.....	874	The Three Corniches .	886
Grasse .....	875	Monaco .....	887
		Menton.....	895



## The Côte d'Azur & Monaco Highlights

- 1 **Nice** (p854) Dawdling on beaches and in bistros in the coast's unofficial capital.
- 2 **St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat** (p865) Walking past

billionaires' mansions and rocky coves.

- 3 **Èze** (p887) Hiking the Sentier Nietzsche from the medieval village.
- 4 **Sentier du Littoral**

(p895) Strolling Roquebrune-Cap Martin's dramatic coastal path.

- 5 **St-Tropez** (p881) Sipping pastis and watching pétanque players in place des Lices.



**6 St-Paul de Vence** (p878)  
Prowling the backstreets of this stunning hilltop village.

**7 Antibes** (p871) Visiting the Musée Picasso and

viewing the Alps across the Mediterranean.

**8 Menton** (p895) Hiking to Cimetièrre du Vieux Château and exploring the town's famed gardens.

**9 Monaco** (p887) Trying your luck at the Monte Carlo roulette tables.

**10 Grasse** (p875) Exploring perfume-making at museums, factories and flower farms.

## NICE

POP 340,017

With its mix of real-city grit, old-world opulence, year-round sunshine, vibrant street life and stunning seaside location, Nice is much more than nice – it's extraordinary.

A magnet for sun-seekers and society jet-setters since the 19th century, this bewitching coastal queen has everything going for it – fabulous street markets, an enticing old town, glorious architecture, world-class modern-art museums (thanks to Chagall, Matisse, Picasso and Renoir, who fell in love with the place) and a delicious wealth of epicurean restaurants. Nice is far from perfect – it's scruffy in spots, the summer traffic is horrendous and the beach is made entirely of bum-numbing pebbles – but if you're in town to soak up the Riviera vibe, there's no finer spot. France's 2020 nomination of Nice for Unesco World Heritage status will be reviewed in July of 2021.

### Sights

#### ★ Promenade des Anglais ARCHITECTURE

(☏ 8, 52, 62) The most famous stretch of sea-front in Nice – if not France – is this vast paved promenade, which gets its name from the English expat patrons who paid for it in 1822. It runs for the whole 4km sweep of the Baie des Anges with a dedicated lane for cyclists and skaters; if you fancy joining them, you can rent skates, scooters and bikes from **Roller Station** (☏ 04 93 62 99 05; www.roller-station.fr; 49 quai des États-Unis; skates, boards & scooters per hour/day €5/15, bicycles €5/18; ☉ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-6pm Sat & Sun, extended hours Jun & Jul).

A more unusual way to cruise along is an electric Segway from **Mobilboard Nice** (☏ 04 93 80 21 27; www.mobilboard.com/nice-promenade; 2 rue Halévy, Batiment Ruhl Méridien; 30min/1hr/2hr tour €17/30/50; ☉ 9am-1pm & 2-7pm; ☏ 8, 52, 62 to Massenet); the same agency also rents out bikes.

Along the way, keep an eye out for a few of the promenade's landmarks, including the **Hôtel Negresco** (☏ 04 93 16 64 00; www.hotel-negresco-nice.com; 37 promenade des Anglais; ☏ 8, 52, 62 to Gambetta/Promenade), the 1929 art deco **Palais de la Méditerranée** (☏ 04 93 27 12 34; www.lepalaisdelamediterranee.com; 13 promenade des Anglais; d €297-907; 📶📶📶; ☏ 8, 52, 62 to Congrès/Promenade) and Niçoise sculptor Sabine Géraudie's giant iron sculpture *La Chaise de SAB* (2014), which pays homage to the city's famous blue-and-white beach chairs.

#### ★ Vieux Nice

HISTORIC SITE

(☏ 1 to Opéra-Vieille Ville/Cathédrale-Vieille Ville) Getting lost among the dark, narrow, winding alleyways of Nice's old town is a highlight. The layout has barely changed since the 1700s, and it's now packed with delis, restaurants, boutiques and bars, but the centrepiece remains **cours Saleya**: a massive market square that's permanently thronging in summer. The **food market** (cours Saleya; ☉ 6am-1.30pm Tue-Sun) is perfect for fresh produce and foodie souvenirs, while the **flower market** (cours Saleya; ☉ 6am-5.30pm Tue-Sat, 6.30am-1.30pm Sun) is worth visiting just for the colours and fragrances. A **flea market** (Marché à la Brocante; cours Saleya; ☉ 7am-6pm Mon) is held on Monday.

Baroque aficionados will adore architectural gems **Cathédrale Ste-Réparate**

### BEACH TALK

Officially there are 25 named beaches strung out along the Baie des Anges, some of which are free, others of which are for paying clientele. All are pebbly, so sensitive beach-hinds might opt for one of the private beaches (€15 to €30 per day), which come with sun-loungers and comfy mattresses.

Free cold-water showers, lifeguards and first-aid posts are available most of the way along the bay, including on the public beaches; there are also a few public toilets for which you have to pay a small charge. Most beaches also offer activities, from beach volleyball to jet-skis and pedalos.

Something else worth noting: nudity is perfectly acceptable on Nice's beaches, and locals certainly aren't shy about letting it all hang out.

Right opposite Vieux Nice, **Plage Publique des Ponchettes** is generally the busiest beach of all, with oiled bodies either baking in the sun or punching a ball on the beach-volleyball court.

## DON'T MISS

## MODERN ART IN CIMIEZ

When you've had your fill of waterfront thrills, escape to the residential neighbourhood of Cimiez, north of Nice-Ville train station, for a low-key dose of local colour and exceptional modern art.

**Musée Matisse** (☎04 93 81 08 08; www.musee-matisse-nice.org; 164 av des Arènes de Cimiez; museum pass 24hr/7 days €10/20; ☀10am-6pm May-Nov, to 5pm rest of year, closed Tue; 📅15, 17, 20, 22 to Arènes/Musée Matisse) This museum, 2km north of the city centre in the leafy Cimiez quarter, houses a fascinating assortment of works by Matisse, including oil paintings, drawings, sculptures, tapestries and Matisse's famous paper cut-outs. The permanent collection is displayed in a red-ochre 17th-century Genoese villa in an olive grove. Temporary exhibitions are in the futuristic basement of the building.

Matisse is buried in the **Monastère Notre Dame de Cimiez** (http://stemariedesanges.free.fr; Place Jean-Paul II Pape; ☀8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm; 📅15, 17, 20, 22 to Arènes/Musée Matisse) cemetery, across the park from the museum, and the grounds here are nearly as big a highlight as the museum.

**Musée National Marc Chagall** (☎04 93 53 87 20; www.musee-chagall.fr; 4 av Dr Ménard; adult/child €10/8; ☀10am-6pm Wed-Mon May-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Apr; 📅15, 22 to Musée Chagall) The strange, dreamlike and often unsettling work of the Belarusian painter Marc Chagall (1887-1985) is displayed at this museum, which owns the largest public collection of the painter's work. The main hall displays 12 huge interpretations (1954-67) of stories from Genesis and Exodus. From the city centre, allow about 20 minutes to walk to the museum (signposted from av de l'Olivetto), or take the bus.

(☎04 93 92 01 35; https://cathedrale-nice.fr; place Rossetti; ☀2-6pm Mon, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun), honouring the city's patron saint; exuberant 16th-century **Chapelle de la Miséricorde** (☎04 92 00 41 90; cours Saleya; ☀2.30-5pm Tue Sep-Jun); and 17th-century **Palais Lascaris** (☎04 93 62 72 40; 15 rue Droite; museum pass 24hr/7 days €10/20, guided visit adult/child €6/free; ☀10am-6pm Wed-Mon late Jun-mid-Oct, from 11am mid-Oct-late Jun), a frescoed riot of Flemish tapestries, faience (tin-glazed earthenware), gloomy religious paintings and an 18th-century pharmacy.

There's also a lively – and very smelly – **fish market** (place St-François; ☀6am-1pm Tue-Sun) on place St-François.

**Colline du Château** PARK  
(Castle Hill; ☀8.30am-8pm Apr-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Mar; 📅1 to Garibaldi/Le Château) **FREE** For the best views over Nice's red-tiled rooftops, climb the winding staircases up to this wooded outcrop on the eastern edge of the old town. It's been occupied since ancient times; archaeological digs have revealed Celtic and Roman remains, and the site was later occupied by a medieval castle that was razed by Louis XIV in 1706 (only the 16th-century **Tour Bellanda** remains).

**Musée Masséna** MUSEUM  
(☎04 93 91 19 10; 65 rue de France; museum pass 24hr/7 days €10/20; ☀10am-6pm Wed-Mon late Jun-mid-Oct, from 11am rest of year; 📅8, 52, 62 to Congrès/Promenade) Originally built as a holiday home for Prince Victor d'Essling (the grandson of one of Napoléon's favourite generals, Maréchal Masséna), this lavish belle époque building is another of the city's iconic architectural landmarks. Built between 1898 and 1901 in grand neoclassical style with an Italianate twist, it's now a fascinating museum dedicated to the history of the Riviera.

**Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain** GALLERY  
(MAMAC; ☎04 97 13 42 01; www.mamac-nice.org; place Yves Klein; museum pass 24hr/7 days €10/20; ☀10am-6pm Tue-Sun late Jun-mid-Oct, from 11am rest of year; 📅1 to Garibaldi) European and American avant-garde works from the 1950s to the present are the focus of this sprawling multilevel museum. Highlights include many works by Christo and Nice's neorealists: Niki de Saint Phalle, César, Arman and Yves Klein. The building's rooftop also works as an exhibition space (with knockout panoramas of Nice to boot).







## Nice

## 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Colline du Château ..... G7  
 2 Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain ..... F4  
 3 Musée Masséna ..... A6  
 4 Promenade des Anglais ..... A7  
 5 Vieux Nice ..... H2

## 📍 Sights

- 6 Cathédrale Ste-Réparate ..... G1  
 7 Chapelle de la Miséricorde ..... G2  
 8 Galerie Lympia ..... H7  
 9 Hôtel Negresco ..... A7  
 10 Musée National Marc Chagall ..... D1  
 11 Palais Lascaris ..... H1  
 12 Plage Publique des Ponchettes ..... H3  
 13 Port Lympia ..... H5

## 📍 Activities, Courses &amp; Tours

- 14 Centre du Patrimoine ..... H2  
 15 Mobilboard Nice ..... C6  
 16 Nikaia Watersports ..... D6  
 17 Roller Station ..... H2  
 18 Train des Pignes ..... A1  
 19 Trans Côte d'Azur ..... H6

## 📍 Sleeping

- 20 Hostel Meyerbeer Beach ..... A6  
 21 Hôtel La Pérouse ..... F7  
 22 Hôtel Solara ..... B6  
 23 Hôtel Wilson ..... D5  
 24 Hôtel Windsor ..... B5  
 25 Hyatt Regency Nice Palais de la Méditerranée ..... B6  
 26 Nice Garden Hôtel ..... B5

## 📍 Eating

- 27 Acchiardo ..... H2  
 28 Arlequin Gelati ..... B2  
 29 Bar des Oiseaux ..... G1  
 30 Café Paulette ..... H4

- 31 Chez Palmyre ..... F5  
 32 Chez Pipo ..... H5  
 33 Chez René Socca ..... F4  
 34 Fenocchio ..... H2  
 35 Fenocchio ..... H1  
 36 Flaveur ..... D4  
 37 Gelateria Azzurro ..... G1  
 38 Jan ..... H5  
 39 Koko Green ..... F5  
 40 La Femme du Boulanger ..... B6  
 41 La Fougasserie ..... H2  
 42 Le Bistrot d'Antoine ..... H2  
 43 Les Amoureux ..... H6  
 44 Olive et Artichaut ..... H2  
 45 Peixes ..... D6  
 46 Socca d'Or ..... H4  
 47 Socca du Cours ..... H2

## 📍 Drinking &amp; Nightlife

- 48 Beer District ..... G5  
 49 Café Indien ..... H1  
 50 Cafés Indien ..... F5  
 51 El Merkado ..... D6  
 52 La Movida ..... H3  
 53 La Part des Anges ..... E4  
 54 Les Distilleries Idéales ..... H2  
 55 Rosalina Bar ..... H5

## 📍 Entertainment

- 56 Opéra de Nice ..... E6  
 57 Shapko ..... H1  
 58 Wayne's ..... G1

## 📍 Shopping

- 59 Cave de la Tour ..... F5  
 60 Cours Saleya Flea Market ..... G2  
 61 Cours Saleya Flower Market ..... G2  
 62 Cours Saleya Food Market ..... G2  
 63 Fish Market ..... F5  
 64 Maison Auer ..... E6  
 65 Moulin à Huile d'Olive Alziari ..... D6

## 📍 Activities &amp; Tours

Swimming at the beaches along Promenade des Anglais and quai des États-Unis is Nice's favourite pastime in summer. Various outfits along Nice's waterfront rent watersports equipment. **Nikaia Watersports** (☎06 19 58 18 82; www.nikaiaaglisse.com; 99 quai des États-Unis), just to the east of Jardin Albert 1er, is one of the best, renting out kayaks and stand-up paddleboards and organising other activities such as wakeboarding and paragliding.

## Centre du Patrimoine

(☎04 92 00 41 90; www.nice.fr/fr/culture/patrimoine; 14 rue Jules Gilly; tours adult/child €5/free; ☉9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Thu, to 3.45pm Fri;

WALKING

📍1 to Opéra) The Centre du Patrimoine runs two-hour thematic walking tours. English-language tours must be booked two days in advance. The tourist office has a full listing.

## Trans Côte d'Azur

BOATING

(www.trans-cote-azur.com; quai Lunel; ☉Apr-Oct; 📍2 to Port Lympia) Trans Côte d'Azur runs one-hour boat cruises along the Baie des Anges and Rade de Villefranche (adult/child €19/14) from April to October. From late May to September it also has full-day, round-trip cruises to Île Ste-Marguerite (€50/40), St-Tropez (€68/54), Monaco (€39/31) and Cannes (€42/32), where you boat to the destination in the morning, spend the day there, then return in the afternoon.

## ★ Festivals & Events

### ★ Carnaval de Nice

CARNIVAL

(www.nicecarnaval.com; ☺ Feb-Mar) Held over a two-week period in late February and early March since 1294. Highlights include the *batailles de fleurs* (battles of flowers) and the ceremonial burning of the carnival king on promenade des Anglais, followed by a fireworks display.

### Nice Jazz Festival

MUSIC

(www.nicejazzfestival.fr; ☺ Jul) France's original jazz festival has taken on a life of its own, with a jam-packed six-night calendar of performances on two stages in Jardin Albert 1er, and fringe concerts popping up all around town, from Vieux Nice to Massena and the shopping streets around rue de France.

## 🛏 Sleeping

Accommodation in Nice is excellent and caters to all budgets, unlike many cities on the Côte d'Azur. Hotels charge substantially more during the Monaco Grand Prix. Book well in advance in summer.

### ★ Hostel Meyerbeer Beach

HOSTEL €

(☎ 04 93 88 95 65; www.hostelmeyerbeer.com; 15 rue Meyerbeer; dm €17-55, s €45-100, d €52-120; 📶; 🕒 7, 9, 22, 27, 59, 70 to Rivoli) It's easy to see why this cosy little hostel has been voted Best in France twice in the last decade. A welcoming mood prevails throughout, thanks to the congenial, international staff of four; a kitchen small enough to make you feel like you're cooking at home, and a cheerful, immaculate mix of private rooms and four- to ten-bed dorms, each with its own en suite bathroom.

### Hôtel Solara

HOTEL €

(☎ 04 93 88 09 96; www.hotelsolara.com; 7 rue de France; s €45-75, d €85-115; ☺ reception 8am-9pm; 📶; 🕒 7, 9, 22, 27, 59, 70 to Grimaldi) With a fantastic location on pedestrianised rue de France, small personal fridges for that evening glass of rosé, and sensational terraces on half the rooms, the Solara is pure budget gold. Rooms are small but spotless, and you're right in the heart of the action, a mere block from the beachfront.

### Hôtel Wilson

HOTEL €

(☎ 04 93 85 47 79; www.hotel-wilson-nice.com; 39 rue de l'Hôtel des Postes; s €35-60, d €40-85; 📶; 🕒 7, 9 to Wilson or Pastorelli) Generations of travellers have passed through Jean-Marie's rambling 3rd-floor apartment, where all

the rooms have been decorated with potted plants and items collected on his travels in a faintly bohemian, hippie-hangover style (one room's styled after Frida Kahlo, another is stuffed with '70s kitsch, while others have African and Asian flavours). It's faded but winningly friendly and family-run. Cheaper rooms share bathrooms.

### ★ Hôtel Windsor

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 93 88 59 35; www.hotelwindsornice.com; 11 rue Dalpozzo; d €137-225; 📶; 🕒 7, 9, 22, 27, 59, 70 to Grimaldi or Rivoli) Don't be fooled by the staid stone exterior: inside, owner Odile Redolfi has enlisted the collective creativity of several well-known artists to make each of the 57 rooms uniquely appealing. Some are frescoed and others are adorned with experimental chandeliers or photographic murals. The garden and pool out the back are delightful, as are the small bar and attached restaurant.

### Nice Garden Hôtel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 93 87 35 62; www.nicegardenhotel.com; 11 rue du Congrès; s €75-95, d €120-150; ☺ reception 8.30am-9pm; 📶; 🕒 7, 9, 22, 27, 59, 70 to Grimaldi) Behind heavy iron gates hides this gem: the nine beautifully appointed rooms – the work of the exquisite Marion – are a subtle blend of old and new and overlook a delightful garden with a glorious orange tree. Amazingly, all this charm and peacefulness is just two blocks from the promenade. Breakfast costs €12.

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

### THE PINE CONE TRAIN

Chugging between the mountains and the sea, the **Train des Pignes** (Pine Cone Train; www.trainprovence.com; single/return Nice to Digne €26/52; 🕒 1 to Libération) is one of Provence's most picturesque train rides. The 151km track between Nice and Digne-les-Bains rises to 1000m for breathtaking views as it passes through Haute-Provence's scarcely populated backcountry. The service runs four times daily from Gare de Nice-CF de Provence (p864) and is ideal for a day trip inland.

The beautiful medieval village of **Entrevaux** is just 1½ hours from Nice (return fare €25), perfect for a picnic and a wander through its historic centre and citadel.

## **i** NICE ICE STOPS

**Fenocchio** (☎ 04 93 80 72 52; www.fenocchio.fr; 2 place Rossetti; 1/2 scoops €3/5; ☼ 9am-midnight Mar-Nov) There's no shortage of ice-cream sellers in the old town, but this *maitre glacier* (master ice-cream maker) has been king of the scoops since 1966. The array of flavours is mind-boggling – cactus, cinnamon, fig, lavender and rosé to name a few. Dither too long over the 98-plus flavours and you'll never make it to the front of the queue.

The queues at the main branch are long on hot summer days, but they're generally shorter at the **second branch** (☎ 04 93 62 88 80; 6 rue de la Poissonnerie; 1/2 scoops €3/5; ☼ 9am-midnight Wed-Mon Mar-Nov) nearby.

**Gelateria Azzurro** (☎ 04 93 13 92 24; www.azzurroartisanglaciernice.com; 1 rue Ste-Réparate; ice cream from €2.80; ☼ 11am-midnight) Next door to the cathedral, this venerable Vieux Nice *gelateria* is beloved for its ice cream, yes – but even more so for its homemade waffle cones, made here on the hot griddle right before your eyes!

**Arlequin Gelati** (☎ 04 93 04 69 88; www.arlequin-gelati.com; 9 av Malausséna; 1/2/3/4 scoops €3/5/7/9; ☼ 10.30am-8.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct; 📍; 🚶 1 to Libération or Gare Thiers) A five-minute walk from Nice Ville train station brings you to this fab ice-cream shop founded by Milanese gelato master Roberto. Grab a scoop of chocolate-orange, hazelnut, pistachio, panna cotta or cinnamon-infused *spéculoos*, take it to the pavement tables out the front, and watch the world go by.

★ **Hôtel La Pérouse** BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€  
(☎ 04 93 62 34 63; www.hotel-la-perouse.com; 11 quai Rauba Capeu; d €224-789; 📍 @ 📶 🚰) A prime seaside location and boutique hotel style put La Pérouse in a league of its own. Built into the rock cliff-face of Colline du Château, it evokes the spirit of a genteel villa. Lower-floor rooms face a citrus-tree-shaded courtyard and pool; upper-floor rooms have magnificent sea vistas. Smart accent colours and Italian marble bathrooms add flair to the traditional decor.

## **✂** Eating

Booking is advisable at most restaurants, particularly during the busy summer season. To lunch with locals, grab a pew in the midday sun on one of the many place Garibaldi café terraces. There are lots of restaurants on cours Saleya, but quality can be variable, so choose carefully.

★ **Les Amoureux** PIZZA €  
(46 bd Stalingrad; pizzas €8-17; ☼ 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Named the best Neapolitan pizza in France 2018, by renowned French food critic François-Régis Gaudry, the specialty heart-shaped Les Amoureux pie here (buffalo mozzarella, tomato sauce and basil) is simply out of this world – and the other pizzas aren't far behind. The deliciousness is matched by family-run, Italian service and atmosphere

that's worth the wait (get here early for a table). Finish with a sublime pistachio panna cotta and a limoncello (the latter offered to all guests free of charge).

★ **Acchiardo** FRENCH €  
(☎ 04 93 85 51 16; https://eater.space/restaurant-acchiardo; 38 rue Droite; mains €16-19; ☼ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Mon-Fri) Warm service and irreplaceable quality are the hallmarks of this traditional neighbourhood restaurant, run by the same family since 1927. Locals and tourists pack into the three stone-walled rooms for Niçois delights such as *merda di can* (little green gnocchi – nicknamed 'dog poop' for the shape, not the flavour, mind you!), red mullet with parsleyed green beans and olive tapenade, and tiramisu.

**La Fougasserie** BAKERY €  
(☎ 04 93 80 92 45; www.lafougasserie.com; 5 rue de la Poissonnerie; items from €1; ☼ 7am-7pm Fri-Tue) Vieux Nice's finest baked goods emanate from this little corner *boulangerie*, which also operates a stall in the cours Saleya food market. Quality organic ingredients go into a full spectrum of sweet and savoury delights, including croissants, *pan bagnat* (Niçois tuna sandwich), pizza and *pissaladière* (onion tart). At Carnaval time, don't miss its dreamy *bugnes de Carnaval*, doughnut-like fritters delicately scented with orange blossoms.



**Chez Palmyre**

FRENCH €

(☎04 93 85 72 32; <https://eater.space/chez-palmyre>; 5 rue Droite; 3-course menu €18; ☀ noon-1.30pm & 7-9.30pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri) Look no further for authentic Niçois cooking than this packed, cramped, convivial little space in the heart of the old town. The menu is very meat-heavy, with plenty of tripe, veal, pot-cooked chicken and the like, true to the traditional tastes of Provençal cuisine. It's a bargain, and understandably popular. Book well ahead, even for lunch.

**Koko Green**

VEGETARIAN €

(☎07 81 63 14 88; [www.kokogreen.com](http://www.kokogreen.com); 1 rue de la Loge; mains €16.50; ☀ noon-5pm Thu, Fri & Sun, noon-4pm & 7.30-10pm Sat; 📍) At this popular Vieux Nice newcomer, a New Zealander and a naturopath whip up an awesome array of veggie, raw and vegan treats. Weekly specials are globally inspired: Mexican *sopa de tortilla*, Middle Eastern falafel, Vietnamese crêpes – all organic, gluten-free and accompanied by fresh-blended juices. The ultimate showstopper is the vegan cheese-cake; dairy-lovers can only marvel at the faux-creaminess!

**★ Bar des Oiseaux**

FRENCH €€

(☎04 93 80 27 33; 5 rue St-Vincent; 3-course lunch menu €20, dinner menus from €30; ☀ 10am-10pm Tue-Sat) Hidden down a narrow backstreet, this old-town classic has been in business since 1961, serving as a popular nightclub before reincarnating itself as a restaurant (some of its original saucy murals have survived the transition). Nowadays it's a lively bistro serving superb traditional French cuisine spiced up with modern twists. The weekday lunch special offers phenomenal value. Book ahead.

**★ Peixes**

SEAFOOD €€

(☎04 93 85 96 15; <https://restaurantpeixes.fr>; 4 rue de l'Opéra; small plates €12-19, mains €18-35; ☀ noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) This chic little restaurant is a seafood-centred masterpiece by Niçois restaurateur Armand Crespo. All done up in white-and-turquoise nautical decor, with dangling fish eyeball light fixtures and murals of a tentacle-haired mermaid ensnaring a fishing boat, it specialises in fresh local fish turned into delicious ceviches, tartares and Japanese-style tatakis by chefs in the open kitchen.

**Le Bistrot d'Antoine**

FRENCH €€

(☎04 93 85 29 57; 27 rue de la Préfecture; mains €17-32; ☀ 9am-1.45pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) A quintessential French bistro, right down to the checked tablecloths, streetside tables and impeccable service – not to mention the handwritten blackboard, loaded with classic dishes such as rabbit pâté, pot-cooked pork, blood sausage and duck breast. If you've never eaten classic French food, this is definitely the place to start; no matter what, you're in for a treat.

**La Femme du Boulanger**

BISTRO €€

(☎04 89 03 43 03; [www.facebook.com/femmeduboulangier](http://www.facebook.com/femmeduboulangier); 3 rue Raffali; mains €17-27, tartines €16-17; ☀ 9am-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm; 📍 8, 52, 62 to Massenet) This back-alley gem with pavement seating is a vision of French bistro bliss. Breakfast and brunch (€25 set menu) are sublime with fresh breads (including gluten-free), homemade preserves and more. Lunch and dinner mains like *duck à l'orange* or honey-balsamic glazed lamb shank, are followed up with raspberry clafoutis and other scrumptious desserts.

**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE****NIÇOIS SPECIALITIES**

Niçois specialities include *socca* (a savoury, griddle-fried pancake made from chickpea flour and olive oil, sprinkled with a liberal dose of black pepper), *petits farcis* (stuffed vegetables), *pissaladière* (onion tart topped with black olives and anchovies) and the many vegetable *beignets* (fritters). Try them at **Chez René Socca** (☎04 93 92 05 73; 2 rue Miralhéti; small plates €3-7; ☀ 9am-9pm Tue-Sun, to 10.30pm Jul & Aug, closed Nov; 📍; ☎ 1 to Garibaldi), **Socca d'Or** (☎04 93 56 52 93; [www.restaurant-soccador-nice.fr](http://www.restaurant-soccador-nice.fr); 45 rue Bonaparte; socca €2.90-7.50; ☀ 11am-2pm & 6-10pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat; 📍 1 to Garibaldi, 2 to Port Lympia) or **Chez Pipo** (☎04 93 55 88 82; [www.chezpipo.fr](http://www.chezpipo.fr); 13 rue Bavastro; socca €2.90; ☀ 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-10pm Wed-Sun; 📍 1 to Garibaldi, 2 to Port Lympia).

At the cours Saleya market, **Socca du Cours** (place Charles Félix; socca €3, other snacks from €2; ☀ 9.30am-1.30pm Wed-Sun; 📍 1 to Jean-Médecin) is the go-to, snack-attack address.

Tartines on wood-fired homemade bread are a house speciality.

### Olive et Artichaut

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎ 04 89 14 97 51; www.oliveartichaut.com; 6 rue Ste-Réparate; 3-course menu €32, mains €22-28; ☀ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Wed-Sun) There's barely enough room to swing a pan in this tiny street bistro, especially when it's full of diners (as it often is), but it doesn't seem to faze young Niçois chef Thomas Hubert and his friendly team. He sources as much produce as possible from close-to-home suppliers (Sisteron lamb, Niçoise olives, locally caught fish) and likes to give the old classics his own spin. Wise diners reserve.

### Café Paulette

TAPAS €€

(☎ 04 92 04 74 48; 15 rue Bonaparte; tapas €6-10, mains €12-32; ☀ 8am-12.30am Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun; 📍 1 to Garibaldi) Chilled and classy Café Paulette has become one of the Petit Marais's favourite hang-outs since opening in 2017. Part cafe, part convivial lunch spot and part evening wine bar, it's especially beloved for its tasty international tapas such as roast squid and barley 'risotto' or Japanese-style sesame-crusting tuna taki. An ample array of cocktails supplements the solid wine list.

### Flaveur

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 04 93 62 53 95; www.restaurant-flaveur.com; 25 rue Gubernatis; set menus €120-185; ☀ noon-2pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat; 📍 3, 7, 9, 27 to Pastorelli) Run by brothers Gaël and Mickaël Tourteau, this small restaurant has big culinary ambitions (and a second Michelin star as of 2018). In a Zen dining room with bold fabrics and wooden platters artfully arranged on the walls, it's a haute-cuisine temple, with dishes dressed in foams, creams, reductions and snows, and presented with the precision of museum exhibits.

For the full-blown gastronomic experience, go for the seven-course tasting menu (€145). Most produce comes from nearby permaculture farms and fish from small boat fishing.

### Jan

GASTRONOMY €€€

(☎ 04 97 19 32 23; www.restaurantjan.com; 12 rue Lascaris; set menus €85-139; ☀ 7-10pm Tue-Sat, noon-2pm Fri & Sat; 📍 1 to Garibaldi, 2 to Port Lympia) For the full-blown fine-dining experience, make a pilgrimage to the Michelin-starred restaurant of South African chef Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen. Dishes here are laced with Antipodean and New

World flavours, and crackle with artistic and culinary flair. There's nothing à la carte – Jan decides his *menus* on the day. It's high-end (dress smart) and sought after; reservations essential.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Cafe terraces on cours Saleya are lovely for an early-evening aperitif. Vieux Nice's bounty of pubs attracts a noisy, boisterous crowd; most bars have a happy hour from 6pm to 8pm. The trendy area to drink these days is Le Petit Marais in the Port Lympia area, where there are a clutch of bars and bistros.

### ★ La Part des AnGES

WINE BAR

(☎ 04 93 62 69 80; www.lapartdesanges-nice.com; 17 rue Gubernatis; ☀ 10am-8.30pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat; 📍 7, 9 to Pastorelli or Wilson) The focus at this classy wine shop-bar is organic wines – a few are sold by the glass, but the best selection is available by the bottle, served with homemade tapenades and charcuterie platters. The name means 'the Angel's Share', referring to the alcohol that evaporates as wines age. There are only a few tables, so arrive early or reserve ahead.

### Beer District

CRAFT BEER

(☎ 06 75 10 26 36; www.beerdistrict.fr; 13 rue Cassini; ☀ 6pm-12.15am Tue-Sat; 📍 1 to Garibaldi, 2 to Port Lympia) One of Nice's coolest new night-spots, Beer District offers a regularly rotating line-up of 16 draught microbrews and 50 bottled beers from all over the world. The vibe is chilled and friendly, with free tastes cheerfully offered and little bowls of peanuts for snacking.

### ★ Les Distilleries Idéales

CAFE

(☎ 04 93 62 10 66; www.facebook.com/ldinice; 24 rue de la Préfecture; ☀ 9am-12.30am) The most atmospheric spot for a tippie in the old town, for cocktails, beers on tap or a local wine by the glass. Brick-lined, filled with 1930s-era decor and set out over two floors (with a little balcony that's great for people-watching), it's packed (with characters) until late. Happy hour is from 6pm to 8pm.

### El Mercado

BAR

(☎ 04 93 62 30 88; www.el-mercado.com; 12 rue St-François de Paule; ☀ 10am-2.30am May-Sep) Footsteps from cours Saleya, this hip tapas bar (strapline: 'In Sangria We Trust') struts its vintage stuff on the ground floor of a quintessential Niçois town house. Lounging on its pavement terrace or a sofa with an after-beach cocktail is the thing to do here.

**La Movida**

COCKTAIL BAR

(☎04 93 80 48 04; [www.movidanice.com](http://www.movidanice.com); 41 quai des États-Unis; ☉10am-2am) No place in Vieux Nice offers better people-watching than the beach-facing tables on La Movida's street-side deck and upstairs terrace. Snag one in time for sunset if you can, and stick around for cocktails, tapas, DJs and live music.

**Rosalina Bar**

BAR

(☎04 93 89 34 96; [www.facebook.com/bar.rosalina](http://www.facebook.com/bar.rosalina); 16 rue Lascaris; ☉6.30pm-12.30am Mon-Sat; 📍1 to Garibaldi, 2 to Port Lympia) Way back before Le Port-Garibaldi became so trendy, Rosalina was the neighbourhood's nightlife pioneer. A decade later, it's still an inviting, friendly spot for drinks or dinner, whether you're sipping wine and nibbling complimentary crostini with killer olive tapenade on the outdoor terrace, or downing a cocktail beside the piano and the swing in the whimsically decorated interior.

**Café Indien**

COFFEE

(2bis rue Ste-Réparate; ☉10am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat) Nice's best bet for coffee snobs, this old fashioned, family-run place roasts its own beans and has a long menu of single-origin coffees and blends. Sit and chat with locals at one of the few tables, take your coffee to go or stock up on beans. There's a second **location** (35 Rue Pairolière; ☉9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sat) that has slightly longer opening hours.

**★ Entertainment****Opéra de Nice**

OPERA

(☎04 92 17 40 79; [www.opera-nice.org](http://www.opera-nice.org); 4-6 rue St-François de Paule) The vintage 1885 grande dame hosts opera, ballet and orchestral concerts.

**Shapko**

LIVE MUSIC

(☎06 15 10 02 52; [www.shapko.bar.fr](http://www.shapko.bar.fr); 5 rue Rossetti; ☉9pm-4.30am) Near the cathedral square, Shapko stages live music nightly in a variety of genres: blues, funk, jazz, R&B, soul, rock and more.

**Wayne's**

LIVE MUSIC

(☎04 93 13 46 99; [www.waynes.fr](http://www.waynes.fr); 15 rue de la Préfecture; ☉10am-2am) One of a strip of raucous drinking holes on the edge of the old town, Wayne's is a proper pub, through and through: plenty of beers on tap, a nightly roster of bands and big-screen sports action. Scruffy as it comes, but great fun if that's what you're in the mood for.

**🛍 Shopping**

Shops abound in Nice, ranging from the boutiques of Vieux Nice and the New Town's designer fashion temples to the enormous Nice Étoile shopping mall. For vintage fashion and contemporary art, meander the hip Petit Marais near place Garibaldi. For gourmet gifts to take home, head for Vieux Nice, where you'll find olive oil, wine, candied fruits and much more.

**★ Maison Auer**

FOOD

(☎04 93 85 77 98; [www.maison-auer.com](http://www.maison-auer.com); 7 rue St-François de Paule; ☉9am-7pm Mon-Sat) With its gilded counters and mirrors, this opulent shop – run by the same family for five generations – looks more like a 19th-century boutique than a sweets shop, but this is where discerning Niçois have been buying their *fruits confits* (crystallised fruit) and *amandes chocolatées* (chocolate-covered almonds) since 1820.

**Cave de la Tour**

WINE

(☎04 93 80 31; [www.cavedelatur.com](http://www.cavedelatur.com); 3 rue de la Tour; ☉7am-8pm Tue-Sat, to noon Sun) Since 1947, locals have been trusting the owners of this atmospheric *cave* (wine cellar) to find the best wines from across the Alpes-Maritimes and Var. It's a ramshackle kind of place, with upturned wine barrels and blackboard signs, and a loyal clientele, including market traders and fishmongers getting their early-morning wine fix. Lots of wines are available by the glass.

**Moulin à Huile d'Olive Alziari**

FOOD

(☎04 93 62 94 03; [www.alziari.com.fr](http://www.alziari.com.fr); 14 rue St-François de Paule; ☉9am-7pm Mon-Sat, from 10am Sun) Superb hand-pressed olive oil, fresh from the mill on the outskirts of Nice. It comes in several flavours of differing fruitiness. The shop also sells delicious tapenades, jams, honeys and other goodies. From Monday to Friday you can visit the mill to see the process in action: catch bus 6 to the Terminus stop.

**📍 Information**

**Tourist Office** (☎04 92 14 46 14; [www.nicetourisme.com](http://www.nicetourisme.com); 5 promenade des Anglais; ☉9am-7pm daily Jun-Sep, to 6pm Mon-Sat Oct-May; 📍; 📍 8, 52, 62 to Massenet) Nice's main tourist office on promenade des Anglais provides a wealth of resources, including maps, brochures, information about attractions and help booking accommodation.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Nice-Côte d'Azur Airport** (NCE; ☎ 08 20 42 33 33; www.nice.aeroport.fr; 📍; 🕒 98, 99, 🕒 2) France's second-largest airport, with international flights to Europe, North Africa and the USA, and regular and low-cost airlines. The airport has two terminals, linked by a free shuttle bus.

### BOAT

**Corsica Ferries** (☎ 04 92 00 42 76; www.corsicaferries.com; quai du Commerce; 🚢 2 to Port Lympia) and **Moby Lines** (☎ 08 00 90 11 44; www.mobyline.fr; quai du Commerce; 🚢 2 to Port Lympia) offer regular ferry services from Nice to Corsica. Corsica Ferries also serves Golfo Aranci in Sardinia.

### BUS

**Lignes d'Azur** (☎ 08 10 06 10 06; www.lignesdazur.com) operates an excellent intercity bus service from Nice; tickets cost just €1.50.

- **Bus 100** (place de l'Île de Beauté; 🚢 2 to Port Lympia) To Menton (1¼ to 1½ hours) via the Corniche Inférieure and Monaco (45 minutes).
- **Bus 200** (av de Verdun) To Cannes (1½ to 1¾ hours).
- **Bus 400** (av de Verdun) To Vence (70 minutes) via St-Paul de Vence (one hour).
- **Bus 500** (av de Verdun) To Grasse (1½ hours).

**Flixbus** (☎ 04 93 13 48 64; www.flixbus.com; 17 rue d'Angleterre; 🚢 7, 9 to Wilson) serves long-haul European destinations.

## **i** PORTSIDE MEANDER

Nice's **Port Lympia** (🚢 2 to Port Lympia), with its beautiful Venetian-coloured buildings, is often overlooked, but a stroll along its quays is lovely, as is the walk to get here: come down through Parc du Château or follow quai Rauba Capeu, where a massive **war memorial** hewn from the rock commemorates the 4000 Niçois who died in both world wars.

Nice's coolest gallery space, **Galerie Lympia** (☎ 04 89 04 53 10; http://galerie.lympia.departement06.fr; 52 bd Stalingrad; 🕒 2-7pm Wed-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-7pm Sun; 🚢 2 to Port Lympia) **FREE**, is housed in a former galley slaves' prison down by the port. It hosts regular free exhibitions of works by contemporary Niçois artists such as Patrick Moya, along with artists from further afield.

### TRAIN

Train is the easiest way to travel between the coast's larger cities from Nice. TGV and TER trains depart from the **Gare de Nice-CF de Provence** (rue Alfred Binet; 🚢 1 to Libération) with services throughout the day to destinations including Monaco (€4.30; 23 minutes) and Marseille (€25, 2h 40 min). Service to Paris and Charles de Gaulle airport requires a transfer at Marseille.

## **i** Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Nice-Côte d'Azur airport is about 7km west of Nice, by the sea. The following buses depart from there:

- There's a direct express bus from terminals 1 and 2 to central Nice (€1.50, 20 minutes, every 20 minutes).
- Bus 110 (€22) links the airport with Monaco (40 minutes, half-hourly) and Menton (1¼ hours, hourly).
- Bus 210 goes to Cannes (€22, 45 minutes, half-hourly).
- Bus 200 goes to Antibes (€11/16.50, 50 minutes, half-hourly).

The easiest way to get into town is on Nice's east-west tram line 2 (tickets €1.50, departures every 10 minutes from 8am to 8pm) with service between the airport and Port Lympia (26 minutes), with intermediate stops granting access to other city-centre destinations.

Taxis from the airport to Nice's centre charge a flat rate of €32.

### BICYCLE

**Vélo Bleu** (☎ 04 93 72 06 06; www.velobleu.org) is Nice's shared-bicycle service. It's great value and very convenient for getting round town, with 100-plus stations around the city – pick up your bike at one, return it at another.

One-day/weeklong subscriptions cost €1.50/5, plus usage: free for the first 30 minutes, €1 for the next 30, then €2 per hour thereafter. Some stations are equipped with terminals to register directly with a credit card; otherwise you'll need a mobile phone. There are also e-bikes available for €3 per day.

The handy Vélo Bleu app allows you to find your nearest station, gives real-time information about the number of bikes available at each and calculates itineraries.

### BUS & TRAM

Buses and trams in Nice are run by Lignes d'Azur (p864). Tickets cost just €1.50 and include one connection, including intercity buses within the Alpes-Maritimes *département*. If you're using Nice's buses and trams a lot, consider purchasing a money-saving all-day ticket or multi-day

pass. Buses are particularly handy for getting to the Musée Matisse and Musée Chagall in Cimiez.

Buses typically run every 10 to 15 minutes between 6am and 9pm. Between 9pm and 1am or 2am, night buses – numbered N1 to N5 and running every 30 to 60 minutes – fan out to various destinations around the city from their central terminus at Promenade des Arts.

Bus stops throughout the city have clear signs indicating which buses stop there. Tickets can be purchased at machines on the platform or on board the bus. All tickets (including day and week passes) must be validated at the beginning of each ride by being inserted into the machines provided on board.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Traffic, a confusing one-way system, and pricey parking mean driving in Nice is a bad idea – it's better to explore the city first, then head back out to the airport and rent your car for onward travel there.

**Holiday Bikes** (📍 04 93 16 01 62; www.loca-bike.fr; 34 av Auber; 24hr rental 50cc/125cc scooter from €35/51; ☺ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 10am-noon & 5-6.30pm Sun Jun-Aug; 🚶 1 to Gare Thiers) rents out scooters and motorcycles. It has another **office** (📍 04 93 04 15 36; 6 rue Massenet; ☺ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 10am-noon & 5-6.30pm Sun Jun-Aug; 🚶 8, 52, 62 to Massenet) just off the promenade des Anglais.

## CANNES

POP 74,686

Glamorous Cannes sets camera flashes popping at its film festival in May, when stars pose in tuxes and couture gowns on the red carpet. But the glitz doesn't end there. Throughout the year, as you walk among the fashionable bars, designer shops and palaces of La Croisette, the wealth and glamour of this city cannot fail to impress. Admiring Ferraris and Porsches and celebrity-spotting on the chic sunlounger-striped beaches and liner-sized yachts moored at the port are perennial Cannes pastimes.

Whether Cannes' soul has managed to survive its celebrity-playground status is another question, but there's still enough natural beauty to make a trip worthwhile: the harbour, the bay, the clutch of offshore islands and the old quarter, Le Suquet, all spring into life on a sunny day. And with the city's famous beaches benefiting from a serious facelift over the last few years, there's suddenly lots more space to lay your towel!

### WORTH A TRIP

#### ST-JEAN-CAP-FERRAT

A world unto itself, the prosperous seaside village of St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat sits aloof from the hustle and bustle of the main coast road, astride a dreamy peninsula that juts into the Mediterranean midway between Nice and Monaco. Away from the town centre, the Cap-Ferrat peninsula is dotted with the villas of millionaires and billionaires, and laced with 14km of eucalyptus-scented walking paths affording magnificent views of the wonderfully rugged coastline. There are various walking itineraries, all easy going; tourist offices have maps.

Bus 15, operated by Lignes d'Azur (p864), provides direct services from Nice's promenade des Arts stop to the centre of St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat (€1.50, 30 minutes).

### 📍 Sights

#### ★ La Croisette

ARCHITECTURE

The multi-starred hotels and couture shops lining the iconic bd de la Croisette (aka La Croisette) may be the preserve of the rich and famous, but anyone can enjoy strolling the palm-shaded promenade – a favourite pastime among Cannois at night, when it twinkles with bright lights. Views of the Baie de Cannes and nearby Estérel mountains are beautiful, and seafront hotel palaces dazzle in all their stunning art deco glory.

#### Palais des Festivals et des Congrès

LANDMARK

(Festival & Congress Palace; www.palaisdesfestivals.com; 1 bd de la Croisette; guided tour adult/child €6/free) Posing for a selfie on the 22 steps leading up to the main entrance of this concrete bunker – unlikely host to the world's most glamorous film festival – at the western end of La Croisette is an essential Cannes experience. Afterwards, wander along the **Allée des Étoiles du Cinéma**, a footpath of celebrity hand imprints in the pavement; it begins with the hands of Meryl Streep in front of the tourist office.

The only way to enter the festival building and walk into the auditorium, tread the stage and learn about cinema's most glamorous event is with a **Palais des Festivals guided tour** (📍 04 92 99 84 22; www.cannes-destination.com/guided-tour/visit-palais-festival-cannes; adult/





## Cannes

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 La Croisette..... F3

### 📍 Sights

- 2 La Malmaison ..... G3  
 3 Le Suquet ..... A3  
 4 Musée de la Castre ..... A3  
 5 Palais des Festivals et des Congrès ..... D3

### 🚗 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 6 Palais des Festivals Guided Tour ..... D2  
 7 Trans Côte d'Azur Cruises ..... B4

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 8 Hôtel Alnea ..... D1  
 9 Hôtel de Provence ..... G2

### 🍴 Eating

- 10 Aux Bons Enfants ..... B2  
 11 Bobo Bistro ..... F2  
 12 La Casa di Nonna ..... F1  
 13 Le Grain de Sel ..... E1  
 14 New York, New York ..... C2  
 15 PhilCat ..... C2  
 16 Table 22 ..... A2

### 🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 17 L'Epicurieux ..... E1

### 🛍 Shopping

- 18 Fromagerie Ceneri ..... C1  
 19 Marché Forville ..... B2

child €6/free) organised by the Cannes tourist office. Check dates and get booking instructions on the tourist-office website.

### Le Suquet

HISTORIC SITE

Follow rue St-Antoine and snake your way up through the narrow streets of Le Suquet, Cannes' oldest district. Up top you'll find the site of Cannes' medieval castle, and the very worthwhile **Musée de la Castre** (📍04 89 82 26 26; www.cannes.com/fr/culture/musee-de-la-castre.html; Le Suquet; adult/student €6/3; 🕒10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun rest of the year) art and archaeology museum, all flanked by the 17th-century Église Notre-Dame de l'Espérance. Climb the ramparts from the museum courtyard for great views of the bay.

### La Malmaison

NOTABLE BUILDING

(📍04 97 06 45 21; www.cannes.com/fr/culture/centre-d-art-la-malmaison.html; 47 bd de la Croisette; 🕒10am-7pm daily Jul-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr, closed May & Jun) On La

Croisette, La Malmaison is a seaside pavilion in the former games and tea room of Cannes' grandest hotel of the 1860s, the Grand Hôtel (opened in 1864, shut in 1950, then demolished and rebuilt in the 1960s). Modern art exhibitions fill part of La Malmaison today; admission price varies depending on the exhibit.



## Beaches

Cannes is blessed with sandy beaches, although much of the bd de la Croisette stretch is taken up by private enterprises, leaving just a small strip of free sand near the Palais des Festivals for the bathing hoi polloi.

### Z Plage

BEACH

(Plage du Martinez; 📍04 93 90 12 34; 73 bd de la Croisette; 🕒10am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 7pm Jul & Aug) Expect to pay €60/45/70 in July and August (€40/30/50 in other months) for the blue sunloungers on the front row/other rows/pier of the super-stylish Z Plage, the beach of Hôtel Martinez. Booking ahead is advised.

### Plage du Midi

BEACH

(bd Jean Hibert) This urban beach just west of Vieux Port enjoys gorgeous sunset views across to the red rock formations of the Corniche de l'Estérel.

### Plage Vegaluna

BEACH

(📍04 93 43 67 05; www.vegaluna.com; bd de la Croisette; sunloungers €25-35; 🕒10am-7pm; ♿) Family-friendly private but busy white-sand beach.



## Tours

### Trans Côte d'Azur Cruises

BOATING

(📍04 92 98 71 30; www.trans-cote-azur.com; 20 quai St-Pierre; 🕒9am-5pm) From June to September this boat company offers all-day cruises to St-Tropez (adult/child return €53/42) and Monaco (€55/42). Shorter two-hour cruises set sail for the Corniche d'Or (€28/18), where you can take in the dramatic contrasts of the Estérel's red cliffs, green forests and intense azure waters.



## Festivals & Events

Cannes lives for music in the summer, so come prepared to party hard.

### Festival de Cannes

FILM

(www.festival-cannes.com; 🕒May) Cannes' world-famous celebration of cinema. You won't get in to any of the premieres, but it's

## CANNES DAY TRIPPER

For a culturally enriching day trip, head to the towns of Cagnes-sur-Mer, Villeneuve-Loubet and Le Cannet – all within 15 to 30 minutes of St-Paul de Vence and 15 to 45 minutes from Cannes – where you'll find a trio of highlights.

Just outside Cagnes-sur-Mer, the evocative **Musée Renoir** (☎ 04 93 20 61 07; www.cagnes-tourisme.com; chemin des Colettes, Cagnes-sur-Mer; adult/child €6/free; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Jun-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Apr & May, to 5pm Oct-Mar, closed Tue year-round) is housed in the Domaine des Collettes, former home and studio to an arthritis-crippled Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919). Works of his on display include *Les Grandes Baigneuses* (The Women Bathers; 1892), a reworking of the 1887 original, and rooms are dotted with photographs and personal possessions. The magnificent olive and citrus groves are as much an attraction as the museum itself.

Equally wonderful is **Musée Escoffier de l'Art Culinaire** (Escoffier Museum of Culinary Arts; ☎ 04 93 20 80 51; http://fondation-escoffier.org; 3 rue Auguste Escoffier, Villeneuve-Loubet; adult/child €6/free; ☀ 10am-1pm & 2-7pm daily Jun-Sep, to 6pm Oct-May), which retraces the history of modern gastronomy. Auguste Escoffier (1846–1935), inventor of the *pêche Melba* among other things, was France's first great chef and a celebrity among Europe's well heeled.

Finally, there's Le Cannet's **Musée Bonnard** (☎ 04 93 94 06 06; www.museebonnard.fr; 16 bd Sadi Carnot, Le Cannet; adult/child €5/3.50; ☀ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun, to 8pm Jul & Aug), in a restored Belle Époque villa with a striking contemporary extension. Instantly recognisable by their intense colour, the works of neo-impressionist painter Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947) form the backbone of the museum's permanent collection. Bonnard arrived in Le Cannet from Paris in 1910 and lived in a seafront villa with his wife, Martha, until his death. It was in Le Cannet that Bonnard painted his best works, including several landscapes of Riviera resorts.

still fun because you see all the celebs walking around.

**Festival d'Art Pyrotechnique** FIREWORKS  
(www.festival-pyrotechnique-cannes.com; ☀ Jul & Aug) Around 200,000 people cram onto La Croisette every summer to admire the outstanding fireworks display over the Baie de Cannes. Magical. Held on six nights in July and August (see the website for exact dates).

**Les Plages Électroniques** MUSIC  
(www.plages-electroniques.com; 1-day pass €33-40, 2-/3-day pass €60/80; ☀ Aug) DJs spin on the sand at the Plage du Palais des Festivals during this relaxed festival, held over a three-day weekend in mid-August.

## Sleeping

Cannes is an important conference centre, and when an event swings into town (there are a dozen or so during the year, including the film festival), hotels book up and prices soar. Many hotels sell out in summer as well, so plan ahead. During film-festival season you won't be able to find a bed for love nor money, but you can always stay in nearby Nice and catch the train to Cannes.

**Hôtel de Provence** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 04 93 38 44 35; www.hotel-de-provence.com; 9 rue Molière; s €123-158, d €146-278, ste €371-432; ☀ closed mid-Jan-early Mar; 🏠🚗) This traditional Provençal townhouse with buttermilk walls, lavender-blue shutters and a palm-lined entryway disguises a minimalist-chic interior. Almost every room sports a balcony, climaxing with a 7th-floor suite with stunning rooftop terrace. The Provence also has self-catering studios in the neighbourhood for three to six people. Breakfast costs €10.80.

**Hôtel Alinea** HOTEL €€  
(☎ 04 93 68 77 77; www.hotel-alnea.com; 20 rue Jean de Riouffe; s €85-140, d €95-155; 🏠🚗) A breath of fresh air in a town of stars, Noémi and Cédric's hotel offers bright, colourful two-star rooms, original paintings and numerous little details, such as the afternoon coffee break, the honesty bar, and the bike or boules (to play *pétanque*) loans. Some rooms have kitchenettes and the central location can't be beat.

**Hotel Le Cavendish** HERITAGE HOTEL €€€  
(☎ 04 97 06 26 00; www.cavendish-cannes.com; 11 bd Carnot; d €125-350; 🏠🚗) With its rotunda

rooms and Napoleon III-era architecture, this grand dame of a hotel can't fail to impress. It's classic in style – plenty of taffeta, tassels and swags, and a monumental marble staircase – but there's a civilised air of old-world grandeur about the place, with special touches such as complimentary evening aperitifs and a private beach on La Croisette.

## Eating

Most private beaches have restaurants, which are particularly delightful on warm sunny days, although you pay for the privilege of eating *les pieds dans l'eau* (feet in the water). Expect to pay around €25 to €30 for a main of grilled fish or meat, or a gourmet salad.

Several streets just inland, such as rue Hoche, are filled with restaurants and bistros. Cheaper eats can be found in and around Cannes' atmospheric food market, Marché Forville (p870).

★ **La Casa di Nonna** ITALIAN €  
(☎04 97 06 33 51; 41 rue Hoche; mains €13-22; ☺8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) Flowers on the tables, fresh floral decor, Italian food just like an Italian *nonna* (grandmother) makes and delicious home-made cakes make this hybrid restaurant-tearoom a real hit in Cannes. Be it breakfast, mid-morning coffee, lunch or early-evening drinks, Grandma's House is gourmet gold.

**PhilCat** SANDWICHES €  
(☎04 93 38 43 42; promenade de la Pantiérou; sandwiches & salads €3.50-6; ☺9am-6pm mid-Mar-Oct; 🍷) Philippe and Catherine's prefab cabin on the waterfront is a perfect lunch spot. This is fast-food, Cannes-style – giant salads, toasted panini and the best *pan ba-*

*gna* (€5.50; a gargantuan bun filled with tuna, onion, red pepper, lettuce and tomato, and dripping in olive oil) on the Riviera. The 'super' version (€6) throws anchovies into the mix.

★ **Le Grain de Sel** BISTRO €€  
(☎04 93 38 83 65; www.legraindesel-cannes.com; 25 rue Hoche; lunch menus €14-19, mains €15-39; ☺noon-2pm Mon-Sat, 7-10pm Tue-Sat) Vietnamese-born, French-trained chef Nhut Nguyen is at the helm of this delightful bistro on Cannes' pedestrianised restaurant row. The high-ceilinged interior dining room, done up with modern lighting and faux bookshelves, creates a relaxed backdrop for inventive offerings such as house-smoked salmon blinis with beetroot and lemon mousse or veal tartar with truffles.

**Bobo Bistro** MEDITERRANEAN €€  
(☎04 93 99 97 33; www.facebook.com/BoboBistro Cannes; 21 rue du Commandant André; pizzas €15-18, mains €18-32; ☺noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat) Predictably, it's a 'bobo' (bourgeois bohemian) crowd that gathers at this achingly cool bistro in Cannes' fashionable Carré d'Or. Decor is stylishly retro, with attention-grabbing objets d'art including a tableau of dozens of spindles of coloured yarn. Cuisine is local, seasonal and invariably organic: artichoke salad, dorado ceviche with avocado, or rotisserie chicken with mash *fait maison* (homemade).

**Aux Bons Enfants** FRENCH €€  
(☎06 18 81 37 47; www.aux-bons-enfants-cannes.com; 80 rue Meynadier; 2-/3-course menus €24/31, mains €17; ☺noon-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat) A people's-choice place since 1935, this informal restaurant cooks up regional dishes, such as *aioli garni* (garlic and saffron

## WORTH A TRIP

### ISLAND ESCAPES

Although just 20 minutes away by boat, Cannes' tranquil islands feel far from the mad-dancing crowd. **Île Ste-Marguerite**, where the mysterious Man in the Iron Mask was incarcerated during the late 17th century, is known for its bone-white beaches, eucalyptus groves and small marine museum. Tiny **Île St-Honorat** has been a monastery since the 5th century; you can visit the church and small chapels and stroll through the monks' vineyards.

Boats leave Cannes from quai des Îles on the western side of the harbour. **Trans Côte d'Azur** (☎04 92 98 71 30; www.trans-cote-azur.com; quai Max Laubeuf), **Riviera Lines** (☎04 92 98 71 31; www.riviera-lines.com; quai Max Laubeuf) and **Horizon** (☎04 92 98 71 36; www.horizon-lerins.com; quai Laubeuf) all run ferries to Île Ste-Marguerite, while **Planaria** (☎04 92 98 71 38; www.cannes-ilesdelerins.com; quai Max Laubeuf) covers Île St-Honorat.

mayonnaise served with fish and vegetables), *daube* (a Provençal beef stew) and *rascasse meunière* (pan-fried rockfish), all in a convivial atmosphere. No credit cards or reservations.

### New York, New York

BRASSERIE €€

(☎04 93 06 78 27; [www.nynycannes.com](http://www.nynycannes.com); 1 allée de la Liberté; pizzas €13-19, mains €16-36; ☺8.30am-11pm; 🍷🍷) Very trendy and very popular, this Manhattan-style diner with its vast front terrace is a favourite hang-out for Cannes' young and beautiful crowd, who tuck into huge pizzas, steaks, club sandwiches and gourmet burgers. The bare brick and industrial decor are straight outta Brooklyn, but the setting is classic Côte d'Azur.

### ★ Table 22

MODERN EUROPEAN €€€

(Mantel; ☎04 93 39 13 10; [www.restaurantmantel.com](http://www.restaurantmantel.com); 22 rue St-Antoine; menus €40-65, mains €25-46; ☺7-10pm) Discover why Noël Mantel is the hotshot of the Cannois gastronomic scene at his refined old-town restaurant. Service is stellar and the seasonally inspired cuisine divine – Mantel's food maximises local ingredients but isn't afraid to experiment with unusual flavours and cooking techniques. Spot the classic film stars on the walls, from Cary Grant to Alfred Hitchcock.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Going out in Cannes is taken seriously: dress to impress.

Bars around the Carré d'Or (Golden Sq) – bordered by rue Commandant André, rue des Frères Pradignac, rue du Batéguier and rue du Dr Gérard Monod – tend to be young, trendy and busy. Beach and hotel bars are more upmarket. Download the free app **Cannes Agenda** (<http://www.cannes.com/fr/index/applications-mobiles/cannes-agenda.html>) for listings.

### DON'T MISS

#### PICNIC PERFECT

**Marché Forville** ([www.marcheforville.com](http://www.marcheforville.com); 11 rue du Marché Forville; ☺7.30am-1pm Tue-Fri, to 2pm Sat & Sun) For local culture, head to Cannes' busy food market, a couple of blocks back from the port. In the biz since 1934, it is one of the most important markets in the region and the supplier of choice for restaurants – and for your beach picnic! On Monday the food stalls are replaced by an all-day *brocante* (flea market).

**Fromagerie Ceneri** (☎04 93 39 63 68; [www.fromagerie-ceneri.com](http://www.fromagerie-ceneri.com); 22 rue Meynadier; ☺10am-6pm Mon, 8am-7pm Tue-Sat, 8.30am-12.30pm Sun) With cowbells strung from the wooden ceiling, and a stunning array of cheeses, this is the only place to shop for dairy products in Cannes. A master *fromager-affineur* (cheesemonger and ripener) in business since 1968, Ceneri is a rare and precious breed on the Riviera. Its selection of *chèvre* (goat's cheese) from Provence is second to none.

### ★ L'Epicurieux

WINE BAR

(☎04 93 99 93 94; [www.facebook.com/Lepicuriouxbaravins](http://www.facebook.com/Lepicuriouxbaravins); 6 rue des Frères Casanova; ☺10am-10pm Mon-Thu, to 10.30pm Fri & Sat) A cosy little spot for a glass or two of a local vintage – the wine list here is great, with hand-picked choices from local *domaines* including Côtes de Provence and Côtes du Rhône. Bistro snacks and live bands at weekends make it doubly attractive.

### Gotha Club

CLUB

(☎04 93 45 11 11; [www.gotha-club.com](http://www.gotha-club.com); place Franklin Roosevelt, Casino Palm Beach; cover €25-50; ☺midnight-6am Apr-Sep) Only open in high season, this club is a hot ticket in DJ land. Bringing together some of the most happening names in music with a spectacular setting at the seafaring end of La Croisette, Gotha is a glitzy VIP favourite. Door policy is tight: no guys without girls and only fabulous-looking people dressed to the nines.

### Bàoli

CLUB

(☎04 93 43 03 43; [www.baolicannes.com](http://www.baolicannes.com); Port Pierre Canto, bd de la Croisette; ☺8pm-6am May-Oct, Fri & Sat only Mar & Apr) This is Cannes' coolest, trendiest and most selective night-spot – so selective, in fact, that your entire posse might not get in unless you're dressed to the nines. It's part club, part restaurant, so one way to ensure you'll get in is to book a table and make a night of it. You can also try booking on the website.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 92 99 84 22; [www.cannes-destination.fr](http://www.cannes-destination.fr); 1 bd de la Croisette; ☺9am-7pm Mar-Oct, to 8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Nov-Feb; 🗺) Runs the informative 'Once Upon a Time: Cannes' guided walking tour (€6) in English at 9.15am (June to September) or



## STARRING AT CANNES

For 12 days in May, all eyes turn to Cannes, centre of the cinematic universe, where producers, distributors, directors, publicists, stars and hangers-on descend to buy, sell or promote more than 2000 films. As the premier film event of the year, the Festival de Cannes (p867) attracts around 4000 journalists from all over the world.

At the centre of the whirlwind is the colossal, 60,000-sq-metre Palais des Festivals (p865), where the official selections are screened. The palace opened in 1982, replacing the original Palais des Festivals. The inaugural festival was scheduled for 1 September 1939, as a response to Mussolini's fascist-propaganda film festival in Venice, but Hitler's invasion of Poland brought the festival to an abrupt end. It restarted in 1946 – and the rest is history.

Over the years the festival split into 'in competition' and 'out of competition' sections. The goal of 'in competition' films is the prestigious Palme d'Or, awarded to the festival's best film as chosen by the jury and its president. Notable winners include Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Quentin Tarantino's cult *Pulp Fiction* (1994). More recent winners include *Shoplifters* (2018), by Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda, about an impoverished family that takes in an abused girl.

The vast majority of films are 'out of competition'. Behind the scenes, the Marché du Film ([www.marchedufilm.com](http://www.marchedufilm.com)) sees nearly \$1 billion worth of business negotiated in distribution deals. And it's this hard-core commerce, combined with all the televised Tinseltown glitz, that gives the film festival its special magic.

Tickets to the film festival are off limits to average Joes. What you can get are same-day free tickets to selected individual films, usually after their first screening. Availability is limited, and all arrangements must be made through **Cannes Cinéma** (☎04 97 06 45 15; [www.cannes-cinema.com](http://www.cannes-cinema.com); 10 av de Vallauris; ☀10am-noon & 2-4pm).

2.30pm (October to May) every Monday, as well as a host of fun themed tours (in English).

**Tourist Office – Train Station Annexe** (8 bis place de la Gare; ☀9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat)

## 📍 Getting There & Around

### BICYCLE

**Mistral Location** (☎04 93 39 33 60; [www.mistral-location.com](http://www.mistral-location.com); 4 rue Georges Clemenceau) rents out bicycles/scooters for €20/30 per day.

### BUS

From bus stops in front of Cannes' train station, Lignes d'Azur (p864) runs express services to Nice (bus 200; €1.50, 1¼ hours, every 15 minutes), Nice-Côte d'Azur airport (bus 210; one way/return €22/33, 50 minutes, half-hourly), Mougins (bus 600; €1.50, 25 minutes, every 20 minutes) and Grasse (bus 600; €1.50, one hour; every 30 minutes).

**Palmbus** (☎08 25 82 55 99; [www.palmbus.fr](http://www.palmbus.fr)) operates local buses serving Cannes and the surrounding region from a separate **bus station** (place Bernard Cornut Gentille) near the waterfront.

### TRAIN

Cannes' gleaming white train station is well connected with other towns along the coast.

**Antibes** €3.10, 12 minutes, at least twice hourly

**Marseille** €32.40, 2¼ hours, half-hourly

**Monaco** €10, one hour, at least twice hourly

**Nice** €7.20, 40 minutes, every 15 minutes

**St-Raphaël** €7.60, 30 minutes, hourly

## ANTIBES

POP 75,568

With its boat-bedecked port, 16th-century ramparts and narrow cobblestone streets festooned with flowers, it's little wonder that lovely Antibes has stolen the hearts of so many artists and writers: they include Graham Greene, Max Ernst and Picasso, who featured the town in many paintings and now has a museum dedicated to him here.

Only Antibes' attractive old town would be recognisable to any of its famous former residents. The modern town, like many along the Riviera, has sprawled rather unbecomingly along the coast and inland, so the best vantage point is from the sea – ideally in one of the many posh yachts that pull into port throughout summer, or from the long series of beaches south of town.

Beyond the city limits, save some time to explore beautiful **Cap d'Antibes**, a wooded cape studded with seaside mansions and pretty walking trails.

## Sights

### Vieil Antibes

HISTORIC SITE

Ringed by sturdy medieval walls and criss-crossed with lanes and shady squares, old Antibes is a delightful place for a wander. The wonderful **Marché Provençal** (cours Masséna; ☺ 7.30am-1pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun, daily Jul & Aug) is old Antibes' beating heart, sheltered by a 19th-century cast-iron roof and packed with stalls selling olives, cheese, vegetables, tapenades and other Provençal goodies until around 1pm.

### Musée Picasso

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 92 90 54 26; www.antibes-juanlespins.com/culture/musee-picasso; Château Grimaldi, 4 rue des Cordiers; adult/concession €8/6; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun rest of year) Picasso himself said, 'If you want to see the Picassos from Antibes, you have to see them in Antibes'. The 14th-century Château Grimaldi was Picasso's studio from July to December 1946 and now houses an excellent collection of his works and fascinating photos of him. The sheer variety – lithographs, paintings, drawings and ceramics – shows how versatile and curious an artist Picasso was.

The museum also has a room dedicated to Nicolas de Staël, another painter who adopted Antibes as home.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### A SEASIDE STROLL

Stroll along **Bastion St-Jaume** (quai Henri Rambaud; ☺ 10am-11pm Jun-Aug, to 6pm Sep-May), the rampart walkway to the harbour, where luxury yachts jostle for the limelight with *Nomade* (2010), an 8m-tall sculpture of a man looking out to sea. The work of Catalan artist Jaume Plensa, the mirage-like piece is built from thousands of white letters and is lit at night – a magnificent sight. It squats on the terrace of the Bastion St-Jaume, the former site of a Roman temple, a 17th-century fortified tower and, until 1985, a shipyard.

### Fort Carré

MONUMENT

(☎ 04 92 90 52 13; av 11 Novembre; guided tour adult/child €3/free; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Oct, to 5pm Tue-Sun Nov-May) The impregnable 16th-century Fort Carré, enlarged by Vauban in the 17th century, dominates the approach to Antibes from Nice. It served as a border defence post until 1860, when Nice, until then in Italian hands, became French. Tours depart half-hourly; some guides speak English.

### Jardin Botanique de la Villa Thuret

GARDENS

(☎ 04 97 21 25 00; www6.sophia.inra.fr/jardin\_thuret; 90 chemin Raymond; ☺ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri Jun-Sep, 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri Oct-May) **FREE** In the centre of Cap d'Antibes, this serene, 3.5-hectare botanical garden was created in 1856 and showcases 2500 species – the perfect opportunity to study the sun-rich cape's lush and invariably exotic flora up close.

## Beaches

### Plage de la Gravette

BEACH

(quai Henri Rambaud) Right in the centre of Antibes, you'll find Plage de la Gravette, a small patch of sand by the *remparts* (ramparts).

### Plage de la Garoupe

BEACH

This stretch of Cap d'Antibes was first raked clear of seaweed in 1922 by Cole Porter and American artist Gerald Murphy to create a sandy beach. Its golden sand is shared today by a small public beach overlooked by the excellent-value terrace of **Le Rocher** (☎ 04 93 67 51 36; 925 chemin de la Garoupe, Plage de la Garoupe; crepes €11-17, salads & mains €15-26; ☺ 9am-7pm Wed-Mon) and the private **Plage Keller** (with white-tablecloth dining and sun loungers on a jetty).

### Plage de la Salis

BEACH

This beach, with unbeatable views of old Antibes and the Alps, has sublime, soft white sand and is 20 minutes from Antibes.

## Sleeping

Old Antibes has some pleasant hotels, but things get seriously pricey once you head out towards Cap d'Antibes.

### Hôtel La Jabotte

B&B €€

(☎ 04 93 61 45 89; www.jabotte.com; 13 av Max Maurey; d €87-130, ste €254; 📞 @ ☺) Just 150m inland from Plage de la Salis and 2km south of the old town towards Cap d'Antibes, this pretty little hideaway makes a cosy base. Hot pinks, sunny yellows and soothing mauves dominate the homey, feminine decor, and

there's a sweet patio where breakfast is served on sunny days. There's a minimum stay of three nights in summer.

### Le Relais du Postillon

HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 34 20 77; [www.relaisdupostillon.com](http://www.relaisdupostillon.com); 8 rue Championnet; s from €70, d €90-154; 🍷🍷) This stone-walled former coaching hotel has a great location opposite a small park and square on the edge of the old town. Rooms are rather charming, especially the ones at the front, which have their own dinky balconies overlooking the square. The ground-floor cafe is a lovely spot for breakfast, too.

### ★ Hotel Juana

HOTEL €€€

(☎04 93 61 08 70; [www.hotel-juana.com](http://www.hotel-juana.com); 19 Av Gallice; d €160-340; 🍷🍷🍷) Hotel Juana is a steal for a five-star hotel with so much jazz-age history behind it – esteemed guests included Winston Churchill and Marc Chagall. Today it's restored to art deco perfection, and though rooms are on the small side, every detail is chosen for design and comfort. Saunter around elegant Juan-les-Pins beach resort at your doorstep.

### 🍴 Eating

Vièl Antibes is the place to eat, both for atmosphere and for its diversity of restaurants. To build your own picnic, hit Antibes' **Fromagerie l'Etable** (☎04 93 34 51 42; 1 rue Sade; ☀8am-1pm & 3.30-6pm Tue-Sat, 8am-1pm Sun) for cheese and deli products, and dazzling morning market **Marché Provençal** (p872) for everything else. If you have access to your own kitchen, head down to the waterfront quai des Pêcheurs, where fishers sell their morning's catch from 9am to 12.30pm.

### ★ Lilian Bonnefoi

BAKERY €

(☎04 93 33 23 32; <https://lilianbonnefoi.com>; 2 place du Safranier; breakfast & lunch set menus €10-16, brunch €32; ☀8.30am-6pm Tue-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun) 'Hidden gem' gets overused but it perfectly describes this wonderful, backlane patisserie that doubles as a healthy breakfast and lunch spot. Dine on smoked salmon Benedicts for breakfast, avocado and ham on toast for lunch and finish it off with some of the best French pastries you're likely to sample, all on the sunny deck. A big set brunch is served Sundays.

### Nacional Trattoria

INTERNATIONAL €€

(☎04 93 61 77 30; [www.restaurant-nacional-antibes.com](http://www.restaurant-nacional-antibes.com); 61 place Nationale; tapas €8-21, mains

### DON'T MISS

#### JAZZ À JUAN

The beach resort of **Juan-les-Pins**, 2km southwest of Antibes, was famously the home of F Scott Fitzgerald, who lived here with his wife Zelda and daughter Scottie in 1926–27 (their house is now a posh hotel). The waterfront draws steady crowds of beachgoers in summer, along with music fans who descend en masse for the **Jazz à Juan** ([www.jazzajuan.com](http://www.jazzajuan.com); Les Jardins du Jazz, bd Baudoin; ☀mid-Jul) festival in July.

€21-38; ☀noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Thu, to 10.30pm Fri & Sat) 'Beef & Wine' is the strapline of this contemporary wine-bar-styled space, so that should give you some idea of the focus here. It's popular for its burgers, steaks in pepper or port sauce, and other grilled meats. The in-crowd adores it for aperitifs and tapas, best sampled on the walled patio garden hidden away at the back.

### l'Aracruz

FRENCH €€€

(☎04 93 34 75 60; [www.laracruz.fr](http://www.laracruz.fr); 8 rue des Palmiers; lunch menus €29-34, dinner menus €60; ☀noon-2pm Thu-Sun, 7-10pm Wed-Sun) After years polishing his skills in double- and triple-starred Michelin restaurants, young chef Lucas Marini launched his own gastronomic venture in Vièl Antibes' pedestrian zone. Fresh seafood, local veggies and classic Provençal ingredients are incorporated into dishes such as grilled squid with artichokes, candied lemon and olive powder. The stone-walled cellar is especially cosy; come at lunchtime for best value.

### 📍 Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 22 10 60 10; [www.antibesjuanlespins.com](http://www.antibesjuanlespins.com); 42 av Robert Soleau; ☀9am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Sep-Jun) By Antibes train station; an excellent source of tourist information; also offers guided walking tours of old Antibes and 'Painters on the French Riviera' (adult/child €7/3.50).

### 📍 Getting There & Away

#### BUS

The Nice–Cannes bus service (route 200, €1.50) operated by Lignes d'Azur (p864) has a **stop** (bd Général Vautrin) just west of Antibes' train station (cross the tracks via the pedestrian overpass).

**Envibus** (☎04 89 87 72 00; www.envibus.fr) operates local bus services for Cap d'Antibes, Biot, Vence and St-Paul de Vence from a separate **bus station** (Gare Routière d'Antibes; place Guynemer; ☎ ticket office 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat) on the western edge of Vieil Antibes, 700m south of Antibes' train station. Tickets cost €1 from machines or €1.50 from the bus driver.

### TRAIN

Antibes' train station is on the main line between Nice (€4.80, 15 to 30 minutes, four hourly) and Cannes (€3.10, 10 to 15 minutes, four hourly).

## MOUGINS & MOUANS-SARTOUX

POP 28,256

Spiralling up its hilltop, pinprick Vieux Mougins looks almost too perfect to be real. Picasso discovered the medieval village in 1935 with lover Dora Marr and lived here with his final love, Jacqueline Roque, from 1961 until his death. Mougins has since become something of an elite location, with prestigious hotel-restaurants, the country's most-sought-after international school and Sophia Antipolis (France's Silicon Valley) nearby.

Nearby Mouans-Sartoux (population 9701) is equally charming and more down to earth, with a cluster of popular eateries and its own excellent museum to explore.

### Sights

#### ★ Musée d'Art

##### Classique de Mougins

GALLERY

(MACM; ☎04 93 75 18 22; www.mouginsmusee.com; 32 rue Commandeur; adult/child €14/7; ☎10am-6pm Oct-Jun, to 8pm Jul-Sep) The brainchild of compulsive art collector and British entrepreneur Christian Levett, this outstanding museum contains 600 works spanning 5000 years. The collection aims to show how ancient civilisations inspired neo-classical, modern and contemporary art, so the collection is organised by civilisations – Roman, Greek and Egyptian – with antiquities juxtaposed with seminal modern works. The top floor is dedicated to armoury, with excellent interactive displays bringing to life the helmets, spears and shields. There's also a fascinating Roman and Greek coin collection.

### Espace de l'Art Concret

GALLERY

(www.espacedelartconcret.fr; Château de Mouans, Mouans-Sartoux; adult/child €7/free; ☎11am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 1-6pm Wed-Sun Sep-Jun) Modern-art and architecture lovers shouldn't miss Mouans-Sartoux' contemporary-art centre, housed in the 16th-century Château de Mouans and the purpose-built Donation Albers-Honegger extension, a brilliant and brilliantly controversial lime-green concrete block ferociously clashing with its historic surroundings. All the old familiars (Eduardo Chillida, Yves Klein, Andy Warhol, César, Philippe Starck) are here, along with lesser-known practitioners and temporary exhibitions. It's 4km northwest of Mougins.

#### ★ Les Jardins du MIP

GARDENS

(☎04 92 98 62 69; www.museesdegrasse.com; 979 chemin des Gourettes, Mouans-Sartoux; adult/child €4/free, combo ticket incl MIP €6/free; ☎10am-7pm May-Aug, to 5.30pm Apr & Sep-Nov, closed Dec-Mar)

These gorgeous gardens belonging to Grasse's Musée International de la Parfumerie (p875) showcase plants used in scent-making. Half the garden is displayed as fields to show how roses, jasmine and lavender are grown; the other half is organised by olfactory families (woody, floral, amber etc), which you can rub and smell on your way around.

The gardens are 5km northwest of Mougins and 10km southwest of Grasse on the edge of the Mouans-Sartoux village. It's half-price if you show your ticket for the Musée International de la Parfumerie. From Grasse bus station, take bus 20 (€1.50), operated by Sillages (sillages.paysdegrasse.fr).

### Sleeping & Eating

#### ★ Les Rosées

B&B €€€

(☎04 92 92 29 64; www.lesrosees.com; 238 chemin de Font Neuve; d €220-396; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) You know that dreamy Provençal getaway you've been looking for? The one in the little village, set among gardens filled with lavender and honeysuckle, and peaceful wood-beamed rooms looking out over Provençal hills? Well, this place is it. Throw in luxuries including Bose sound systems, designer bathrooms, home-cooked food and a gorgeous pool, and you won't want to leave.

#### ★ Le Sot l'y Laisse

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎04 93 75 54 50; 1 place Suzanne de Villeneuve, Mouans-Sartoux; lunch menus €20-25, dinner menus €25-35, mains €17-32; ☎ noon-2pm & 7-10pm)

Thu-Mon) You won't find a more authentic Provençal restaurant than this place, on the shady town square of Mouans-Sartoux, 4km northwest of Mougins. The signature dish, a hearty chicken stew, gives the place its name (it means 'the fool leaves it there', referring to the juicy oyster of meat most people miss in poultry). Fish, meats and desserts are all superb.

★ **L'Amandier** MODERN FRENCH €€€  
 (📍 04 93 90 00 91; www.amandier.fr; 48 av Jean-Charles Maillet; lunch menus €25, dinner menus €38-60; ☀️ noon-2pm & 7-9.30pm; 🍷) Young chef Denis Fétiisson has brought Roger Vergé's baby back to its former glory. Set in an old mill, it's considered casual in these parts, but comes with chandeliers and breathtaking views. Various fixed-price meals let you shape your culinary experience, but the underlying theme is classic French. Lunch *menus* (€25 including wine, coffee and mini-desserts) offer outstanding value.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (📍 04 92 92 14 00; www.mougins-tourisme.com; 39 place des Patriotes; ☀️ 10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, to 6pm daily Jun & Sep, to 6pm Mon-Sat Apr & May, to 5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar) Located at the entrance of the old village. Pick up the free map to the town's historic centre, and borrow a free set of boules to play *pétanque* with the locals (or your friends); just leave an ID. It also offers 'Picasso in Mougins' tours at 10.30am on Tuesdays, April 1 to September 31st, for €7.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 600 (€1.50), operated by Lignes d'Azur (p864), runs every 20 minutes, connecting Mougins and Mouans-Sartoux with Cannes (20 minutes) and Grasse (35 minutes). Drivers can park free at the Moulin de la Croix car park at the foot of town.

## GRASSE

POP 50,396

Up in the hills to the north of Nice, the town of Grasse has been synonymous with perfumery since the 16th century, and is still home to around 30 makers – a few of which offer guided tours of their factories, and the chance to hone your olfactory skills. The town itself is also delightful, with cob-

## FLOWER FARM VISIT

For a different spin on Grasse's perfume production, plan a trip to **Domaine de Manon** (📍 06 12 18 02 69; www.le-domaine-de-manon.com; 36 chemin du Servan, Plascassier; adult/child €6/free), a lovely flower farm 7km southeast of the centre of Grasse. Centifolia roses and jasmine have been cultivated here for three generations, and the farm now supplies Dior exclusively. Tours only take place during flowering: Tuesday at 9am from early May to mid-June for roses, and late August to mid-October for jasmine; contact Carole Biancalana at domainedemanon@yahoo.fr or ring to reserve and verify times, which vary from year to year.

blestone lanes to explore and views over the lowlands around various corners.

## Sights

★ **Musée International de la Parfumerie** MUSEUM  
 (MIP; 📍 04 97 05 58 11; www.museesdegrasse.com; 2 bd du Jeu de Ballon; adult/child €4/free, combo ticket incl Les Jardins du MIP €6/free; ☀️ 10am-7pm May-Sep, to 5.30pm Oct-Apr; 🗺️) This whiz-bang museum is a work of art: housed in an 18th-century mansion enlarged with a modern glass structure, it retraces three millennia of perfume history through beautifully presented artefacts (including Marie Antoinette's travelling case), bottles, videos, vintage posters, olfactive stations and explanatory panels. The museum offers interesting insights into how the industry developed in Grasse.

**Fragonard's Usine Historique & Musée du Parfum** MUSEUM  
 (📍 04 93 36 44 65; www.fragonard.com/fr/usines/musee-du-parfum; 20 bd Fragonard; ☀️ 9am-6pm) **FREE** At the entrance to the old town, this ochre-coloured mansion is where the Fragonard perfumery began in 1926 – though perfumers were at work here as early as 1782. Guided visits take in the original equipment used for extraction and distilling, and end at the shop where you can buy Fragonard scents. Upstairs there's a small, self-guided Musée du Parfum (Perfume Museum) tracing perfume's history.



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

MUSEUM

(📍04 93 36 80 20; [www.museesdegrasse.com](http://www.museesdegrasse.com); 2 rue Mirabeau; adult/child €2/free; 🕒10am-7pm May-Sep, to 5.30pm Oct-Apr) This old-fashioned local-history museum, at home since 1921 in an aristocratic *hôtel particulier* (mansion), is a wonderful evocation of life in the 18th century. Rooms are laid out much as they were when the marquis of Clapiers-Cabris lived here – he loathed his mother, who lived opposite, so he had a Gorgon's head carved over his door to leer through her windows. Don't miss the ground-floor kitchen, art collection and gardens with springtime wisteria.

## Musée Fragonard

MUSEUM

(Collection Hélène et Jean-François Costa; 📍04 93 36 02 07; [www.fragonard.com/fr/usines/musee-fragonard](http://www.fragonard.com/fr/usines/musee-fragonard); 14 rue Jean Ossola; 🕒10am-6pm) **FREE** On Grasse's main pedestrian street, this small museum explores the work of Grassois painter Fragonard (1732–1806), whose risqué paintings of love scenes shocked and titillated 18th-century France with their licentiousness. Paintings by Marguerite Gérard (1761–1837), Fragonard's sister-in-law and protégé, and Jean-Baptiste Mallet (1759–1835), another Grasse native, fill other rooms on the 1st floor.

## Sleeping & Eating

There are also some lovely options in the countryside surrounding Grasse, especially around the nearby villages of Mougins, Mouans-Sartoux, Le Rouret and Cabris.

## Les Palmiers

B&amp;B €

(📍06 60 52 66 04; [www.les-palmiers-grasse.com](http://www.les-palmiers-grasse.com); 17 av Yves Emmanuel Baudoin; d €65-115, family ste €100-130, apartment €115-180, all incl breakfast; 📞) 🌿 A short but steep walk up from the old town, this spotless and very welcoming B&B has four, good-sized, view-filled rooms plus one two-bedroom, two-bathroom penthouse apartment. There's a full, shared kitchen, a sunny garden to hang out in and free parking as well. All but the family room have terraces and the decor blends simply but elegantly into the 1850s architecture.

## ★ Hotel du Clos

HOTEL €€€

(📍04 93 40 78 85; [www.hotel-du-clos.com](http://www.hotel-du-clos.com); 3 chemin des Écoles, Le Rouret; r €169-260; 📞) 🍷 Hidden in the hills 10km east of Grasse, this village retreat began as a restaurant (now Michelin-starred) and has since

expanded with a second bistro and this lovely hotel, housed in a 17th-century farmhouse and barn. It's effortlessly tasteful, with chic rooms, cosy country decor and swanky bathrooms. The best rooms have views over gardens and olive trees.

## Les Délicatesses de Grasse

PROVENÇAL €

(📍06 16 02 44 26; <https://lesdelicatessesdeg.wixsite.com/monsie>; 3 place aux Aires; tasting plate for 2€18; 🕒10am-10pm) A perfect place to sit outdoors near the old town square and enjoy local cheeses, charcuterie, olives, fresh bread and decadent deserts, all paired with local wine and plenty of friendly information about where your meal comes from. The set *planchas* let you sample it all. Reserve in advance for lunch.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (📍04 93 36 66 66; [www.grasse.fr](http://www.grasse.fr); place de la Buanderie; 🕒9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat; 📞) Takes reservations for guided tours and workshops of the perfume factories, and provides maps and information on the town. Adjacent to the Grasse bus station.

## Getting There & Around

Local bus company Lignes d'Azur (p864) departs regularly from Grasse's **bus station** (place de la Buanderie). Fares for all destinations are a flat-rate €1.50. Bus 600 goes to Cannes (one hour, every 20 minutes) via Mouans-Sartoux (30 minutes) and Mougins (35 minutes). Bus 500 goes to Nice (1½ hours, hourly).

The train station is a short distance downhill from the centre; shuttle buses (€1.50) to 'Centre Ville' depart from in front of the train station. There are regular rail services to Nice (€10.40, one hour, hourly) via Cannes (€4.60, 25 minutes).

## VENCE

POP 18,465

Some visitors only come to Vence to see Matisse's otherworldly Chapelle du Rosaire at the edge of town. Yet Vence deserves more than a flying visit. It's well worth lingering a while to explore the city's charming and well-preserved medieval centre, much of which dates back to the 13th century. Sample some of Vence's gastronomic talent on restaurant-fringed place du Peyra, stroll through lovely place du Frêne with its 500-year-old ash tree, or take time to ap-

preciate the Marc Chagall mosaic in Vieux Venice's cathedral. A fruit-and-veg market fills place du Jardin several mornings a week, with antiques on Wednesday.

## Sights

### ★ **Chapelle du Rosaire**

ARCHITECTURE

(Rosary Chapel; ☎ 04 93 58 03 26; <http://chapellematisse.fr>; 466 av Henri Matisse; adult/child €7/4; ☀ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 2-6pm Wed & Sat Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) An ailing Henri Matisse moved to Venice in 1943 to be cared for by his former nurse and model, Monique Bourgeois, who'd since become a Dominican nun. She persuaded him to design this extraordinary chapel for her community. The artist designed everything from the decor to the altar and the priests' vestments. From the road, you can see the blue-and-white ceramic roof tiles, wrought-iron cross and bell tower. Inside, light floods through the glorious blue, green and yellow stained-glass windows.

### Musée de Venice

MUSEUM

(Fondation Émile Hugues; ☎ 04 93 24 24 23; [www.museeeventence.com](http://www.museeeventence.com); 2 place du Frêne; adult/child €6/3; ☀ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun) With its wonderful 20th-century art exhibitions, this daring art museum inside the imposing Château de Villeneuve offers a nice contrast to Venice's historic quarter. Matisse-lovers will appreciate the permanent exhibit on the 2nd floor, which showcases the city of Venice's private

collection of six dozen works by the great artist, displayed on a rotating basis.

## Sleeping & Eating

### ★ **La Maison du Frêne**

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 06 88 90 49 69; [www.lamaisondufrene.com](http://www.lamaisondufrene.com); 1 place du Frêne; d €155; ☀ Feb-Dec; 🚿 🚿) Named for the gorgeous 500-year-old ash tree out the front, this arty guesthouse is a labour of love for avid art collectors Thierry and Guy. Yes, that Niki de Saint Phalle is an original. And yes, the César too. It's an essential sleeper for true art-lovers, who will thoroughly appreciate the superb, sprawling rooms that boldly mix classic and contemporary styles.

### ★ **Restaurant La Litote**

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 93 24 27 82; [www.lalitote-vence.com](http://www.lalitote-vence.com); 5 rue de l'Évêché; 2-/3-course lunch menus €19/24, dinner menu €35; ☀ noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm, closed Tue Jun-Sep, closed Sun evening & Mon Oct-May) In the heart of Venice's old town, La Litote is the very picture of a village bistro, with tables set out on the square and blackboard menus filled with seasonal classics. Expect stews, supremes and steaks in winter, grilled fish and salads in summer, and delicious desserts year-round. Homey and lovely.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 93 58 06 38; [www.vence-tourisme.fr](http://www.vence-tourisme.fr); 8 place du Grand Jardin;

## WORTH A TRIP

### GORGES DU LOUP

A combination of perilously perched villages, sheer cliffs, waterfalls, densely wooded slopes and gushing rivers, the Gorges du Loup is a scenic, unspoiled part of the world, known for spectacular drives and walking trails.

The highlight of the gorge's western side (reached via the D3) is the fortified village of **Gourdon**, teetering on a rocky summit 14km north of Grasse. Lunch on the splendid home cooking of chef Stephan Lucas at **Au Vieux Four** (☎ 04 93 09 68 60; [www.facebook.com/auvieuxfourgourdon](http://www.facebook.com/auvieuxfourgourdon); 4 rue Basse, Gourdon; lunch menus €22-28, dinner menus €38-43; ☀ noon-2pm Fri-Tue, 7.15-9pm Fri & Sat).

Way down below, along the D2210, bitter-orange trees are cultivated on terraces around the beautifully intact medieval village of **Le Bar-sur-Loup**. Further north along the rushing river's edge, via the D3, tucked beneath the remnants of an old railway bridge (bombed during WWII), you'll find the hamlet of **Le Pont du Loup**.

End in **Tourrettes-sur-Loup**, a postcard-perfect medieval village, a further 10 minutes' drive east along the D2210. **Bistrot Gourmand Clovis** (☎ 04 93 58 87 04; [www.clovisgourmand.fr](http://www.clovisgourmand.fr); 21 Grand Rue, Tourrettes-sur-Loup; 2-/3-/4-course menus €40/49/58, tasting menu with/without wine €105/67; ☀ 12.30-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Wed-Fri & Sun, 7.30-9.30pm Sat; 🍷), in its cobbled heart, cooks up a stylish contemporary decor and creative seasonal cuisine that's been honoured with a Michelin star. Bookings essential.

☉ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) Has several good leaflets on self-guided tours in and around Vence.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Lignes d'Azur (p864) bus 400 to/from Nice (€1.50, 1¼ hours, once or twice hourly) stops on place du Grand Jardin. Medieval Vence is pedestrianised; park in the paid lot (per hour €2) underneath place du Grand Jardin or in the streets leading to the historical centre.

## ST-PAUL DE VENCE

POP 3477

Once upon a time, St-Paul de Vence was a small medieval village atop a hill looking out to sea. Then came the likes of Picasso in the postwar years, followed by showbiz stars such as Yves Montand and Roger Moore, and St-Paul shot to fame.

The village is now home to dozens of art galleries as well as the renowned Fondation Maeght.

Among the many artists who have lived in or passed through St-Paul over the years are Soutine, Léger, Cocteau, Matisse and Chagall. The latter is buried with his wife, Vava, in the cemetery at the village's southern end (immediately to the right as you enter).

St-Paul's tiny cobbled lanes get overwhelmingly crowded in high season – come early or late to beat the rush.

## **o** Sights & Activities

Across from the entrance to the fortified village, the *pétanque* pitch, where many a star has had a spin, is the hub of village life. The tourist office rents out balls (€2) and organises one-hour *pétanque* lessons (€5 per person; reserve in advance).

### Fondation Maeght

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 93 32 81 63; www.fondation-maeght.com; 623 chemin des Gardettes; adult/child €16/11; ☉ 10am-7pm Jul-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Jun) St-Paul's renowned art museum features works by a who's who of 20th-century artists, including many who found inspiration along the Côte d'Azur. From pieces by Georges Braque, Vassily Kandinsky and Marc Chagall to spooky sculptures by Alberto Giacometti and glassworks by Joan Miró, it's a treasure trove – although works from the permanent collection are often disappointingly confined to a single room to make room for temporary exhibits.

## **🏠** Sleeping & Eating

### Villa St Paul

B&B €€

(☎ 04 93 72 58 71; www.villasaintpaulvence.com; 293 chemin Fontmurado; r €135-180, apt €105-250; ☎ ☎) At this attractive oasis 1km below St-Paul, friendly young hosts David and Jeanette welcome guests with three spacious, comfortable rooms and a grassy pool area for lounging. Days begin with abundant breakfasts featuring fresh-squeezed orange juice, croissants, a variety of cheeses and eggs cooked to order. The pricier adjoining Étoile de St-Paul features six more rooms and its own *hammam*.

### ★ Les Cabanes d'Orion

B&B €€€

(☎ 06 75 45 18 64; www.orionbb.com; Impasse des Peupliers, 2436 chemin du Malvan; d €200-285; ☎ ☎) Dragonflies flit above water lilies in the natural swimming pool, while guests slumber amid a chorus of frogs and cicadas in luxurious cedar-wood tree houses at this enchanting, ecofriendly B&B. Children are well catered for with mini-*cabanes* in two of the tree houses. There's a minimum two- to four-night stay from May to September.

### La Colombe d'Or

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 93 32 80 02; www.la-colombe-dor.com; place de Gaulle; d €225-480; ☎ ☎ ☎) This world-famous inn could double as the Fondation Maeght's annex: the 'Golden Dove' was party HQ for dozens of 20th-century artists (Chagall, Braque, Matisse, Picasso etc) who paid for their meals in kind, resulting in an extraordinary private art collection. Rooms are strung with unique pieces, as are the **restaurant** ( mains €29-49; ☉ noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm late Dec-Oct) and garden.

### ★ Le Tilleul

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎ 04 93 32 80 36; www.restaurant-tilleul.com; place du Tilleul; mains €25-29, mains €15-32; ☉ 8.30am-10.30pm; 🍷) Considering its location on the *remparts*, this place could have easily plumbed the depths of a typical tourist trap. But it hasn't. Instead, divine and beautifully presented dishes grace your table, complemented by an all-French wine list and blissful terrace seating under the shade of a big lime-blossom tree. Open for breakfast and afternoon tea too.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 93 32 86 95; www.saint-paulvence.com; 2 rue Grande; ☉ 10am-7pm Jun-Sep, to 6pm Oct-May, closed 1-2pm Sat & Sun) Runs a series of informative,

themed guided tours that delve into the village's illustrious past. Some tours are also available in English. Book ahead. Also organises *pétanque* lessons.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Bus 400, operated by Lignes d'Azur (p864), serves St-Paul once or twice hourly, running between Nice (€1.50, one hour) and Vence (€1.50, seven minutes). The town is closed to traffic, but there are several car parks (€2.70 per hour) surrounding the village.

## CORNICHE DE L'ESTÉREL

A walk or drive along the winding Corniche de l'Estérel, opened by the Touring Club de France in 1903, is an attraction in its own right. Also known as the Corniche d'Or, 'Golden Coast', and signposted as the N98 or the D559, it offers spectacular views of rugged red rock formations juxtaposed against the blue-green Mediterranean. Small summer resorts and dreamy inlets (perfect for swimming), all accessible by bus or train, dot its 30km length stretching from Fréjus and St-Raphaël to Cannes. The most dramatic stretch is between Anthéor and Théoule-sur-Mer, where the tortuous, narrow road skirts through sparsely built areas.



## Activities

With its lush Mediterranean forests, red peaks and sterling sea views, the Massif de l'Estérel is a walker's paradise. Local tourist offices have leaflets detailing popular walks, including Pic de l'Ours (496m) and Pic du Cap Roux (452m). Buy IGN's Carte de Randonnée (1:25,000) No 3544ET *Fréjus, Saint-*

*Raphaël & Corniche de l'Estérel* for more serious walks.

For a more informed hike, sign up for a three-hour guided walk with a forest ranger from the Office National des Forêts (National Forestry Office) or nature guide at **St-Raphaël tourist office** (☎ 04 94 19 52 52; www.saint-raphael.com; 99 quai Albert 1er; ☀ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun, 9am-7pm Jul & Aug). Access to the range is prohibited on windy or particularly hot days because of fire risks; check with the tourist office before setting off.

With its 30km of coastline, the corniche has more than 30 beaches running the gamut of possibilities: sandy, pebbly, nudist, cove-like... you name it. But wherever you go, the sea remains that crystal-clear turquoise and deep blue, an irresistible invitation to swim.

The Estérel is also a leading dive centre, with numerous WWII shipwrecks and pristine waters. Much of the coast is protected, meaning its fauna and flora are among the best around.

## Sentier du Littoral

HIKING

Running 11km between Port Santa Lucia (the track starts behind the naval works) and Agay, this coastal path (yellow markers) takes in some of the area's most scenic spots. It takes roughly 4½ hours to complete, but from May to October you could make a day of it by stopping at some of the idyllic beaches scattered along the way.

You can choose to walk smaller sections; the most scenic is around **Cap du Dramont**, crowned by a signal station, which you can do as a loop from **Plage du Débarquement**. This long, sandy beach is where the US 36th Infantry Division landed on 15 August 1944 as part of Operation Dragoon (Provence

### WORTH A TRIP

#### BIOT

This 15th-century hilltop village (population 9876) was once an important pottery-manufacturing centre specialising in earthenware oil and wine containers. Metal containers brought an end to this, but Biot is still active in handicraft production, especially glass-making. See the blowers in action and pick up some premium glassware at the renowned **Verrerie de Biot** (☎ 04 93 65 03 00; www.verrieriebiot.com; chemin des Combes; guided tour adult/child €6/3, museum adult/child €3/1.50; ☀ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-7.30pm Sun May-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Apr) **FREE**, at the foot of the village. One and a half kilometres south of town, there's also a **museum** (☎ 04 92 91 50 20; https://musees-nationaux-alpesmaritimes.fr/fleger; chemin du Val de Pôme; adult/child incl audioguide €5.50/free, special exhibitions additional €2; ☀ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon May-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Apr) devoted to the experimental artist Fernand Léger, a major inspiration for pop art.

landing). The large memorial park has a car park easily accessible from the N98/D559.

## Fréjus

POP 52,672

Once an important province of Roman Gaul (when it was known as Forum Julii), the little town of Fréjus is a quiet spot that has some surprisingly big attractions – including some Roman ruins, a chapel decorated by the filmmaker-artist Jean Cocteau (of *Les Enfants du Paradis* fame), and an impressive Gothic cathedral whose cloister houses a unique collection of medieval ceiling frescoes.

It's particularly worth a visit on Wednesday and Saturday morning, when the old-town market is in full swing.

### Sights

If you're visiting several sights in Fréjus, it's worth buying a **Fréjus Pass** (€6), which grants entry to all municipal museums, or the **Fréjus Pass Integral** (€9), which also includes the town's top attraction, the cathedral cloister. You can buy the pass at the first sight you visit.

### ★ Cloître de la Cathédrale de Fréjus

CATHEDRAL

(☎04 94 51 26 30; www.cloitre-frejus.fr; 48 rue de Fleury; adult/child €6/free; ☺10am-12.30pm & 1.45-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-May) Fréjus' star sight is its 11th- and 12th-century cathedral, one of the region's first Gothic buildings. Its **cloister** features rare 14th- and 15th-century painted wooden ceiling panels depicting angels, devils, hunters, acrobats and monsters in vivid comic-book fashion. The meaning and origin of these are unknown. Only 500 of the original 1200 frames survive. Afterwards, peek at the octagonal 5th-century **baptistery**, which incorporates eight Roman columns; it's one of the oldest Christian buildings in France and is exceptionally well preserved.

### Les Arènes

RUINS

(Amphitheatre; ☎04 94 51 34 31; https://frejus.fr/decouverte/amphitheatre-romain; rue Henri Vadon; adult/child €3/free; ☺9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-noon & 2-4.30pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar) Fréjus' amphitheatre is a little underwhelming – it was badly damaged during archaeological digs, and some half-hearted reconstruction hasn't quite recaptured the atmosphere of what was once one of Gaul's

largest amphitheatres (seating 10,000 spectators). Plans have been mooted to rebuild it properly, but so far no joy.

### Musée Archéologique

MUSEUM

(☎04 94 52 15 78; 3 place Calvin; adult/child €3/free; ☺9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-noon & 2-4.30pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar) Fréjus' Roman remains have seen better days, so the town's archaeological museum makes a useful accompaniment. There are some fascinating treasures on display dating all the way back to the town's Grecian and Roman beginnings, from everyday objects to rare finds, such as a double-faced marble statue of Hermes, a head of Jupiter and a stunning 3rd-century mosaic depicting a leopard.

### Sleeping & Eating

Fréjus has a few hotels in the town centre, with other options spread out along the coast and in the surrounding countryside. It's the least-expensive home base for exploring the Estérel region.

### Auberge de

#### Jeunesse Fréjus-St-Raphaël

HOSTEL €

(☎04 94 53 18 75; www.fuaj.org; chemin du Counillier; dm €20-26; ☺) This is a rambling, basic HI-affiliated hostel set in 10 hectares of pine trees and parkland, where you can also pitch your tent. It's a half-hour walk or about a seven-minute bus ride into central Fréjus. Daily lockout applies between noon and 5.30pm; rates include breakfast and sheets.

### Hôtel Les Calanques

HOTEL €€

(☎04 98 11 36 36; www.hotel-les-calanques.com; rue du Nid au Soleil, Les Issambres; d €93-149, f €149-169) Thirteen kilometres south of Fréjus towards St-Tropez along the winding coast road, this family-run three-star sits on the rocks above its own quiet cove, accessed via the hotel's palm-filled garden. Many of the 12 simple rooms sport brand-new bathrooms and other upgrades from a recent makeover; and 10 boast stunning sea views – don't even consider the two facing the busy road.

### ★ Le Palais du Fromager

DELI €

(☎04 94 40 67 99; www.mon-fromager.fr; 38 rue Siéyès; plat du jour €16, 5-cheese platter €13; ☺shop 9am-9pm Tue-Fri, to 7pm Sat, lunch noon-2pm Tue-Sat; ☎) Enterprising cheesemonger Philippe Daujam not only sells cheese – he also cooks it into tasty lunches in his deli-style restaurant by the cheese counter and on the street outside. Locals flock for the excellent-value *plat du jour* and can't-go-



wrong cheese platters with salad. The faux cow-skin table mats are a fun touch, and Philippe is a font of *fromage* knowledge.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 94 51 83 83; www.frejus.fr; 249 rue Jean Jaurès; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat Jun & Sep, 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) Runs French-language guided tours (€8) of the town covering history, architecture and natural history.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Bus 4, operated by **AggloBus** (☎ 04 94 53 78 46, 04 94 44 52 70; www.agglobus-cavem.com), links Fréjus' little **bus station** (rue Gustave Bret) with St-Raphaël (€1.50).

From Fréjus' small train station, in summer there are hourly services to/from St-Raphaël (€1.40, three minutes), Cannes (€8.10, 30 to 45 minutes) and Nice (from €13.40, one hour).

## ST-TROPEZ

POP 4352

Putting sexpot Brigitte Bardot came to St-Tropez in the 1950s to star in *Et Dieu Créa la Femme* (And God Created Woman; 1956) and overnight transformed the peaceful fishing village into a sizzling jet-set favourite. Tropezienis have thrived on their sexy image ever since: at the Vieux Port, yachts like spaceships jostle for millionaire moorings, and infinitely more tourists jostle to admire them.

Yet there is a serene side to this village trampled by 60,000 summertime inhabitants and visitors on any given day. In the low season, the St-Tropez of mesmerising quaint beauty and 'sardine scales glistening like pearls on the cobblestones' that charmed Guy de Maupassant (1850-93) comes to life. Meander cobbled lanes in the old fishing quarter of La Ponche, sip pastis at a place des Lices cafe, watch old men play *pétanque* beneath plane trees, or walk in solitary splendour from beach to beach along the coastal path.

## **o** Sights

### Viewpoint

PORT

Yachts line the harbour (as their uniformed crews diligently scrub them) and visitors stroll the quays at the picturesque old port. In front of the sable-coloured townhouses,

the **Bailli de Suffren statue** (quai Suffren) of a 17th-century naval hero, cast from a 19th-century cannon, peers out to sea. Duck beneath the archway, next to the tourist office, to uncover St-Tropez' daily morning **fish market**, on place aux Herbes.

### ★ Musée de l'Annonciade

GALLERY

(☎ 04 94 17 84 10; www.saint-tropez.fr/fr/culture/musee-de-lannonciade; place Grammont; adult/child €6/free; ☎ 10am-6pm daily mid-Jun-Sep, Tue-Sun Oct-mid-Jun) In a gracefully converted 16th-century chapel, this small but famous museum showcases an impressive collection of modern art infused with that legendary Côte d'Azur light. Pointillist Paul Signac bought a house in St-Tropez in 1892 and introduced other artists to the area. The museum's collection includes his *St-Tropez, Le Quai* (1899) and *St-Tropez, Coucher de Soleil au Bois de Pins* (1896). Vuillard, Bonnard and Maurice Denis (the self-named 'Nabis' group) have a room to themselves.

### ★ La Ponche

HISTORIC SITE

Shrug off the hustle of Vieux Port in St-Tropez' historic fishing quarter, La Ponche, to the northeast. From the southern end of quai Frédéric Mistral, place Garzeio sprawls east from 10th-century **Tour Suffren** to place de l'Hôtel de Ville. From here, rue Commandant Guichard leads southeast to iconic **Église de St-Tropez** (Eglise Notre Dame de l'Assomption; rue Commandant Guichard; ☎ 9.30am-noon). Follow rue du Portail Neuf south to **Chapelle de la Miséricorde** (1-5 rue de la Miséricorde; ☎ 10am-6pm).

### Place des Lices

SQUARE

St-Tropez' legendary and very charming central square is studded with plane trees, cafes and *pétanque* players. Simply sitting on a cafe terrace watching the world go by or jostling with the crowds at its twice-weekly **market** (place des Lices; ☎ 8am-1pm Tue & Sat) extravaganza, jam-packed with everything from fruit and veg to antique mirrors and sandals, is an integral part of the St-Tropez experience.

Place des Lices has seen artists and intellectuals fraternising for decades, most frequently in the famous Café des Arts, now simply called **Le Café** (☎ 04 94 97 44 69; www.lecafe.fr; Traverse des Lices; 2-course lunch menu €18, mains €21-32; ☎ 8am-2am) – and not to be confused with the newer, green-canopied Café des Arts on the corner of the square.

## DON'T MISS

## ST-TROPEZ SHOPPING ICONS

St-Tropez has some iconic shoemakers including **Atelier Rondini** (☎ 04 94 97 19 55; www.rondini.fr; 18 rue Georges Clémenceau; ☺ 10.30am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sun), who makes a famous pair (still being made and sold for around €150) that Colette brought here from Greece to be replicated. Another shop, **K Jacques** (☎ 04 94 97 41 50; www.kjacques.com; 39bis rue Allard; ☺ 10am-1pm & 2.30-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1pm & 3-8.30pm Sun), has made handcrafted sandals for the likes of Picasso and Brigitte Bardot.

If you'd like to find a more down-to-earth side of St-Tropez, head to the twice weekly, traditional market (p881), with everything from cheese trucks and veg stalls to bric-a-brac sellers, sandal-makers and vintage clothes.

Aspiring *pétanque* players can borrow a set from the bar.

★ **Citadelle de St-Tropez**

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 94 97 59 43; www.saint-tropez.fr/culture/citadelle; 1 montée de la Citadelle; adult/child €3/free; ☺ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm; 🚻) Built in 1602 to defend the coast against Spain, the citadel dominates the hillside overlooking St-Tropez to the east. The views are fantastic, as are the exotic peacocks wandering the grounds. Its dungeons are home to the excellent **Musée de l'Histoire Maritime**, an interactive museum that traces the history of humans at sea through fishing, trading, exploration, travel and the navy. The particular focus, of course, is Tropezienne and Provençal seafarers.

🏖️ **Beaches**★ **Plage de Pampelonne**

BEACH

The 5km-long, celebrity-studded Plage de Pampelonne sports a line-up of exclusive beach restaurants and clubs in summer. Find public entries (and parking for €5.50) at one of six access points: rte de Tahiti, chemin des Moulins, chemin de Tamaris, bd Patch, chemin des Barraques and rte de Bonne Terrasse. The northern edge of the beach begins 4km southeast of St-Tropez with **Plage de Tahiti**.

Work undertaken throughout 2020 and 2021 includes parking expansion and

automation, walking paths and lots of landscaping.

🌊 **Plage des Salins**

BEACH

(chemin des Salins) Just east of St-Tropez, Plage des Salins is a 600m-wide pine-fringed beach at the southern foot of Cap des Salins. At the northern end of the beach, on a rock jutting out to sea, is the tomb of Émile Olivier (1825-1913), who served as first minister to Napoleon III until his exile in 1870. It looks out towards **La Tête de Chien**, named after the legendary dog who declined to eat St Torpes' remains.

🚶 **Activities & Tours**🌊 **Sentier du Littoral**

WALKING

A spectacular coastal path wends past rocky outcrops and hidden bays 35km south from St-Tropez, around the peninsula to the beach at Cavalaire-sur-Mer. In St-Tropez, the yellow-flagged path starts at **La Ponche**, immediately east of Tour du Portalet, and curves around Port des Pêcheurs, past the citadel. It then leads past the walled **Cimitière Marin**, **Plage des Graniers** and more lovely, less-crowded beaches.

The tourist office has maps with distances and walking times (eg, Plage des Salins is 8.5km or around 2½ hours' walk).

🚤 **Les Bateaux Verts**

BOATING

(☎ 04 94 49 29 39; www.bateauxverts.com; 7 quai Jean Jaurès) Les Bateaux Verts offers trips around Baie des Cannebières (dubbed 'Bay of Stars' after the celebrity villas dotting its coast) from April to September (adult/child from €12/6.50), as well as seasonal boats to Cannes (€40/25.50, 1½ hours) and Porquerolles (€44/28.50, two hours), and regular shuttle boats to Marines de Cogolin, Port Grimaud, Ste-Maxime and Les Issambres.

🛖 **Sleeping**

St-Tropez is home to celebrity-studded hangs, with prices to match – this is no shoestring destination, though campgrounds do sit southeast along Plage de Pampelonne. Most hotels close in winter; the tourist office lists what's open, and also has a list of B&Bs. If you're driving, double-check the parking arrangements.

🏕️ **La Vigneraie 1860**

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 04 94 97 17 03; www.la-vigneraie-1860.fr; chemin des Moulins; site for 2 people €40, apt per week from €700; ☺ Apr-Oct, reception 8am-noon &

5-8pm; This simple spot for tents and caravans, just off Plage de Pampelonne, offers one of the few ways to live cheaply and still get a chance to hang out in one of the most exclusive locales in the region. Surrounded by vineyards, it has basic showers and apartments.

### Hôtel Lou Cagnard

HOTEL €€

( 04 94 97 04 24; www.hotel-lou-cagnard.com; 30 av Paul Roussel; d €86-188; Apr-late Oct; This old-school hotel stands in stark contrast to most of the swanky hotels around St-Tropez. Located in an old house shaded by lemon and fig trees, its 18 rooms are unashamedly frilly and floral, but some have garden patios, and the lovely jasmine-scented garden and welcoming family feel make it a home away from home. The cheapest rooms share toilets.

### Pan Deï Palais

HOTEL €€€

( 04 94 17 71 71; www.pandei.com; 52 rue Gambetta; d from €495; This elegant, traditional-style town house is decked out in a contrasting Indian-inspired decor to create a unique style. The central courtyard is blooming with tropical plants and their sweet perfumes that continue to the pool and spa areas. It's worth upgrading to the much larger Prestige rooms, but all of the total 12 rooms are quiet and lush. Swan about like a raja.



### Eating

Prices are high: the glamour dust sprinkled on fish and chips doesn't come cheap! Quai Jean Jaurès is lined with mediocre restaurants with great portside views. Cheaper eats cluster near quai de l'Épi and the new port. Reservations are essential in high season; many restaurants close in winter.

Don't leave town without sampling *tarte Tropézienne*, an orange-blossom-flavoured double sponge cake filled with thick cream, created by Polish baker A Mickla in 1955.

### La Tarte Tropézienne

CAFE €

( 04 94 97 94 25; www.latarartetropézienne.fr; place des Lices; tarts/snacks from €5.50/3; 6.30am-10pm; This smart, bustling cafe-bakery is the creator of St Tropez' eponymous sugar-crusted, orange-perfumed cake, but also does decent breads and light meals. There are smaller branches on **rue Clémenceau** ( 04 94 97 71 42; www.latarartetropézienne.fr; 36 rue Clémenceau; tarts/snacks €5.50/3; 7am-9.30pm) and near the **new port** ( 04 94 97 19 77; www.latarartetropézienne.fr; 9 bd Louis Blanc; tarts/snacks

€5.50/3; 7am-7pm), plus various other towns around Provence and the Île de France.

### La Pesquière

SEAFOOD €

( 04 94 97 05 92; http://pesquiere.mazagran.free.fr; 1 rue des Remparts; mains €16-26; 9am-11pm late Mar-Oct) It's no surprise this old-fashioned place survives in restless, modish St Tropez: since 1962 the one family has made an art of buying the day's freshest catch – whether that be dorade, red mullet, bass or prawns – and cooking it to simple perfection. Locals love it, as do visitors, and you feel you've had your money's worth.

### ★ La Vague d'Or

GASTRONOMY €€€

( 04 94 55 91 00; www.chevalblanc.com; Cheval Blanc St-Tropez, Plage de la Bouillabaisse; menus from €310; 7.30pm-midnight Thu-Tue Jun-mid-Oct; Triple-starred chef Arnaud Donckele has established a gastronomic temple at the Cheval Blanc St-Tropez: expect exquisite ingredients treated with the utmost cheffy cleverness. But with offerings such as the Balade Epicurienne setting you back half a grand for seven courses with matched wines, expectations can rise to dangerous heights. Then again, this *is* St Tropez.

### Information

**Tourist Office** ( 04 94 97 45 21; www.sainttropeztourisme.com; quai Jean Jaurès; 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Apr-Aug, to 6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Mar) Runs occasional walking tours April to October, and also has a **kiosk** ( 9am-6pm Jul & Aug) in Parking du Port in July and August.

### Getting There & Around

#### BICYCLE

**Rolling Bikes** ( 04 94 97 09 39; www.rolling-bikes.com; 50 av du Général Leclerc; per day bikes/scooters/motorcycles from €17/46/120; 9am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jun, daily Jul & Aug) Do as the locals do and opt for two wheels.

#### BOAT

**Les Bateaux de St-Raphaël** ( 04 94 95 17 46; www.bateauxsaintraphael.com; Apr-late Oct) Seasonal boats between St-Tropez (Nouveau Port) and St-Raphaël (one way adult/child €15/10, one hour).

**Les Bateaux Verts** (p882)

**Sea Taxi** ( 06 12 40 28 05; www.taxi-boat-saint-tropez.com) Taxi boat for hire around St-Tropez. A crossing from St-Tropez to Ste-Maxime is €80 during the day, and €100 after 10pm.

**Trans Côte d'Azur** (📞 04 92 98 71 30; www.trans-cote-azur.co.uk; 🕒 May-Oct) Ferries from Nice and Cannes.

## BUS

Tickets cost €4 from the **bus station** (Gare Routière; 📞 04 94 56 25 74; av du Général de Gaulle) for anywhere within the Var *département* (except Toulon-Hyères airport). Destinations include Ramatuelle (35 minutes, up to six daily) and St-Raphaël (1¼ to three hours, depending on traffic, hourly) via Grimaud and Port Grimaud, and Fréjus.

Buses to Toulon (two hours, seven daily, fewer in summer) stop at Le Lavandou (one hour) and Hyères (1½ hours).

Buses serve Toulon-Hyères airport (€15, 1½ hours), but some require a transfer.

## MASSIF DES MAURES

A wild range of wooded hills rumpling the landscape inland between Hyères and Fréjus, the Massif des Maures is a pocket of surprising wilderness just a few miles from the summer hustle of the Côte d'Azur. Shrouded by pine, chestnut and cork oak trees, its near-black vegetation gives rise to its name, derived from the Provençal word *mauro* (dark pine wood).

Traditional industries (chestnut harvests, cork, pipe-making) are still practised here, and the area is criss-crossed by hiking trails that offer spectacular views of the surrounding coastline.

Hidden in the forest, the leafy village of **Collobrières** is *the* place to taste chestnuts. Across its 11th-century bridge, the **tourist office** (📞 04 94 48 08 00; www.mpmtourisme.com; bd Charles Caminat; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, 2-5.30pm Thu, 9am-12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year) can help you participate in the October chestnut harvest, celebrated with the **Fête de la Châtaigne**, or join a guided forest walk.

## 🗨️ Sights & Activities

Local tourist offices can supply hiking guides and route suggestions, but note that from June to September, access to many areas is limited due to the risk of forest fire. Depending on the risk, trails are graded yellow, orange, red and black, with yellow meaning some minor restrictions at certain times of day, and black meaning total closure. Ask at a tourist office before you set out.

★ **Monastère de la Verne** MONASTERY  
(Chartreuse de la Verne; 📞 04 94 43 45 51; https://bethleem.org/monasteres/laverne.php; off D14; adult/child €6/3; 🕒 11am-6pm Wed-Mon Jun-Aug, to 5pm Feb-May & Sep-Dec; 📍) The majestic 12th-century Monastère de la Verne sits on a forested ridge in the Massif des Maures, rising like an island of honeyed stone in a sea of green. The Carthusian institution was founded in 1170, possibly on the site of a temple to the goddess Laverna, protector of the bandits who hid in the Maures. It has been ravaged by fire and rebuilt several times over the years (much of the reconstruction dates from the 17th and 18th centuries).

**Village des Tortues** WILDLIFE RESERVE  
(📞 04 89 29 14 10; www.villagedestortues.fr; 1065 rte du Luc/D97, Carnoules; adult/child €15/10; 🕒 10am-7pm Apr-Aug, to 6pm Sep & Oct, to 5pm Wed, Sat & Sun Nov-Mar; 📍) This sanctuary protects one of France's most endangered species, the Hermann tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) today found only in the Massif des Maures and on Corsica. In summer, the best time to see the tortoises is in the morning and late afternoon. Watch them hatch from mid-May to the end of June; they hibernate from November to early March. Guided tours at 10.30am and 2.30pm are enlightening.

## 🏠 Sleeping & Eating

The tourist office lists local *gîtes* (cottages), hotels and B&Bs online.

★ **La Petite Fontaine** FRENCH €€  
(📞 04 94 48 00 12; 6 place de la République; menus €33-35; 🕒 noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9pm Tue-Sat, noon-1.30pm Sun) Locals travel from miles around to sit at a tree-shaded table on place de la République and feast on *daube de boeuf* (beef stew), forest mushrooms and house-made terrine at one of southern France's most charming, relaxed village inns. The walls inside are exposed stone, and the fruit tarts are out of this world. Reservations are essential, as is cash.

**Ferme de Peïgros** FRENCH €€  
(📞 04 94 48 03 83; http://fermedepeigros.pag.esperso-orange.fr; Col de Babaou; menus €30; 🕒 noon-2pm Jan-Dec, 7-9.30pm Jul & Aug; 📍) Treat yourself to real mountain food: wild boar, pheasant, capon, kid, *cèpes* (porcini mushrooms) and other delicacies. Finish with chestnut ice cream and superb views at this goat farm, 1.8km along a gravel track

from the top of the Col de Babaou (8km from Collobrières). You can also stay at one of two *gîtes* (€305 per week). Bring cash.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Public transport is pretty much non-existent up in the hills. You'll need your own wheels.

## CORNICHE DES MAURES

The Corniche des Maures (D559) unwinds beautifully southwest from La Croix-Valmer to Le Lavandou along a shoreline trimmed with sandy beaches ideal for swimming, sunbathing and windsurfing.

Tiny **Plage du Rayol** and **Plage de l'Escale** are particularly enchanting beaches: they're backed by pine trees and have a restaurant on the sand. As the D559 hugs the coast going west, you'll reach Plage du Layet, the beautiful beach at **Cavalière** (not to be confused with Cavalaire-sur-Mer).

Once a fishing village, **Le Lavandou** is now an overbuilt family-oriented beach resort with a small intact old town and 12km of golden sand; opposite the **tourist office** (☎04 94 00 40 50; www.ot-lelavandou.fr; quai Gabriel Péri; ☀9am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm May, Jun & Sep, shorter hours rest of year) boats sail to the **Îles des Hyères**. Inland, the flower-strewn hilltop village of **Bormes-les-Mimosas** is the jewel in the Corniche des Maures' crown.

## **o** Sights & Activities

Bormes-les-Mimosas' **tourist office** (☎04 94 01 38 38; www.bormeslesmimosas.com; 1 place

Gambetta; ☀9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar; ☎) takes bookings for botanical walks (€9) and hikes (€7) with a forest warden in the village's nearby **Forêt du Dom**.

## ★ **Domaine du Rayol**

GARDENS

(Le Jardin des Méditerranées; ☎04 98 04 44 00; www.domainedurayol.org; av des Belges, La Rayol-Canadel; adult/child €12/9; ☀9.30am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, to 6.30pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, to 5.30pm Nov-Mar; ♿) Growing continuously since its conception in 1910, this stunning garden, with plants from all Mediterranean climates, is wonderful for a stroll or a themed nature walk. The dense flora cascades down the hillside to the sea, and while the flowers are at their best in April and May, it's always worth a visit. In summer, at the estate's petite gem of a beach, you can snorkel around underwater flora and fauna with an experienced guide (adult/child €30/22; bookings essential).

## **Fort de Brégançon**

FORT

(☎04 94 01 38 38; www.bormeslesmimosas.com; av Guy Tezenas, Cap de Brégançon; adult/child €10/free, parking €7-10; ☀9am-5.45pm late Jun-mid-Oct, shorter hours rest of year) A private residence of the president from 1968 to 2013, the Fort de Brégançon is now a national monument that's open to the public by three-hour guided tour. Located on a scenic peninsula 20 minutes' drive from Bormes-les-Mimosas, the imposing fort dates back to the 11th century and has featured in numerous conflicts since, from the tensions between Provence and France to the French Revolution and WWI. Tickets must be

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

#### ROUTE DES CRÊTES

For breathtaking views of the Med and the Îles d'Hyères, follow rte des Crêtes as it winds its way through maquis-covered hills some 400m above the sea. From Bormes-les-Mimosas, follow the D41 uphill (direction Collobrières) past the Chapelle St-François and, 1.5km north of the village centre, turn immediately right after the sign for Col de Caguo-Ven (237m).

The **Relais du Vieux Sauvaira** (☎04 94 22 02 32; www.relaisduvieuxsauvaire.com; rte des Crêtes, corniche de la pierre d'Avenoun; menu €46, mains €32-40; ☀noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-12.30pm Sun May-Nov; ♿) is the gem of these hills. With dreamy 180-degree views, this restaurant and pool (most people come for lunch and then stay all afternoon) is one of a kind. The food is as sunny as the views: pizzas, melon and Parma ham, or whole sea bass in salt crust.

Past the restaurant, rte des Crêtes joins the final leg of the panoramic Col du Canadel road. On the *col* (mountain pass), turn left to descend into the heart of the forested Mas-sif des Maures, or right to the sea and the coastal Corniche des Maures (D559).



booked in advance online or via the Bormes tourist office (p885).

## **i** Getting There & Away

The coastal D559 is served by **VarLib** (<http://zou.maregionsud.fr>) buses 7801 and 7802, running between St-Tropez and Toulon (€3, two hours, up to 20 per day).

## THE THREE CORNICHES

This trio of corniches (coastal roads) hugs the cliffs between Nice and Monaco, each higher than the last, with dazzling views of the Med. For the grandest views, it's the Grande Corniche you want, but the Moyenne Corniche runs a close second. The lowest of all, the Corniche Inférieure, allows access to a string of snazzy coastal resorts.

With Nice, Monaco and Menton all nearby, there's no compelling reason to stay overnight on the Corniches. A few cafes and bistros pepper the cliff-top roads, or picnic-shop before hitting the high road.

Skimming the villa-lined waterfront between Nice and Monaco, the **Corniche Inférieure**, built in the 1860s, passes through the towns of Villefranche-sur-Mer, St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Èze-sur-Mer and Cap d'Ail.

### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

#### LAZY LUNCH CALL

The Corniche des Maures squirrels away a couple of memorable addresses that beg long, lazy lunches.

On the southwestern end of nudist Plage du Layet, bare-bones **Chez Jo** (Restaurant Plage du Layet; ☎ 04 94 05 85 06; Plage du Layet, Cavalière; mains €20-30; ☀ noon-3pm May-Sep) is the ultimate summer seafood, suntan and socialisation shack on the sand, and it buzzes come noon, with tanned, barefoot beach-lovers sipping Bandol whites and devouring the fresh seafood.

At the other end of the spectrum, in Bormes-les-Mimosas, is Michelin-starred **La Rastègue** (☎ 04 94 15 19 41; [www.larastegue.com](http://www.larastegue.com); 48 bd du Levant; menus €50; ☀ 7.30-9pm Tue-Sat, noon-1.45pm Sun Apr-Nov) with its ever-changing menu of superb Provençal fare and sensational sea-view terrace.

Cut through rock in the 1920s, the **Moyenne Corniche** takes drivers from Nice past the Col de Villefranche (149m), the hilltop village of Èze and Beausoleil (the French town bordering Monaco's Monte Carlo).

Views from Napoléon's spectacular cliff-hanging **Grande Corniche** are mesmerising. Hitchcock was sufficiently impressed to use it as a backdrop for his film *To Catch a Thief* (1956), starring Cary Grant and Grace Kelly. Sadly, Kelly died in 1982 after crashing her car on this very same road. There are no villages of note along the Grande Corniche until you reach hilltop La Turbie, best known for its imposing Roman triumphal monument.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Bus 100 (€1.50, every 15 minutes from 6am to 8pm) runs the length of the Corniche Inférieure between Nice and Menton, stopping at all the villages along the way, including Villefranche-sur-Mer (15 minutes), Beaulieu-sur-Mer (20 minutes) and Cap d'Ail (35 minutes). Bus 81 serves Villefranche (20 minutes) and St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat (30 minutes).

From Nice, trains to Ventimiglia in Italy (half-hourly 5am to 11pm) stop at Villefranche-sur-Mer (€1.90, seven minutes), Beaulieu-sur-Mer (€2.30, 10 minutes) and Cap d'Ail (€3.50, 20 minutes).

Bus 82 serves the Moyenne Corniche from Nice all the way to Èze (20 minutes); bus 112 carries on to Beausoleil (40 minutes, Monday to Saturday).

Bus 116 links the town of La Turbie with Nice (€1.50, 35 minutes, five daily), and bus 114 goes to Monaco (€1.50, 30 minutes, six daily).

## Èze

POP 2239

This rocky medieval village perched on an impossibly steep peak is as perfectly Côte d'Azur as you'll find. Stroll the winding, cobblestone lanes lined with higgledy-piggledy stone houses as well as plenty of galleries and shops. Stop to take in the mesmerising views of the coast.

The village gets very crowded during the day; for a quieter wander, come early in the morning or late afternoon. You'll get the best panorama from Jardin Exotique d'Èze.

## **i** Sights & Activities

### Jardin Exotique d'Èze

GARDENS

(☎ 04 93 41 10 30; [www.jardinexotique-eze.fr](http://www.jardinexotique-eze.fr); rue du Château; adult/child €6/3.50; ☀ 9am-7.30pm

Jul-Sep, to 6.30pm Apr-Jun & Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar) The best panorama in Èze village is from this cactus garden right at the top of the craggy hilltop village. Take time to relax in the ruins of Èze's castle and contemplate the stunning view from the garden's Zen area – few places offer such a wild panorama.

### Fort de la Revère

VIEWPOINT

Sitting just below Èze, this fort is the perfect place to revel in 360-degree views. An orientation table helps you get your bearings. The fort was built in 1870 to protect Nice (it served as an allied prisoner camp during WWII). There are picnic tables under the trees for an al fresco lunch and dozens of trails in the surrounding Parc Naturel Départemental de la Grande Corniche, a protected area that stretches along the D2564 from Col d'Èze to La Turbie.

### Sentier Nietzsche

WALKING

☞ This incredibly steep downhill hike takes you all the way from the hilltop village of Èze (elevation 427m) to the seaside village of Èze-sur-Mer in just 45 minutes, with some spectacular views en route. Bring sturdy hiking shoes and plenty of water, and take care with loose rocks underfoot. The trail is clearly signposted near the bottom of Èze village.



### Sleeping & Eating

#### ★ Château Eza

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(☎04 93 41 12 24; www.chateaueza.com; rue de la Pise; d €215-580; ☎☎) If you're looking for a place to propose, well, there can be few more memorable settings than this wonderful clifftop hotel, perched dramatically above the glittering blue Mediterranean. There are only 14 rooms, so it feels intimate, but the service is impeccable, and the regal decor (gilded mirrors, sumptuous fabrics, antiques) explains the sky-high price tag.

Even if you're not staying, it's worth experiencing a sundowner at the stylish bar or – even better – a meal at the hotel's luxurious **restaurant** (lunch menus €50-62, tasting menus €100).

## La Turbie

POP 3063

Perched high above the Mediterranean, the village of La Turbie is a key stop along the Grande Corniche scenic drive. Its main

attraction is the spectacular Trophée des Alpes, a monument built by Emperor Augustus at the high point of the ancient Via Julia Augusta to celebrate the Romans' pivotal victory over the surrounding mountain tribes. There are some attractive pedestrianised streets and good restaurants in the immediate vicinity of the monument.



### Eating

#### ★ Café de la Fontaine

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎04 93 28 52 79; www.hostellerie-gerome.com/le-cafe-de-la-fontaine; 4 av Général de Gaulle; mains €18-26; ☺ noon-3pm & 7-11pm) Those not in the know wouldn't give this inconspicuous yet newly renovated village bistro a second glance. What they don't know is that it is Michelin-starred chef Bruno Cirino's baby – somewhere for him to go back to his culinary roots with simple yet delicious dishes reflecting *le terroir* (land) and season. Blackboard *plats* (dishes) are a perfect reflection of what's at the market.

## MONACO

POP 38,964

Squeezed into just 200 hectares, Monaco might be the world's second-smallest country (only the Vatican is smaller), but what it lacks in size it makes up for in attitude. A magnet for high-rollers and hedonists since the early 20th century, it's also renowned as one of the world's most notorious tax havens and home to the annual Formula One Grand Prix.

Despite its prodigious wealth, Monaco is far from being the French Riviera's prettiest town. World-famous Monte Carlo is basically an ode to concrete and glass, dominated by high-rise hotels, super yachts and apartment blocks that rise into the hills like ranks of dominoes, plonked into an utterly bewildering street layout seemingly designed to confound lowly pedestrians.

In dramatic contrast, the rocky outcrop known as Le Rocher, jutting out on the south side of the port, is crowned by a rather charming old town, home to the principality's royal palace.

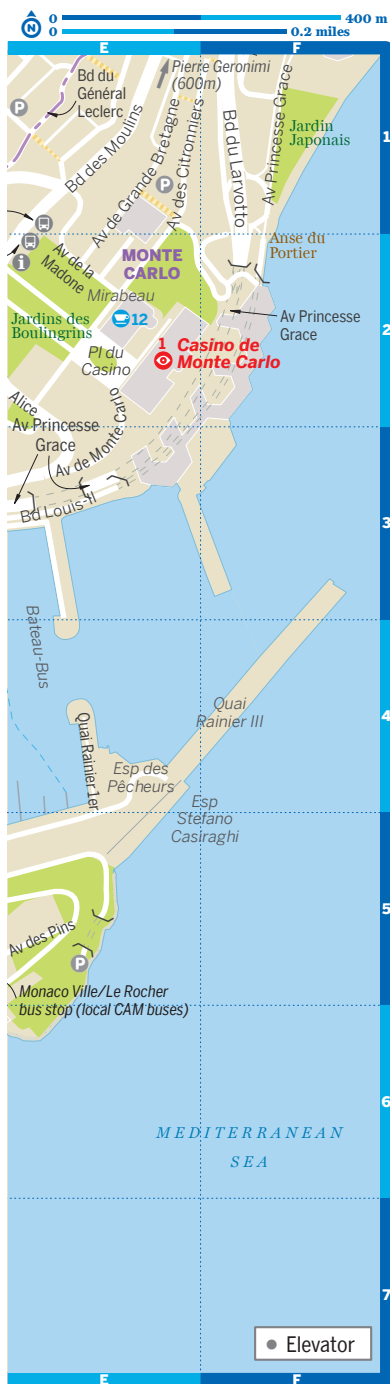


### Sights & Activities

Major construction is under way on the north side of the port, where the Anse de Portier Seafront Extension project is underway.

## Monaco





## Monaco

### Top Sights

- 1 Casino de Monte Carlo ..... E2
- 2 Jardin Exotique ..... A5
- 3 Le Rocher ..... C5
- 4 Musée Océanographique de Monaco ..... D6

### Sights

- 5 Cathédrale de Monaco ..... D6
- 6 Collection de Voitures Anciennes ..... B6
- 7 Palais Princier de Monaco ..... C5

### Sleeping

- 8 Hôtel de France ..... B4

### Eating

- 9 La Montgolfière ..... D5
- 10 Maison des Pâtes ..... C5
- 11 Marché de la Condamine ..... C5

### Drinking & Nightlife

- 12 Café de Paris ..... E2
- 13 Rascasse ..... D5

Building in this new district has begun and is expected to be completed by 2025.

### ★ Le Rocher

HISTORIC SITE

Monaco Ville, also called Le Rocher, is the only part of Monaco to have retained its original old town, complete with small, windy medieval lanes. The old town thrusts skywards on a pistol-shaped rock, its strategic location overlooking the sea that became the stronghold of the Grimaldi dynasty. There are various staircases up to Le Rocher; the best route up is via Rampe Major, which starts from place d'Armes near the port.

### Palais Princier de Monaco

PALACE

(☎) 93 25 18 31; [www.palais.mc](http://www.palais.mc); place du Palais; adult/child €10/5, incl Collection de Voitures Anciennes car museum €8/4, incl Musée Océanographique €16/10; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep-mid-Oct, to 7pm Jul & Aug) Built as a fortress atop Le Rocher in the 13th century, this palace is the private residence of the Grimaldi family. It is protected by the blue-helmeted, white-socked Carabiniers du Prince; changing of the guard takes place daily at 11.55am, when crowds gather outside the gates to watch.

Most of the palace is off limits, but you can get a glimpse of royal life on a tour of the glittering state apartments, where you can see some of the lavish furniture and priceless artworks collected by the family over

the centuries. It's a good idea to buy tickets online in advance to avoid queuing.

Combined tickets including Monaco's oceanographic museum or the Prince's **classic car collection** (Monaco Top Cars Collection; ☎92 05 28 56; www.mttc.mc; Terrasses de Fontvieille; adult/child €6.50/3, incl Palais Princier de Monaco €11.50/5; ☀10am-6pm) are also available.

### Cathédrale de Monaco

CATHEDRAL

(https://diocese.mc; 4 rue Colonel Bellando de Castro; ☀8.30am-6.45pm) **FREE** An adoring crowd continually shuffles past Prince Rainier's and Princess Grace's flower-adorned graves, located inside the cathedral choir of Monaco's 1875 Romanesque-Byzantine cathedral.

### ★ Musée

#### Océanographique de Monaco

AQUARIUM

(☎93 15 36 00; www.oceano.mc; av St-Martin; adult/child high season €16/10; ☀9.30am-8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-7pm Apr-Jun & Sep, to 6pm Oct-Mar) Stuck dramatically to the edge of a cliff since 1910, the world-renowned Musée Océanographique de Monaco, founded by Prince Albert I (1848-1922), is a stunner. Its centrepiece is its aquarium with a 6m-deep lagoon where sharks and marine predators are separated from colourful tropical fish by a coral reef. Upstairs, two huge colonnaded rooms retrace the history of oceanography and marine biology (and Prince Albert's contribution to the field) through photographs, old equipment, numerous specimens and interactive displays.

### ★ Jardin Exotique

GARDENS

(☎93 15 29 80; www.jardin-exotique.mc; 62 bd du Jardin Exotique; adult/child €8/4; ☀9am-7pm mid-May-mid-Sep, to 6pm rest of year) Home to the world's largest succulent and cactus collection, from small echinocereus to 10m-tall African candelabras, the gardens tumble down the slopes of Moneghetti through a maze of paths, stairs and bridges. Views of the principality are spectacular. Admission includes the **Musée d'Anthropologie**, which displays prehistoric remains unearthed in Monaco, and a 35-minute guided tour of the **Grotte de l'Observatoire**. The prehistoric, stalactite- and stalagmite-laced cave is the only one in Europe where the temperature rises as you descend.

### ★ Casino de Monte Carlo

CASINO

(☎98 06 21 21; www.casinomontecarlo.com; place du Casino; morning visit incl audio guide adult/child Oct-Apr €17/8, May-Sep €17/12, salons ordinaires

gaming €17; ☀visits 9am-1pm, gaming 2pm-late) Peeping inside Monte Carlo's legendary marble-and-gold casino is a Monaco essential. The building, open to visitors every morning, including the exclusive *salons privés*, is Europe's most lavish example of Belle Époque architecture. Prince Charles III spearheaded the casino's development and in 1866, three years after its inauguration, the name 'Monte Carlo' – Ligurian for 'Mount Charles' in honour of the prince – was coined. To gamble here, visit after 2pm (when a strict over-18s-only admission rule kicks in).

## 🌟 Festivals & Events

### Formula One Grand Prix

SPORTS

(www.formula1monaco.com; ☀late May) Formula One's most iconic event spans four days in late May, when Monaco goes completely car crazy and every street in town is closed for the race. At other times of the year, fans can walk the 3.2km circuit through town; the tourist office has maps. Friday's cheapest tickets go for €30, but figure €1400 for a prime casino-side Sunday spot.

### Grand Prix Historique de Monaco

SPORTS

(www.monacograndprixticket.com/grand-prix-historique; tickets €53-126; ☀May) Held every other year (in even-numbered years), this fun event features vintage racing cars navigating Monte Carlo's twists and turns two weeks before the Formula One Grand Prix begins.

## 🏠 Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel de France

HOTEL €

(☎93 30 24 64; www.hoteldefrance.mc; 6 rue de la Turbie; s €95-125, d €115-170, tr €145-190; 🍷) Anywhere else this stalwart hotel would be way overpriced, but in sky-high Monaco it qualifies as a bargain. The older rooms are nothing special – plain furniture, basic beds – but some have been renovated with a sleeker and more contemporary look; ask to see a few before committing.

### ★ Pierre Geronimi

ICE CREAM €

(☎97 98 69 11; www.glacespierregeronimi.com; 36 bd d'Italie; 1/2/3 scoops €4/6/8; ☀8am-7pm Mon-Sat) A bit of a local's secret: Monaco's best ice creams and sorbets, made by its eponymous Corsican *maitre glacier*. The flavours are exciting – try chestnut flour, beetroot, matcha tea or honey and pine nut – and for the ultimate indulgence, ask for it to be served cocktail-style in a glass *verrine*. He also cre-



ates delicious ice-cream cakes and patisseries. Don't say we didn't warn you...

**★ Marché de la Condamine** MARKET €  
(www.facebook.com/marche.condamine; 15 place d'Armes; ☺ 7am-3pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) For tasty, excellent-value fare around shared tables, hit Monaco's fabulous food court, tucked beneath the arches behind the open-air place d'Armes market. Rock-bottom budget faves include fresh pasta from **Maison des Pâtes** (☎ 93 50 95 77; Marché de la Condamine, 15 place d'Armes; pasta €8-12; ☺ 7am-3.30pm; 🍴), pizza and seafood from **Le Comptoir**, sushi from **Japan Trading**, a deli, a cafe, a cheesemonger and more.

**★ La Montgolfière** FUSION €€  
(☎ 97 98 61 59; www.lamontgolfiere.mc; 16 rue Basse; 3-/4-course menu €49/56; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-9.30pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat) Monégasque chef Henri Geraci has worked in some of the Riviera's top restaurants, but he's now happily settled at his own establishment down a shady alleyway near the palace. Escoffier-

trained, he's faithful to the French classics, but his travels have inspired a fondness for Asian flavours, so expect some exotic twists. The restaurant's small and sought after, so reserve ahead.

## Drinking & Nightlife

Much of Monaco's superchic drinking goes on in its designer restaurants and the bars of luxury hotels. For a lower-key ambience, head to the relaxed bars located behind the port. Monégasque people are fond of wine and will drink it almost any time of day. The signature after-dinner drink is limoncello, sometimes homemade with lemons grown in the region.

**Rascasse** BAR  
(☎ 98 06 16 16; www.montecarlosbm.com/en/bar-nightclub-monaco/la-rascasse; 1 quai Antoine; ☺ 4pm-5am) This two-storey lounge bar down by the port draws the crowds at aperitif time, then morphs into Monaco's liveliest nightclub, with live music Monday through Friday and all-night DJs on weekends.

## DON'T MISS

### ÎLES D'HYÈRES

Lying intriguingly offshore from the coast between Toulon and Hyères, the Îles d'Hyères are also known as the Îles d'Or (Islands of Gold) – not only for their mica-rich rock but also for the golden beaches that fringe their forested hinterland. They're overrun in July and August, but for much of the rest of the year you might have them largely to yourself, with plenty of good weather too.

Île de Porquerolles is the largest; Île de Port-Cros is a national park with fantastic snorkelling; and Île du Levant is both an army camp and a nudist colony. Wild camping and cars are forbidden throughout the archipelago.

There are plenty of bistros and cafes on Porquerolles and Port-Cros, but if you're cycling round and exploring the beaches, packing a picnic is both cheaper and more convenient.

The main ports for travelling to the islands are La Tour Fondue (at the southern end of the Presqu'île de Giens), Port d'Hyères (further north) and Le Lavandou (east of Hyères). From June to September seasonal ferries also run from other locations, including Toulon and St-Tropez.

**Vedettes Îles d'Or et Le Corsaire** (☎ 04 94 71 01 02; www.vedettesilesdor.fr; quai des Îles d'Or, Le Lavandou, Gare Maritime) runs boats to the Îles d'Hyères from Le Lavandou, Cavalaire and La Croix-Valmer.

From Le Lavandou, boats go to Île du Levant, Île de Port-Cros and Île de Porquerolles – all trips take from 30 minutes to a little over an hour and return fare is adult/child €29.50/23.80. Trips from Cavalaire and La Croix-Valmer cost about €5 extra.

There are also multi-island cruises (adult/child €49/40) on high-speed La Croisière Bleue vessels, which stop at both Île de Porquerolles and Île de Port-Cros. The company also runs a summer-only ferry to St-Tropez from Le Lavandou (adult/child €48/38), Cavalaire (€33/27) and La Croix-Valmer. Note that in winter, boats only connect Le Lavandou, Île du Levant and Île de Port-Cros.

# Monte Carlo Casino

## TIMELINE

**1863** Charles III inaugurates the first Casino on Plateau des Spélugues. The **1 Atrium** is a small room with a wooden podium from which an orchestra entertains while punters purchase entrance tickets.

**1864** Hôtel de Paris opens and the area becomes known as the 'Golden Square'.

**1865** Construction of **2 Salle Europe**. Cathedral-like, it is lined with onyx columns and lit by eight Bohemian crystal chandeliers weighing 150kg each.

**1868** The steam train arrives in Monaco and **3 Café de Paris** is completed.

**1878–79** Gambling moves to Hôtel de Paris while Charles Garnier is charged with building a new casino with a miniature replica of the Paris Opera House. **4 Salle Garnier**.

**1890** The advent of electricity casts a glow on architect Jules Touzet's newly added **5 gaming rooms** for high rollers.

**1903** Inspired by female gamblers, Henri Schmit decorates **6 Salle Blanche** with caryatids and the painting *Les Grâces Florentines*.

**1904** Smoking is banned in the gaming rooms and **7 Salon Rose**, a new smoking room, is added.

**1910** **8 Salle Médecin**, immense and grand, hosts the high-spending Private Circle.

**1966** Celebrations mark 100 years of uninterrupted gambling despite two world wars.

## TOP TIPS

- ➔ After 2pm when gaming begins, admission is strictly for 18 years and over. Rooms beyond the Salle Europe are closed to the general public. Photo ID is obligatory.
- ➔ Don't wear trainers. A jacket for men is not obligatory (but is recommended) in the gaming rooms.
- ➔ In the main room, the minimum bet is €5/25 for roulette/blackjack.
- ➔ In the *salons privés*, there is no maximum bet.



### Atrium

The casino's 'lobby', so to speak, is paved in marble and lined with 28 Ionic columns, which support a balustraded gallery canopied with an engraved glass ceiling.

Hôtel de Paris

### HÔTEL DE PARIS

Notice the horse's shiny leg (and testicles) on the lobby's statue of Louis XIV on horseback? Legend has it that rubbing them brings good luck in the casino.

### Salon Rose

Smoking was banned in the gaming rooms following a fraud involving a croupier letting his ash fall on the floor. The Salon Rose (Pink Room; today a restaurant) was therefore opened in 1903 for smokers – the gaze of Galilei's famous cigarillo-smoking ladies follows you around the room.

### Salle Garnier

Taking eight months to build and two years to restore (2004–06), the opera's original statuary is rehabilitated using original moulds saved by the creator's grandson. Individual air-con and heating vents are installed beneath each of the 525 seats.



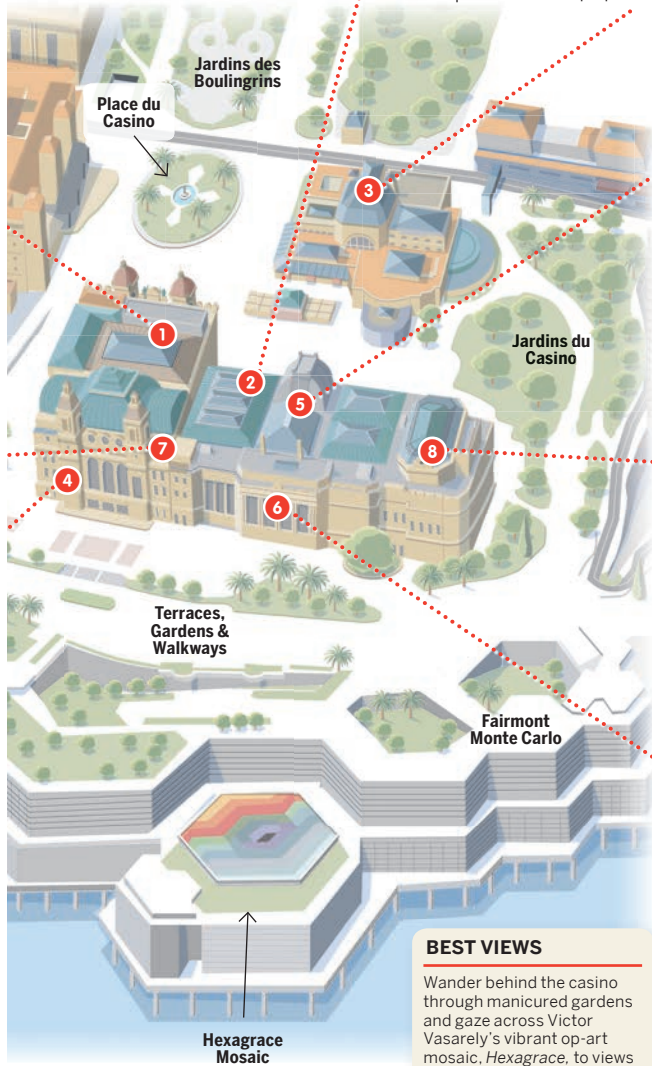


### Salle Europe

The oldest part of the casino, where they continue to play *trente-et-quarante* and European roulette, which have been played here since 1865. Tip: the bull's-eye windows around the room originally served as security observation points.

### Café de Paris

With the arrival of Diaghilev as director of the Monte Carlo Opera in 1911, Café de Paris becomes the go-to address for artists and gamblers. It retains the same high-glamour ambience today. Tip: snag a seat on the terrace and people-watch.



### Salles Touzet

This vast partitioned hall, 21m by 24m, is decorated in the most lavish style: oak, Tonkin mahogany and oriental jasper panelling are offset by vast canvases, Marseille bronzes, Italian mosaics, sculptural reliefs and stained-glass windows.

### Salle Médecin

Also known as Salle Empire because of its extravagant Empire-style decor, Monégasque architect François Médecin's gaming room was originally intended for the casino's biggest gamblers. Part of it still remains hidden from prying eyes as a Super Privé room.

### Salle Blanche

Today a superb bar-lounge, the Salle Blanche (White Room) opens onto an outdoor gaming terrace. The caryatids on the ceiling were modelled on fashionable courtesans such as La Belle Otero, who placed her first bet here aged 18.

### BEST VIEWS

Wander behind the casino through manicured gardens and gaze across Victor Vasarely's vibrant op-art mosaic, *Hexagrace*, to views of the harbour and the sea.

## Café de Paris

☎ 98 06 76 23; [www.facebook.com/cafedeparismontecarlo](http://www.facebook.com/cafedeparismontecarlo); place du Casino; ☀ 8am-2am) The *grande dame* of Monaco's cafes (founded in 1882), it's perfect for *un petit café* and a spot of people-watching. Everything is chronically overpriced, and the waiters can be horrendously snooty, but it's the price you pay for a front-row view of Monte Carlo's razzamatazz.

## ★ Entertainment

### Opéra de Monte Carlo

OPERA (Salle Garnier; ☎ 98 06 28 28 ticket office; [www.opera.mc](http://www.opera.mc); Casino de Monte Carlo, place du Casino) Also known as the Salle Garnier, Monaco's opera house is an 1892 confection of neoclassical splendour adjoining Monte Carlo Casino, designed by Charles Garnier (who also designed the Paris opera house). The season runs from October through April.

## i Information

Get maps and info – along with your semi-official Monaco passport stamp – at the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 92 16 61 16; [www.visitmonaco.com](http://www.visitmonaco.com); 2a bd des Moulins; ☀ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-1pm Sun) just above the casino. For tourist information by the port, head to the seasonal kiosk near the cruise-ship terminal on Esplanade des Pêcheurs, open mid-June to mid-September.

## i Getting There & Around

### BUS

**Lignes d'Azur** ([www.lignesdazur.com](http://www.lignesdazur.com)) runs bus 100 (€1.50, every 15 minutes from 6am to 9pm) to/from Nice (45 minutes) and Menton (40 minutes) along the Corniche Inférieure; bus 110 (one way/return €22/33, hourly) goes to/from Nice-Côte d'Azur airport (45 minutes). Eastbound, both services stop at the tunnel entrance near place d'Armes and the Monte Carlo Casino bus stop in front of the tourist office. Westbound, the casino stop is diagonally opposite the tourist office near Jardins des Boulingrins, and the place d'Armes stop is on bd Charles III. Night services run Thursday to Saturday.

### TRAIN

Services run about every 20 minutes east to Menton (€2.30, 12 minutes) and west to Nice (€4.10, 25 minutes). Access to the station (place Ste-Dévote) is through pedestrian tunnels, lifts and escalators from allée Lazare Sauvaigo, pont Ste-Dévote, place Ste-Dévote and bd de Belgique/bd du Jardin Exotique. There are no trains between midnight and 5.30am.

## ROQUEBRUNE-CAP MARTIN

POP 12,639

Beautiful Cap Martin nestles its languid shores into the sea of crystalline water between Monaco and Menton. The village of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin is actually centred on the medieval village of Roquebrune, which towers over the cape (the village and cape are linked by innumerable *very* steep steps). The amazing thing about this place is that, despite Monaco's proximity, it feels a world away from the urban glitz of the principality: the coastline around Cap Martin remains relatively unspoiled and it's as if Roquebrune had left its clock on medieval time.

## 👁 Sights & Activities

It takes 30 to 45 minutes to climb from Cap Martin to Roquebrune, depending on your fitness level (and a lot less the other way around since it's downhill). You'll find several staircases linking the two parts of town.

### ★ Cabanon Le Corbusier

ARCHITECTURE (☎ 06 48 72 90 53; [www.capmoderne.com](http://www.capmoderne.com); promenade Le Corbusier; guided tours adult/child €18/free; ☀ guided tours 10am & 2pm May-Sep) The only building French architect Le Corbusier (1887-1965) ever built for himself is this rather simple – but very clever – beach hut on Cap Martin. The *cabanon* (small beach hut), which he completed in 1952, became his main holiday home until his death. The hut can be visited on excellent two-hour guided tours run by the Association Cap Moderne; tours depart on foot from Roquebrune-Cap-Martin train station and must be reserved in advance by email.

### ★ Villa E-1027

ARCHITECTURE (☎ 06 48 72 90 53; [www.capmoderne.com](http://www.capmoderne.com); sentier Massolin; guided tours adult/child €18/free; ☀ tours 10am & 2pm May-Sep) Irish modernist architect Eileen Gray designed this tour de force of a Mediterranean villa, complete with highly inventive furniture and fixtures, in the late 1920s. Nearly a century later, after an extensive renovation, it is once again open to the public for guided tours. Other noteworthy features of the villa include its beautiful landscaping and seaside location, along with the murals added by Le Corbusier against Gray's wishes in the 1930s. Reserve ahead online; tour size is limited to 12 people.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel Victoria

DESIGN HOTEL **ccc**

(☎ 04 93 35 65 90; www.hotel-victoria.fr; 7 promenade du Cap Martin; d €215-287; 🍷 @ 📶) Well placed on the waterfront, between Roquebrune's urban attractions and the wilder shores of Cap Martin, this modern, four-star hotel features immaculate blue and white rooms, with balconies on the sea-facing units. It's next to the bus 100 stop (going to Menton, Nice and Monaco) and 500m from Roquebrune-Cap-Martin train station (on the Nice-Ventimille route).

### Les Deux Frères

MODERN FRENCH **cc**

(☎ 04 93 28 99 00; www.lesdeuxfreres.com; 1 place des Deux Frères; menus lunch €29, dinner €48-65; ☺ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Wed-Sun; 🍷) This gourmet hotel-restaurant with incredible panoramic views from its terrace is super-stylish. Eight chic boutique rooms (doubles €75 to €142) – two with sea view – slumber up top, while waiters in black serve magnificent dishes (dishes for two, such as huge pieces of meat or whole fish, delicate fish fillets in hollandaise sauce or spinach and basil olive oil) hidden beneath silver domed platters.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 93 35 62 87; www.roquebrune-cap-martin.com; 218 av Aristide Briand; ☺ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Local information on the Roquebrune area.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 100 (€1.50) goes to Monaco (15 minutes), Nice (1¼ hours) and Menton (15 minutes); it stops on av de la Côte d'Azur, which lies below Roquebrune and above Cap Martin (you'll see steps near the bus stop).

The Roquebrune-Cap-Martin train station is at the western end of Cap Martin, adjacent to the coastal path and steeply downhill from Château de Roquebrune. Destinations include Monaco (€1.60, four minutes), Nice (€4.80, 30 minutes), Menton (€1.40, six minutes) and Ventimiglia (€3.90, 25 minutes). Trains run half-hourly.

## MENTON

POP 28,958

Last stop on the Côte d'Azur before Italy, the seaside town of Menton offers a glimpse of what the high life on the Riviera must have been like before the developers moved in. With its sunny climate, shady streets and pastel mansions – not to mention a lovely old port – it's one of the most attractive towns on the entire coast. Menton's old town is a cascade of pastel-coloured buildings. Add a fantastic museum dedicated to the great artist and film director Jean Cocteau, as well as several excellent restaurants, and Menton really is a must.

To French people, the town is also known for its lemons, which are renowned for their flavour and celebrated every February with a big lemon-themed party.

## Sights & Activities

The town's epicentre is the bustling, pedestrianised rue St-Michel, with its ice-cream parlours and souvenir shops.

★ **Cimetière du Vieux Château** CEMETERY (montée du Souvenir; ☺ 7am-8pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar) For great views of the old town and the port, meander all the way up through the historic quarter to this hilltop

### DON'T MISS

#### A COASTAL HIKE

With the exception of a 4km stretch through Monaco, you can walk the entire 13km coastal strip between Roquebrune-Cap Martin and Cap d'Ail without passing a car (although note that sections may close for maintenance November through April). Starting west of Menton, the **Sentier du Littoral** follows Cap Martin's rugged coastline past beaches and wooded shores, including beautiful **Plage Buse**, all the way to Monaco's **Plage Larvotto**. Resuming at **Plage Marquet** near Monaco's western edge, the path skirts dramatic coastal bluffs all the way to hedonistic **Plage Mala** in Cap d'Ail.

The walk is easy going, but visitors should note that the stretch of coast between Monaco and Cap d'Ail is inaccessible in bad weather. The path is well signposted and you can easily walk small sections or make a day trip out of it, including beach stops and lunch in Monaco. The Roquebrune-Cap Martin and Cap d'Ail train stations both make ideal starting points, depending on which section you wish to tackle first. If you don't fancy walking through Monaco, you can catch bus 6 from Larvotto to Fontvieille.



cemetery. It's something of a pilgrimage site for rugby fans, who come to pay their respects at the tomb of William Webb Ellis, legendary inventor of the sport, but the walk is outstanding for lovers of views and winding old lanes as well.

### ★ Musée Jean

#### Cocteau – Le Bastion

GALLERY

(📍 04 93 18 82 61; [www.museecocteauanton.fr](http://www.museecocteauanton.fr); quai Napoléon III; adult/child Jun-Oct €10/free, Nov-May €8/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) Cocteau loved Menton. It was following a stroll along the seaside that he got the idea of turning a disused 17th-century bastion (1636) on the seafront into a monument to his work. He restored the building himself, decorating the alcoves, outer walls, reception hall and floors with pebble mosaics. The works on display change regularly.

It's a must-visit until the adjacent and much larger and more comprehensive Musée Jean Cocteau Collection Séverin Wunderman re-opens (estimated 2023) after significant flood damage.

### Jardin Botanique

#### Exotique du Val Rahmeh

GARDENS

(📍 04 93 35 86 72; [www.mnhn.fr/fr/visitez/lieux/jardin-botanique-exotique-menton](http://www.mnhn.fr/fr/visitez/lieux/jardin-botanique-exotique-menton); av St-Jacques; adult/child €7/5; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Wed-Mon Oct-Mar) Laid out in 1905 for Lord Rad-

cliffe, governor of Malta, the terraces of the Val Rahmeh overflow with exotic fruit-tree collections, including the only European specimen of the Easter Island tree *Sophora toromiro*, now extinct on the island. The vine-covered chateau is also quite photogenic.

## 🌟 Festivals & Events

### Fête du Citron

CARNIVAL

(Lemon Festival; [www.fete-du-citron.com](http://www.fete-du-citron.com); 🕒 Feb) Menton's quirky two-week Fête du Citron sees sculptures and decorative floats made from tonnes of lemons weave along the seafront. Afterwards, the monumental lemon creations are dismantled and the fruit sold off at bargain prices in front of Palais de l'Europe. Each year the festival follows a different theme.

## 🍴 Sleeping & Eating

In the old town, pedestrianised rue du Vieux Collège is worth a meander for its tasty lineup of eateries. Rue St-Michel is littered with touristy shops selling lemon-based products, including limoncello, lemonade, lemon-infused olive oil and lemon preserves.

### Hôtel Lemon

HOTEL €

(📍 04 93 28 63 63; [www.hotel-lemon.com](http://www.hotel-lemon.com); 10 rue Albert 1er; s €70, d €80-90; 📞) Hôtel Lemon sits in an attractive 19th-century villa with a pretty garden, opposite a school. Its spacious minimalist rooms are decked out in shades of white with bright red or lemon-yellow bathrooms. Breakfast costs €10.

### ★ Hôtel Napoléon

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(📍 04 93 35 89 50; [www.napoleon-menton.com](http://www.napoleon-menton.com); 29 porte de France; d €170-340, junior ste €298-462; 📞 @ 📺) Standing tall on the seafront, the Napoléon is Menton's most stylish sleeping option. Everything from the pool to the restaurant-bar and the back garden (a haven of freshness in summer) has been beautifully designed. Rooms are decked out in white and blue, with Cocteau drawings on headboards. Sea-facing rooms have balconies but are a little noisier because of the traffic.

### Au Baiser du Mitron

BAKERY €

(The Baker's Kiss; 📍 04 93 57 67 82; [www.au-baiserdumitron.com](http://www.au-baiserdumitron.com); 8 rue Piéta; items from €1; 🕒 7.30am-1pm Wed-Sun) This one-of-a-kind *boulangerie* showcases breads from the Côte d'Azur, inland Provence and other favourite spots from baker-owner Kevin Le Meur's world travels. Everything is baked in

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

### HOT LUNCH DATE

Drop-dead-gorgeous **Gorbio** (population 1387), just a few kilometres inland from Menton and the Mediterranean coast, is a classic Provençal *village perché* (hilltop village). Have a meal to remember at **Le Beauséjour** (📍 04 93 41 46 15; [www.facebook.com/Restaurant-le-Beausejour-117711438292493](http://www.facebook.com/Restaurant-le-Beausejour-117711438292493); 14 place de la République; lunch/dinner menus €29/47, mains €20-30; 🕒 noon-2.30pm Thu-Tue Apr-Oct, 7.15-9.30pm Jul-Sep), the stuff of Provençal lunch dreams in a buttermilk house with a front terrace overlooking Gorbio's village square. The interior dining room, straight out of a design magazine, proffers panoramic views of the tumbling vale. Then stroll through the town's narrow medieval streets and climb to the scenic neighbouring village of **Ste-Agnès**.

a traditional *four à bois* (wood bread oven) from 1906, using 100% natural ingredients and no preservatives. The *tarte au citron de Menton* (Menton lemon tart) is the best there is.

Loaves of ink-black bread made with vegetal charcoal, quinoa and chickpea flour sit neatly on wooden shelves next to plump rounds of bacon-topped *fougasses*, Niçois *grisses*, lavender-flavoured buns and fruit breads laced with nuts, figs, apricots and cranberries. *Les Montagnards* ('mountain breads') – shaped in *boules* (big balls), *couronnes* (crowns) and *baguettes* (mini baguettes) – come from an old family recipe and are made to last. There's another branch at the nearby **Halles Municipales** (quai de Monléon; ☀7am-1pm Tue-Sun).

### ★ **Le Mirazur**

GASTRONOMY **ccc**

(☎04 92 41 86 86; [www.mirazur.fr](http://www.mirazur.fr); 30 av Aristide Briand; 9-course menu €320; ☀12.15-2pm & 7.15-10pm Wed-Sun Mar-Dec) Design, cuisine and sea views (the full sweep of the Med) are all spectacular at this 1930s villa with three Michelin stars (it was also named Best Restaurant in the World in 2019). This is the

culinary kingdom of chef Mauro Colagreco, who flavours dishes with herbs and flowers from his dazzling herb and flower garden, citrus orchard and vegetable patch.

Find it 3km northeast of Menton off the coastal D6007 to Italy. Cooking classes too.

### **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 92 41 76 76; [www.tourisme-menton.fr](http://www.tourisme-menton.fr); 8 av Boyer; ☀9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) Located in the centre of town.

### **i** Getting There & Away

Bus 100, operated by Lignes d'Azur (p864), runs frequently to Nice (€1.50, 1½ hours) via Monaco (40 minutes) and the Corniche Inférieure. Bus 110 links Menton with Nice-Côte d'Azur airport (one way/return €22/33, 1¼ hours, hourly). **Zest** (☎04 93 35 93 60; [www.zestbus.fr](http://www.zestbus.fr)) offers additional bus service to inland villages such as Gorbio, Roquebrune and Ste-Agnès.

There are regular train services (half-hourly) to Ventimiglia in Italy (€2.70, 10 minutes), Monaco (€2.30, 11 minutes) and Nice (€5.50, 40 minutes).

## AT A GLANCE



### POPULATION

335,000

### CAPITAL CITY

Ajaccio

### BEST BEACH

Plage de Palombaggia (p923),  
Porto-Vecchio

### BEST DAY HIKE

Gorges de la Spelunca (p912), Porto

### BEST FESTIVAL

Procession du Catenacciu (p917),  
Sartène



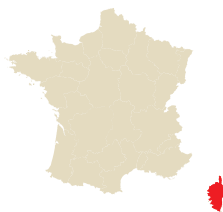
### WHEN TO GO

**Easter** Marked by solemn processions and colourful passion plays.

**May & Jun** The maquis is in blossom and while it's warm enough to swim, it's not too hot to hike.

**Jul-Sep** Enjoy the summer party vibe at beach restaurants and nightclubs.





# Corsica

**J**utting from the foaming Mediterranean like an impregnable fortress, Corsica has astounding geographical diversity. Within half an hour's drive, the landscape ranges from glittering bays, vibrant coastal cities and fabulous beaches to sawtooth mountain ridges, verdant valleys, dense forests and time-forgotten hilltop villages. Holiday opportunities are tremendously varying: from hiking and canyoning to snorkelling and sunbathing, leisurely boat trips, delving into the island's multifaceted history and sampling local delicacies. Though part of France for more than 200 years, Corsica feels different from the mainland in everything from customs and cuisine to language and character. Locals love to explain their Corsican identity so plenty of engaging evenings await.

## INCLUDES

Bastia . . . . .	901	Ajaccio . . . . .	913
Cap Corse . . . . .	905	Porto . . . . .	911
St-Florent . . . . .	907	Sartène . . . . .	916
La Balagne . . . . .	907	Bonifacio . . . . .	920
L'Île-Rousse . . . . .	907	Porto-Vecchio . . . . .	922
Calvi . . . . .	909	Corte . . . . .	924

# Corsica Highlights

- 1 Réserve Naturelle de Scandola** (p911) Cruising the sapphire waters off Corsica's northwestern coast.
- 2 Cap Corse** (p905) Exploring a wild and remote peninsula by way of winding coastal roads.
- 3 Les Calanques de Piana** (p912) Seeing red, blazing red, flaming between fantastic rock formations.
- 4 Vallée du Tavignano** (p926) Hiking through a gorgeous road-free mountain valley near Corte.
- 5 Plage de Palombaggia** (p923) Slipping into serene turquoise waters at Corsica's prettiest beach.
- 6 Filitosa** (p917) Meeting the amazing megalithic builders, face to face.
- 7 Ajaccio** (p913) Boning up on Bonaparte around Napoléon's home town.
- 8 Îles Lavezzi** (p920) Discovering island paradises, halfway to Italy.
- 9 Bonifacio** (p920) Marvelling at Corsica's most dramatic fortified town, perched on the edge of a cliff.
- 10 Aiguilles de Bavella** (p923) Walking and canyoning among the rocky 'needles' of a soaring massif.





## **i** Getting There & Away

### AIR

Corsica's four airports – Ajaccio, Bastia, Calvi and Figari (between Bonifacio and Porto-Vecchio) – are served by regular year-round flights from the French mainland airports, and in summer from other European countries as well.

### BOAT

#### To/From Mainland France

Corsica's five ferry ports (Ajaccio, Bastia, L'Île-Rousse, Porto-Vecchio and Propriano) can be reached from Nice, Marseille and Toulon. Journeys last between five and 15 hours, depending on the route, size of vessel and time of day. There are numerous crossings in summer, but far fewer in winter. Always book in advance.

Fares vary dramatically – anything from €30 to €100 for a foot passenger – depending on route, degree of comfort, need for overnight accommodation, and size of vehicle (if any). Expect to pay around €400 return for a car and two passengers from Toulon to Ajaccio in July and August.

Ferry companies include **Corsica Ferries** (☎ 04 95 50 78 82; www.corsica-ferries.fr), **La Méri-dionale** (☎ 04 91 99 45 09; www.lameridionale.com) and **Corsica Linea** (☎ 04 95 57 69 10; www.corsicalinea.com).

#### To/From Italy

Year-round ferries operated by Corsica Ferries (p904) and Moby (p904) link Corsica with Genoa, Livorno and Savona on the Italian mainland and Porto Torres in Sardinia. From April to October, Moby and Blu Navy (p921) also run ferries from Bonifacio to the Sardinian port of Santa Teresa di Gallura.

## **i** Getting Around

By far the best way to get around Corsica is by car, but rental and fuel costs can quickly add up. Even with the help of satnav, you'll need a detailed road map, such as Michelin's yellow-jacketed *Corse-du-Sud, Haute-Corse* (departmental map 345), covering the entire island at a scale of 1:150,000, or the orange-jacketed 1:200,000 *Corse* (regional map 528).

Public transport only connects the larger towns and cities, from which local explorations can continue on foot or by bike or scooter (both readily available for hire). Corsica's only train

line, the **Chemin de Fer de la Corse** (www.cf-corse.corsica), is an attractive if limited option, running across the stunning mountainous interior between Bastia and Ajaccio, with a branch route to Calvi and L'Île-Rousse. The bus network is more comprehensive but often there's only one bus per day, and none on Sunday.

**Corsica Bus & Train** (www.corsicabus.org) is a tip-top, one-stop website displaying up-to-date bus and train timetables, island-wide.

## THE NORTHEAST

Northeastern Corsica encapsulates the island at its very best. Historic Bastia, Corsica's second city and largest ferry port, is not just a great point of arrival; with its maze of alleyways, bustling medieval harbour and imposing citadel, it's also a place where you could happily linger for several days. Immediately north, the enchanting Cap Corse peninsula boasts spectacular coastal scenery, as well as delightful villages like Nonza, Centuri and Erbalunga, while to the west St-Florent is an exquisite little port-cum-resort.

## Bastia

POP 46,435

As France's second busiest passenger port, after Calais, the dynamic city of Bastia remains lively year-round and offers a wonderful welcome to Corsica. While it may not have the relaxed charm of its long-term rival Ajaccio and is home to fewer people, it's much larger to stroll around and has the feel of a genuine lived-in city that refuses to sell its soul just to please the tourists.

Bastia's historic core consists of two distinct neighbourhoods: Terra Vecchia, surrounding the small original harbour; and Terra Nova, the high-walled citadel above. Although those names mean 'Old Land' and 'New Land', the hilltop fortress is actually much older, built from the 15th century onwards as the stronghold of Bastia's Genoese overlords. What's now the Terra Vecchia replaced the tiny fishing village below with a tangle of alleyways, an ensemble of splendidly top-heavy tenement blocks and some fine churches.

## **i** Sights

### ★ Terra Vecchia

OLD TOWN

Criss-crossed by narrow lanes, Terra Vecchia is Bastia's heart and soul. Shady **place de l'Hôtel de Ville** hosts a lively morning market on Saturday and Sunday. One block west, Baroque **Chapelle de l'Immaculée**

## **i** SEASONAL WARNING

Corsica's tourism is heavily seasonal. Most hotels, restaurants and even sights open only from Easter to October, so winter visitors will need patience, a good book and an appetite for walking...

## Bastia



## Bastia

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Terra Nova ..... C7  
 2 Terra Vecchia ..... C4  
 3 Vieux Port ..... C5

### 📍 Sights

- 4 Cathédrale Ste-Marie ..... C7  
 5 Chapelle de l'Immaculée  
 Conception ..... B4  
 6 Chapelle St-Roch ..... C4  
 7 Église Ste-Croix ..... C7  
 8 Église St-Jean Baptiste ..... C5  
 9 Jardin Romieu ..... C6  
 10 Musée de Bastia ..... C6

### 🛏 Sleeping

- 11 Hôtel Central ..... B3  
 12 Hôtel des Gouverneurs ..... C7

### 🍴 Eating

- 13 A Scudella ..... C5  
 14 Chez Vincent ..... C7  
 15 Col Tempo ..... C5  
 16 Petit Vincent ..... D7  
 17 Raugi ..... C1

### 🛍 Shopping

- 18 Isula Crea ..... B5  
 19 LN Mattei ..... C2

**Conception** (rue des Terrasses; ☀ 8am-7pm), with its elaborately painted barrel-vaulted ceiling, served as the seat of the short-lived Anglo-Corsican parliament in 1795. Further north, **Chapelle St-Roch** (rue Napoléon; ☀ 8am-7pm) holds an 18th-century organ and trompe l'œil roof.

### ★ Vieux Port

HARBOUR

Bastia's Vieux Port is ringed by precariously tall, pastel-coloured tenements and buzzy brasseries, and overlooked by the twin-towered **Église St-Jean Baptiste** (4 rue du Cardinal Viale Préla; ☀ 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Sat). The best views of the harbour are from the citadel or the hillside park of **Jardin Romieu**, reached via a stately old staircase that twists up from the waterfront.

### ★ Terra Nova

OLD TOWN

Looming above the harbour, Bastia's stern-walled citadel was built between the 15th and 17th centuries for the city's Genoese masters. Known as the Terra Nova, despite looking much older than the lower town, it's largely residential and uncommercialised.

### DON'T MISS

#### SUMMER COOLER

A Bastia institution, **Raugi** (☎ 04 95 31 22 31; www.raugi.fr; 2 rue du Chanoine Colombani; ice cream from €3; ☀ 9am-11pm Tue-Sat) is still going strong after more than 80 years. This glorious ice-cream parlour tempts with Corsican flavours including chestnut, mandarin, fig, aromatic *senteur de maquis* (the herbal scent of the wilderness) and sweet *myrte* (myrtle). In summer, it opens an annexe by the old port.

The amber-hued **Palais des Gouverneurs** now houses the **Musée de Bastia** (☎ 04 95 31 09 12; www.musee-bastia.com; place du Donjon; adult/child €5/2.50, free Jan-Apr; ☀ 10am-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug, Tue-Sun May, Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sat Oct-Apr), while the majestic **Cathédrale Ste-Marie** (rue de l'Évêché; ☀ 8am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 5.30pm Oct-Mar, 8am-noon Sun) and the rococo **Église Ste-Croix** (rue de l'Évêché; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Oct-Mar), home to a mysterious black-oak crucifix found in the sea in 1428, stand side by side a few streets south.

### 🛏 Sleeping

#### ★ Hôtel-Restaurant La Corniche

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 95 31 40 98; www.hotel-lacorniche.com; D31, San Martino di Lota; d €83-198; ☀ Apr-Oct; 📶 📺) Perched high in the hills, 8km along a tortuous road northwest of Bastia, this veteran family-run hotel makes a brilliant halfway house between city and wilderness. Summer-time ushers in dreamy lounging in the bijou back garden, by the pool or on the panoramic terrace – the sea views will leave you smitten.

#### Hôtel Central

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 95 31 71 12; www.centralhotel.fr; 3 rue Miot; d €90-150, apt €150-160; 📶 📺) From the black-and-white tiled floor in the entrance to the sweeping central staircase – there's no lift – this family-run hotel oozes vintage charm. Guest rooms come in all shapes and sizes, but like the appealing breakfast room, they're kitted out with idiosyncratic 1940s fixtures and furnishings. The three apartments, with fully equipped kitchen, are great for longer stays.

#### ★ Hôtel des Gouverneurs

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 95 47 10 10; www.hoteldesgouverneurs.fr; 3 rue des Turquines; d €225-295, ste €345-515; ☀ Feb-Dec; 📶 📺) The only hotel within

Bastia's hilltop citadel is a stylish contemporary gem. Tiers of peaceful, spacious rooms and suites drop down the seaward slope, with tremendous views over the port and along the coast. There's a spa and indoor pool, but no restaurant. It's set in a pedestrian enclave; guests will need to walk the final 200m from the nearest car park.

## Eating

### Chez Vincent

PIZZA, FRENCH €

(☎ 04 95 31 62 50; [www.facebook.com/chez.vincent.1](http://www.facebook.com/chez.vincent.1); 12 rue St-Michel; pizzas €10-14; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍷) The great selling point of this long-standing local favourite is its location, with a terrace perched at the edge of the citadel and glorious views of the port. Its reputation rests on its excellent pizzas, but changing daily specials include well-executed French classics like mussels and steaks.

### Petit Vincent

SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 04 20 00 14 67; [www.facebook.com/lepetitevincent](http://www.facebook.com/lepetitevincent); 1 rue du Dragon; mains €18-27; ☺ noon-2.30pm Fri-Mon & Wed, 7-11pm Wed-Sat & Mon; 🍷) The little brother of Chez Vincent stands lower down the citadel slope, with tables on a lovely garden terrace overlooking the port as well as a very cosy indoor dining room. The changing menu concentrates on seafood, using Asian flavours to subtle and delicious effect, but usually includes a straightforward grilled fish, and at least one meat option.

### Col Tempo

SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 04 95 58 14 22; [www.facebook.com/coltempobastia](http://www.facebook.com/coltempobastia); 4 rue St-Jean, Vieux Port; mains €25-30; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 8-11pm Tue-Sat, noon-2.30pm Sun & Mon) The scrumptious market-fresh cuisine served here, beside Bastia's Vieux Port, has rightly earned kudos from locals. Watch the boats bobbing in the harbour as you tuck into specialities like *rillettes de crabe au citron vert* (lime-marinated crabmeat pâté), *risotto 'retour de la pêche'* (risotto studded with fresh-caught seafood) and codfish fillet with truffled polenta and asparagus-leek fondue.

### A Scudella

CORSICAN €€

(☎ 06 25 27 26 25; [www.facebook.com/ascudella](http://www.facebook.com/ascudella). osteria; 10 rue Pino; menu €26; ☺ 7pm-2am Tue-Sat) Tucked down a back alley near the Vieux Port, this is a superb spot to sample traditional mountain cuisine, from appetisers of fine Corsican charcuterie and *beignets au brocciu* (sweet, lemon-scented fritters filled with ricotta-like Brocciu cheese) to *veau aux olives* (stewed veal with olives) and *flan à la châtaigne* (chestnut flan).

## Shopping

### ★ LN Mattei

FOOD & DRINKS

(☎ 04 95 32 44 38; [www.capcorsemattei.com](http://www.capcorsemattei.com); 15 bd Général de Gaulle; ☺ 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat) Run by Bastia's famous distillery, this iconic boutique has the look and feel of a grocer from the 1900s. The enticing array of bottles naturally includes Mattei's signature aperitif, Cap Corse, while gourmets can also stock up on locally milled chestnut flour, *sel à la figue* (fig-scented salt) and Corsican *marrons* (chestnuts) preserved in *eau-de-vie* (brandy).

### Isula Crea

ARTS & CRAFTS

(☎ 04 95 44 02 07; 3 rue St Jean; ☺ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat) A fine spot to pick up authentic Corsican handicrafts, this gorgeous little old-town boutique displays and sells the work of 30 craftspeople from all over the island. There's everything from jewellery and graphic art to woodcarving and glassware.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 95 54 20 40; [www.bastia-tourisme.com](http://www.bastia-tourisme.com); place St-Nicolas; ☺ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat; 📞) Information on Bastia and Cap Corse, plus guided tours of the city, ticket sales and help with hotel reservations.

## Getting There & Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

**Aéroport Bastia-Poretta** (☎ 04 95 54 54 54; [www.bastia.aeroport.fr](http://www.bastia.aeroport.fr)) is 20km south of the city. **Société des Autobus Bastiais** (☎ 04 95 31 06 65; [www.bastiabus.com](http://www.bastiabus.com)) operates frequent shuttles (€9, 35 minutes) between the airport and Bastia's place du Maréchal Leclerc, where it stops across from the train station outside the city's Préfecture. **Taxi Aéroport Poretta** (☎ 04 95 36 04 65; [www.corsica-taxis.com](http://www.corsica-taxis.com)) charges €48/66 by day/night.

### BOAT

Ferry companies including **Corsica Ferries** (☎ 08 25 09 50 95; [www.corsica-ferries.fr](http://www.corsica-ferries.fr); av Pascal Lota), **Corsica Linea** (☎ 08 25 88 80 88; [www.corsicalinea.com](http://www.corsicalinea.com)), **La Méridionale** (☎ 04 91 99 45 09; [www.lameridionale.com](http://www.lameridionale.com)) and **Moby** (☎ 04 95 34 84 94; [www.mobylines.com](http://www.mobylines.com)) have information offices at **Bastia Port** ([www.bastia.port.fr](http://www.bastia.port.fr)); they usually open for same-day ticket sales a couple of hours before sailings. Ferries sail to/from Marseille, Toulon and Nice (mainland France), and Livorno, Savona and Genoa (Italy).

### BUS

Bastia's **bus station** (1 rue du Nouveau Port) – really just a couple of open-air bus stops – is immediately north of place St-Nicolas, behind the Hôtel de Ville (town hall), and is used by buses to

## DON'T MISS

## PLAGE DE L'ARINELLA

White-clothed tables, strung along the sand and topped with straw parasols, evoke a tropical paradise at **Le Matahari** (☎ 04 95 60 78 47; Plage de l'Arinella; mains €18-37, dinner menu €45; ☀ 11am-3pm Apr-Sep, 6-10pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep). The stylish interior is shabby-chic, the waiters wear white and boaters, and the food is Mediterranean fusion: *penne à la langouste* (spiny lobster with pasta), sesame-coated tuna steak, fish teriyaki. Opening hours are weather-dependent, so call ahead; reservations are essential.

Cap Corse as well as **Corsicatours/Les Rapides Bleus** (☎ 04 95 31 03 79; www.rapides-bleus.com; av Maréchal Sébastiani 1) services to Porto Vecchio. Buses to the airport and to Calvi run from the roundabout outside the train station.

## TRAIN

Services from the **train station** (☎ 04 95 32 80 61; www.cf-corse.corsica; av Maréchal Sébastiani) run to Ajaccio (€21.60, 3¼ hours, two to five daily) via Corte (€10.10, 1¼ hours), and Calvi (€16.40, 3¼ hours, two daily) via L'Île-Rousse (€13.50, 2¾ hours).

## Cap Corse

Poking like a giant finger from Corsica's northeastern corner, the Cap Corse peninsula is a world apart. Measuring 40km long by just 10km wide, it's easily seen in a day trip from Bastia, but you could spend your entire holiday exploring its two very different sides. The east coast, with its rolling green hills, pretty little ports and beautiful beaches, has a languorous feel, while the west, across the craggy central spine, is much more dramatic, all rocky cliffs, perched villages and strong winds. As it loops around Cap Corse, the narrow D80 coastal road crams in 120km of switchback curves and hair-raising drop-offs; expect slow but exhilarating driving.

## Erbalunga

POP 400

North of Bastia, the coast road winds past small beaches to reach this harbour village after 9km. As tiny as it is picturesque, Erbalunga squeezes onto a pocket-sized promontory and centres on a cute seafront square, strewn with well-worn fishing boats and

tempting restaurants. Narrow alleys lead to a romantic and totally derelict **Genoese tower** by the water.

## Sleeping &amp; Eating

★ **Hôtel Demeure Castel Brando** HOTEL €€€ (☎ 04 95 30 10 30; www.en.castelbrando.com; rte Principale; d €175-295; ☀ Apr-Oct; 🍷🍷🍷) Housed in a stately, cream-coloured, mid-19th-century mansion overlooking the main road, this historic hotel offers soothing rustic-chic rooms set around a bewitching courtyard, plus palm-shaded gardens, two pools (one heated) and bike rental. Some, less charming, rooms are in a modern annexe at the back.

## Le Pirate

CORSIKAN €€€

(☎ 04 95 33 24 20; www.restaurantlepirate.com; le port d'Erbalunga; lunch menu €45, dinner menus €55-195; ☀ noon-1.45pm & 7-9.45pm Wed-Sun Apr-Oct) For a meal to remember, dine on the waterfront terrace at Le Pirate, right by the harbour. It's quite magical on a starry summer evening, with seafood-rich *haute cuisine* to match.

## Macinaggio

POP 570

The coastal road swings inland, westwards, at little Macinaggio, well short of the peninsula's northern tip. You can only explore the seashore further north on foot, along the magnificent Sentier des Douaniers. A port since Roman times, Macinaggio now centres on a pleasure marina used by summer excursion boats.

## Sleeping &amp; Eating

## Casa di Babbo

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 06 78 04 77 46; www.casa-di-babbo.com; Tomino; d €80-110, tr €100-120; 🍷🍷🍷) This lovely B&B, surrounded by fruit trees on the hillside 1km south of Macinaggio – follow the yellow signs – operates a two-night minimum stay in July and August. That's no hardship, though: its six rooms are themed and beautifully decorated, and besides the pool it has several terraces where you can while away an afternoon. The breakfasts are something to remember.

## La Vela d'Oro

SEAFOOD €€

(☎ 04 95 35 42 46; menus €18-58; ☀ noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10pm, closed Wed in low season & Jan-mid-Mar) Macinaggio's finest restaurant lurks in a narrow alleyway, one block back from the waterfront. Seafood is the main attraction;



## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

## CONCHIGLIO ESCAPE

For dreamy views and a taste of rural life, check out the two B&B rooms in **Maison Battisti** (☎04 95 35 10 40; www.maisonbattisti.com; Barrettali; d incl breakfast €95-130), a gloriously romantic, vintage-furnished, golden-stone house in tiny Conchiglio, between Nonza and Centuri. The owners also rent out two enchanting self-catering cottages by the week, and sell local products in the lovely shop alongside. A 1.5km trail leads down to the beach.

lobster or crab is sold by weight, so prices can soar. Set menus range from a basic €18 'meat' one featuring charcuterie and veal to a €20 option with fish soup followed by fresh catch, to the let-out-all-the-stops €58 lobster menu.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 95 35 40 34; www.capcorse-tourisme.corsica; port de Plaisance; ☀10am-noon & 2.30-5pm Mon-Sat) The helpful local tourist office, on the jetty poking out from the harbour, has information on Cap Corse activities of all kinds.

## i Getting There & Away

It takes up to an hour to drive the 37km from Bastia to Macinaggio along the D80, a route that's followed by one or two buses per day (€8, one hour, no Sunday service).

## Centuri

POP 210

Rough-hewn but ravishing, the tiny harbour of Centuri, near the northwestern tip of Cap Corse, is home to one of Europe's most important lobster fleets: eight boats worked by three rival families. During lobster season, early April to early October, a cluster of waterfront restaurants compete to serve the best *pâtes à la langouste* (pasta with lobster).

## 🍽️ Sleeping & Eating

### Au Vieux Moulin

HOTEL €€

(☎04 95 35 60 15; www.le-vieux-moulin.net; port de Centuri; d annexe €100-128, main house €195; @☎) Poised just up from the harbour, this upmarket hotel-restaurant is based in a glo-

rious old mansion. The two nicest rooms are upstairs in the house itself, overlooking the port; the rest are in a modern annexe, where some but not all have fabulous sea-view balconies. The restaurant front terrace also enjoys wonderful views.

### La Bella Vista

SEAFOOD €€

(☎04 95 35 62 60; port de Centuri; menus from €26; ☀noon-2pm & 7-10pm Apr-mid-Nov) Run by a long-established fishing family, La Bella Vista is a great spot for fresh seafood and sports a sweet sunny terrace directly above the boats in the harbour. Specialities include bouillabaisse and mixed platters like the Misto Bella Vista, a smorgasbord of squid, scallops, shrimp, grilled fish and – of course – locally caught lobster.

## Nonza

POP 75

Arrayed around a rocky pinnacle that's crowned with the remains of a Genoese watchtower, Nonza is the most attractive village on the western coast of Cap Corse. Its diminutive central square, at a sharp curve in the D80 – high above the coast at this point – is a hubbub of activity in summer; while its schist-roofed stone houses look ready to tumble down the hillside onto the black-pebble beach far below.

That beach, accessible via a rocky footpath, is a legacy of an asbestos mine that closed 50 years ago. Locals don't seem to worry about potential pollution, though – it's packed with holidaying families in high season.

## 🍽️ Sleeping & Eating

### Le Relais du Cap

B&amp;B €

(☎04 95 37 86 52; www.relaisducap.com; Marine de Negru; d with shared bathroom €65-90; ☀Apr-Sep; 📞☎) For the ultimate seaside escape, this friendly little B&B is hard to beat. Squeezed beside a pocket-size pebble beach, beneath a towering cliff 4km south of Nonza, it holds four neat, unpretentious doubles, all with staggering sunset-facing views. No air-con, but who needs it with the sea breezes puffing in?

### Casa Maria

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 95 37 80 95; www.casamaria-corse.com; chemin de la Tour; d/q €105/175; ☀Apr-Oct; 📞☎) This bewitching hideaway is in the heart of the village, just below the tower in a coolly

refurbished 18th-century mansion. Four of its five rooms revel in sea views, while three – including the family suite – sit harmoniously beneath the sloping roof. Enjoy summer breakfasts beneath a vine-clad pergola in the bijou back garden.

### ★ La Sassa

GRILL €€

(☎04 95 38 55 26; [www.castalibre.com/lasassa](http://www.castalibre.com/lasassa); Tour de Nonza; mains €20-40; ☺ noon-3pm & 7.30-midnight mid-May-mid-Oct) In a magnificent setting, on a rocky spur immediately below Nonza's Genoese watchtower, this entirely outdoor restaurant serves up succulent meat and seafood cooked on an open Argentinian-style grill. Colourfully spotted after dark, it puts on live music weekly, with DJs other nights. The sea views and sunsets are unforgettable.

## St-Florent

POP 1690

The pretty little resort of St-Florent is the principal town of the hugely fertile region known as the Nebbio, an amphitheatre-shaped valley that's ringed by high mountains and renowned for its olives, wheat and chestnuts. Though little more than a village, St-Florent boasts its own cathedral, plus a picturesque 15th-century citadel that was bombarded by Nelson and now consists of a small round tower, closed to visitors. In summer, St-Florent springs to life as a bustling, rather upscale holiday destination, attracting visitors with a string of restaurants, a marina crammed with pleasure boats, and a reasonable beach, the Plage de la Roya, 2km southwest. Better beaches, best accessed by boat, lie between the isolated headlands further west.



### Eating

#### ★ Auberge de Pecheur

SEAFOOD €€

(☎06 24 36 30 42; [www.aubergedupecheur.net](http://www.aubergedupecheur.net); rte de Bastia; mains €26-38; ☺ 7-11.30pm Mon-Sat May-mid-Oct, plus Sun Jul & Aug) Entering this irresistible seafood restaurant via the owners' fish shop, St-Cristophe – also the name of their boat – you get a chance to inspect the day's fresh catch before you settle into the lovely courtyard dining area. Expect exquisitely presented fishy delights of all kinds including, for those partial to Japanese flavours, sashimi-style tuna tartare and teppanyaki-grilled swordfish.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 95 37 06 04; [www.corsica-saintflorent.com](http://www.corsica-saintflorent.com); rte de Bastia; ☺ 9am-noon & 1-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun) Offers information on the Nebbio region as well as St-Florent itself.

## Getting There & Away

St-Florent is not on a train line, but **Autocars Santini** (☎04 95 37 02 98; [www.autocars-santini.fr](http://www.autocars-santini.fr)) run at least two buses daily all year to Bastia (€10, 45 minutes, no Sunday service September to May), and also two daily, in July and August only, to L'Île-Rousse (€15, 1¼ hours).

## LA BALAGNE

This striking region blends history, culture and beach, with a healthy dash of Mediterranean glam to seal the deal. Whether you're looking for *la dolce vita* or *la vida loca*, you should be able to find it in Calvi or L'Île-Rousse. But try, if you can spare the time, to venture inland, for a day trip at least. Hidden among the valleys and spurs of La Balagne's spectacular hinterland, even on the hillsides lining the coast, you'll come across cute-as-can-be villages, Romanesque chapels, olive groves and lush vineyards. A signposted route, the **Strada di l'Artigiani** ([www.routedesartisans.fr](http://www.routedesartisans.fr)), spotlights craftspeople and producers who welcome visitors, ranging from potters and woodcarvers to beekeepers and biscuit-makers.

## L'Île-Rousse

POP 3120

Straddling a long, sandy curve of coastline and backed by maquis-clad mountains, the attractive little beach town of L'Île-Rousse fills up in summer with worshippers and holidaying yachties. Founded by Pascal Paoli in 1758, hoping to eclipse the Genoese-ruled port of Calvi, it has finally achieved that goal; unlike L'Île-Rousse, Calvi no longer has ferry service from the mainland. The ferry port is just north of the centre, over a causeway on the tiny Île de la Pietra.

## Sights & Activities

### Old Town

HISTORIC SITE

L'Île-Rousse's delightful old town centres on tree-shaded **place Paoli**, with its daily food

market, designed to resemble a Greek temple, alongside.

### Promenade de la Marinella BEACH

This coastal promenade follows the seafront east from L'Île-Rousse. The beach right by the town centre is actually very pleasant, with fine broad sand, but inevitably it can get very crowded in summer. More peaceful beaches nearby include Plage de Bodri, immediately southwest; Algajola, 8km southwest; and the magnificent Plage de Lozari, 8km east.

### Île de la Pietra ISLAND

Low, rocky Île de la Pietra, the 'russet island' that gave L'Île-Rousse its name, is a pleasant 15-minute stroll from the centre, across a short causeway. Apart from the ferry terminal and a solitary hotel, it's uninhabited. Walk up to the **Genoese watchtower** above the port, then follow the footpath that winds to the **lighthouse** at its far end.

### Club Nautique d'Île Rousse WATER SPORTS

(☎ 04 95 60 22 55; www.cnir.org; rte du Port; per hour kayak/SUP/sailboard/catamaran €14/15/20/40; ☀ 9am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 2-5pm Wed & Sat & by arrangement Sep-Jun) Offers water-sports equipment rentals, plus two-hour sea-kayak trips around the promontory and its islets.

## Sleeping & Eating

### L'Escale Côté Sud HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 95 63 01 70; www.hotel-ilerousse.com; 22 rue Notre-Dame; d €85-210) Open year-round and right in the heart of town, this well-equipped modern hotel is an excellent midrange option. Four of its rooms enjoy dreamy views of limpid turquoise waters lapping the beach, just across the promenade. Besides the large lounge bar downstairs, the place also has a good **restaurant** (☎ 04 95 60 10 53; 28 rue Notre-Dame; mains €25-30, menu €29; ☀ noon-3pm & 6-10pm) just down the street.

### Hôtel Perla Rossa BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎ 04 95 48 45 30; www.hotelperlarossa.com; 30 rue Notre-Dame; d €190-430, ste €360-590; ☀ late Apr-early Oct; 🍷🍷) With its soft-apricot façade and oyster-grey shutters, this boutique old-town option adds a touch of chic to the hotel scene. All its 10 rooms are opulent suites, decorated in a soothing cream-and-orange palette, and the best have swoon-inducing sea-view balconies.

### ★ A Casa Corsa CORSICAN €

(☎ 04 95 60 23 63; 6 place Paoli; sandwiches & salads €5-10; ☀ 9am-midnight mid-Mar-mid-Nov; 🍷) With a prime location – and outdoor tables – on gorgeous place Paoli, this wine bar does a brisk trade in salads, cheese and charcuterie platters and other stalwart Corsican dishes. All the excellent, all-Corsican wines are available by the glass.

### Food Market MARKET €

(place Paoli; ☀ 8am-1pm mid-Apr-Oct, shorter hours rest of year) Modelled on a Greek temple, with its open sides, tiled roof and 21 classical columns, L'Île-Rousse's covered food market opens every morning. Outside summer, it's busiest on Fridays.

## Drinking & Nightlife

### Café des Platanes CAFE

(www.balagne-corsica.com/cafe-des-platanes; place Paoli; ☀ 6am-2am Jun-Sep, 7am-8.30pm Oct-May) With its wood panelling and art nouveau touches, this venerable main-square cafe has a real old-time charm. Sipping an aperitif beneath its namesake sycamores, and watching the local gents play boules – L'Île-Rousse doesn't get any better than that.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 95 60 04 35; www.balagne-corsica.com; av Calizi; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri year-round, plus variable weekend hours Apr-Oct) Information on L'Île-Rousse and the whole Balagne region.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

**Corsica Linea** (☎ 08 25 88 80 88; www.corsica.linea.com; Gare Maritime) and **Corsica Ferries** (☎ 04 95 32 95 95; www.corsica-ferries.fr) operate ferries between L'Île-Rousse and the mainland French ports of Marseille and Toulon, with additional summer service to Nice.

### BUS

One or two buses each day head to Calvi (€4, 30 minutes) and Bastia (€14, 1¼ hours).

### TRAIN

From the **train station** (☎ 04 95 60 00 50; www.cf-corse.corsica; av David Dary), at the inland end of the causeway to the ferry port, four or five daily trains run west to Calvi (€6, 40 minutes), while at least two daily services via Ponte Leccia offer onward connections to Corte (€10.80, two hours), Bastia (€13.50, 2½ hours) or Ajaccio (€22.20, four hours).

## Algajola

POP 365

Historic little Algajola centres on a delightful walled enclave, on a sea-girt headland tipped by a tiny Genoese castle that's now a private home. Just 7km west of L'Île-Rousse, and 16km from Calvi, Algajola makes a great alternative to its larger neighbours, not least because of the long, golden beach that stretches away eastwards.

### Sleeping & Eating

#### ★ U Castellu

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 04 95 36 26 13; [www.ucastelluchambresdhotels.com](http://www.ucastelluchambresdhotels.com); 8 place du Château; d incl breakfast €90-173; ☺ late Mar-early Nov; 🚶 🚰) The five light-filled rooms in this lovely B&B, set in an old village home on the main square and right beside the ancient castle, are a wonderful blend of old and new. Maud's welcome is another drawcard, as is the panoramic rooftop terrace where they lay out the copious buffet breakfast.

#### Le Padula

SEAFOOD, PIZZA €

(☎ 04 95 60 75 22; [www.facebook.com/lepadula.algajola](http://www.facebook.com/lepadula.algajola); Plage d'Aregno; pizza from €12, mains €16-25; ☺ 8am-11pm Easter-Oct) Spectacular views and tasty, unpretentious food bring the crowds flocking to this informal beach terrace restaurant, 1km east of the centre. The menu ranges from pizza – served day and night – and the daily *plat du jour* (€16) to classic seafood snacks like fried squid or mussels cooked in wine.

### Getting There & Away

Poised beside the T30, Algajola is less than half an hour from either L'Île-Rousse or Calvi by car or train.

## Calvi

POP 5640

Basking between the fiery orange bastions of its medieval citadel and a glittering moon-shaped bay that's lined by a magnificent beach, Calvi has a long and venerable history. Locals insist that Christopher Columbus was born here, in the one Genoese city on Corsica that the French could never capture, while Admiral Nelson lost his right eye besieging the citadel on behalf of Pascal Paoli.

Since the 1920s, Calvi has been a tourist hotspot, to the point where it now has the

### DON'T MISS

#### THE TREMBLER

You may well tremble as the *trinighellu* (trembler) – the affectionate nickname for **U Trinighellu** (☎ 04 95 65 00 61; [www.cf-corse.corsica](http://www.cf-corse.corsica); one way €6), the dinky little coastal train between L'Île-Rousse and Calvi – trundles along its sand-covered tracks. Running seven times daily, and calling at 14 intermediate stations by request only, it's the easiest way to access numerous hidden coves and beaches: no traffic jams and a low-key, scenic journey.

Hop off at whichever rocky cove takes your fancy, or, for fine golden sand, at Algajola or Plage de Bodri, the closest stop to L'Île-Rousse.

feel – and, in high season, the crowds and prices – of a chi-chi French Riviera resort. Palatial yachts jostle in its marina, overlooked by upmarket brasseries, while higher up, the citadel watchtowers stand aloof.

Come in spring or autumn, though, and there's a lot to like about Calvi. The beach is emptier, it's easier to get into a restaurant, and cooler temperatures mean you can hike along the superb coastline.

### Sights & Activities

#### ★ Citadel

HISTORIC SITE

Crowning a rocky headland, Calvi's massive citadel was fortified by Corsica's Genoese rulers from the 12th century onwards, and has fended off everyone from Franco-Turkish raiders to Anglo-Corsican besiegers. While it holds little commercial activity to match the modern town below, a scenic hour-long stroll is rewarded with superb views from its five bastions. Don't miss the **Caserne Sampiero**, once home to the Genoese governor and now used by the legendary Foreign Legion, and the 13th-century **Cathédrale St-Jean Baptiste**, home to the ebony *Christ des Miracles*, credited with saving Calvi from Saracen invasion in 1553.

#### Plage de Calvi

BEACH

Sun-worshippers don't have far to stroll. Backed by a grove of pine trees, Calvi's stellar white-sand beach curves eastwards for 4.5km around the Golfe de Calvi from the marina.

**Colombo Line**

BOATING

(☎04 95 65 32 10; [www.colombo-line.com](http://www.colombo-line.com); quai Landry, Port de Plaisance; day trip adult €64-90, child €32-45; ☺Apr-Oct) Colombo Line runs a bevy of seasonal boat excursions, heading along the coast from the marina – a fine way to beat the summer traffic. Highlights include day trips to the Réserve Naturelle de Scandola, with beach stopovers at Girolata or Ajaccio.

 **Sleeping & Eating****Hôtel Le Magnolia**

HOTEL €€

(☎04 95 65 19 16; [www.hotel-le-magnolia.com](http://www.hotel-le-magnolia.com); rue Alsace Lorraine; d €107-220; ☺late Mar-Oct; 🍷🍷) Right by the church in the heart of town, this attractive mansion sits in a beautiful high-walled courtyard garden adorned by a handsome magnolia tree. Pretty much every room has a lovely outlook – rooftops, garden or sea – while connecting doubles make it a hit with families.

**Hôtel La Villa**

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(☎04 95 65 10 10; [www.hotel-lavilla.com](http://www.hotel-lavilla.com); chemin Notre-Dame de la Serra; d from €468; ☺May-Oct; 🍷🍷🍷🍷) The last word in Calvi chic, this lavish hilltop hideaway is brimming with boutique trappings. Clean lines, cappuccino-and-chocolate colour schemes, designer fabrics and minimalist motifs distinguish the rooms, while facilities include a pool, spa, tennis courts and Michelin-starred restaurant.

**Annie Traiteur**

DELI €

(☎04 95 65 49 67; [www.annietraiteur.com](http://www.annietraiteur.com); 5 rue Clemenceau; snacks from €3; ☺8am-8pm) With its dazzling array of Corsican charcuterie, cheeses, prepared deli foods, jams, wines,

liqueurs, olive oils and chestnut-flour cakes, this beautifully stocked deli is the perfect place to pick up a picnic.

 **U Casanu**

CORSIKAN €€

(☎04 95 65 00 10; 18 bd Wilson; mains €16-25; ☺noon-1.30pm & 8-10pm Mon-Sat Jan-Oct) For an unforgettable lunch, grab a booth at this cosy hole-in-the-wall, cheerily decorated in yellow and green, and hung with watercolours by septuagenarian artist-owner Monique Luciani. Tuck into home-cooked fish couscous, roast lamb, codfish aïoli or octopus salad, and don't miss the exquisite *fiadone*, a classic Corsican cheesecake made with lemon-scented Brocciu cheese soaked in *eau-de-vie* (brandy).

**A Candella**

CORSIKAN €€

(☎04 95 65 42 13; 9 rue St-Antoine; mains €18-30; ☺noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm mid-May-Sep) Of the few eating options within the citadel, A Candella stands out for the stupendous views from its romantic, golden-hued stone terrace, strewn with pretty flowers in pots and olive trees. The food tends to be Corsican hearty, with rich sauces on chunks of meat and fish, but it does decent salads if you fancy lingering over a light lunch.

**Drinking & Nightlife** **Chez Tao**

BAR

(☎04 95 65 00 73; [www.cheztao.com](http://www.cheztao.com); rue St-Antoine; ☺10.30pm-6am Jun-Sep) Eight decades on, hedonistic hipsters still flock to this super-smooth piano bar, a Calvi institution founded high in the citadel by White Russian émigré Tao Kanbey de Kerekoff in 1935. Enjoy a cocktail in the lavish, vaulted 16th-century interior, where there's usually

**DON'T MISS****PRETTY PIGNA**

The charming village of Pigna, a mirage of burnt-orange rooftops and blue-shuttered houses, nestles on the hillside 8km southwest of L'Île-Rousse. Thanks to its auditorium, Centre Culturel Voce, it's become a high-profile destination for Corsican music fans. Artisan workshops are scattered among the sweet cobbled streets both here and in the cute hamlet of **Sant'Antonino** a little higher up, precariously perched on a rocky outcrop that commands incredible views.

In Pigna, both **Casa Musicale** (☎04 95 61 77 31; [www.casa-musicale.org](http://www.casa-musicale.org); d €90-125; ☺mid-Feb-Dec; 🍷) and **Hôtel Palazzu** (☎04 95 47 32 78; [www.hotel-corse-palazzu.com](http://www.hotel-corse-palazzu.com); d €170-203, ste €271-395; ☺Apr-Oct) have romantic restaurant terraces worthy of a million marriage proposals, but the prize for best lunch spot has to go to **A Casarella** (☎04 95 61 78 08; [www.facebook.com/acasarellapigna](http://www.facebook.com/acasarellapigna); snacks from €4, mains €8-10; ☺10.30am-sunset Apr-mid-Oct).

Up the hill in pretty Sant'Antonino, stop for a freshly squeezed lemon juice at **Clos Antonini** (☎04 95 61 76 83; place de l'Église; ☺9am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 8pm Jul & Aug).



## WORTH A TRIP

## POINTE DE LA REVELLATA

Thrill your senses with a short scenic drive west along the coastal D81B (signposted 'Route de Porto – bord de mer' from just below Calvi's citadel) to Pointe de la Revellata, the nearest point on Corsica to the French mainland. Within seconds of leaving town, you're deep in the hot, sun-baked maquis, with only a low stone wall separating a white-knuckled passenger from the scrubby green drop down to the sparkling emerald water far below. Suddenly, after 4km, the majestic cape pops into view, with a toy-like white lighthouse at its tip. Park in the lay-by and head off to explore the network of dusty walking trails etched in ginger. To enjoy even better views of the bay of Calvi, drive another 1.5km uphill (signposted) towards **Chapelle Notre Dame de la Serra**.

live music or a DJ, or better still, soak up the amazing sea views from the terrace.

### **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (📍 04 95 65 16 67; [www.balagne-corsica.com](http://www.balagne-corsica.com); chemin de la Plage, Port de Plaisance; ☀️ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri year-round, plus variable weekend hours Apr-Oct; 📶) Very dynamic, with excellent resources on La Balagne, including detailed walk itineraries, with maps (€2 each, or €6 for four). There's a summer-only annexe in the citadel.

### **i** Getting There & Away

#### AIR

Calvi's **Aéroport Calvi Ste-Catherine** (📍 04 95 65 88 88; [www.calvi.aeroport.fr](http://www.calvi.aeroport.fr)), 7km southeast of the centre, has flights to mainland France and continental Europe. Count on paying €25 for a taxi into town.

#### BUS

There's a year-round bus service to Bastia (€16, 2½ hours, two daily in July and August, one daily Monday to Friday otherwise) via L'Île-Rousse (€4, 30 minutes). In July and August there's also one daily bus to Porto (€16, 2½ hours).

#### TRAIN

From Calvi train station, south of the harbour, there are at least two departures daily to Bastia (€16.40, 3¼ hours) and Ajaccio (€25.10, 4¾ hours), in each case involving a change at Ponte Leccia, and four or five direct trains to L'Île-Rousse (€6, 40 minutes).

## NORTHWEST CORSICA

The coastline that stretches away northwards from the classy and historic city of Ajaccio holds some of the most breathtaking scenery in all Corsica. Successive bays unfold in dazzling splendour, each peppered with villages that spring to life in sum-

mer. Many of the beaches are superb, and the sea is consistently enticing, but it's the breathtaking coastal cliffscape, culminating in the iconic red-rock extravaganza of the Calanques de Piana, that you'll never forget.

## Porto

POP 550

The setting could hardly be more magnificent. The village of Porto stands amid the west coast's most spectacular scenery, facing the stunning Golfe de Porto – a Unesco World Heritage Site, cradled between flame-red cliffs – and with a thickly forested valley to its rear, where the Gorges de Spelunca offers superb hiking.

Very much a summer resort, and all but deserted in winter, Porto sprawls a long way back from the sea, up the slopes of the valley. All action centres on its picturesque waterfront, punctuated by a pocket-sized red-rock headland that's topped by an oh-so-cute 16th-century watchtower, built to guard against Barbary pirates. Frequent boat trips set off to explore the shimmering seas of the gulf.

### **🗨** Sights & Activities

#### Waterfront

PORT

Porto's main sights are clustered around the harbour. Once you've climbed the higgledy-piggledy headland up to the **Genoese tower** (€2.50; ☀️ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 8pm Jul & Aug), stroll round to the bustling marina, from where an arched footbridge crosses the estuary to an impressive eucalyptus grove and Porto's pebbly patch of beach.

#### ★ Réserve

#### Naturelle de Scandola

NATURE RESERVE

The jewel of the Golfe de Porto World Heritage Site, the Réserve Naturelle de Scandola extends both above and below the water, from the russet-hued cliffs down to their

submarine counterparts. With no road or trail access, you can only explore this majestic wilderness by boat.

Several Porto-based boat operators, including **Via Mare** (☎06 07 28 72 72; [www.via-mare-promenades.com](http://www.via-mare-promenades.com); tours €26-47; ☀Apr-Oct), **L'Eivissa & Le Stella Marina** (☎06 73 05 98 50; [www.portoeivissa.com](http://www.portoeivissa.com); tours €27-60; ☀Apr-Oct) and **Corse Émotion** (☎06 68 58 94 94; [www.corse-emotion.com](http://www.corse-emotion.com); tours €26-60; ☀year-round), run half-day excursions into the reserve, in some cases combining it with Les Calanques de Piana.

**★Gorges de la Spelunca** HIKING  
Just inland from Porto, the awesome Gorges de la Spelunca offers splendid hiking, plus freshwater swimming on hot days. A 45-minute trail, marked with orange blazes, leads eastwards through the heart of the canyon from the bridge over the Porto River, 2km east of Ota on the D124, to the Pont de Zaglia, an 18th-century Genoan stone bridge.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Les Oliviers** CAMPGROUND €  
(☎04 95 26 14 49; [www.camping-oliviers-porto.com](http://www.camping-oliviers-porto.com); Pont de Porto; per adult/child/tent or car €11.80/6/4, 2-person chalet per week €539-997; ☀late Mar-Oct; @☎☎) Idyllically set amid overhanging olive trees, this steeply terraced site climaxes with a landscaped swimming pool, surrounded by artificial rocks. It's by the main road, 2km up from the harbour, but you can swim in the river. There's a large fitness cen-

tre, and wooden chalets and *roulottes* (caravans) can be rented by the week. Expect lively group-participation events in summer.

**Hôtel-Restaurant Le Belvédère** HOTEL €€  
(☎04 95 26 12 01; [www.hotelrestaurant-lebelvedere-porto.com](http://www.hotelrestaurant-lebelvedere-porto.com); rte de la Marine; d/q €100/165; ☎) In a great location beside the harbour, near the steps up to the little watchtower, this small hotel holds bright, clean, tiled-floor rooms; several have full-on sea views, some have private terraces. Family rooms sleep up to five, with a double bed, two bunks and a trundle bed.

**Le Moulin** CORSICAN €€  
(☎04 95 26 12 09; [www.lemoulindeporto.canalblog.com](http://www.lemoulindeporto.canalblog.com); Pont de Porto; mains €15-24, menus €20-28; ☀noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Apr-Oct) Pleasantly situated above a rushing river, immediately south of the bridge at the start of the D84 towards Evisa, 'The Mill' serves solid Corsican food in an unpretentious, family-friendly setting. Specialities include courgette *beignets*, Corsican bean-and-vegetable soup, polenta, local cheese and charcuterie, cannelloni and grilled meats.

**Le Maquis** CORSICAN €€  
(☎04 95 26 12 19; rte de Calvi; mains €25-30; ☀noon-2pm & 7-10pm, closed Mon Oct-Apr) Propped on the hillside beside the main road, this welcoming restaurant is much loved by locals and tourists alike. The food is a delight, with a changing daily menu that's rooted in traditional Corsican recipes but extends to Mediterranean classics like seafood

### WORTH A TRIP

## LES CALANQUES DE PIANA

No amount of praise can do justice to the astonishing beauty of Les Calanques de Piana (E Calanche in Corsican). These sculpted cliffs rear above the Golfe de Porto in staggering scarlet pillars, teetering columns, and irregularly shaped outcrops of pink, ochre and ginger. Flaming red in the sunlight, they're one of the great sights of Corsica. And as you sway around switchback after switchback along the rock-riddled 10km stretch of the D81 between Porto and the village of Piana, one mesmerising vista piggybacks on another.

There are two ways to discover the Calanques: by boat or on foot. Numerous operators offer boat trips from Porto; allow €26 for a 90-minute excursion. For a land-based perspective, don your walking boots. Several trails start near the municipal stadium, 3km north of Piana on the D81. Piana's **tourist office** (☎04 95 27 84 42; [www.ouestcorsica.com](http://www.ouestcorsica.com); place de la Mairie; ☀9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat; ☎) sells a €1 leaflet detailing six walks.

Afterwards, flop on the sand on the idyllic beaches of **Ficajola** or **Arone**. 5km north and 12km southwest of Piana respectively. Or splurge on lunch (mains €27 to €30, lunch menu €40) or sundowners with epic views at Corsica's original luxury hotel, **Les Roches Rouges** (☎04 95 27 81 81; [www.lesrochesrouges.com](http://www.lesrochesrouges.com); D81; d from €150, with sea view €170; ☀Apr-Oct; ☎☎), an eccentric vintage property that opened in 1912.

risotto. Sit in the cosy interior or, for brilliant views, reserve a table on the balcony.

## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 95 26 10 55; www.ouest.corsica.com; place de la Marine; ☀ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Helpful office set in the former gunpowder store that belonged to Porto's Genoese watchtower.

## **i** Getting There & Away

There's no fast or easy way to reach Porto. Whether you're driving the coastal D81 from Calvi (75km north) or Ajaccio (80km south), you can expect two hours of switchbacks and jaw-dropping vistas.

Buses run to the following:

**Ajaccio** €12, two hours, two daily in summer, one Monday to Saturday in winter

**Calvi** €16, 2½ hours, one daily July and August

**Piana** €2.40, 25 minutes, two daily in summer, one Monday to Saturday in winter

## Ajaccio

POP 71,510

Commanding a lovely sweep of bay, the handsome city of Ajaccio has the self-confidence that comes with a starring role in world history. In summer, there's more than a whiff of the Côte d'Azur to its pastel-toned, cafe-filled historic core and the trendy waterfront promenade that stretches west, buzzing with beachgoers by day and party people later on. But it's in the tangled old-town lanes that the spectre of Napoléon Bonaparte looms largest, with the house where he was born in 1769 now serving as a museum to his memory. The headland alongside is dominated by a redoubtable citadel that's sadly off limits to visitors, while a palace amid the newer boulevards to the north displays magnificent art collected by Napoléon's uncle. With ferries from mainland France mooring right alongside, Ajaccio's always bustling with activity.

## **👁** Sights & Activities

Kiosks on the quayside at the foot of place du Maréchal Foch sell tickets for seasonal **boat trips** around the Golfe d'Ajaccio and Îles Sanguinaires (adult/child €28/15), and excursions to the Réserve Naturelle de Scandola (adult/child €59/39).

### Palais Fesch – Musée des Beaux-Arts

GALLERY

(☎ 04 95 26 26 26; www.musee-fesch.com; 50-52 rue du Cardinal Fesch; adult/child €8/5; ☀ 9.15am-

## AJACCIO BEACH LIFE

Ajaccio's most popular beach, **Plage de Ricanto** (aka Tahiti Plage), is 5km east of town, just short of the airport. Dedicated beach bums tend to prefer the sands of **Porticcio** further east, which is 15km by road from Ajaccio, but only 6km if you sail straight across the bay, on the 20-minute **ferry** (Navette Maritime; ☎ 06 03 13 46 80, 04 95 21 06 16; www.promenades-en-mer.org; one way/return €5/8) that runs six to nine times daily.

Heading west along the waterfront from the old town, on the other hand, the coast road leads past several smaller beaches – Ariane, Neptune, Palm Beach and Marinella – before culminating after 12km at the slender, rocky **Pointe de la Parata**. This popular hiking destination gives grandstand views of the **Îles Sanguinaires** (Bloody Islands), named for their vivid crimson colours at sunset.

6pm May-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Apr) Established by Napoléon's uncle, cardinal Joseph Fesch (1763-1839), Ajaccio's superb art museum holds the largest French collection of Italian paintings outside the Louvre. Masterpieces by Titian, Fra Bartolomeo, Veronese, Bellini and Botticelli – look out for his *Vierge à l'Enfant Soutenu par un Ange* (Mother and Child Supported by an Angel) – are complemented by temporary exhibitions. Several rooms are devoted to Napoléon and his family, with one unlikely painting showing Napoléon atop a dromedary.

### Maison Bonaparte

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 95 21 43 89; www.musees-nationaux-mal.maison.fr; rue St-Charles; adult/child €7/free; ☀ 10am-12.30pm & 1.15-5.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10.30am-12.30pm & 1.15-4.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) Unremarkable from the outside, the old-town house where Napoléon was born and spent his first nine years was ransacked by Corsican nationalists in 1793, requisitioned by English troops from 1794 to 1796, and eventually rebuilt by his mother. It's now preserved as a museum, filled with interesting displays and memorabilia despite the loss of its original furnishings and decor. Highlights include a glass medallion containing a lock of Napoléon's hair.



## Ajaccio

### Sights

- 1 Maison Bonaparte..... C6  
2 Palais Fesch – Musée des Beaux-Arts..... C3

### Sleeping

- 3 Hôtel Napoléon..... B4  
4 Hôtel San Carlu Citadelle..... C6

### Eating

- 5 A Nepita..... B1  
6 Boulangerie Galeani..... C5  
7 Le 20123..... B6

## Pointe de la Parata

WALKING

This slender promontory, 12km west of Ajaccio, is a magnet for walkers. A much-trodden trail around the cape rewards with great sea views and tantalising close-ups of the four islets of the Îles Sanguinaires (Bloody Islands), so named thanks to their crimson-coloured rock. **Bus 5** (€1, 30 minutes) runs to the trailhead from just west of Ajaccio's place de Gaulle.



## Festivals & Events

### Fêtes Napoléoniennes

STREET CARNIVAL

(☺15 Aug) Ajaccio's biggest bash celebrates Napoléon's birthday – which coincides with the Assumption of Mary, a national bank holiday – with military-themed parades, street spectacles and a huge fireworks display.



## Sleeping

### Hôtel Napoléon

HOTEL €€

(☎04 95 51 54 00; www.hotel-napoleon-ajaccio.fr; 4 rue Lorenzo Vero; d €115-149; 🏠🚿) The warmth of a family-run hotel, coupled with a prime location on a side street in the heart of town, make the Napoléon an excellent midrange choice. Rooms are clean, bright and comfortable, despite their rather uninspiring decor; some of the nicest are on the 7th floor, with high ceilings and tall shuttered windows looking out on a leafy backyard.

### Hôtel San Carlu Citadelle

HOTEL €€

(☎04 95 21 13 84; www.hotel-sancarlu.com; 8 bd Danièle Casanova; d/q from €109/159; 🏠🚿) This cream-coloured townhouse, smack opposite the citadel and featuring matching oyster-grey shutters, is a solid bet. Rooms are clean and modern, while the views over citadel and sea get better with every floor. The family room sleeps up to five comfortably. Traffic noise could be an issue for light sleepers.

## ★ Hôtel Demeure

### Les Mouettes

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 95 50 40 40; www.hotellesmouettes.fr; 9 cours Lucien Bonaparte; d €185-595; ☺Apr-Oct; 🏠🚿🚿) Nestled right at the water's edge, 1.5km west of the old town, this colonnaded, peach-coloured 19th-century mansion is a dream. Views of the bay from its terraces – some rooms have their own private ones – and (heated) pool are exquisite; you may spot dolphins at dawn or dusk. Inside, the decor is elegantly understated and the service superb.



## Eating

### Boulangerie Galeani

BAKERY €

(☎04 95 21 39 68; www.facebook.com/boulangeriegaleani; 3 rue du Cardinal Fesch; pastries €2-3, sandwiches €5.50; ☺6.30am-7.15pm Mon-Sat) Ajaccio's office workers queue outside the town's finest bakery at midday for freshly made sandwiches and delicious pastries; tourists with more time on their hands linger over breakfast or a bargain lunch at the pavement tables outside. Be sure to try one of the chestnut-flour specialties.

## ★ L'Altru Versu

BISTRO €€

(☎04 95 50 05 22; www.facebook.com/mezzacquiresto; rte des Sanguinaires; mains €20-40, menus from €29; ☺noon-2pm & 8-10pm, closed Jan & Feb) At this perennial favourite on Ajaccio's waterfront, 2.5km west of the old town, magnificent sea views complement the exquisite gastronomic creations of the Mezzaacqui brothers (Jean-Pierre front of house, David powering the kitchen), from crispy minted prawns with pistachio cream to pork with honey and clementine zest.

## ★ Le 20123

CORSICAN €€

(☎04 95 21 50 05; www.20123.fr; 2 rue du Roi de Rome; menu €38.50; ☺noon-2.30pm Mon-Sat, 7-11pm daily Apr-Oct, closed Mon Nov-Mar) This

## ICE-CREAM PIT STOP

Sample the extraordinary creations of Pierre Geronimi at **Glaces Geronimi** (☎04 95 28 04 13; www.glacespierregeronimi.com; Résidence de la Plage, Sagone; scoop/sundae €3/15; ☺7.30am-2am Jul & Aug, shorter hours rest of year), Corsica's most celebrated *glacier* (ice-cream maker) – violet tutti-frutti, Camembert or mustard ice cream, anyone? – in this beachfront cafe, 13km southeast of Cargèse towards Ajaccio.



fabulous, one-of-a-kind restaurant originated in the village of Pila Canale (postcode 20123). When the owner moved to Ajaccio, the village came too – water fountain, life-sized dolls, central square and all. That might sound tacky, but it works; lively year-round, it's a charming, characterful night out, where everyone feasts on a seasonal four-course menu that's rich in meaty traditional cuisine.

### A Nepita

BISTRO €€

(☎ 04 95 26 75 68; 4 rue San Lazaro; 2-/3-course menus lunch €30/35, dinner €38/45; ☀ noon-2pm Tue, noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Wed-Fri, 7.30-10pm Sat) With its modern French cuisine and elegant setting, it's no wonder A Nepita keeps winning plaudits and loyal followers. While it makes a nice change from hearty traditional Corsican food, the island's not forgotten. The changing daily menu includes just two appetisers, two mains and two desserts, and draws on the freshest local ingredients, including seasonal seafood and vegetables.

## i Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 95 51 53 03; www.ajaccio-tourisme.com; 3 bd du Roi Jérôme; ☀ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Apr-Sep; 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Sat Oct-Mar; 📞) Ajaccio's helpful tourist office, in the former fish market, is a great source of information on town and island alike.

## i Getting There & Away

### AIR

The **Aéroport d'Ajaccio Napoléon Bonaparte** (☎ 04 95 23 56 56; www.2a.cci.fr/Aeroport-Napoleon-Bonaparte-Ajaccio.html; rte de Campo dell'Oro), 6km east of the town centre around the bay, is connected with the French mainland, and in summer with London Stansted, by Air Corsica. It's linked by the half-hourly Muvistrada bus 8 (€10, 30 minutes) to Ajaccio's train station (bus stop Marconajo). A taxi into town will cost around €25.

### BOAT

**Corsica Linea** (☎ 04 95 57 69 10; www.corsica.linea.com) and **Corsica Ferries** (☎ 04 95 50 78 82; www.corsica-ferries.fr) sail to the French mainland ports of Toulon (seven to 11 hours) and Marseille (12 hours) from Ajaccio's **Gare Maritime** (☎ 04 95 51 55 45; quai L'Herminier). Buy tickets before sailings inside the combined bus and ferry terminal. **La Méridionale** (☎ 04 91 99 45 09; www.lameridionale.com) also offers service to Marseille from Propriano, 70km south of Ajaccio.

### BUS

Long-distance buses from Ajaccio only serve destinations to the southeast and north of the city that can't be reached by train, including Bonifacio, Porto and Sartène. Buses arrive and depart immediately outside the ferry terminal, while local bus companies including **Ceccaldi** (☎ 06 09 96 15 37; www.autocars-cccaldi-ajaccio.fr), **Corsica Europa Travel** (Eurocorse; ☎ 04 95 70 13 83) and **Balési Évasion** (☎ 04 95 70 02 50; www.balesievation.com) sell tickets inside the adjoining bus terminal. Sunday services operate in July and August only.

**Bonifacio** €19.20, three hours, twice daily

**Porto** €12, two hours, once or twice daily

**Porto-Vecchio** €19.20, 3¼ hours, twice daily

**Zonza** €19.20, two hours, once daily

### TRAIN

Services from the **train station** (☎ 04 95 23 11 03; www.cf-corse.corsica; place de la Gare), 1km north of the old town and 500m north of the ferry terminal, include the following:

**Bastia** €21.60, 3¼ hours, five daily

**Calvi** €25.10, 4¾ hours, two daily (change at Ponte Leccia)

**Corte** €11.50, two hours, five daily

## THE SOUTH

A microcosm of Corsica itself, the south boasts two of the island's most alluring port towns – the cliff-hugging citadel of Bonifacio and the glamorous resort of Porto-Vecchio – along with its most remarkable megalithic sites (Filitosa and Cucuruzzu), some of its most breathtaking mountains (Aiguilles de Bavella) and its most beautiful beach (Palombaggia).

## Sartène

POP 3390

With its grey granite houses, secretive dead-end alleys and sombre, introspective air, the hill village of Sartène has long been renowned for encapsulating Corsica's rugged spirit. To French novelist Prosper Mérimée, this was the 'most Corsican of Corsican towns'. It certainly feels a long way from the glitter of the Corsican coast; the hillside houses are endearingly ramshackle, the streets scruffy and shady, and life still crawls along at a traditional tilt. Even if the banditry and bloody vendettas for which it was formerly notorious now lie firmly in the past, Sartène continues to offer an authentic glimpse of how life used to be lived in rural Corsica.

## Sights

### Musée de Préhistoire Corse et d'Archéologie

MUSEUM

(☎04 95 77 01 09; www.corsedusud.fr/nos-compences/patrimoine-et-culture; bd Jacques Nicolai; adult/child €4/2.50; ☀10am-6pm Jun-Sep, to 5pm Mon-Fri Oct-May) This modern museum traces Corsica's prehistory from its original fauna through the megalithic, Bronze Age and Roman eras. Much of it is rather dry, with cases of tiny, symmetrically arrayed arrowheads, though an interesting section on marine archaeology displays huge jars salvaged from shipwrecks. There are also full-sized granite-carved replica menhirs, with good explanations of the cultures that created them.

## Festivals & Events

### Procession du Catenacciu

RELIGIOUS

(☀Good Friday) Every Good Friday since the Middle Ages, a chained, barefoot penitent has re-enacted Christ's journey to Calvary by lugging a massive oak cross on a 1.8km circuit through the streets of Sartène. Wearing red robes and cowed to preserve his anonymity, the Catenacciu (literally 'chained one') is chosen by the parish priest, often to atone for a grave sin.

Both the 34kg cross and 16kg chain are displayed year-round inside Sartène's granite **Église Ste-Marie** (place Porta), on the main square.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel des Roches

HOTEL €€

(☎04 95 77 07 61; www.sartenehotel.fr; av Jean-Jaurès; d €117-163, junior ste €211; ☀Feb-mid-Dec; ) This large hotel, just a few steps from the main square, may look a little drab as you approach, but the views from the balconies and terraces on its other side, down over the valley towards the sea, are stupendous. All the rooms are crisp, simple and light; those that face out cost extra.

### Le Jardin de l'Echauguette

CORSIKAN €€

(☎06 20 40 71 49; place de la Vardiola; mains €14-25, menus from €23.50; ☀noon-2pm & 7-9pm mid-Apr-Sep) This cheerful restaurant, downstairs from Sartène's main square, centres on a dreamy walled garden terrace, overhung by trees. Linger over rich Corsican specialities like *beignets de courgette* (zucchini fritters), cannelloni with Brocciu cheese, or veal stew.

## WORTH A TRIP

### PREHISTORIC CORSICA: FILITOSA & CAURIA

Southern Corsica boasts the island's most astonishing prehistoric sites, set amid stunning landscapes and essential viewing for anyone with an interest in Europe's earliest civilisations.

The granite menhirs (standing stones) at **Filitosa** (☎04 95 74 00 91; www.filitosa.fr; D57, Sollacaro; adult/child €9/7; ☀9am-1hr before sunset Apr-Oct), 20km north of Propriano, were first erected as much as 6000 years ago, perhaps to mark communal tombs. Many were re-carved during the Bronze Age to hold detailed faces and weaponry and thus, uniquely, appear to depict specific individuals, perhaps warriors or chieftains. Current theories suggest that the so-called 'Sea Peoples', long-standing enemies of the ancient Egyptians, may have sailed west across the Mediterranean to Corsica at this time, and taken over pre-existing settlements such as Filitosa.

The desolate and beautiful **Cauria plateau**, 15km south of Sartène and reached by turning right onto the D48 just south of town, holds further megalithic curiosities. To find them, follow signs to Stantari, then walk 10 minutes down a dirt track, where they're set along a 40-minute loop trail, close to a fantastic jumble of naturally eroded boulders that surely served as an ancient landmark. Both **Stantari** and **Renaghju** are short *alignements* (lines) of standing stones that show similar anatomical details and weaponry to those at Filitosa; **Funtanaccia** is a dolmen, one of Corsica's few burial chambers, with its pillars and capstones fully exposed.

Both sites can easily be visited from Sartène; alternatively, **U Mulinu di Calzola** (☎04 95 24 32 14, 06 84 79 21 86; Pont de Calzola, Casalabriva; d €90-110, tr €105-125; ☀May-Oct) is a gorgeous inn located right on the banks of the Taravo River, less than 10 minutes' drive from Filitosa. Dinner on the shaded terrace is certain to win you over after a day of sightseeing.



1  
WEEK

## Exploring Southern Corsica

Southern Corsica encapsulates the very best the island has to offer: mountains and beaches, culture, history and plenty of fabulous restaurants for epicurean travellers.

Start your trip in **Bonifacio** (p920): perched atop dramatic chalky cliffs that plunge into the sea, it is undoubtedly Corsica's most spectacular town. Allow a day to wander the streets of the citadel, descend (and then re-climb!) the precipitous Escalier du Roi d'Aragon, and hike to the Phare de Pertusato for long-range views of the town's amazing setting.

The next day, pack a picnic and snorkelling gear and join a boat trip to the **Îles Lavezzi** (p920), an idyllic archipelago southeast of Bonifacio towards Sardinia, where you can walk the island paths and swim in dazzling turquoise waters, amid schools of colourful fish.

On the third day, head north from Bonifacio towards **Sartène** (p916) – taking a small detour to the remote and rural prehistoric sites of **Cauria** (p917) on your way to a late lunch on the panoramic terrace at Le Jardin de l'Echauguette. Continue to **Levie** (p924), up in the mountainous region of L'Alta Rocca. Your overnight destination is the exquisite boutique inn A Pignata – half-board is compulsory, and what a good idea!

The next morning, visit the Bronze Age forts of **Cucuruzzu and Capula** (p924), deep in the woods five minutes' drive from the hotel. Spend the rest of the day exploring the picturesque villages of Levie and **Ste-Lucie de Tallano** or simply enjoying the creature comforts and views of A Pignata.

On day five: action! Go canyoning, hiking or mountain biking in the **Aiguilles de Bavella** (p923), a stunning mountain fastness characterised by steep, serrated peaks, forested slopes and deep canyons. Spend the night in **Zonza** (p923) to recover, before driving down to **Porto-Vecchio** (p922) the next day and flopping on one of its paradisiacal beaches: Plage de Palombaggia or Plage de San Ciprianu get our vote.

For your last day, enjoy a spot of shopping in Porto-Vecchio's pretty boutiques, feast on fresh pasta or seafood down by the harbour-side, and check out whichever beaches you missed out on the day before.



ANDREW HAN ORSKYV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



PETE SEAWARD/ONELL PLANET ©

Top: Zonza (p923) Bottom: Bonifacio (p920)



## **i** Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 95 77 15 40; [www.facebook.com/lacorsedesorigines](http://www.facebook.com/lacorsedesorigines); 14 cours Sœur Amélie; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, plus 9am-4pm Sat Jun-Sep) Helpful regional tourist office on Sartène's main street, 200m south of the town square.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Sartène is 80km (1½ hours' drive) south of Ajaccio and 50km (one hour) north of Bonifacio. At least twice daily, buses run by Corsica Europa Travel (p916) and/or Balési Évasion (p916) head for Ajaccio, Bonifacio, L'Alta Rocca and Porto-Vecchio.

## Bonifacio

POP 3175

Thanks to its stunning natural setting, the ancient fortress town of Bonifacio is an essential stop for all visitors to Corsica. Protected by vast smooth walls, the town itself stretches along a narrow, top-heavy promontory, undercut by creamy-white limestone cliffs hollowed out by centuries of ceaseless waves. Down below, connected by steep footpaths and a single winding road, and lapped by cornflower-blue waters, its harbour and modern marina shelters at the landward end of a snaking fjord-like inlet.

It's down by the port where much of Bonifacio's tourist trade is concentrated, including ferries across to nearby Sardinia, boat tours to Corsica's southerly beaches and the Îles Lavezzi, and a busy clutch of bars, clubs and brasseries along the quayside. The old city, though, is what truly lingers in the mind, a ravishingly romantic web of alleyways lined by ramshackle medieval houses and chapels with faded pastel plasterwork.

## **👁** Sights & Activities

### ★ Citadel

HISTORIC SITE

(Haute Ville) The great joy of visiting Bonifacio lies in strolling the tangled medieval lanes of the citadel. The paved steps of *montée du Rastello* and *montée St-Roch* lead up from the marina to its old gateway, the **Porte de Gênes**, complete with an original 16th-century drawbridge. Immediately inside, the **Bastion de l'Étendard** ([www.bonifacio.fr/visite-decouverte/bastion-de-letendard](http://www.bonifacio.fr/visite-decouverte/bastion-de-letendard); adult/child €3.50/1, incl Escalier du Roi d'Aragon €4.50/1.50; ☀ 10am-4.30pm Apr-Dec) was the main stronghold of the fortified town. Built to hold heavy artillery, it now houses a small museum and

provides access to the ramparts, which offer jaw-dropping views.

Several of the town's streets are spanned by arched aqueducts, designed to collect rainwater to fill the communal cistern opposite **Église Ste-Marie Majeure**. On the southern side of the citadel, the **Escalier du Roi d'Aragon** ([www.bonifacio.fr/visite-decouverte/escalier-roy-daragon](http://www.bonifacio.fr/visite-decouverte/escalier-roy-daragon); adult/child €3.50/1, incl Bastion de l'Étendard €4.50/1.50; ☀ 9am-sunset Apr-Dec) cuts down the cliff-face.

Bonifacio doesn't fill the entire headland. Just beyond the old core as you head west, beyond the Gothic **Église Ste-Dominique** and massive defunct barracks, you come to an eerily quiet **marine cemetery**. At the western tip of the peninsula, an underground passage dug during WWII leads down to a 'window' cut into the rock just 12m above the sea, at a rudder-shaped rock formation known as the **Gouvernail de la Corse**.

### Îles Lavezzi

ISLAND

(day trips from Bonifacio adult/child €37/18.50) Paradise! If you love to splash in tranquil lapis-lazuli waters, this protected clutch of uninhabited islets was made for you. The largest, the 65-hectare Île Lavezzi itself, is the most accessible. In summer, operators based at Bonifacio's marina (and also in Porto-Vecchio) offer boat trips; bring a picnic lunch.

### Phare de Pertusato

WALKING

For an enjoyable hike with magnificent views, head south along the cliffs to the Phare (Lighthouse) de Pertusato. Clearly signposted off the road up to the citadel, the trail leads past the deceptively lighthouse-like Semaphore de Pertusato before following a rudimentary road to Pertusato. Count on 2½ hours, without shelter or other facilities, for the 5.6km return trip.

## **🏠** Sleeping

### Hôtel Colomba

HOTEL €€

(☎ 04 95 73 73 44; [www.hotel-bonifacio-corse.fr](http://www.hotel-bonifacio-corse.fr); 4-6 rue Simon Varsi; d €132-167; ☀ Apr-Oct; 📞 📺 📶) Occupying a tastefully renovated 14th-century building, this hotel enjoys a prime location on a picturesque (steep) street, bang in the heart of the old town. Rooms are simple and smallish, but fresh and decorated with amenities including wrought-iron bedsteads, country fabrics, carved bedheads and/or chequerboard tiles. Other pluses include friendly staff and breakfast served in a medieval vaulted cellar.



**Hôtel Genovese**

HOTEL €€€

(📍) 04 95 73 12 34; [www.hotel-genovese.com](http://www.hotel-genovese.com); place de l'Europe, Haute-Ville; d €230-340, ste €380-610; (P) (♿) (♿) Built into Bonifacio's northern ramparts, just west of the historic core, this ultra-cool hotel is hard to resist. Its rooftop swimming pool and bijou garden are stunning, and the interior stylish and bright. Standard rooms are comfortable but a bit underwhelming, while the poolside terrace and some fancier rooms and suites offer spectacular views over town and harbour.

**✂ Eating****Sorba**

BAKERY €

(📍) 06 22 51 70 12; 3 rue St-Erasme; ☺ 8am-6.30pm Apr-Oct) Before a boat trip, drop in at this artisanal patisserie-gelateria down by the water, run by the same family since 1921, and splash out on a bag of lemon- or aniseed-flavoured *canistrelli* (Corsican biscuits), a loaf of *pain des morts* (literally 'death bread' but actually sweet nut-and-raisin bread) or some giant-sized chestnut and orange *fu-gazzi* (cookies) to nibble aboard.

**La Bodega**

CORNICAN €

(📍) 06 73 75 94 70; [www.facebook.com/LaBodegaBonifacio](http://www.facebook.com/LaBodegaBonifacio); place Bonaparte; mains €14-21; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Mon-Sat Mar-mid-Oct) At this cute wood-beamed hole-in-the-wall, just up from the tourist office, gregarious owner Jean-Marie whips up no-nonsense Corsican classics, from veal with olives to *civet de sanglier* (wild boar stew). Don't miss his *aubergine à la bonifacienne* (roasted aubergine, stuffed with garlic, breadcrumbs, egg and Corsican cheese), or sample a bit of everything with an *assiette dégustation* (tasting plate).

**★ Kissing Pigs**

CORNICAN €€

(📍) 04 95 73 56 09; [www.facebook.com/kissingpigs](http://www.facebook.com/kissingpigs); 15 quai Banda del Ferro; mains €11-23.50, menus €21-23; ☺ 11.30am-3pm Thu-Tue, 6.30-11pm Thu-Sat, Mon & Tue) At the water's edge beneath the citadel, and festooned with swinging sausages, this seductively cosy and friendly restaurant-cum-wine-bar serves wonderfully rich and predominantly meaty Corsican dishes. Hearty casseroles include pork stewed with muscat and chestnuts, while the cheese and charcuterie platters are great for sharing. The Corsican wine list is another hit.

**Les Quatre Vents**

SEAFOOD €€

(📍) 04 95 73 07 50; [www.facebook.com/restaurantlesquatrevents](http://www.facebook.com/restaurantlesquatrevents); 29 quai Banda del Ferro; mains

**BONIFACIO BEACHES**

Bonifacio's town beaches – such as **Plage de Sotta Rocca**, a small pebbly cove reached by steps that drop from av Charles de Gaulle – are a little underwhelming. For something nicer, explore **Plage Fazzio** and the other sandy inlets on the northern side of Bouches de Bonifacio, accessed via a 3km footpath that leaves av Sylvère Bohn just north of the Esso petrol station at the harbour's eastern edge. Even better stretches of sand can be found in **Sperone**, 8km southeast of Bonifacio.

€18-35; ☺ noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun; (♿) Surveying the harbour through giant windows, the 'Four Winds' has an appropriately nautical theme, with lots of yachting photos, plus a spiral ship's staircase and even a funnel above the open kitchen. Breton-owned, it's the finest seafood restaurant in town, offering classic preparations of shellfish and fresh catch, or a 'petite' bouillabaisse for €29.

**i Information**

**Tourist Office** (📍) 04 95 73 11 88; [www.bonifacio.fr](http://www.bonifacio.fr); 2 rue Fred Scamaroni; ☺ 10am-5pm; (♿) Bonifacio's tourist office, in the old-town walls, is complemented by summer-only annexes in the Bastion de l'Étendard and down by the port.

**i Getting There & Around****AIR**

**Aéroport de Figari-Sud-Corse** (📍) 04 95 71 10 10; [www.2a.cci.fr/Aeroport-Figari-Sud-Corse.html](http://www.2a.cci.fr/Aeroport-Figari-Sud-Corse.html), 20km north of Bonifacio, welcomes domestic flights from France, plus seasonal services from the UK. There's no shuttle-bus service to Bonifacio, though **Transports Rossi** (📍) 04 95 71 00 11; [www.corsicabus.org/bus-PVecchio/PVE\\_Airport.html](http://www.corsicabus.org/bus-PVecchio/PVE_Airport.html)) runs shuttles to Porto-Vecchio (€4.80, 30 minutes, two to four daily). Car rental is available, while a taxi into Bonifacio costs about €55.

**BOAT**

Italian ferry operators **Moby** (📍) 04 95 73 00 29; [www.mobyline.com](http://www.mobyline.com); Gare Maritime) and **Blu Navy** (📍) 04 95 25 50 86; [www.blunavytraghetti.com](http://www.blunavytraghetti.com); Gare Maritime) run seasonal boats between Bonifacio and Santa Teresa di Gallura (Sardinia); sailing time is 50 minutes.

## BUS

**Corsica Europa Travel** (Eurocorse; ☎04 95 70 13 83) runs daily buses to Porto-Vecchio (€9, 30 minutes) and Ajaccio (€19.20, three hours).

## Porto-Vecchio

POP 12,270

Shamelessly seductive, fashionably alluring, Porto-Vecchio has been dubbed the Corsican St-Tropez. The kind of summer resort that entices French A-listers and wealthy tourists, it's split between the ancient core, aloof on a hilltop; the modern marina in the marvellous bay below; and enough urban sprawl across the inland plain to mean it's now Corsica's third most populous town. The old town's picturesque backstreets, lined with restaurants and designer shops, have charm in spades, and are presided over by the ruined vestiges of an old Genoese citadel. Although there's no beach in Porto-Vecchio itself, some of Corsica's finest beaches are close by.

## Sleeping & Eating

### A Littariccìa

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 95 70 41 33; www.littariccìa.com; rte de Palombaggia; d €115-225; 🍷🍷🍷) The twin trump cards here are the fabulous hillside location, overlooking Plage de Palombaggia 9km southeast of Porto-Vecchio, and the dreamy pool. Spread through adjacent villas which can also be rented in their entirety, the rooms are pretty and bright, but not all come with a sea view. Wi-fi is available in the pool area only.

### Le Goéland

HOTEL €€€

(☎04 95 70 14 15; www.hotelgoeland.com; av Georges-Pompidou, port de Plaisance; d from €224; ☀️ early Apr-late Oct; 🍷🍷) If you have the urge – and the budget – to stay in Porto-Vecchio itself, there's no better option than this cream-coloured waterfront hotel, arrayed around verdant lawns and its own little artificial beach 1km below the old town, and 500m from the harbour. Most of the light-filled rooms have great views, and there's a good restaurant.

### La Table de Nathalie

BISTRO €€

(☎04 95 71 65 25; www.facebook.com/restaurant-latabledenahalie; 4 rue Jean Jaures; mains €24-42; ☀️ noon-1.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat Mar-Nov) Locals and tourists alike flock to the front terrace of this chic little bistro, just south of the tourist office. The menu abounds in sea-

sonally inspired, locally sourced treats such as slow-cooked fish in citrus-herb crust, terrine of rabbit with Cervione hazelnuts or homemade foie gras with muscat from Cap Corse.



## Drinking & Nightlife

### Le Glacier de la Place

BAR

(☎04 95 70 21 42; www.leglacierdelaplace.com; 4 place de la République; ☀️ 8am-11pm Jun-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) It may call itself an ice-cream parlour, and it does serve a month's worth of sundaes, but this place on Porto-Vecchio's main square is more famous for its staggering selection of beers from all over the world, as well as its numerous rums and whiskies.

## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎04 95 70 09 58; www.ot-portovecchio.com; rue Maréchal Leclerc; ☀️ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun; 🗺️) Helpful tourist office on the inland edge of the old town.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

From **Aéroport de Figari-Sud-Corse** (p921), 20km southwest of Porto-Vecchio, **Transports Rossi** (p921) operates a shuttle bus to Porto-Vecchio's bus station (€4.80, 30 minutes, two to four daily). A taxi will cost around €50.

### BOAT

**Corsica Ferries** (☎04 95 32 95 95; www.corsica-ferries.fr) and **La Méridionale** (☎04 91 99 45 09; www.lameridionale.com) operate seasonal ferries to Porto-Vecchio from the mainland French ports of Marseille (13¼ to 14 hours), Nice (nine to 12 hours) and Toulon (10½ to 15 hours).

### BUS

All buses leave from the bus station – Gare Routière – at the northern end of the harbour.

**Balési Évasion** (☎04 95 70 02 50; www.balesievasion.com) Buses to Ajaccio (€19.20, 3¼ hours) via Zonza (€4.80, one hour) and l'Alta Rocca.

**Corsica Europa Travel** (Eurocorse; ☎04 95 70 13 83) Twice-daily services to Bonifacio (€9, 30 minutes) and to Ajaccio (€19.20, 3½ hours) via Sartène. Also runs summer-only shuttles to Plage de Palombaggia.

**Corsicatoms/Les Rapides Bleus** (☎04 95 31 03 79; www.rapides-bleus.com) Two daily buses to Bastia (€26, three hours), plus summer-only shuttles to Plage de Santa Giulia.

## DON'T MISS

## CORSICA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL BEACH

Lapped by turquoise waters, fringed with pine trees and graced with gorgeous views of the Îles Cerbicale, the long sandy crescent of **Plage de Palombaggia**, 10km southeast of Porto-Vecchio, is widely acknowledged to be Corsica's most beautiful beach. To officially make it to paradise, reserve a table at **Tamaricciu** (☎ 04 95 70 49 89; www.tamaricciu.com; mains €19-32; ☀ 9am-7pm mid-Apr-mid-Jun & Sep-mid-Oct, to 10.30pm mid-Jun-Aug), a chic beach restaurant with unsurpassable views of the turquoise surf. Coming from Porto-Vecchio, follow the T10 south then turn left onto rte de Palombaggia, which winds around the coast.

Across the first headland south of Plage de Palombaggia, **Plage de la Folacca** (also known as Plage de Tamaricciu) is no less impressive. Continue a few kilometres further south, over the Bocca di L'Oru pass, to reach another gem of a beach, the gently curving **Plage de Santa Giulia**.

The coast north of Porto-Vecchio is also peppered with scenic expanses of sand. The gorgeous, translucent seas off the beaches at **Cala Rossa** and **Baie de San Cipriano** are sure to set your heart aflutter. Further north lies the stunning **Golfe de Pinarello**, with its Genoese tower and yet more beautiful expanses of sand lapped by shallow waters.

Various operators offer boat excursions from Porto-Vecchio's marina to Bonifacio and the Îles Lavezzi.

## L'Alta Rocca

When you've seen enough superb seascapes for the moment, take the time to explore the wilderness of L'Alta Rocca, the mountainous country that looms inland north of Porto-Vecchio. At the southern end of Corsica's long spine, a world away from the bling and bustle of the coast, it's a beguiling combination of dense evergreen and deciduous forests and granite villages strung along rocky ledges.

### Sights

★ **Aiguilles de Bavella** MOUNTAIN  
The high pass by which the D268 crosses the mountains, the **Col de Bavella** (Bavella Pass; 1218m) is overlooked by the magnificent silhouettes of the serrated Aiguilles de Bavella (Bavella Needles). Soaring to over 1600m, and also known as the Cornes d'Asinao (Asinao Horns), these jagged points vary in colour from grey to ochre to golden as the sun moves across the sky.

The Bavella massif offers wonderful climbing, canyoning and walking. From the parking area at the pass, alongside the white marble statue of **Notre Dame des Neiges** (Our Lady of the Snows), a high-mountain spur of the GR20 hiking trail splits off northwards to approach Monte Incudine (2134m). Alternatively, a red-marked trail leads one hour south, mostly along a wide dirt road, to culminate with a last-minute scramble to reach the **Trou de la Bombe**, a giant hole in

the rock. If you're lucky you may spot a few of the mouflons (wild mountain sheep) that frequent the area.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Auberge du Col de Bavella** CORSICAN €€  
(☎ 04 95 72 09 87; www.auberge-bavella.com; Col de Bavella, D268; menu €26; ☀ noon-3pm & 7-9.30pm Apr-Oct) Rustic roadside inn, near the summit, where you can feast on roasted baby goat, wild boar stew and other hearty Corsican favourites. The central fireplace is welcome on cooler spring and autumn days. For overnight guests, it holds impeccable four- to eight-bed dorms (€22 per person; breakfast/half-board/full board €29/47/55) and private rooms.

### Getting There & Away

The best way to see this magnificent landscape is by driving your own vehicle. In July and August, though, **Balési Évasion** (☎ 04 95 70 02 50; www.balesievasion.com) run daily buses that call at Zonza and Quenza en route between Ajaccio and Porto-Vecchio, and loop up from Zonza to the Col and back both morning and evening. For the rest of the year, the route operates on Monday and Friday only, and there's no service up to the Col.

## Zonza

POP 2760


A bustling little mountain crossroads, the attractive village of Zonza (pronounced 'tzonz') makes a perfect base for exploring

L'Alta Rocca. Summer tourists stroll back and forth along the narrow main street, home to a good crop of restaurants and accommodation. Tiny **Quenza**, nearby, is another charmer, cradled by thickly wooded mountains with the Aiguilles de Bavella looming on the horizon.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Le Pré aux Biches

CAMPGROUND €

( tent lodges 06 27 52 48 03, yurts 06 19 34 74 10; [www.lodges-ourtes-corse.com](http://www.lodges-ourtes-corse.com); d/tr/q yurt €50/65/80, d/q/6-person tent lodge €70/120/150; ☺ May–mid-Sep) The quilted, sumptuously furnished Mongolian yurts are the star attraction on this peaceful, meadow-like organic farm, 2km west of Zonza. Larger safari-style tent lodges are also available, and everyone has their own dedicated toilet and showers in a shared block. They serve breakfast (€6 to €10) and dinner (€22 to €25) using products from the farm. Note that access to electricity is limited.

### Les Hauts de Cavanello

B&B €€

( 06 09 50 05 01; [www.locationzonza.com](http://www.locationzonza.com); Hameau de Cavanello; s/d €88/98; ☺ May–late Oct; ) Also let under the name 'Hameau de Cavanello', this rural B&B 2km northeast of Zonza offers five cosy, well-equipped modern rooms plus a pool and stone terrace, all nestling in hectares of green meadows and forests with magical views of the Aiguilles de Bavella.


### L'Eternisula

CAFE €

( 04 95 76 11 75; [www.facebook.com/leternisula](http://www.facebook.com/leternisula); rte de Quenza; sandwiches, soups & snacks €6-20;

☺ noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun May-Oct) The brainchild of an Anglo-Corsican couple, this gorgeous, central cafe-cum-gourmet-deli offers charcuterie and cheese platters, espresso, sandwiches, soups and a suggestion of the day, served in the pretty dining room or on the terrace.

## Getting There & Away

Zonza sits at the junction of the D268 and D368, 9km below Col de Bavella. **Balési Évasion** ( 04 95 70 02 50; [www.balesievasion.com](http://www.balesievasion.com)) runs daily buses in July and August to Ajaccio (€19.20) and Porto-Vecchio (€4.80), which also loop to the Col and back. For the rest of the year services are on Monday and Friday only, with no Col detour.

## CORTE



POP 7565

Blessed with a stunning natural setting, circled by jagged peaks at the confluence of several rivers, the mountain stronghold of Corte is as forbidding as it is spectacular. Centring on a towering pinnacle that's been fortified for over 2000 years, it still stands at the heart of Corsican identity. When Pascal Paoli made it the capital of his short-lived Corsican republic in 1755, most of Corte's population lived within its hilltop citadel. French invaders devastated the upper town 14 years later; fleeing refugees included Napoléon's mother, pregnant with the future emperor.

These days, life focuses on the newer town below, linked to the citadel by steep stairways and cobbled alleys. While Corte

## WORTH A TRIP

### LEVIE

The small mountain village of Levie, home to a fine Corsican archaeology **museum** ( 04 95 78 00 78; [www.corsedusud.fr/nos-competences/patrimoine-et-culture](http://www.corsedusud.fr/nos-competences/patrimoine-et-culture); quartier Prato; adult/child €4/2.50; ☺ 10am-6pm Jun-Sep, to 5pm Tue-Sat Oct-May), makes a worthwhile stop. Post-museum, archaeology buffs can track down the real thing at **Cucuruzzu** ( 04 95 51 64 29; [www.isula.corsica/musees](http://www.isula.corsica/musees); adult/child €4/free; ☺ 9.30am-7pm Jun-Sep, to 6pm Apr, May & Oct): a side turning north from the D268, 3km west of Levie, arrives after 4km at a beautiful forest, where an easy 2.5km loop trail leads past two remarkable *castelli* (Bronze Age hillforts). Cucuruzzu is a rocky hillock that was fortified around 1200 BCE by cramming boulders into every crevice, and topping the walled ensemble with a round tower. **Capula**, a similar fortress further along, was strengthened by the Romans and altered and then levelled during the Middle Ages.

Near Cucuruzzu, boutique farmhouse **A Pignata** ( 04 95 78 41 90; [www.apignata.com](http://www.apignata.com); rte de Cucuruzzu; incl half-board d €260-420, cabin €480-680; ☺ Apr-Dec; ) has 16 rooms, two still-perched, family-friendly treehouse cabins and a wonderful rustic restaurant (*menu* €53). In addition to a vegetable garden and herd of pigs (they end up as charcuterie), there's a heated indoor pool, with vast mountain-view windows.

remains a nationalist stronghold, famous for being secretive and inward-looking, it's also home to Corsica's only university, founded by Paoli and reopened in 1981. Its strong youthful energy is boosted in summer when hikers, bikers and climbers flock in to explore the nearby valleys.

## Sights

### Citadelle

HISTORIC SITE

(adult/child incl Musée de la Corse €5.50/3; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar) Corte's citadel occupies a stark rocky crag that juts above the Tavignano and Restonica rivers. Its oldest portion – the château known as the Nid d'Aigle, meaning 'Eagle's Nest' – was built at the highest point in 1419. It can only be accessed by paying for admission to the Musée de la Corse, an anthropology museum housed in the modernised 19th-century barracks below.

### Place Gaffory

SQUARE

Below the citadel, place Gaffory is a lively little square that's dominated by the 15th-century **Église de l'Annonciation**. The bullet holes that pockmark nearby houses date from Corsica's war of independence. Napoléon's parents were living just down from the square when his elder brother Joseph, later King of Spain, was born in 1768.

### Musée de la Corse

MUSEUM

(☎ 04 95 45 25 45; www.musee-corse.com; Citadelle; adult/child incl citadel €5.50/3; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar) Housed in the converted and expanded former barracks of the citadel, this intriguing museum is devoted to Corsican anthropology rather than history. The two main galleries cover everything from pottery and agriculture to religious fraternities and tourism – and don't miss the listening booths that play different genres of Corsican music – while a third stages temporary exhibitions.

## Sleeping & Eating

Busy with students year-round, Corte is bursting with restaurants. Menus tend to be meat-heavy, and prices generally lower than elsewhere on the island.

### L'Albadu

B&B €

(☎ 09 74 56 52 96; www.hebergement-albadu.fr; ancienne rte d'Ajaccio; dm/d incl half-board €50/125, camping per adult/car/tent €6/3/3) The friendly owners of this horse farm, 2km south of Corte, offer assorted accommodation – camp-

ing, a 10-bed dorm and five double rooms – at bargain prices. Abundant *table d'hôte* dinners (included with half-board; €25 otherwise) come with appetiser, main course, cheese, dessert, aperitif, wine and coffee. Horse-riding excursions into the surrounding countryside are the icing on the cake.

### ★ Osteria di l'Orta

B&B €€

(☎ 04 95 61 06 41; www.osteria-di-l-orta.com; av du Pont de l'Orta; d €110, ste €130-200; ☺ Apr-Sep; ☎ @ ☎ ☎) Set in a powder-blue house on Corte's northern edge, this peach of a B&B is run by a charming couple, Marina and Antoine. The three rooms and two suites are lovely, with polished wooden floors and great showers, while the guest kitchen, dining room and DVD lounge are a welcome bonus. Marina cooks delicious and copious Corsican dinners (€35) using produce from their adjoining farm, and they also make their own aperitifs and wine.

### ★ La Rivière des Vins

BISTRO €

(☎ 04 95 46 37 04; 5 rampe Ste-Croix; mains €9-21, menus €15-21; ☺ noon-2pm & 7-11pm Mon-Fri, 7-11pm Sat & Sun; ☎) Diners flock to this fab bistro, on a staircase climbing from Corte's main street, for its relaxed atmosphere, unbeatable value and sumptuous food. The meat skewers and Corsican sausages, grilled in the open fireplace, are wonderful, while the *patatines* (chunks of roast potato), omelettes and salads will make vegetarians weep for joy. Excellent wines by the glass or jug.



## Drinking & Nightlife

Thanks in large part to Corte's many students, there's a lively year-round bar scene along cours Paoli.

### Bar de la Haute Ville

BAR

(☎ 04 95 61 06 20; www.facebook.com/BarDeLaHauteVille; 2 place Gaffory; ☺ 8am-2am; ☎) Known to all as 'BHV', this legendary bar spills out across the town's small upper square, with local beers on tap and plenty of fine wines too, along with a snack menu. Live local musicians play several nights per week in summer.



## Information

**Tourist Office** (☎ 04 95 46 26 70; www.corte-tourisme.com; Citadelle; ☺ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri year-round, plus 9am-1pm Sat Jul & Aug) The helpful local tourist office is just above the southern approach to the citadel, diagonally across the courtyard from the museum.



## LONG-DISTANCE TRAIL TASTER

Corsica's long-distance trails, especially the north-south, two-week GR20, are legendary. For those who can't – or don't want to! – fit two weeks of walking into their holiday, you can get a wonderful taste of the hiker's life by spending a single night at the **Refuge A Sega** (☎04 95 51 79 00; www.pnr.corsica; dm €15; ☺ Jun-early Oct), and combining two of the island's most scenic valleys in an easy, two-day itinerary.

Day one consists of a five-hour walk from Corte up the stunning Vallée du Tavignano, following the orange waymarks of the famous cross-island Mare a Mare itinerary, and breaking for a picnic at the Passerelle de Rossolino. Once at the refuge – be sure to book in advance online – take a dip in the nearby natural pools, then enjoy a home-cooked Corsican dinner.

After breakfast on day two, head east to the Bergeries d'Alzu (sheepfold, two hours), before heading down to the Vallée de la Restonica (one hour), and then back to Corte along the scenic D623 (two hours).

## i Getting There & Away

Corte's **train station** (☎04 95 46 00 97; www.cf-corse.corsica; place de la Gare), across the Tavignano River 800m below the town centre, has five daily services (three on Sunday) to both Bastia to the northeast (€10.10, 1¼ hours) and Ajaccio to the southwest (€11.50, two hours), via Vizzavona.

The T20 road also connects Corte with Bastia and Ajaccio, again running via Vizzavona (32km), while the T50 heads southeast to the coast, where it meets the T10 south towards Porto-Vecchio and Bonifacio.

The only public transport into the Restonica valley is a summer shuttle bus from Corte along the D623; otherwise, you'll need your own vehicle. All travel into the Tavignano valley is on foot.

## AROUND CORTE

Rearing to astonishing heights, the craggy mountains of central Corsica are in every sense the core of the island. Even when foreign powers like the Genoese controlled the citadel ports along the coast, a uniquely Corsican way of life persisted deep in the interior.

## Vallée de la Restonica

Crashing down from the grey-green mountains southwest of Corte, the Restonica River has carved a gorgeous pine-forested valley that extends right to the edge of town. To see the full majesty of the Vallée de la Restonica, follow the tortuous D623 for 15km to the Bergeries de Grotelle (1375m), where it dead-ends at a car park (car/motorcycle €6/3), and a huddle of shepherds' huts that sell drinks, cheeses and snacks. So narrow that

it's effectively single file for much of the way, and fringed by steep drop-offs, it's no road for the faint-hearted, and gets so crowded in summer that marshals struggle to keep traffic flowing at all. At quieter times, though, the valley is idyllic, with river-scoured basins in the rock making perfect settings for bathing and sunbathing.

Between May and September, **Autocars Cortenais** (☎04 95 46 22 89; return €15) run a daily shuttle bus into the Vallée de la Restonica, stopping at hotels and campgrounds. Reserve ahead.

## Vallée du Tavignano

If you have a day to spare, don't miss the opportunity to hike into the deliciously peaceful, car-free wonderland of the Vallée du Tavignano, the deepest gorge in Corsica. Even though it's right on Corte's doorstep, it's only accessible on foot and remains well off the beaten track. The signposted trail from Corte leads in around 2½ hours to the Passerelle de Rossolino footbridge, a fabulous spot for a picnic that's surrounded by translucent green natural bathing pools.

## Vizzavona

South of Corte, the T20 climbs steeply in the shadow of Monte d'Oro (2389m) before arriving at the cool mountain hamlet of Vizzavona. No more than a cluster of houses around a train station, Vizzavona is an ideal base from which to explore the 16-sq-km Forêt de Vizzavona. A short, gentle and well-signed path meanders to **Cascade des Anglais**, gleaming waterfalls with shallow family-friendly dipping pools.

# Understand France

## **HISTORY** .....928

Charlemagne, William the Conqueror, Joan of Arc, Louis XIV, Napoléon, Charles de Gaulle – just some who've had starring roles in the story of France.

## **THE FRENCH** .....946

Chic, smart, sexy, rude, arrogant, bureaucratic – everyone has an opinion on the French.

## **THE FRENCH TABLE** .....950

Know your *flûte* from your *ficelle*, and how to create the perfect cheeseboard – the basics on French staples.

## **THE ARTS** .....955

Home of Voltaire, Debussy, Piaf and Monet, France has an arts culture spanning more than 500 years and it's still going strong.

## **ARCHITECTURE** .....962

It's not all about the Eiffel Tower. Take a wander past prehistoric megaliths and Gothic basilicas, and into the mirrored ballrooms of Versailles.

## **LANDSCAPES & WILDLIFE** .....967

Discover France's immense scenic beauty, diverse landscapes, extraordinary protected areas and abundant wildlife.

# History

The history of France mirrors that of much of Europe. Its beginnings saw the mass migration of the nomadic Celts, the subjugation by the Romans, and their civilising influence, and the rise of a local nobility. Christianity brought a degree of unity, but nowhere else would such a strongly independent church continue to coexist under a powerful central authority (think Charles 'The Hammer' Martel or Louis XIV's claim to be the state itself). This is the essence of France's story.

## Best Roman Sights

Pont du Gard  
(near Nîmes)

Les Arènes &  
Maison Carrée  
(Nîmes)

Musée Gallo-  
Romain & Théâtre  
Romain  
(Vienne)

Théâtre Antique  
(Orange)

Théâtre Antique  
(Arles)

Musée Gallo-  
Romain Vesunna  
(Périgueux)

Fourvière  
(Lyon)

## Roman Gaul

What is now France was settled by several different groups of people in the Iron Age, but the largest and most organised were the Celtic Gauls. The subjugation of these people and their territory by Rome was gradual, and within a few centuries Rome had imposed its government, roads, trade, culture and even language. A Gallo-Roman culture emerged and Gaul was increasingly integrated into the Roman Empire.

It began in the 1st millennium BCE as the Greeks and Romans established colonies on the Mediterranean coast, including Massilia (Marseille). Centuries of conflict between the Gauls and the Romans ended in 52 BCE when Julius Caesar's legions crushed a revolt by many Gallic tribes led by Celtic Arverni tribe chief Vercingétorix at Gergovia, near present-day Clermont-Ferrand – no site better evokes the drama and bloodshed of this momentous point in history than the MuséeParc Alésia in Burgundy. For the next couple of years, during the Gallic Wars, the Gauls hounded the Romans with guerrilla warfare and fought them in several match-drawn pitched battles. But gradually Gallic resistance collapsed and the Romans reigned supreme.

The stone architecture left by the occupiers was impressive and Roman France is magnificent, climaxing with the mighty Pont du Gard aqueduct, built to bring water to the city of Nîmes in southern France. Splendid theatres and amphitheatres dating from this period are still extant in that city as well as at Autun, Arles and Orange. Some Roman remains were reused: in an early form of recycling, the 1st-century Roman amphitheatre at Périgueux in the Dordogne was dismantled in the 3rd century and its stones used to build the city walls.

## TIMELINE

### c 30,000 BCE

During the middle Palaeolithic period, Cro-Magnon people start decorating their homes in the Vézère Valley of the Dordogne with colourful scenes of animals, human figures and geometric shapes.

### c 7000 BCE

Neolithic people turn their hands to monumental menhirs and dolmens during the New Stone Age, creating a fine collection in Brittany that continues to baffle historians.

### 1500–500 BCE

Celtic Gauls move into the region and establish trading links with the Greeks, whose colonies included Massilia (Marseille) on the Mediterranean coast; the latter bring grapes and olives.

## Prehistory Sights

Vézère Valley  
(Dordogne)

Carnac  
(Brittany)

Filitosa  
(Corsica)

Vallée de l'Ariège  
(Pyrenees)

Musée de Préhistoire de Solutré  
(near Mâcon)

Musée de Tautavel  
(near Perpignan)

Sophisticated urban centres with markets and baths of hot and cold running water began to emerge. The Romans planted vineyards, notably in Burgundy and Bordeaux, introduced techniques to process wine, and introduced the newfangled faith of Christianity.

Later the Franks would adopt these important elements of Gallo-Roman civilisation (including Christianity), and their eventual assimilation resulted in a fusion of Germanic culture with that of the Celts and the Romans.

## Medieval France

When the Roman Empire collapsed, the gates to a wave of Franks and other Germanic tribes under Merovius opened to the north and northeast. Merovius' grandson, Clovis I, converted to Christianity, giving him greater legitimacy and power over his Christian subjects, and made Paris his seat; his successors founded the abbey of St-Germain des Prés in Paris and later the one at St-Denis to the north, which would become the richest, most important monastery in France and the final resting place of its kings.

The Frankish tradition, in which the king was succeeded by all of his sons, led to power struggles and the eventual disintegration of the kingdom into a collection of small feudal states. The dominant house to emerge was that of the Carolingians.

Carolingian power reached apogee under Charlemagne, who extended the boundaries of the kingdom and was crowned Holy Roman Emperor (Emperor of the West) in 800 CE. But during the 9th century Scandinavian Vikings (also called Norsemen, thus Normans) raided France's western coast, settling in the lower Seine Valley and later forming the Duchy of Normandy. This would be a century of disunity in France, marked politically by the rise of Norman power and religiously by the foundation of influential abbeys such as the Benedictine one at Cluny. By the time Hugh Capet ascended the throne in 987, the king's domain was a humble parcel of land around Paris and Orléans.

The tale of how William the Conqueror and his forces mounted a successful invasion of England from their base in Normandy in 1066 is told on the Bayeux Tapestry, showcased inside the Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux. In 1152 Eleanor of Aquitaine wed Henry of Anjou, bringing a further third of France under the control of the English crown. The subsequent rivalry between France and England for control of Aquitaine and the vast English territories in France lasted three centuries.

## Hundred Years War

In 1337 hostility between Capetians and Anglo-Normans degenerated into the Hundred Years War, fought on and off until the middle of the 15th century. The Black Death, which broke out a decade after the

### 3rd century BCE

The Celtic Parisii tribe builds a handful of wattle-and-daub huts on what is now the Île de la Cité in Paris; the capital city is christened Lutetia by the Romans.

### 121 BCE

The Romans begin taking Gallic territory, annexing southern Gaul as the province of Gallia Narbonensis (in modern Provence and Languedoc), with its capital at the present-day town of Narbonne.

### 55–52 BCE

Julius Caesar launches his invasion of Britain from the Côte d'Opale in far northern France; the Gauls defeat the Romans at Gergovia near present-day Clermont-Ferrand, but ultimately the Romans prevail.

### c 100–300 CE

The Romans go on a building spree throughout France, erecting magnificent baths, temples and aqueducts of almighty proportions such as the Pont du Gard near Nîmes in southern France.

hostilities began and lasted more than two years, killed more than a third (an estimated 80,000 souls) of Paris' population alone.

The French suffered particularly nasty defeats at Crécy and Agincourt. Abbey-studded Mont St-Michel in present-day Normandy was the only place in northern and western France not to fall into English hands. The dukes of Burgundy (allied with the English) occupied Paris and in 1422 John Plantagenet, duke of Bedford, was made regent of France for England's King Henry VI, then an infant. Less than a decade later Henry was crowned king of France.

Luckily for the French, 17-year-old Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc) came along with the outlandish tale that she had a divine mission from God to expel the English from France and bring about the coronation of French Charles VII in Reims.

### THE VIRGIN WARRIOR

Many stories surround the origins of Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc), the virgin warrior burned at the stake by the English, and France's patron saint. Some say she was the illegitimate child of Louis d'Orléans, King Charles VI's brother. The more accurate account pinpoints Domrémy in northeastern France (Domrémy-la-Pucelle today) as the place where she was born to a peasant family in 1412.

Revelations delivered by the Archangel Michael prompted Jeanne d'Arc to flee the fold in 1428. Her mission: to raise a siege against the city of Orléans and see the future Charles VII crowned king of France. An enquiry conducted by clergy and university clerks in Poitiers tried to establish if Jeanne d'Arc was a fraud or a gift, as she claimed, from the king of Heaven to the king of France. Her virginity was likewise certified. Following the six-week interrogation Jeanne was sent by Charles VII to Tours, where she was equipped with attendants, a horse, a sword and her own standard featuring God sitting in judgement on a cloud. In Blois the divine warrior collected her army, drummed up by Charles VII from his Royal Army Headquarters there. In April 1429, just 17 years old, Jeanne d'Arc started her attack on Orléans, besieged by the English from October of the previous year. On 5 and 6 May the French gained control of Bastille St-Loup and Bastille des Augustins, followed the next day by Fort des Tourelles – a fort guarding the only access to the city from the left bank. This last shattering defeat prompted the English to lay down the siege on 8 May and was a decisive turning point in the Hundred Years War.

From Orléans Jeanne d'Arc went on to defeat the English at Jargeau, Beaugency and Patay. Despite Charles' promised coronation in July 1429, battles between the English and the French waged until 1453, by which time the virginal warrior responsible for turning the war around was dead: Jeanne d'Arc was captured by the Burgundians, sold to the English, convicted of witchcraft and heresy in Rouen in 1431 and burned at the stake. She was canonised in 1920.

**c 455–70**

France remains under Roman rule until the 5th century, when the Franks (hence the name 'France') and the Alemanni invade and overrun the country from the east.

**732**

Somewhere near Poitiers, Charles Martel and his cavalry repel the Muslim Moors. His grandson, Charlemagne, extends the boundaries of the kingdom and is crowned Holy Roman Emperor.

**800–900**

Scandinavian Vikings (also called Norsemen, thus Normans) raid France's western coast and settle in the lower Seine Valley where they later form the Duchy of Normandy.

**987**

Five centuries of Merovingian and Carolingian rule ends with the crowning of Hugh Capet; a dynasty that will rule one of Europe's most powerful countries for the next eight centuries is born.



## The Rise of the French Court

With the arrival of Italian Renaissance culture during the reign of François I (r 1515–47), the focus of French attention became the Loire Valley. Italian artists decorated royal castles at Amboise, Azay-le-Rideau, Blois, Chambord and Chaumont.

Renaissance ideas of scientific and geographic scholarship and discovery assumed a new importance, as did the value of secular matters over religious life. Writers such as Rabelais, Marot and Ronsard of La Pléiade were influential, as were artist and architect disciples of Michelangelo and Raphael. Evidence of this architectural influence can be seen in François I's château at Fontainebleau – where superb artisans, many of them brought over from Italy, blended Italian and French styles to create the First School of Fontainebleau – and the Petit Château at Chantilly, both near Paris. This new architecture reflected the splendour of the monarchy, which was fast moving towards absolutism. But all this grandeur and show of strength was not enough to stem the tide of Protestantism that was flowing into France.

The Reformation swept through Europe in the 1530s, spearheaded by the ideas of Jean (John) Calvin, a Frenchman born in Picardy but exiled to Geneva. Following the Edict of January 1562, which afforded the Protestants certain rights, the Wars of Religion broke out between the Huguenots (French Protestants who received help from the English), the Catholic League (led by the House of Guise) and the Catholic monarchy, and lasted three dozen years.

Henri IV, founder of the Bourbon dynasty, issued the controversial Edict of Nantes in 1598, guaranteeing the Huguenots civil and political rights, notably freedom of conscience. Ultra-Catholic Paris refused to allow the new Protestant king to enter the city, and a siege of the capital continued for almost five years. Only when Henri IV embraced Catholicism at the cathedral in St-Denis did the capital submit to him.

France's most famous king of this or any other century, Louis XIV (r 1643–1715), called Le Roi Soleil (the Sun King), ascended the throne at the tender age of five. Bolstered by claims of divine right, he involved the kingdom in a series of costly wars with Holland, Austria and England, which gained France territory but nearly bankrupted the treasury. State taxation to refill the coffers caused widespread poverty and vagrancy. In Versailles, Louis XIV built an extravagant palace and made his courtiers compete with each other for royal favour, thereby quashing the ambitions, feuding aristocracy and creating the first centralised French state. In 1685 he revoked the Edict of Nantes.

The Seven Years War (1756–63) was one of a series of ruinous military engagements pursued by Louis XV, the Sun King's grandson. It led to the loss of France's flourishing colonies in Canada, the West Indies and India.

### Best History Museums

MuCEM  
(Marseille)

Musée Carnavalet  
(Paris)

Musée d'Art et  
d'Histoire Baron  
Gérard  
(Bayeux)

Caen-Normandie  
Mémorial  
(Caen)

Centre d'Histoire  
de la Résistance et  
de la Déportation  
(Lyon)

Musée d'Aquitaine  
(Bordeaux)

The Sun King was yet another Louis named after France's patron saint. Paintings in Versailles' Royal Chapel evoke the idea that the king was chosen by God, thus was His lieutenant on earth.

### 1066

Duke of Normandy William the Conqueror and his Norman forces occupy England, making Normandy and, later, Plantagenet-ruled England formidable rivals of the kingdom of France.

### 1095

Pope Urban II preaches the First Crusade in Clermont-Ferrand, prompting France to take a leading role and giving rise to some splendid cathedrals, including those at Reims, Strasbourg, Metz and Chartres.

### 1152

Eleanor of Aquitaine weds Henry of Anjou, bringing a further third of France under the control of the English crown and sparking a French-English rivalry that will last three centuries.

### 1163

Two centuries of nonstop building in the capital reaches its zenith with the start of Notre Dame cathedral under Maurice de Sully, the bishop of Paris; construction continues for 150-odd years.

### Best Walled Towns

Carcassonne  
(Languedoc)

Avignon  
(Provence)

St-Malo  
(Brittany)

Domme  
(Dordogne)

Uzerche  
(Limousin)

### Paris: Revolution Encounters

Jeux de Paume

Place de Bastille

Hôtel des Invalides

Place de la  
Concorde

Conciergerie

It was in part to avenge these losses that his successor Louis XVI sided with the colonists in the American War of Independence a dozen years later. But the Seven Years War cost France a fortune and, more disastrously for the monarchy, it helped to disseminate at home the radical democratic ideas that were thrust upon the world stage by the American Revolution.

## Revolution to Republic

At the beginning of the 18th century, new economic and social circumstances began to render the *ancien régime* (old order) dangerously out of step with the needs of the country. The regime was further weakened by the anti-establishment and anticlerical ideas of the Enlightenment, whose leading lights included Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot. But entrenched vested interests, a cumbersome power structure and royal lassitude prevented change from starting until the 1770s, by which time the monarchy's moment had passed.

By the late 1780s, the indecisive Louis XVI and his dominating consort, Marie Antoinette, had managed to alienate virtually every segment of society, and the king became increasingly isolated as unrest and dissatisfaction reached boiling point. When he tried to neutralise the power of the more reform-minded delegates at a meeting of the États-Généraux (States-General) in Versailles in May and June 1789, the masses took to the streets of Paris. On 14 July, a mob raided the armoury at the Hôtel des Invalides for rifles, seizing 32,000 muskets, then stormed the prison at Bastille – the ultimate symbol of the despotic *ancien régime*. The French Revolution had begun.

At first, the Revolution was in the hands of moderate republicans called the Girondins. France was declared a constitutional monarchy and various reforms were introduced, including the adoption of the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen) modelled on the American Declaration of Independence. But as the masses armed themselves against the external threat to the new government – posed by Austria, Prussia and the exiled French nobles – patriotism and nationalism mixed with extreme fervour, popularising and radicalising the Revolution. It was not long before the Girondins lost out to the extremist Jacobins, who abolished the monarchy and declared the First Republic after Louis XVI proved unreliable as a constitutional monarch. The Assemblée Nationale (National Assembly) was replaced by an elected Revolutionary Convention.

In January 1793, Louis XVI was convicted of 'conspiring against the liberty of the nation' and guillotined on place de la Révolution, today's place de la Concorde, in Paris. Two months later the Jacobins set up the Committee of Public Safety to deal with national defence and to apprehend and try 'traitors'. This body had dictatorial control over the country during the so-called Reign of Terror (September 1793 to July 1794), which

### 1309

French-born pope Clément V moves papal headquarters from Rome to Avignon, where the Holy Seat remains until 1377; 'home' is the resplendent Palais des Papes built under Benoît XII.

### 1337

Incessant struggles between the Capetians and England's King Edward III, a Plantagenet, over the powerful French throne degenerate into the Hundred Years War, which will last until 1453.

### 1358

The war between France and England and the devastation and poverty caused by the plague lead to the ill-fated peasants' revolt led by Étienne Marcel.

### 1422

John Plantagenet, duke of Bedford, is made regent of France for England's King Henry VI, then an infant; in less than a decade Henry is crowned king of France at Paris' Notre Dame.

saw religious freedoms revoked and churches desecrated, cathedrals turned into 'Temples of Reason', and thousands incarcerated in dungeons in Paris' Conciergerie on Île de la Cité before being beheaded.

After the Reign of Terror faded, a five-man delegation of moderate republicans set itself up to rule the republic as the Directoire (Directory).

## Napoléon & Empire

It was true happenstance that brought dashing young Corsica-born general Napoléon Bonaparte to the attention of France. In October 1795 a group of royalist youths bent on overthrowing the Directoire were intercepted on rue St-Honoré in Paris by forces under Bonaparte, who fired into the crowd. For this 'whiff of grapeshot' he was put in command of the French forces in Italy, where he was particularly successful in the campaign against Austria.

In 1799 Napoléon overthrew the Directoire and assumed power as First Consul, chosen by popular vote. A referendum three years later declared him 'Consul for Life' and his birthday became a national holiday. In 1804, when he crowned himself 'Emperor of the French' in the presence of Pope Pius VII at Notre Dame in Paris, the scope of Napoléon's ambitions were obvious to all.

To legitimise his authority, Napoléon needed more battlefield victories. So began a series of wars and victories by which France would come to control most of Europe. In 1812 his troops captured Moscow, only to

### A DATE WITH THE REVOLUTION

Along with standardising France's system of weights and measures with the now almost universal metric system, the revolutionary government adopted a new, 'more rational' calendar from which all 'superstitious' associations (ie saints' days and mythology) were removed. Year 1 began on 22 September 1792, the day the First Republic was proclaimed.

The names of the 12 months – Vendémiaire, Brumaire, Frimaire, Nivôse, Pluviôse, Ventôse, Germinal, Floréal, Prairial, Messidor, Thermidor and Fructidor – were chosen according to the seasons. The autumn months, for instance, were Vendémiaire (derived from *vendange*, grape harvest), Brumaire (from *brume*, mist or fog) and Frimaire (from *frimas*, wintry weather). In turn, each month was divided into three 10-day 'weeks' called *décades*, the last day of which was a rest day. The five remaining days of the year were used to celebrate Virtue, Genius, Labour, Opinion and Rewards. These festivals were initially called *sans-culottides* in honour of the *sans-culottes*, the extreme revolutionaries who wore pantaloons rather than the short breeches favoured by the upper classes.

While the republican calendar worked well in theory, it caused no end of confusion for France in its communications and trade abroad because the months and days kept changing in relation to those of the Gregorian calendar. The revolutionary calendar was abandoned and the old system restored in 1806 by Napoléon Bonaparte.

#### 1431

Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc) is burned at the stake in Rouen for heresy; the English are not driven out of France until 1453.

#### 1515

With the reign of François I the royal court moves to the Loire Valley, where a rash of stunning Renaissance châteaux and hunting lodges is built.

#### 1530s

The Reformation, spurred by the writings of French Jean (John) Calvin, sweeps through France, pitting Catholics against Protestants and eventually leading to the Wars of Religion (1562–98).

#### 1572

Some 3000 Huguenots visiting Paris to celebrate the wedding of the Protestant Henri of Navarre (the future Henri IV) are slaughtered on 23–24 August, in the so-called St Bartholomew's Day Massacre.

## Napoleonic Sights

Maison Bonaparte  
(Ajaccio)

Salon Napoléonien  
(Ajaccio)

Arc de Triomphe  
(Paris)

Hôtel des Invalides  
(Paris)

Napoléon III  
apartments  
(Musée du Louvre,  
Paris)

be killed off by the Russian winter. Two years later Allied armies entered Paris, exiled Napoléon to Elba in the Mediterranean and restored the House of Bourbon to the French throne at the Congress of Vienna.

In early 1815 Napoléon escaped Elba, landed in southern France and gathered a large army as he marched towards Paris. On 1 June he reclaimed the throne. But his reign ended just three weeks later when his forces were defeated at Waterloo in Belgium. Napoléon was exiled again, this time to St Helena in the South Atlantic, where he died in 1821. In 1840 his remains were moved to the Hôtel des Invalides in Paris.

Although reactionary in some ways – he re-established slavery in France's colonies in 1802, for example – Napoléon instituted a number of important reforms, including a reorganisation of the judicial system; the promulgation of a new legal code, the Code Napoléon (or civil code), which forms the basis of the French legal system to this day; and the establishment of a new education system. More importantly, he preserved the essence of the changes brought about by the Revolution.

A struggle between extreme monarchists seeking a return to the *ancien régime*, people who saw the changes wrought by the Revolution as irreversible, and the radicals of the poor working-class neighbourhoods of Paris dominated the reign of Louis XVIII (r 1814–24). His successor Charles X responded to the conflict with ineptitude and was overthrown in the so-called July Revolution of 1830. Those who were killed in the accompanying Paris street battles are buried in vaults under the Colonne de Juillet in the centre of place de la Bastille. Louis-Philippe, a constitutional monarch of bourgeois sympathies who followed him, was subsequently chosen as ruler by parliament, only to be ousted by the 1848 Revolution.

The Second Republic was established and elections brought in Napoléon's inept nephew, the German-reared (and accented) Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, as president. In 1851 he staged a coup d'état and proclaimed himself Emperor Napoléon III of the Second Empire, which lasted until 1870.

Like his uncle before him, Napoléon III embroiled France in a number of costly conflicts, including the disastrous Crimean War (1854–56). In 1870, Otto von Bismarck goaded Napoléon III into declaring war on Prussia. Within months the thoroughly unprepared French army was defeated and the emperor had been taken prisoner.

## The Belle Époque

Though it ushered in the glittering Belle Époque (beautiful age), there was little else attractive about the start of the Third Republic. Born as a provisional government of national defence in September 1870, it was quickly besieged by the Prussians, who blockaded Paris and demanded National Assembly elections be held. The first move made by the result-

### 1588

The Catholic League forces Henri III (r 1574–89), the last of the Valois kings, to flee the royal court at the Louvre; the next year he is assassinated by a fanatical Dominican friar.

### 1589

Henri IV, the first Bourbon king, ascends the throne after renouncing Protestantism; '*Paris vaut bien une messe*' (Paris is well worth a Mass), he is reputed to have said upon taking communion.

### 1598

Henri IV gives French Protestants freedom of conscience with the Edict of Nantes – much to the horror of staunchly Catholic Paris, where many refuse to acknowledge the forward-thinking document.

### 1635

Cardinal Richelieu, de facto ruler during the reign of Henri IV's son, Louis XIII, founds the Académie Française, the first and best known of France's five institutes of arts and sciences.

ant monarchist-controlled assembly was to ratify the Treaty of Frankfurt. The terms of the treaty – a huge war indemnity and surrender of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine – prompted immediate revolt (known as the Paris Commune), during which several thousand Communards were killed and another 20,000 executed.

The Belle Époque launched art nouveau architecture, a whole field of artistic ‘isms’ from impressionism onwards, and advances in science and engineering, including the construction of the first metro line in Paris. World Exhibitions were held in the capital in 1889 (showcased by the Eiffel Tower) and again in 1901 in the purpose-built Petit Palais.

But all was not well in the republic. France was consumed with a desire for revenge after its defeat by Germany, and looking for scapegoats. The so-called Dreyfus Affair began in 1894 when Jewish army captain Alfred Dreyfus was accused of betraying military secrets to Germany; he was then court-martialled and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil’s Island in French Guiana. Liberal politicians succeeded in having the case reopened despite opposition from the army command, right-wing politicians and many Catholic groups, and Dreyfus was vindicated in 1900. This resulted in more rigorous civilian control of the military and, in 1905, the legal separation of church and state.

Paris was transformed under urban planner Baron Haussmann (1809–91), who created the 12 huge boulevards radiating from the Arc de Triomphe. Napoléon III, who had commissioned Haussmann’s work, threw glittering parties at the royal palace in Compiègne, and breathed in fashionable sea air at Biarritz and Deauville.

## The Two World Wars

Central to France’s entry into WWI against Austria-Hungary and Germany had been its desire to regain Alsace and Lorraine, lost to Germany

### THE MAGINOT LINE

The Ligne Maginot, named after France’s minister of war from 1929 to 1932, was one of the most spectacular blunders of WWII. This elaborate, mostly subterranean defence network, built between 1930 and 1940 (and, in the history of military architecture, second only to the Great Wall of China in sheer size), was the pride of prewar France. It included everything France’s finest military architects thought would be needed to defend the nation in a ‘modern war’ of poison gas, tanks and aeroplanes: reinforced concrete bunkers, subterranean lines of supply and communication, minefields, antitank canals, floodable basins and even artillery emplacements that popped out of the ground to fire and then disappeared. The only things visible above ground were firing posts and lookout towers. The line stretched along the Franco–German frontier from the Swiss border all the way to Belgium where, for political and budgetary reasons, it stopped. The Maginot Line even had a slogan: *Ils ne passeront pas* (They won’t get through).

‘They’ – the Germans – never did. Rather than attack the Maginot Line straight on, Hitler’s armoured divisions simply circled around through Belgium and invaded France across its unprotected northern frontier. They then attacked the Maginot Line from the rear.

#### 1643

The Roi Soleil (Sun King), Louis XIV, all of five years old, assumes the French throne.

In 1682 he moves his court – lock, stock and satin slipper – from Paris’ Palais des Tuileries to Versailles.

#### 1756–63

The Seven Years War against Britain and Prussia sees Louis XV engage in several ruinous wars resulting in the loss of France’s colonies in Canada, the West Indies and India.

#### 1789

The French Revolution begins when a mob arms itself with weapons taken from the Hôtel des Invalides and storms the prison at Bastille, freeing a total of just seven prisoners.

#### 1793

Louis XVI is tried and convicted as citizen ‘Louis Capet’ (as all kings since Hugh Capet were declared to have ruled illegally) and executed; Marie Antoinette’s turn comes nine months later.



A full 20% of all Frenchmen – one out of every five males – between 20 and 45 years of age were killed in WWI.

in the Franco-Prussian War – but it would prove to be a costly piece of real estate in terms of human life. By the time the armistice was signed in November 1918, some 1.3 million French soldiers had been killed and almost one million crippled. At the Battle of Verdun alone, the French (under the command of General Philippe Pétain) and the Germans each lost about 400,000 men.

The naming of Adolf Hitler as Germany's chancellor in 1933 signalled the end of a decade of compromise between France and Germany over border guarantees. Initially the French tried to appease Hitler, but two days after Germany invaded Poland in 1939 France joined Britain in declaring war on Germany. By June 1940 France had capitulated. The Maginot Line had proved useless, with German armoured divisions outflanking it by going through Belgium.

The Germans divided France into a zone under direct German rule (along the western coast and the north, including Paris), and a puppet-state based in the spa town of Vichy and led by General Pétain, the ageing WWI hero of the Battle of Verdun. The Vichy regime was viciously anti-Semitic, and local police helped the Nazis in rounding up French Jews and others for deportation to Auschwitz and other death camps. While many people either collaborated with the Germans or passively waited out the occupation, the underground movement known as the Résistance, or Maquis, whose active members never amounted to more than about 5% of the French population, engaged in such activities as sabotaging railways, collecting intelligence for the Allies, helping Allied airmen who had been shot down, and publishing anti-German leaflets.

## THE GUILLOTINE

Hanging and drawing and quartering – roping the victim's limbs to four oxen or horses, which then ran in four different directions – was once the favoured method of publicly executing commoners. In a bid to make public executions more humane, French physician Joseph Ignace Guillotin (1738–1814) came up with the guillotine.

Several tests on dead bodies down the line, highwayman Nicolas Jacques Pelletier was the first in France to have his head sliced off by the 2m-odd falling blade on 25 April 1792 on place de Grève (today's place de l'Hôtel de Ville) in Paris. During the Reign of Terror, at least 17,000 met their death by guillotine.

By the time the last person in France to be guillotined (murderer Hamida Djandoubi in Marseille) was given the chop in 1977 (behind closed doors – the last public execution was in 1939), the lethal contraption had been sufficiently refined to slice off a head in 2/100 of a second. A real McCoy guillotine is displayed in the Galerie de la Méditerranée of Marseille's MuCEM.

France abolished capital punishment in 1981.

### 1795

A five-man delegation of moderate republicans led by Paul Barras sets itself up as the Directoire (Directory) and rules the First Republic for five years.

### 1799

Napoléon Bonaparte dismisses the Directoire and seizes control of the government in a coup d'état, opening the doors to 16 years of despotic rule, victory and then defeat on the battlefield.

### 1815

British and Prussian forces under the Duke of Wellington defeat Napoléon at Waterloo; he is exiled to a remote island in the South Atlantic where he dies six years later.

### 1851

Louis Napoléon leads a coup d'état and proclaims himself Emperor Napoléon III of the Second Empire (1852–70), a period of significant economic growth and building under Baron Haussmann.

## Key War Museums

Mémorial  
de la Shoah  
(Paris)

Centre d'Histoire  
de la Résistance et  
de la Déportation  
(Lyon)

Caen-Normandie  
Mémorial  
(Caen)

Musée Mémorial  
de la Bataille  
de Normandie  
(Bayeux)

An 80km-long stretch of beach was the site of the D-Day landings on 6 June 1944, when more than 100,000 Allied troops stormed the coastline to liberate most of Normandy and Brittany. Paris was liberated on 25 August by a force spearheaded by Free French units, sent in ahead of the Americans so the French would have the honour of liberating their own capital.

The war ruined France. More than one-third of industrial production fed the German war machine during WWII, the occupiers requisitioning practically everything that wasn't (and was) nailed down: ferrous and non-ferrous metals, statues, iron grills, zinc bar tops, coal, leather, textiles and chemicals. Agriculture, strangled by the lack of raw materials, fell by 25%.

In their retreat, the Germans burned bridges (2600 destroyed) and the Allied bombardments tore up railroad tracks (40,000km). The roadways had not been maintained since 1939, ports were damaged, and nearly half a million buildings and 60,000 factories were destroyed. The French had to pay for the needs of the occupying soldiers to the tune of 400 million francs a day, prompting an inflation rip tide.

## Rebuilding & the Loss of the Colonies

The magnitude of France's postwar economic devastation required a strong central government with broad powers to rebuild the country's industrial and commercial base. Soon after liberation most banks, insurance companies, car manufacturers and energy-producing companies fell under government control. Other businesses remained in private hands, the objective being to combine the efficiency of state planning with the dynamism of private initiative. But progress was slow. By 1947 rationing remained in effect and France had to turn to the USA for loans as part of the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe.

One aim of the plan was to stabilise postwar Europe financially and politically, thus thwarting the expansion of Soviet power. As the Iron Curtain fell over Eastern Europe, the pro-Stalinist bent of France's Communist Party put it in a politically untenable position. Seeking to exercise power within the government and at the same time oppose its measures as insufficiently Marxist, the communists found themselves on the losing end of disputes involving the colonies, workers' demands and American aid. In 1947 they were booted out of government.

The economy gathered steam in the 1950s. The French government invested in hydroelectric and nuclear-power plants, oil and gas exploration, petrochemical refineries, naval construction, auto factories and building construction to accommodate a boom in babies and consumer goods. The future at home was looking brighter; the situation of *la France d'outre-mer* (overseas France) was another story altogether.

France's humiliation at the hands of the Germans had not been lost on its restive colonies. As the war economy tightened its grip, native-born

Paris in the 1920s and '30s was a centre of the avant-garde, with painters pushing into new fields of art such as cubism and surrealism, Le Corbusier rewriting the architecture textbook, foreign writers such as Ernest Hemingway drawn by the city's liberal atmosphere (and cheap booze), and nightlife establishing a cutting-edge reputation.

### 1860s

The phylloxera (a tiny aphid-like creature) decimates France's vineyards.

### 1871

The Treaty of Frankfurt is signed, the harsh terms of which (a 5-billion-franc war indemnity, surrender of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine) prompt immediate revolt.

### 1903

The world's biggest sporting event after the Olympics and the World Cup sprints around France for the first time; Tour de France riders pedal throughout the night to cover 2500km in 19 days.

### 1904

Colonial rivalry between France and Britain in Africa ends with the Entente Cordiale (Cordial Understanding), marking the start of a cooperation that continues, more or less, to this day.

people, poorer to begin with, noticed that they were bearing the brunt of the pain. In North Africa the Algerians coalesced around a movement for greater autonomy, which blossomed into a full-scale independence movement by the end of the war. The Japanese moved into strategically important Indochina in 1940. The Vietnamese resistance movement that developed quickly took on an anti-French, nationalistic tone, setting the stage for Vietnam's eventual independence.

The 1950s spelled the end of French colonialism. When Japan surrendered to the Allies in 1945, nationalist Ho Chi Minh launched a push for an autonomous Vietnam that became a drive for independence. Under the brilliant General Giap, the Vietnamese perfected a form of guerrilla warfare that proved highly effective against the French army. After their defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the French withdrew from Indochina.

The struggle for Algerian independence was a brutal era. Technically a French *département*, Algeria was in effect ruled by a million or so French settlers who wished at all costs to protect their privileges. Heads stuck firmly in the Saharan sands, the colonial community and its supporters in the army and the right wing refused all Algerian demands for political and economic equality.

The Algerian War of Independence (1954–62) was vicious. Nationalist rebel attacks were met with summary executions, inquisitions, torture and massacres, which made Algerians more determined to gain their independence. The government responded with half-hearted reform. International pressure on France to pull out of Algeria came from the UN, the USSR and the USA, while *pièdes noirs* (literally 'black feet', as Algerian-born French people are known in France), elements of the military and extreme right-wingers became increasingly enraged at what they saw as defeatism in dealing with the problem. A plot to overthrow the French government and replace it with a military-style regime was narrowly avoided when General Charles de Gaulle, France's undersecretary of war who had fled Paris for London in 1940 after France capitulated and had spent more than a dozen years in opposition to the postwar Fourth Republic, agreed to assume the presidency in 1958.

De Gaulle's initial attempts at reform – according to the Algerians political equality and recognising their right in principle to self-determination – infuriated right-wingers without quenching the Algerian thirst for independence. Following a failed coup attempt by military officers in 1961, the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS; a group of French settlers and sympathisers opposed to Algerian independence) resorted to terrorism. It tried to assassinate de Gaulle several times and in 1961 violence broke out on the streets of Paris. Police attacked Algerian demonstrators, killing more than 100 people. Algeria was granted independence the following year.

France today maintains a firm distinction between church and state. The country is a secular republic, meaning there can be no mention of religion on national school syllabuses. In French the principle is called *laïcité* – and it ties into current debates around religious garb and practices.

### 1905

The emotions aroused by the Dreyfus Affair and the interference of the Catholic Church lead to the promulgation of *laïcité* (secularism), the legal separation of church and state.

### 1918

The armistice ending WWI signed at Fôret de Compiègne near Paris sees the return of lost territories (Alsace and Lorraine), but the war brings about the loss of more than a million French soldiers.

### 1920s

Paris sparkles as the centre of the avant-garde. The luxurious Train Bleu makes its first run, and Sylvia Beach of the Shakespeare & Company bookshop publishes James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

### 1939

Nazi Germany occupies France and divides it into a zone under direct German occupation (along the north and western coasts), and a puppet state led by General Pétain, based in the spa town of Vichy.

## The Road to Prosperity & Europe

In the late 1960s Charles de Gaulle was appearing more and more like yesterday's man. The loss of the colonies, a surge in immigration and a rise in unemployment had weakened his government. De Gaulle's government by decree was starting to gall the anti-authoritarian baby-boomer generation, now at university and agitating for change. Students reading Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich found much to admire in Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and the black struggle for civil rights in America, and vociferously denounced the war in Vietnam.

Student protests of 1968 climaxed with a brutal overreaction by police to a protest meeting at the Sorbonne, Paris' most renowned university. Overnight, public opinion turned in favour of the students, while the students themselves occupied the Sorbonne and erected barricades in the Latin Quarter. Within days a general strike by 10 million workers countrywide paralysed France.

But such comradeship between workers and students did not last long. While the former wanted a greater share of the consumer market, the latter wanted to destroy it. After much hesitancy de Gaulle took advantage of this division by appealing to people's fear of anarchy. Just as the country seemed on the brink of revolution and an overthrow of the Fifth Republic, stability returned. The government decentralised the higher-education system and followed through in the 1970s with a wave of other reforms (lowering the voting age to 18, instituting legalised abortion and so on). De Gaulle meanwhile resigned from office in 1969 and suffered a fatal heart attack the following year.

Georges Pompidou stepped onto the presidential podium in 1969. Despite embarking on an ambitious modernisation program, investing in aerospace, telecommunications and nuclear power, he failed to stave off

### THE BIRTH OF THE BIKINI

Almost called *atome* (atom) rather than bikini, after its pinprick size, the scanty little two-piece bathing suit was the 1946 creation of Cannes fashion designer Jacques Heim and automotive engineer Louis Réard. It made its first appearance poolside in Paris at the Piscine Molitor, a mythical art deco pool complex that reopened – with original pool – as the stunning Hôtel Molitor in 2014. Top-and-bottom swimsuits had existed for centuries, but it was the French duo who made them briefer than brief and plumped for the name 'bikini' – after Bikini, an atoll in the Marshall Islands chosen by the USA in the same year as the testing ground for atomic bombs. Once wrapped top and bottom around the curvaceous 1950s sex-bomb Brigitte Bardot on St-Tropez' Plage de Pampelonne, there was no looking back. The bikini was here to stay.

#### 1944

Normandy and Brittany are the first to be liberated by Allied troops following the D-Day landings in June, followed by Paris on 25 August by a force spearheaded by Free French units.

#### 1949

France signs the Atlantic Pact uniting North America and Western Europe in a mutual defence alliance (NATO); the Council of Europe, of which France is part, is born.

#### 1951

Fear of communism and a resurgent Germany prompts the first steps towards European integration with the European Coal and Steel Community and military accords three years later.

#### 1946–62

French colonialism ends with war in Indochina (1946–54) followed by the Algerian War of Independence (1954–62), brought to a close with the signing of the Accord d'Évian (Evian Accord) in Évian-les-Bains.

inflation and social unrest following the global oil crisis of 1973. He died the following year.

In 1974 Valéry Giscard d'Estaing inherited a deteriorating economic climate and sharp divisions between the left and the right. His friendship with emperor and cruel dictator Jean-Bédél Bokassa of the Central African Republic did little to win him friends, and in 1981 he was ousted by long-time head of the Parti Socialiste (PS; Socialist Party), François Mitterrand.

Despite France's first socialist president instantly alienating the business community by setting out to nationalise several privately owned banks, industrial groups and other parts of the economy, Mitterrand gave France a sparkle. Potent symbols of France's advanced technological savvy – the Minitel, a proto-personal computer in everyone's home, and high-speed TGV train service between Paris and Lyon – were launched in 1980 and 1981 respectively; a clutch of *grands projets* were embarked upon in the French capital. The death penalty was abolished, homosexuality was legalised, a 39-hour work week was instituted, annual holiday time was upped from four to five weeks and the right to retire at 60 was guaranteed.

But by 1986 the economy was weakening and in parliamentary elections that year the right-wing opposition, led by Jacques Chirac (mayor of Paris since 1977), won a majority in the National Assembly. For the next two years Mitterrand worked with a prime minister and cabinet from the opposition, an unprecedented arrangement known as *cohabitation*. The extreme-right Front National (FN; National Front) meanwhile quietly gained ground by loudly blaming France's economic woes on immigration.

Presidential elections in 1995 ushered Chirac (an ailing Mitterrand did not run and died the following year) into the Élysée Palace. However, Chirac's attempts to reform France's colossal public sector in order to meet the criteria of the European Monetary Union (EMU) were met with the largest protests since 1968, and his decision to resume nuclear testing on the Polynesian island of Mururoa and a nearby atoll was the focus of worldwide outrage. Always the maverick, Chirac called early parliamentary elections in 1997 – only for his party, the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR; Rally for the Republic), to lose out to a coalition of socialists, communists and greens. Another period of *cohabitation* ensued.

The 2002 presidential elections surprised everybody. The first round of voting saw left-wing PS leader Lionel Jospin eliminated and the FN's Jean-Marie Le Pen win 17% of the national vote. But in the subsequent run-off ballot, Chirac enjoyed a landslide victory, echoed in parliamentary elections a month later when the president-backed coalition UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire) won a healthy majority, leaving Le Pen's FN without a seat in parliament and ending years of *cohabitation*.

France has always drawn immigrants: 4.3 million from Europe between 1850 and WWI, and another three million between the world wars. Post-WWII, several million unskilled workers followed from North Africa and French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa.

## 1966

France withdraws from NATO's joint military command in 1966; it has maintained an independent arsenal of nuclear weapons since 1960. A year later NATO moves out of its headquarters near Paris.

## 1968

Large-scale anti-authoritarian student protests (known as 'May 1968'), aimed at Charles de Gaulle's style of government by decree, escalate into a countryside protest that eventually brings down the president.

## 1981

The superspeedy TGV makes its first commercial journey from Paris to Lyon, breaking all speed records to complete the train journey in two hours instead of six.

## 1989

President Mitterrand's *grand projet*, Opéra Bastille, opens to mark the bicentennial of the French Revolution; IM Pei's love-it-or-leave-it Grande Pyramide is unveiled at the Louvre.



## Sarkozy's France

Presidential elections in 2007 ushered out old-school Jacques Chirac (in his 70s with two terms under his belt) and brought in Nicolas Sarkozy. Dynamic, ambitious and media-savvy, the former interior minister and chairman of centre-right party UMP wooed voters with policies about job creation, lower taxes, crime crackdown and help for France's substantial immigrant population – issues that had particular pulling power coming from the son of a Hungarian immigrant father and Greek Jewish–French mother. However, his first few months in office were dominated by personal affairs as he divorced his wife Cecilia and wed Italian multimillionaire singer Carla Bruni a few months later.

The 2008 global banking crisis saw the government inject €10.5 billion into France's six major banks. Unemployment hit the 10% mark in 2010 and in regional elections the same year, Sarkozy's party lost badly. The left won 54% of votes and control of 21 out of 22 regions on mainland France and Corsica. Government popularity hit an all-time low.

Riots ripped through the Alpine town of Grenoble in 2010 after a 27-year-old man was shot dead by police while allegedly trying to rob a casino. The incident echoed bloodshed five years earlier in a Parisian suburb following the death of two teenage boys of North African origin, electrocuted after hiding in an electrical substation while on the run from the police. In Grenoble the burning cars and street clashes with riot police were seen as a measurement of just how volatile France had become.

Nicolas Sarkozy became the first French president to be held in police custody due to allegations of corruption in July 2014. In October 2020 he stood trial on the first of several charges and in March 2021 was sentenced to three years in jail (two of which were suspended) for trying to bribe a judge in connection with the cases.

## Hollande's France

Presidential elections in 2012 ushered in France's first socialist president since François Mitterrand left office in 1995. Nicolas Sarkozy ran for a second term in office, but lost against left-wing candidate François Hollande (b 1954) of the Socialist Party whose ambitious talk of reducing unemployment, clearing the country's debts, upping tax on corporations and salaries over €1 million per annum, and increasing the minimum salary clearly won over the electorate. Parliamentary elections a month later sealed Hollande's grip on power: the socialists won a comfortable majority in France's 577-seat National Assembly, paving the way for Hollande to govern France during Europe's biggest economic crisis in decades.

His term got off to a rocky start. Scandal broke in 2013 after finance minister Jérôme Cahuzac admitted to having a safe-haven bank account in Switzerland and was forced to resign. Two months later France officially entered recession again. France's AA+ credit rating was downgraded still further to AA and unemployment rose to 11.1% – the highest in 15 years. Mounting anger at Hollande's failure to get the country's economy back on track saw his popularity plunge fast and furiously, and his Socialist Party was practically wiped out in the 2014 municipal elections as

### 1994

The 50km-long Channel Tunnel linking France with Britain opens after seven years of hard graft by 10,000 workers.

### 1995

After twice serving as prime minister, Jacques Chirac becomes president of France, winning popular acclaim for his direct words and actions in matters relating to the EU and the war in Bosnia.

### 1998

After resuming nuclear testing in the South Pacific in the early 1990s, France signs the worldwide test-ban treaty, bringing an end to French nuclear testing once and for all.

### 2001

Socialist Bertrand Delanoë becomes the first openly gay mayor of Paris (and any European capital); he is wounded in a knife attack by a homophobic assailant the following year.

Since the end of WWII France has been one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Follow its movements at [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

the vast majority of the country swung decisively to the right. Paris, with the election of Spanish-born socialist Anne Hidalgo as Paris' first female mayor, was one of the few cities to remain on the political left.

Hollande's handling of his personal affairs proved equally inelegant. The same year French tabloid magazine *Closer* published photographs of the French president arriving at the Paris apartment of his alleged mistress, actress Julie Gayet, on a scooter – prompting public concern about both presidential security (or rather, lack of) and the well-being of the president's relationship with long-term partner and official First Lady, journalist Valérie Trierweiler. The presidential couple soon after announced the end of their relationship. Hollande's popularity plummeted to rock-bottom.

## The Rise of the Far Right

In 2017 French president François Hollande's popularity hovered at an all-time low. As the country geared up for presidential elections in May that year, all eyes were on the increasingly powerful Front National (FN; National Front), known for its fervent anti-immigrant stance. In 2014 municipal elections, the far-right party led by Marine Le Pen won 7% of votes, trumping the ruling left-centre socialists in several towns. In European elections a month later the FN won a quarter of votes, ahead of the main opposition party UMP (21%) and governing left-wing socialists (14%). Prime Minister Manuel Valls was reported in the press as describing the victory as a political 'earthquake'. During parliamentary elections a few months later the FN won its first-ever two seats in the French Senate and the socialists lost majority control of the Upper Chamber. The far right was clearly a force to be reckoned with, though the 2017 presidential elections saw the FN's Marine Le Pen convincingly defeated by centrist Emmanuel Macron.

## Macron's France

Presidential elections in 2017 placed the country squarely on an upward path to renewal and regeneration. All the traditional parties were eliminated in the first round of voting, paving the way for savvy Emmanuel Macron – a former investment banker – to win the second round of voting and form a centrist government with his freshly formed, pro-EU movement En Marche (since repackaged as political party La République en Marche). Not only did Macron's overwhelming victory mark a dramatic break from political tradition in France, it also delivered a resounding blow to the country's far-right hopes of gaining power: Macron defeated the FN's Marine Le Pen by a decisive 66.1% to 33.9% in the presidential second round.

With an absolute majority in the National Assembly, Macron has pursued a rigorous reform programme. His agenda: to reboot the economy, reduce taxes for businesses and make the country's notoriously rigid labour laws more flexible. Moves to privatise the heavily indebted, state-run

The French invented the first digital calculator, the hot-air balloon, Braille and margarine, not to mention Grand Prix racing and the first public interactive computer network.

2002

The French franc, first minted in 1360, is thrown onto the scrap heap of history as the country adopts the euro as its official currency along with 14 other EU member-states.

2004

France bans the wearing of crucifixes, the Islamic headscarf and other overtly religious symbols in state schools.

2005

The French electorate overwhelmingly rejects the EU Constitution. Parisian suburbs are wracked by rioting Arab and African youths.

2007

Pro-American pragmatist Nicolas Sarkozy beats Socialist candidate Ségolène Royal to become French president.

railway company SNCF in 2018 were met with months of hugely disruptive strikes by transport workers countrywide, but Macron remains bent on reform. On the world stage, he has quickly won a reputation as an eloquent global statesman and staunch champion of a unified Europe.

Tackling climate change is of tantamount importance to Macron, who has made France's commitment to limiting global warming very clear to the world. Following the withdrawal of the USA from the Paris climate-change agreement in June 2017, Macron openly invited American scientists and researchers to France to continue their vital climate research. During a subsequent official visit to the USA in April 2018, the French president urged the USA to reconsider its withdrawal, warning Congress, 'There is no Planet B'. (It was in Paris, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference – COP21 – in 2015, that world leaders agreed to limit global warming to less than 2°C by the end of the century.)

National measures recently introduced in France include banning single-use plastic bags, reducing supermarket food waste, banning the sale of all petrol and diesel cars by 2040 (currently just 1.2% and 3.5% of French cars are electric or hybrid) and introducing financial incentives to low-level income households to change polluting oil-fired boilers to renewable energies. In Paris €150 million is being invested in its environmentally friendly cycling infrastructure. In 2018, France's medium-term energy policy was released. The Multiannual Energy Programme (known as PPE) focuses on fossil-fuel reduction and social equity in the transition. To that end, in June 2019 lawmakers passed the first round of legislation aiming for carbon neutrality for France by 2050. As floods and droughts begin to affect French farmers and vintners, many eyes are on addressing climate change.

## Terrorism & State of Emergency

On 7 January 2015, the Paris offices of newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* were attacked in response to satirical images it had published of the Prophet Muhammad. Eleven staff and one police officer were killed and a further 22 people injured. #JeSuisCharlie ('I am Charlie') became a worldwide slogan of support.

On 13 November 2015 terrorist attacks occurred in Paris and St-Denis. During a football match watched by 80,000 spectators, three explosions were heard outside the stadium. Soon after, gunmen fired on customers drinking on pavement terraces outside several cafes and restaurants in Paris' 10e and 11e *arrondissements*. At 9.40pm three gunmen stormed concert hall Le Bataclan and fired into the audience. In all, that evening 130 people lost their lives and 368 were injured. *Fluctuat nec mergitur* (tossed but not sunk) – words etched on Paris' city coat of arms – assumed a vital new meaning after the attacks and became the rallying cry of French people countrywide who stood in complete solidarity with Parisians.

On 15 April 2019, Paris' iconic Notre Dame cathedral burst into flames which destroyed its roof, spire and upper walls, and caused smoke damage. The world watched in horror. Investigators suspect an electrical fault to have been the cause. It's hoped that the painstaking rebuilding will be completed by 2024.

### 2010

Countrywide strikes and protests briefly paralyse France after Sarkozy unveils plans to push the retirement age back from 60 to 62 by 2018.

### 2011

French parliament bans burkas in public. Muslim women publicly wearing the face-covering veil can be fined and required to attend 'citizenship classes'.

### 2012

France loses its top AAA credit rating. Economic policy is the big issue in presidential elections which usher in François Hollande, France's first socialist president in 17 years.

### 2013

Same-sex marriage is legalised in France. By the end of the year, 7000 gay couples have tied the knot.

More was to follow. In Nice on 14 July 2016, while thousands of people were gathered on Promenade des Anglais to celebrate Bastille Day, a lorry ploughed through the crowd. Hundreds were injured and 86 killed. France entered three days of official mourning.

Following the fatal terrorist attacks in Paris, France declared a state of emergency, essentially allowing authorities to carry out police raids and place suspects under house arrest without prior court authorisation. This heightened security measure remained in place until November 2017 when it was effectively replaced by a new anti-terrorism law giving authorities similar rights: to search private homes, restrict free movement of individuals (41 people were placed under house arrest during the initial two-year state of emergency), and close mosques if necessary.

Unfortunately, 2018 brought a fatal attack at a Christmas market in Strasbourg, 2019 a parcel bombing in Lyon and 2020 another round of shocking killings. On 16 October 2020 Samuel Paty, a teacher in the northern Paris suburb of Éragny, was beheaded. An 18-year-old Chechen refugee confessed to the killing on social media and was later shot dead by police. Why was Paty targeted? In a class discussing freedom of expression and the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons and killings, he showed some of the cartoons to the students.

Less than two weeks later, three people were killed at the Notre Dame church in Nice by a Tunisian national who had entered France a month earlier. France's Council of the Muslim Faith decried the attack and asked French Muslims to cancel that week's Mawlid celebrations, which mark the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. These attacks also led to a government crackdown on suspected Islamic radicals in France and prompted Macron to defend the right to freedom of expression in France.

The vast majority of French Muslims have nothing to do with terrorism or extremism, so these acts of violence inflame and broaden divisions between factions in France, from advocates of free speech and secularists to Muslims seeking respect for their religion.

The President of the Republic has a website ([www.elysee.fr](http://www.elysee.fr)), posts regularly on his Facebook page and is active on Twitter @elysee. He is also highly prolific on his personal accounts @Emmanuel Macron.

## The Urban-Rural Divide

As the country's youngest-ever president (aged 39 when he moved into the Élysée Palace), Macron is a digital native and innovator and desires the same for France. Macron tweets and shares videos on Facebook in English and French, and speaks English at ease in public (describing the Australian prime minister's wife as 'delicious' – a wonderful faux pas derived from the high-society French *délicieux* meaning 'delightful' – during a diplomatic visit to Australia in May 2018). In 2017 he unveiled the world's largest start-up campus in Paris, Station F, conceived and backed by French billionaire businessman Xavier Niel, where 3000 international entrepreneurs beaver away on ground-breaking new tech ideas and businesses, supported by

2014

Municipal elections result in Paris' first female mayor Anne Hidalgo, Spanish-born to boot. In European elections a month later, the far-right National Front wins almost a quarter of votes.

2015

Deadly terrorist attacks in Paris: at satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* on 7 January and at multiple locations including concert hall Le Bataclan on 13 November. The next year terrorists target Nice on Bastille Day.

2016

France's 22 administrative *régions* are reduced to 13. French people are not impressed.

2017

Centrist Emmanuel Macron wins presidential elections to become, at the age of 39, France's youngest-ever president. Paris wins its bid to host the Summer Olympics and Paralympics in 2024.

30 high-tech incubators and accelerators. The unique start-up ecosystem squats inside a gargantuan steel, glass and concrete hangar built in the 1920s as a railway depot, and proves Macron's determination to lure world talent – be it in science, tech or banking – to France. A similar digital ecosystem, French Tech Totem, opened in Lyon in 2019.

Cities are enjoying a renaissance as brave new worlds mushroom on industrial wastelands and derelict riverbanks. In Lyon, the multimillion-euro Confluence project continues apace on the slip of land where the Rhône meets the Saône. Phase One is complete and Phase Two, overseen by Swiss architects Herzog and de Meuron (of Tate Modern and Beijing Olympic Stadium fame), is now introducing high-tech residential buildings and landscaped leisure spaces into the environmentally sustainable mix. Ultimately, 50km of riverbanks along the Saône will sport pedestrian walkways, cycling lanes, picnic areas and parks peppered with artworks for public recreational use.

Further south in Bordeaux, an equally ambitious urban-renewal project is underway at Euratlantique, a sizzling new business and residential district boasting glass-and-steel office towers, eco-smart skyscrapers, a groundbreaking arts incubator and old abattoirs upcycled as luxe shopping malls. Riverbanks will likewise be greened up, with bags of space for urban walkers and cyclists to experience their city at a grassroots level.

Nothing can trump the gargantuan Grand Paris (Greater Paris) redevelopment project, a new, decentralised metro system designed to link the outer suburbs with each other as well as downtown. Its current completion date is 2030. Additionally, Paris is also preparing to host the Olympics in 2024 ([www.paris2024.org](http://www.paris2024.org)).

Proposed fuel tax rises in late 2018 sparked a mass movement especially in rural and exurban France, dubbed the Gilets Jaunes for the yellow vests worn by protesters marching in the streets. Protests spread nationwide and they even set up blockades in Paris. The movement has attempted to eschew a leadership structure, while its goals include a rise in the minimum wage and a cut to pension tax.

These protests have dovetailed with other rural movements, such as in November 2019 when French farmers, led by the farmers' unions, drove their tractors into Paris to protest over increased farming regulation and trade agreements they see as dispossessing French agriculture.

Nevertheless, Macron marches ahead with proposed pension changes and other policies that have drawn continuing ire from workers and farmers alike. The 2020 advent of the coronavirus pandemic has dampened the ability to march, but tempers still run high around the perception that French policy prioritises cities and the elite, while leaving rural or working-class interests in the dust.

Keep tabs on the moves and motions of France's National Assembly at [www2.assemblee-nationale.fr](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr).

2018

Gilets Jaunes (Yellow Vests) grassroots protests hit the streets nationwide against a proposed fuel tax increase, starting a movement.

2018

France wins the World Cup for the second time (the first was in 1998).

2019

Paris' iconic Notre Dame cathedral is blighted by an enormous fire caused by an electrical short.

2020

A tough year in France, with the spread of coronavirus and a new spate of terrorist attacks.



# The French

**Stylish, sexy, chic, charming, arrogant, rude, bureaucratic, chauvinistic... France is a country whose people attract more stubborn myths and stereotypes than any other. Over the centuries dozens of tags, true or otherwise, have been pinned on the garlic-eating, beret-wearing, *sacrebieu*-swearing French. (The French, by the way, don't wear berets or use old chestnuts like *sacrebieu* anymore.) So what precisely does it mean to be French?**

## Superiority Complex

Most French people are proud to be French and are staunchly nationalistic, a result of the country's republican stance that places nationality – rather than religion, for example – atop the self-identity list. This has created an overwhelmingly self-confident nation, culturally and intellectually, that can appear as a French superiority complex.

Such natural confidence is the backbone to being French. Never was this demonstrated more passionately or fervently than during the terrorist attacks that rocked the French capital in November 2015 and Nice during Bastille Day celebrations in 2016. Far from cowering in a corner, the shock attacks prompted the French to get out there and defiantly brandish their culture and national pride as their greatest weapon against terrorism: the hashtag slogan #JeSuisEnTerrasse spread like wildfire on the internet, while Parisians took to cafe pavement terraces and public spaces in typical quiet and elegant defiance.

Many French speak a foreign language fairly well, travel and are happy to use their language skills should the need arise. Of course, if monolingual English-speakers don't try to speak French, there is no way proud French people will reveal they speak English!

## Tradition v Innovation

Suckers for tradition, the French are slow to embrace new ideas and technologies: it took the country an age to embrace the internet, clinging on to its own at-the-time-advanced Minitel system. Yet the French innovate. They came up with microchipped credit cards long before anyone else. The lead pencil, refrigerator, tinned foods, calculator, spirit level and little black dress (*merci*, Chanel) are all French inventions.

## Naturally Sexy

When it comes to sex, not all French men ooze romance or light Gitane cigarettes all day. Nor are they as civilised about adultery as French cinema would have you believe. Adultery, illegal in France until 1975, was actually grounds for automatic divorce until as late as 2004. Today, some 45% of marriages in France end in divorce (making the French population the ninth most divorced in the world) – with women, interestingly, being the ones to file for divorce in three out of four cases. As with elsewhere in Europe, couples are marrying later – at the average age of 32 and 31 for men and women respectively today, compared to 30 and 28 a

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*Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong: What Makes the French so French ask Jean-Benoît Nadeau and Julie Barlow in their witty, well-written and at times downright comical musings on the French.*

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decade ago. Almost 60% of babies in France are born out of wedlock, and one-fifth are raised by a single parent.

Kissing is an integral part of French life. (The expression ‘French kissing’ doesn’t exist in French, incidentally.) Countrywide, people who know each other really well, reasonably well, a tad or barely at all greet each other with a glancing peck on each cheek. Southern France aside (where everyone kisses everyone), two men rarely kiss (unless they are related or artists) but always shake hands. Boys and girls start kissing as soon as they’re out of nappies, or so it seems.

## Lifestyle

Be a fly on the wall in the 5th-floor bourgeois apartment of Monsieur et Madame *Tout le Monde* and you’ll see them dunking croissants in bowls of *café au lait* for breakfast, buying a baguette every day from the *boulangerie* (Monsieur nibbles the end off on his way home) and recycling window bar a few glass bottles and the odd cardboard box.

They go to the movies once a month, work 35 hours a week (many French still toil 39 hours or more a week – employers can enforce a 39-hour work week for a negotiable extra cost), and enjoy five weeks’ holiday and almost a dozen bank (public) holidays a year. The couple view the start-up launched by their 24-year-old son in Paris with a bemusing mix of pride, scepticism and non-comprehension. Their 20-year-old daughter is a student: France’s overcrowded state-run universities are free and open to anyone who passes the baccalaureate. Then there’s their youngest, aged 10 and one of France’s many children who have no school on part or all of Wednesday – those that get the four-day week have a ball, but it’s not so easy for working parents who have to sort out childcare.

Madame buys a load of hot-gossip weekly magazines, Monsieur meets his mates to play boules, and the first two weeks of August is the *only* time to go on a summer holiday (with the rest of France). Dodging dog poo on pavements is a sport practised from birth, and everything goes on the *carte bleue* (credit or debit card) when shopping. The couple have a landlord, although they are in the minority: 65% of households own their own home; the rest rent.

## Les Femmes

Women were granted suffrage in 1945, but until 1964 a woman needed her husband’s permission to open a bank account or get a passport. Younger French women in particular are quite outspoken and emancipated. But this self-confidence has yet to translate into equality in the workplace, where women hold few senior and management positions. Sexual harassment is addressed with a law imposing financial penalties on the offender. A great achievement in the last decade has been *Parité*, the law requiring political parties to fill 50% of their slates in all elections with female candidates.

### FRANCE’S FIRST LADY

Not only are many French naturally sexy, but this enviable look is ageless. Or it has been unofficially declared so among older women following the arrival of President Emmanuel Macron who brought into office a glamorous first lady 24 years his senior (and over 60 to boot). Confidently stylish and sexy to the core, Brigitte Trogneux was a married mum-of-three and teacher at a school in small-town Amiens when she first met Macron, then a 15-year-old school pupil. The pair fell in love, prompting enormous scandal at the time, and subsequently married. They are the embodiment of open-mindedness.

*The Elementary Particles* (first published in France as *Les Particules Élémentaires* and subsequently in the UK as *Atomised*) by bestselling French author Michel Houellebecq uses the story of two French half-brothers born to a hippy mother to delve into the state of contemporary society. Funny, sad, caustic and hugely insightful, it is a wonderful anthropological portrait of modern France.

Abortion is legal during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, and girls under 16 do not need parental consent provided they are accompanied by an adult of their choice: 30 abortions take place in France for every 100 live births.

Above all else French women are known for their natural chic, style and class. And there's no doubt that contemporary French women are sassier than ever. Take the Rykiel women: in the 1970s, legendary Parisian knitwear designer Sonia Rykiel (1930–2016) designed the skin-tight, boob-hugging sweater worn with no bra beneath. In the new millennium, daughter Nathalie created Rykiel Woman, a sensual label embracing everything from lingerie to sex toys and aimed squarely at women who know what they want.

Then, of course, there is Spanish-born Anne Hidalgo, Paris' first ever female mayor, elected in 2014 and reelected in 2020. *Allez les femmes!*

## Linguistic Patriotism

Speaking a language other than their own is an emotional affair for the French, memorably illustrated a few years back when then president Jacques Chirac walked out of an EU summit session after a fellow countryman had the audacity to address the meeting in English. French newspapers and the French blogosphere seethed with debate on linguistic patriotism the following day, with French bloggers – many of whom write in English – rightly pointing out that French has not been the primary international language for a long, long time.

Since the arrival of Emmanuel Macron – a fluent English-speaker – on the political scene in 2017, English has assumed a new *de rigueur* in France. Since assuming the French presidency, Macron's silver-tongued ability to speak at ease in both English and French has won over the world.

French was the main language of the EU until 1995, when Sweden and Finland came into the EU fold. French broadcasting laws restrict the amount of airtime radio and TV stations can devote to non-French music, but nothing can be done to restrict who airs what on the internet. With English words like 'weekend', 'jogging', 'stop' and 'OK' firmly entrenched in daily French usage, language purists might just have lost the battle.

## Multiculturalism

France is multicultural (immigrants make up around 9.7% of the population), yet its secular republican code has been criticised for doing little to accommodate a multicultural society (and, interestingly, none of the members of France's National Assembly represents the immigrant population, first or second generation). Nothing reflects this dichotomy better than the law, in place since 2004, banning the Islamic headscarf,

### FRENCH KISSING

Kissing French-style is not straightforward, with 'how many' and 'which side first' being potentially problematic. In Paris it is two: unless parties are related, very close friends or haven't seen each other in ages, anything more is deemed affected. That said, in hipster twenty-something circles, friends swap three or four cheek-skimming kisses.

Travel south and *les bises* (kisses), or *les bisous* as the French colloquially say, multiply; three or four is the norm in Provence. The bits of France neighbouring Switzerland around Lake Geneva tend to be three-kiss country (in keeping with Swiss habits); and in the Loire Valley it is four. Corsicans, bizarrely, stick to two but kiss left cheek first – which can lead to locked lips given that everyone else in France starts with the right cheek.

Jewish skullcap, crucifix and other religious symbols in French schools, or the more recent 2016 burkini ban at pools and on beaches in southern France.

The majority of France's Muslim community – Europe's largest at 5 million – are from Algeria or Morocco. Some Muslims in France are marginalised from mainstream French economic prosperity. The poorest live in *bidonvilles* (shanty towns) around Paris, Lille, Marseille and other metropolitan centres. And many see structural Islamophobia in government policies and the media treatment of Muslims – masking systemic causes to poverty and inequity.

## Good Sports

Most French wouldn't be seen dead walking down the street in trainers and tracksuits. But contrary to appearances, they love sport. Shaved-leg cyclists toil up Mont Ventoux, football fans fill stadiums and anyone who can flit off for the weekend to ski or snowboard.

Les 24 Heures du Mans and the F1 Grand Prix in Monaco are the world's raciest dates in motor sports; the French Open, aka Roland Garros, in Paris in late May to early June is the second of the year's four grand-slam tennis tournaments; and the Tour de France is – indisputably – the world's most prestigious bicycle race. Bringing together 189 of the world's top male cyclists (21 teams of nine) and 15 million spectators in July each year for a spectacular 3000-plus-kilometre cycle around the country, the three-week race always labours through the Alps and Pyrenees and finishes on Paris' Champs-Élysées. The route in between changes each year but wherever it goes, the French systematically turn out in droves – armed with tables, chairs and picnic hampers – to make a day of it. The serpentine publicity caravan preceding the cyclists showers roadside spectators with coffee samples, logo-emblazoned balloons, pens and other free junk-advertising gifts and is easily as much fun as watching the cyclists themselves speed through – in 10 seconds flat.

France's greatest moment in football history came at the 1998 World Cup, which the country hosted and won. The son of Algerian immigrants, Marseille-born midfielder Zinedine Zidane (b 1972) wooed the nation with a sparkling career of goal-scoring headers and extraordinary footwork that unfortunately ended with him head-butting an Italian player during the 2006 World Cup final. But such was the power of his humble Marseillais grin (since used to advertise Adidas sports gear, Volvic mineral water and Christian Dior fashion) that the French nation instantly forgave this 'golden boy' of French football.

Recent years have seen a crop of new French stars emerge: in 2016 French midfielder Paul Pogba (b 1993) was signed by Manchester United for a then record €105 million, a price tag equalled by Les Bleus' striker Ousmane Dembélé (b 1997) a year later when he moved to Barcelona. Paris-born Kylian Mbappé (b 1998) then put pen to paper the same year and signed for Paris Saint-Germain, eclipsing both transfer fees with a deal worth around €180 million.

France's second-greatest moment in football history came at the 2018 World Cup which Les Bleus won – almost 20 years to the day since their first World Cup win. At the tender age of 19, Mbappé became the youngest player to score in a World Cup final since the 17-year-old Brazilian player Pelé in 1958. The team's coach Didier Deschamps made history by becoming just the third person in the world to first captain a World Cup-winning team and then, 20 years later, win it again as trainer of the national side.

Following France's ban on face covering, burka included, in 2010, municipalities in 30 coastal resorts on the Côte d'Azur and in Corsica banned burkinis in 2016.

The French Council of State declared the ruling illegal, but the body-covering beachwear still remains banned at public pools.

France's traditional ball games include *pétanque* and the more formal boules, which has a 70-page rule book. Both are played by men on a gravel pitch.

# The French Table

Few Western cuisines are so envied, aspirational or influential. The freshness of ingredients, natural flavours, regional variety and range of cooking methods in French cuisine is phenomenal. The very word 'cuisine' was borrowed from the French – no other language could handle all the nuances. The French table waltzes taste buds through a dizzying array of dishes sourced from aromatic street markets, seaside oyster farms, sun-baked olive groves and ancient vineyards mirroring the beauty of each season. Discovering these varied regional cuisines is an enriching, essential experience.

## Cooking Classes

.....  
 La Terrasse Rouge  
 (St-Émilien)

.....  
 L'Atelier Jean-Luc  
 Rabanel  
 (Arles)

.....  
 Le Mirazur  
 (Menton)

.....  
 Le Grand Bleu  
 (Sarlat-la-Canéda)

.....  
 La Table du  
 Couvent  
 (Limoges)

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The Food of France by Waverley Root (a long-time Paris-based American foreign correspondent), first published in 1958, remains the seminal work in English on *la cuisine française*, with a focus on historical development.

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## Terroir

No country so blatantly bundles up cuisine with its *terroir* (land) – which is now globally understood to be the unique flavour and qualities imparted to food or wine due to their place of origin.

*Le jardin de France* (the garden of France), a poetic phrase coined by the French writer Rabelais in the 16th century to describe his native Touraine in the Loire Valley, has been exploited ever since. Yet it is the serene valley, tracing the course of the Loire River west of the French capital, which remains most true to the Rabelais image of a green and succulent landscape laden with lush fruits, flowers, nuts and vegetables.

It was in the Renaissance kitchens of the Loire's celebrated châteaux that French cooking was refined: *coq au vin* (chicken in wine) and *cuisses de grenouilles* (frogs' legs) were common dishes, and poultry and game dishes were the pride and joy. Once or twice a year a fattened pig was slaughtered and prepared dozens of different ways – roasts, sausages, *boudin noir* (black pudding), charcuterie (cold meats), pâtés and so on. No single part was wasted.

## Sauces

With plenty of game and poultry going into châteaux kitchens, it was natural that medieval cooks should whip up a sauce to go with it. In the 14th to 16th centuries, *sauce verte* (green sauce) – a rather crude, heavily spiced mix of vinegar and green grape juice – accompanied meat dishes. In 1652 François-Pierre de la Varenne published his cookbook *Le Cuisinier François* in which he dismissed bread and breadcrumbs as thickening agents in favour of *roux* (a more versatile mixture of flour and fat). This paved the way for the creation, a century later, of classic French sauces such as béchamel (a milk-based sauce thickened with *roux*) and *velouté* (a velvety mix of chicken or other stock and melted butter, seasoned and thickened with *roux*) a century later. *Velouté* is the base for dozens of other sauces made to accompany meat, fish and game dishes today. Other famous sauces include hollandaise (made with egg yolks, clarified melted butter and lemon juice or white wine) and *sauce tomat* (combining pork fat with carrots, onions and tomatoes, a *roux* and meat-based stock).

## Bread

In northern France wheat fields shade vast swathes of agricultural land a gorgeous golden copper, and nothing is more French than *pain* (bread).



## Foodie Towns

Le Puy-en-Velay  
(lentils)

Dijon  
(mustard)

Privas  
(chestnuts)

Cancale  
(oysters)

Espelette  
(red chillies)

Colmar  
(chocolate stork  
eggs)

Lyon  
(piggy-part  
cuisine)

Starved peasants demanded bread on the eve of the French Revolution when the ill-fated Queen Marie Antoinette is purported to have said 'let them eat cake'. And bread today – no longer a matter of life or death but a cultural icon – accompanies every meal. It's rarely served with butter, but when it is, the butter is always *doux* (unsalted).

Every town and almost every village has its own *boulangerie* (bakery) that sells bread in all manner of shapes, sizes and variety. Artisan *boulangeries* bake their bread in a wood-fired, brick bread oven pioneered by Loire Valley châteaux in the 16th century.

Plain old *pain* is a 400g, traditional-shaped loaf, soft inside and crusty out. The classic is *une baguette*, a long thin crusty loaf weighing 250g. Anything fatter and it becomes *une flûte*, thinner *une ficelle*. While French baguettes are impossibly good, they turn dry within four hours, and unbelievably rock-hard within 12. The French always buy fresh.

## Charcuterie & Foie Gras

Charcuterie, the backbone of every French picnic and a bistro standard, is traditionally made from pork, though other meats are used in making *saucisse* (small fresh sausage, boiled or grilled before eating), *saucisson* (salami), *saucisson sec* (air-dried salami), *boudin noir* (blood sausage or pudding made with pig's blood, onions and spices) and other cured and salted meats. Pâtés, terrines and rillettes are also considered charcuterie. The difference between a pâté and a terrine is academic: a pâté is removed from its container and sliced before it is served, while a terrine is sliced from the container itself. Rillettes, spread cold over bread or toast, is potted meat or even fish that has been shredded with two forks, seasoned and mixed with fat.

The key component of *pâté de foie gras* is foie gras, which is the liver of fattened ducks and geese who are force-fed in almost every case. It was first prepared *en croûte* (in a pastry crust) around 1780 by one Jean-Pierre Clause, chef to the military governor of Alsace, who was impressed enough to send a batch to the king of Versailles. Today, it is a traditional component of celebratory or festive meals – particularly Christmas and New Year's Eve – in family homes countrywide, and is consumed with relish year-round in regions in southwest France where it is primarily made, namely Aquitaine (the Dordogne), Limousin, Auvergne and the Midi-Pyrénées.

## Pâtisserie

Pâtisserie is a general French term for pastries and includes *tartes* (tarts), *flans* (custard pies), *gâteaux* (cakes) and *biscuits* (cookies) as well as traditional croissants, *pains au chocolats* (chocolate-filled croissants) and other typical pastries. *Sablés* are shortbread biscuits, *tuiles* are delicate wing-like almond cookies, *madeleines* are small scallop-shaped cakes often flavoured with a hint of vanilla or lemon, and *tarte tatin* is an upside-down caramelised apple pie that's been around since the late 19th century. Louis XIV (r 1643–1715), known for his sweet tooth, is credited with introducing the custom of eating dessert – once reserved for feast days and other celebrations – at the end of a meal.

No sweet treat evokes the essence of French pâtisserie quite like the elegant, sophisticated and zany macaron, a legacy of Catherine de Médicis who came to France in 1533 with an entourage of Florentine chefs and pastry cooks adept in the subtleties of Italian Renaissance cooking and armed with delicacies such as aspic, truffles, quenelles (dumplings), artichokes – and macarons. Round and polished smooth like a giant Smartie, the macaron (nothing to do with coconut) is a pair of crisp-shelled, chewy-inside discs – egg whites whisked stiff with sugar and ground almonds – sandwiched together with a smooth filling. Belying

their egg-shell fragility, macarons are created in a rainbow of lurid colours and flavours, wild and inexhaustible: rose petal, cherry blossom, caramel with coconut and mango, mandarin orange and olive oil...

## Cheese

No French food product is a purer reflection of *terroir* than cheese, an iconic staple that – with the exception of most coastal areas – is made all over the country, tiny villages laying claim to ancient variations made just the way *grand-père* (grandfather) did it. France boasts more than 500 varieties, made with *lait cru* (raw milk), pasteurised milk or *petit-lait* ('little-milk', the whey left over after the fats and solids have been curdled with rennet).

Chèvre, made from goat's milk, is creamy, sweet and faintly salty when fresh, but hardens and gets saltier as it matures. Among the best is Ste-Maure de Touraine, a mild creamy cheese from the Loire Valley; Cabécou de Rocamadour from Midi-Pyrénées, often served warm with salad or marinated in oil and rosemary; and Lyon's St-Marcellin, a soft white cheese that should be served impossibly runny.

Roquefort, a ewe's-milk veined cheese from Languedoc, is the king of blue cheeses and vies with Burgundy's pongy Époisses for the strongest taste award. Soft, white, orange-skinned Époisses, created in the 16th century by monks at Abbaye de Cîteaux, takes a month to make, using washes of saltwater, rainwater and Marc de Bourgogne – a local pomace brandy and the source of the cheese's final fierce bite.

Equal parts of Comté, Beaufort and Gruyère – a trio of hard, fruity, cow's-milk cheeses from the French Alps – are grated and melted in a garlic-smearing pot with a dash of nutmeg, white wine and *kirsch* (cherry liqueur) to create fondue Savoyarde. Hearty and filling, this pot of melting glory originated from the simple peasant need of using up cheese scraps. It is now the chic dish to eat on the ski slopes.

## Wine

Viticulture in France is an ancient art and tradition that bears its own unique trademark. The French thirst for wine goes back to Roman times when techniques to grow grapes and craft wine were introduced, and *dégustation* (tasting) has been an essential part of French wine culture ever since.

### THE PERFECT CHEESEBOARD

Treat your taste buds to the perfect balance of cheese by taking at least one of each type from the cheeseboard:

**Goat's cheese** (*fromage de chèvre*) Made from goat's milk.

**Soft cheese** (*fromage à pâte molle*) Moulded or rind-washed, the classic soft cheese that everyone knows is Camembert from Normandy made from unpasteurised cow's milk. Munster from Alsace is a fine-textured, rind-washed cheese.

**Semihard cheese** (*fromage à pâte demi-dure*) Among the finest uncooked, pressed cheese is Tomme de Savoie, made from pasteurised or unpasteurised cow's milk near the Alps; and St-Nectaire, a strong-smelling pressed cheese with a complex taste.

**Hard cheese** (*fromage à pâte dure*) Must-taste cooked and pressed cheeses are Beaufort, a fruity cow's-milk cheese from Rhône-Alpes; Comté, made with raw cow's milk in Franche-Comté; emmental, a cow's-milk cheese made all over France; and Mimolette, an Edam-like bright-orange cheese from Lille aged for as long as 36 months.

**Blue cheese** (*fromage à pâte persillée*) 'Marbled' or with veins that resemble *persil* (parsley).

## APERITIFS & DIGESTIFS

Meals in France are preceded by an aperitif such as a *kir* (white wine sweetened with a sweet fruit syrup like blackcurrant or chestnut), *kir royale* (Champagne with blackcurrant syrup), *pineau* (cognac and grape juice) or a glass of sweet white Coteaux du Layon from the Loire Valley. In southern France aniseed-flavoured pastis (clear in the bottle, cloudy when mixed with water) is the aperitif to drink al fresco; in the southwest, go local with a Floc de Gascogne, a liqueur wine made from Armagnac and red or white grape juice. In Corsica, Cap Corse Mattei – a fortified wine whose recipe has stood the test of time (nearly 150 years!) – is the choice *apéro*.

After-dinner drinks accompany coffee. France's most famous brandies are Cognac and Armagnac, both made from grapes in the regions of those names. *Eaux-de-vie* (literally 'waters of life') can be made with grape skins and the pulp left over after being pressed for wine (Marc de Champagne, Marc de Bourgogne), apples (Calvados) and pears (Poire William), as well as such fruits as plums (*eau de vie de prune*) and even raspberries (*eau de vie de framboise*). In the Loire Valley a shot of orange (aka a glass of local Cointreau liqueur) ends the meal.

When in Normandy, do as the festive Normans do: refresh the palate between courses with a *trou normand* (literally 'Norman hole') – traditionally a shot of *calva* (Calvados) or a contemporary scoop of apple sorbet doused in the local apple brandy.

Quality wines in France are designated as Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC; literally, 'label of inspected origin'), equivalent since 2012 to the European-wide Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP). Both labels mean the same: that the wine has met stringent regulations governing where, how and under what conditions it was grown and bottled. French AOC can cover a wide region (such as Bordeaux), a sub-region (such as Haut-Médoc), or a commune or village (such as Pomerol). Some regions only have a single AOC (such as Alsace), while Burgundy has dozens.

Some viticulturists have honed their skills and techniques to such a degree that their wine is known as a *grand cru* (literally 'great growth'). If this wine has been produced in a year of optimum climatic conditions, it becomes a *millésime* (vintage) wine. *Grands crus* are aged in small oak barrels then bottles, sometimes for 20 years or more, to create those memorable bottles (with price tags to match) that wine experts enthuse about with such passion.

There are dozens of wine-producing regions throughout France, but the principal ones are Burgundy, Bordeaux, the Rhône and Loire Valleys, Champagne, Languedoc, Provence and Alsace. Wines are generally named after the location of the vineyard rather than the grape varietal. Organic and biodynamic wines are increasingly popular.

## Red

France's most respected reds are from Burgundy (Bourgogne in French), Bordeaux and the Rhône Valley.

Monks in Burgundy began making wine in the 8th century during the reign of Charlemagne. Today vineyards remain small, rarely more than 10 hectares, with vigneron (winegrowers) in Côte d'Or, Chablis, Châtillon and Mâcon producing small quantities of excellent reds from pinot noir grapes. The best Bourgogne vintages demand 10 to 20 years to age.

In the sun-blessed south, Bordeaux has the perfect climate for producing wine: its 1100 sq km of vineyards produce more fine wine than any other region in the world. Well-balanced Bordeaux reds blend several grape varieties, predominantly merlot, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc. The Médoc, Pomerol, St-Émilion and Graves are key winegrowing areas.

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Britons have had a taste for Bordeaux' full-bodied red wines, known as clarets in the UK, since the 12th century when King Henry II, who controlled the region through marriage, gained the favour of locals by granting them tax-free trade status with England.

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## Top Self-Drive Wine Trips

Marne & Côte des  
Bar Champagne

Routes  
(Champagne)

Route des Grands  
Crus  
(Burgundy)

Route des Vins  
d'Alsace  
(Alsace)

Route des Vins  
de Jura  
(the Jura)

The most renowned red in the Côtes du Rhône appellation from the Rhône Valley – a vast 771-sq-km winegrowing area with dramatically different soils, climates, topography and grapes – is Châteauneuf du Pape, a strong full-bodied wine bequeathed by the Avignon popes who planted the distinctive stone-covered vineyards.

Further south on the coast near Toulon, deep-flavoured Bandol reds have been produced from dark-berried mourvèdre grapes since Roman times. These wines were famous across Gaul, their ability to mature at sea ensuring they travelled far beyond their home shores in the 16th and 17th centuries.

## White

Some of France's finest whites come from the Loire Valley. This large winegrowing region produces the country's greatest variety of wines, and light delicate whites from Pouilly-Fumé, Vouvray, Sancerre, Bourgueil and Chinon are excellent. Muscadet, cabernet franc and chenin blanc are key grape varieties, contrasting with the chardonnay grapes that go into some great Burgundy whites.

Vines were planted by the Greeks in Massilia (Marseille) around 600 BCE and crisp Cassis whites remain the perfect companion to the coast's bounty of shellfish and seafood.

Alsace produces almost exclusively white wines – mostly varieties produced nowhere else in France – that are known for their clean, fresh taste. Unusually, some of the fruity Alsatian whites also go well with red meat. Alsace's four most important varietal wines are riesling (known for its subtlety), gewürztraminer (pungent and highly regarded), pinot gris (robust and high in alcohol) and muscat d'Alsace (less sweet than muscats from southern France).

## Rosé

Chilled, fresh pink rosé wines – best drunk al fresco beneath a vine-laced pergola – are synonymous with the hot south. Côtes de Provence, with 20 hectares of vineyards between Nice and Aix-en-Provence, is the key appellation (and France's sixth-largest).

Other enticing rosé labels from Provence include Bandol, Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence, Palette and Coteaux Varois.

## Champagne

Champagne has been produced northeast of Paris since the 17th century when innovative monk Dom Pierre Pérignon perfected a technique for making sparkling wine. It's made from the white chardonnay, red pinot noir or black pinot meunier grape. Each vine is vigorously pruned and trained to produce a small quantity of high-quality grapes.

If the final product is labelled *brut*, it is extra dry, with only 1.5% sugar content. *Extra-sec* means very dry (but not as dry as *brut*), *sec* is dry and *demi-sec* slightly sweet. The sweetest Champagne is labelled *doux*. Whatever the label, it is sacrilege to drink it out of anything other than a traditional Champagne flute, narrow at the bottom to help the bubbles develop, wider in the middle to promote the diffusion of aromas, and narrower at the top again to concentrate those precious aromas.

Other sparkling wines throughout France cannot use the name Champagne – they are called *crémant*.

# The Arts

**Literature, music, painting, cinema: France's vast artistic heritage is the essence of French art de vivre. Contemporary French writers might struggle to be published abroad, but Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Marcel Proust and Simone de Beauvoir walk the hall of fame. Music is embedded in the French soul, with world-class rap, dance and electronica coming out of Paris. French painting, with its roots in prehistoric cave art, continues to break new ground with provocative street art, while French film is enjoying a marvellous renaissance.**

## Literature

### Courtly Love to Symbolism

Troubadours' lyric poems of courtly love dominated medieval French literature, while the *roman* (literally 'romance', now meaning 'novel') drew on old Celtic tales. With the *Roman de la Rose*, a 22,000-line poem by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, allegorical figures like Pleasure, Shame and Fear appeared.

French Renaissance literature was extensive and varied. La Pléiade was a group of lyrical poets active in the 1550s and 1560s. The exuberant narrative of Loire Valley-born François Rabelais (1494–1553) blends coarse humour with encyclopedic erudition in a vast panorama of every kind of person, occupation and jargon in 16th-century France. Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) covered cannibals, war horses, drunkenness and the resemblance of children to their fathers, along with other themes.

The *grand siècle* (golden age) ushered in classical lofty odes to tragedy. François de Malherbe (1555–1628) brought a new rigour to rhythm in poetry, and Marie de La Fayette (1634–93) penned the first French novel, *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678).

The philosophical Voltaire (1694–1778) dominated the 18th century. A century on, Besançon gave birth to French Romantic Victor Hugo (1802–85). The breadth of interest and technical innovations exhibited in his poems and novels – *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* among them – was phenomenal.

In 1857 literary landmarks *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert (1821–80), and Charles Baudelaire's (1821–67) poems *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil), were published. Émile Zola (1840–1902) saw novel-writing as a science in his powerful series, *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

## 1920s

French film flourishes. Sound ushers in René Clair's (1898–1981) world of fantasy and satirical surrealism. **Watch** Abel Gance's antiwar blockbuster *J'Accuse!* (I Accuse!; 1919), filmed on WWI battlefields.

## 1930s

WWI inspires a new realism: portraits of ordinary lives dominate film. **Watch** *La Grande Illusion* (The Great Illusion; 1937), a devastating evocation of war's folly based on the trench warfare experience of director Jean Renoir.

## 1940s

Surrealists eschew realism. WWII saps the film industry of talent and money. **Watch** Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (Beauty and the Beast; 1945) and *Orphée* (Orpheus; 1950).

## 1950s

*Nouvelle Vague* (New Wave) sees small budgets, no stars and real-life stories. **Watch** A petty young criminal on the run in Jean-Luc Godard's *À Bout de Souffle* (Breathless; 1958) and adolescent rebellion in François Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (The 400 Blows; 1959).

## 1960s

France as the land of romance. **Watch** Claude Lelouch's *Un Homme et une Femme* (A Man and a Woman; 1966) and Jacques Demy's *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (The Umbrellas of Cherbourg; 1964).

## 1970s

The limelight baton goes to lesser-known directors like Éric



### Best Literary Sites

Maison de Victor Hugo  
(Paris)

Jean-Paul Sartre's and Simone de Beauvoir's graves, Cimetière du Montparnasse  
(Paris)

Oscar Wilde's grave, Cimetière du Père Lachaise  
(Paris)

Musée Colette  
(Burgundy)

Musée Jules Verne  
(Nantes & Amiens)

Les Charmettes, Maison de Jean-Jacques Rousseau  
(Chambéry)

Evoking mental states was the dream of symbolists Paul Verlaine (1844–96) and Stéphane Mallarmé (182–98). Verlaine shared a tempestuous romantic relationship with poet Arthur Rimbaud (1854–91): enter French literature's first modern poems.

### Modern Literature

The world's longest novel – a seven-volume 9,609,000-character giant by Marcel Proust (1871–1922) – dominated the early 20th century. *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (Remembrance of Things Past) explores in evocative detail the true meaning of past experience recovered from the unconscious by involuntary memory.

Surrealism proved a vital force until WWII. André Breton (1896–1966) captured the spirit of surrealism – a fascination with dreams, divination and all manifestations of the imaginary – in his autobiographical narratives. In Paris the bohemian Colette (1873–1954) captivated and shocked with her titillating novels detailing the amorous exploits of heroines such as schoolgirl Claudine. In New York, meanwhile, what would become one of the bestselling French works of all time was published in 1943: *Le Petit Prince* (The Little Prince), by Lyon-born writer and pilot, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900–44). He captured the hearts of millions with his magical yet philosophical tale for children about an aviator's adventures with a little blonde-haired Prince from Asteroid B-612.

After WWII, existentialism developed around the lively debates of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80), Simone de Beauvoir (1908–86) and Albert Camus (1913–60) in Paris' Left Bank cafes.

The *nouveau roman* of the 1950s saw experimental young writers seek new ways of organising narratives, with Nathalie Sarraute slashing identifiable characters and plot in *Les Fruits d'Or* (The Golden Fruits). *Histoire d'O* (Story of O), an erotic sadomasochistic novel written by Dominique Aury under a pseudonym in 1954, sold more copies outside France than any other contemporary French novel.

Another writer to turn heads was radical young writer Françoise Sagan (1935–2004) who shot to fame overnight at the age of 18 with her first novel, *Bonjour Tristesse* (Hello Sadness), published in 1954. The subsequent fast-paced, hedonistic lifestyle pursued by the party-loving, bourgeois-born writer ensured she remained in the spotlight until her death in 2004.

### Contemporary Literature

Marc Levy ([www.marlevy.com](http://www.marlevy.com)) is France's bestselling writer. The film rights of his first novel were snapped up for the Stephen Spielberg box-

### READING LIST

One way of ensuring your beach reading is right up to the minute is to plump for the latest winner of the Prix Goncourt, France's most prestigious literary prize awarded annually since 1903 and reflective, in recent years, of the preoccupation in contemporary French literature with issues of race, multiculturalism and immigration.

Winners include Marcel Proust in 1919 for *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (Within a Budding Grove; 1924) and Simone de Beauvoir in 1954 for *Les Mandarins* (The Mandarins; 1957). The first black woman to win the award, Marie NDiaye stunned the literary world at the age of 21 with *Comédie Classique* (Classic Comedy; 1988), a 200-page novel comprising one single sentence. Jean-Paul Dubois' *Tous les Hommes N'Habitent Pas le Monde de la Même Façon* (Not All Men Inhabit the World in the Same Way), a surreal work set in a Montreal jail cell, landed the 2019 prize.

Add to your reading list the laureate of France's other big literary award, the Grand Prix du Roman de l'Académie Française, around since 1914. In 2019 Laurent Binet won the esteemed prize with *Civilizations*, a historical reimagining of the world's conquerors and peoples.

office hit, *Just Like Heaven* (2005), and his novels have since been translated into 49 languages. His 16th novel, *Elle & Lui* (2015) was quickly published in English – as *PS from Paris* (2017) – as were his most recent novels *La Dernière des Stanfield* (The Last of the Stanfields; 2017) and *Une Fille Comme Elle* (A Woman Like Her; 2018).

No French writer better delves into the mind, mood and politics of France's notable ethnic population than Faïza Guène (b 1985), sensation of the French literary scene who writes in a notable 'urban slang' style. Born and bred on a housing estate outside Paris, she stunned critics with her debut novel, *Kiffe Kiffe Demain* (2004), sold in 27 countries and published in English as *Just Like Tomorrow* (2006). Guène's father moved from a village in western Algeria to northern France in 1952, aged 17, to work in the mines. Her latest novel is *La Discretion* (2020).

Delphine de Vigan (b 1966) is another female Parisian writer to be widely translated in English. Her nine novels today include the psychological thriller *D'Après Une Histoire Vraie* (2015), published in English as *Based On a True Story* (2017), about a writer named Delphine living in Paris with her teenage kids and famous journalist husband.

Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, born during WWII in Nice to a Niçois mother and Mauritian father, addresses ethnic issues engagingly. The bulk of his childhood was spent in Nigeria and he studied in Bristol, England, and Aix-en-Provence. In 2008 he won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The work of Paris-born Patrick Modiano (b 1945) was only really discovered by an Anglophone audience after the novelist was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2014. His most famous novel remains Prix Goncourt winner *Rue des Boutiques Obscures* (1978), translated in English as *Missing Person* (1980). His latest novel is *Encre Sympathique* (Sympathetic Ink; 2020).

## Music

### Jazz & French Chansons

Jazz hit 1920s Paris in the banana-clad form of Josephine Baker, an African American cabaret dancer. Post-WWII ushered in a much-appreciated bunch of musicians, mostly black Americans who opted to remain in Paris' bohemian Montmartre rather than return to the brutal racism and segregation of the USA: Sidney Bechet called Paris home from 1949, jazz drummer Kenny 'Klook' Clarke followed in 1956, pianist Bud Powell in 1959, and saxophonist Dexter Gordon in the early 1960s.

In 1934 a chance meeting between Parisian jazz guitarist Stéphane Grappelli and Roma guitarist Django Reinhardt in a Montparnasse nightclub led to the formation of the Hot Club of France quintet. Claude Luter and his Dixieland band were hot in the 1950s.

The *chanson française*, a French folk-song tradition dating from the troubadours of the Middle Ages, was

Rohmer (1920–2010), who make beautiful but uneventful films in which the characters endlessly analyse their feelings.

## 1980s

Big-name stars, slick production values and nostalgia: filmmakers switch to costume dramas and comedies in the face of growing competition from the USA. **Watch** Luc Besson strikes box-office gold with *Subway* (1985) and *Le Grand Bleu* (The Big Blue; 1988).

## 1990s

French actor Gérard Depardieu wins huge audiences in France and abroad. **Watch** *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1990) and *Astérix et Obélix: Mission Cléopâtre* (2002). Besson continues to stun with *La Femme Nikita* (1990) and *Jeanne d'Arc* (Joan of Arc; 1999).

## New Millennium

'New French Extremity' denotes the socially conscious, transgressive films of Paris-born, Africa-raised filmmaker Claire Denis. **Watch** *Chocolat* (1988) and *Matériel Blanc* (White Material; 2009), scripted by Parisian novelist Marie NDiaye, to explore the legacy of French colonialism.

## 2011

Renaissance of French film. **Watch** *The Artist* (2011), a silent B&W romantic comedy set in 1920s Hollywood that scooped five Oscars and seven BAFTAs to become the most awarded film in French film history.

## 2014–present

A new breed of female filmmakers includes Céline Sciamma (b 1978) with *Girlhood* (2014) and *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019); Deniz Gamze Ergüven (b 1978) with *Mustang* (2015); and Mati Diop (b 1982) with *Atlantics* (2019).

## Musical Pilgrimage

Serge Gainsbourg's grave, Cimetière du Montparnasse (Paris)

Jim Morrison's grave, Cimetière du Père Lachaise (Paris)

Former home of Josephine Baker, Château et Jardins des Milandes (Dordogne)

Jazz à Juan, Juan-les-Pins (Côte d'Azur)

Despite the English name, solo band Christine & the Queens is firmly French. Hailing from Nantes on the Atlantic Coast, Héloïse Letissier (b 1988) woos music lovers with her edgy rock and pop, outspoken attitudes and brazen pansexuality.

eclipsed by the music halls and burlesque of the early 20th century, but was revived in the 1930s by Édith Piaf and Charles Trenet. In the 1950s, Paris' Left Bank cabarets nurtured *chansonniers* (cabaret singers) such as Léo Ferré, Georges Brassens, Claude Nougaro, Jacques Brel and the very charming, very sexy, very French Serge Gainsbourg. A biopic celebrating his life, *Serge Gainsbourg: Une Vie Héroïque* (Serge Gainsbourg: A Heroic Life), was released in 2009 to wide acclaim.

In the 1980s irresistible crooners Jean-Pierre Lang and Pierre Bachelet revived the *chanson* tradition with classics such as 'Les Corons' (1982), a passionate ode to northern France's miners. Contemporary performers include Vincent Delerm, Bénabar, Jeanne Cherhal, Camille, Soha, Les Têtes Raides and Arnaud Fleurent-Didier.

Jazz fans will adore the gypsy-jazz style of young French pop singer Zaz – an experimental voice from Tours in the Loire Valley, often compared to Édith Piaf – who stormed to the top of the charts with her debut album *Zaz* (2010). Her third album, *Paris* (2014) is a musical ode to the French capital with 13 songs evoking Paris' irresistible charm and romance.

## Rap

France is known for its rap, an original 1990s sound spearheaded by Senegal-born, Paris-reared rapper MC Solaar and Suprême NTM (NTM being an acronym for a French expression far too offensive to print). Most big-name rappers are French twenty-somethings of Arabic or African origin whose material covers the frustrations and fury of immigrants in French *banlieues* (suburbs or housing estates).

Disiz La Peste, born in a Senegalese father and French mother, portrayed precisely this in his third album, aptly entitled *Histoires Extra-Ordinaires d'un Jeune de Banlieue* (The Extraordinary Stories of a Youth in the Suburbs; 2005). In 2018 he released *Disizilla*, his 12th album.

Another big rap band is Marseille's IAM, around since 1989 and still going strong. In 2017 the group released its eighth album, *Révolution*, and went on tour for the first time in several years; tickets for concerts in Paris and Marseille sold out within seconds of going online. Djadja & Dinaz from Meaux, 40km northeast of Paris, is a hip-hop duo whose 2019 album *Drôle de Mentalité* raced to the top of the French charts.

French rap continues to inspire fresh talent. Congolese rapper Maître Gims (b 1986) arrived in France at the age of two, grew up in squats in the Parisian suburbs and is one of France's best-known rappers today. The millennial rap scene is notably prolific in Bordeaux in southwest France where talented young rappers like twenty-something Joey Larsé – originally from the Parisian suburb of Montreuil – live and work. Also look for Nekfeu (b 1990), an excellent French-Greek rapper.

## Rock & Pop

One could be forgiven for thinking that French pop is becoming dynastic. The distinctive M (for Mathieu) is the son of singer Louis Chédid; Arthur H is the progeny of pop-rock musician Jacques Higelin; and Thomas Dutronc is the offspring of 1960s idols Jacques and Françoise Hardy. Serge Gainsbourg's daughter with Jane Birkin, Charlotte Gainsbourg (b 1971), made her musical debut in 1984 with the single 'Lemon Incest' and – several albums later – released a cover version of the song 'Hey Joe' as soundtrack to the film *Nymphomaniac* (2013) in which she also starred as the leading lady. For her latest album, *Rest*, released in 2017, she collaborated with Guy Man from Daft Punk and Paul McCartney among others.

Indie rock band Phoenix, from Versailles, headlines festivals in the USA and UK. The band was born in the late 1990s in a garage in the Paris suburbs; lead singer Thomas Mars, school mate Chris Mazzalai (guitar),

his brother Laurent Brancowitz (guitar and keyboards) and Deck d'Arcy (keyboards/brass) have six hugely successful albums under their belt, including *Ti Amo* (2017) and a much-coveted Grammy award.

Always worth a listen is Louise Attaque who, after a 10-year break, released a new album, *L'Anomalie*, with huge success in 2016. Nofell ([www.nofell.com](http://www.nofell.com)), one of France's most creative and intense musicians, sings in his own invented language called *le klokobetz*. In 2015 Nofell wrote the music for *Contact*, a musical comedy by French dancer and choreographer Philippe Decoufflé. His fifth album, *Echo Zulu* (2017), woos listeners with powerful lyrics in English and French, some written by French sound poet Anne-James Chaton.

Christophe Maé ([www.christophe-mae.fr](http://www.christophe-mae.fr)) mixes acoustic pop with soul, with stunning success. His jazzy third album, *Je Veux du Bonheur* (2013), was heavily influenced by the time the Provence-born singer spent travelling in New Orleans; his latest album is *La Vie d'Artiste* (Life of the Artist; 2019). Travels abroad likewise provided the inspiration for the 2016 album *Palermo Hollywood*, by talented singer-songwriter Benjamin Biolay (b 1973).

Aya Nakamura (b 1995) is a Malian-born French hitmaker. Her smash 'Djadja' has had over 700 million views on YouTube.

Marseille-born Marina Kaye (b 1998) won *France's Got Talent* TV show at the age of 13, as well as huge acclaim with her debut single 'Homeless'; her most recent album is *Twisted* (2020). Celebrity singer Nolwenn Leroy (b 1982) performs in Breton, English and Irish as well as French, while Paris' very own Indila (b 1984) woos France with her edgy pop and *rai* (a style derived from Algerian folk music). Then there's Louane (b 1996), the idol of many a young French teen, or Wejdene (b 2004) with hit songs 'Anissa' and 'Coco'.

## World

With styles from Algerian *rai* to other North African music (artists include Cheb Khaled, Natacha Atlas, Jamel, Cheb Mami) and Senegalese *mbalax* (Yousou N'Dour), West Indian zouk (Kassav', Zouk Machine) and Cuban salsa, France's world beat is strong. Manu Chao ([www.manuchao.net](http://www.manuchao.net)), the Paris-born son of Spanish parents, uses world elements to stunning effect.

Magic System from Côte d'Ivoire popularised *zouglou* (a kind of West African rap and dance music) with the album *Premier Gaou*, and Congolese Koffi Olomide still packs the halls. Also try to catch singing couple Amadou and Mariam; Rokia Traoré from Mali; and the late Franco-Algerian DJ turned singer Rachid Taha (1958–2018) whose music mixes Arab and Western musical styles with lyrics in English, Berber and French.

No artist has sealed France's reputation in world music more than Paris-born, Franco-Congolese rapper, slam poet and three-time Victoire de la Musique award winner, Abd al Malik (b 1975). His albums *Gibraltar*

## Experience Cinema

Cinémathèque  
Française (Paris)

Musée Lumière  
(Lyon)

Cannes Film  
Festival  
(Cannes)

American Film  
Festival  
(Deauville)

Futuroscope  
(Poitiers)

## DJS & DANCE

France does dance music well: computer-enhanced Chicago house and blues and Detroit techno are often mixed with 1960s lounge music and vintage tracks from the likes of Gainsbourg and Brassens to create a distinctly urban, highly portable sound.

David Guetta, Laurent Garnier, Martin Solveig and Bon Sinclair – originally nicknamed 'Chris the French Kiss' – are top Parisian electronica music producers and DJs who travel the international circuit, as was Daft Punk, who split up in 2021. In the late 1990s David Guetta, with his wife Cathy, directed Paris' mythical nightclub Les Bains Douches, today a trendy club-hotel in Le Marais.

(2006), *Dante* (2008), *Château Rouge* (2010) and *Scarifications* (2015) are classics.

## Painting

### Prehistoric to Landscape

France's oldest-known prehistoric cave paintings (created 31,000 years ago) adorn the Grotte Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc in the Rhône Valley (and its stunning replica, Grotte Chauvet 2) and the underwater Grotte Cosquer near Marseille. In the Dordogne, it is the prehistoric art in caves in and around Lascaux that stuns.

According to Voltaire, French painting proper began with Baroque painter Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), known for his classical mythological and biblical scenes bathed in golden light. Wind forward a couple of centuries and modern still life popped up with Jean-Baptiste Chardin (1699–1779). A century later, neoclassical artist Jacques Louis David (1748–1825) wooed the public with vast history paintings.

While Romantics like Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) revamped the subject picture, the Barbizon School effected a parallel transformation of landscape painting. Jean-François Millet (1814–75), the son of a peasant farmer from Normandy, took many of his subjects from peasant life, and reproductions of his *L'Angélus* (The Angelus; 1857) – the best-known painting in France after the *Mona Lisa* – are strung above mantelpieces all over rural France. The original hangs in Paris' Musée d'Orsay.

### Realism & Impressionism

The realists were all about social comment: Édouard Manet (1832–83) evoked Parisian middle-class life and Gustave Courbet (1819–77) depicted working-class drudgery.

It was in a flower-filled garden in a Normandy village that Claude Monet (1840–1926) expounded impressionism, a term of derision taken from the title of his experimental painting *Impression: Soleil Levant* (*Impression: Sunrise*; 1874). A trip to the Musée d'Orsay unveils a rash of other members of the school – Boudin, Sisley, Pissarro, Renoir, Degas and more.

An arthritis-crippled Renoir painted out his last impressionist days in a villa on the Côte d'Azur, a part of France that inspired dozens of artists. Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) is particularly celebrated for his post-impressionist still lifes and landscapes done in Aix-en-Provence, where he was born and worked; Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) worked in Arles; while Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh (1853–90) painted Arles and St-Rémy de Provence. In St-Tropez, pointillism took off: Georges Seurat (1859–91) was the first to apply paint in small dots or uniform brush strokes of unmixed colour, but it was his pupil Paul Signac (1863–1935) who is best known for pointillist works.

### 20th Century to Present Day

Twentieth-century French painting is characterised by a bewildering diversity of styles, including cubism, and Fauvism, named after the slur of a critic who compared the exhibitors at the 1906 autumn Salon in Paris with *fauves* (wild animals) because of their radical use of intensely bright colours. Spanish cubist Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and Fauvist Henri Matisse (1869–1954) both chose southern France to set up studio, Matisse living in Nice and Picasso in Antibes.

The early 20th century also saw the rise of the Dada movement, and no piece of French art better captures its rebellious spirit than Marcel Duchamp's *Mona Lisa*, complete with moustache and goatee. In 1922 German Dadaist Max Ernst moved to Paris and worked on surrealism,

In 2020 Lille was the World Design Capital, the first French city to be named so. Alas, the coronavirus pandemic interfered with its year laden with exhibitions and festivities.



a Dada offshoot that drew on the theories of Freud to reunite the conscious and unconscious realms and permeate daily life with fantasies and dreams.

With the close of WWII, Paris' role as artistic world capital ended. The focus shifted back to southern France in the 1960s with new realists such as Arman (1928–2005) and Yves Klein (1928–62), both from Nice. In 1960 Klein famously produced *Anthropométrie de l'Époque Bleue*, a series of imprints made by naked women (covered from head to toe in blue paint) rolling around on a white canvas, in front of an orchestra of violins and an audience in evening dress.

Artists turned to the minutiae of everyday urban life to express social and political angst. Conceptual artist Daniel Buren (b 1938) reduced his painting to a signature series of vertical 8.7cm-wide stripes that is applied to any surface imaginable – white marble columns in the courtyard of Paris' Palais Royal included. The painter (who in 1967, as part of the radical *groupe BMPT*, signed a manifesto declaring he was not a painter) was the *enfant terrible* of French art in the 1980s. Partner-in-crime Michel Parmentier (1938–2000) insisted on monochrome painting – blue in 1966, grey in 1967 and red in 1968.

Paris-born conceptual artist Sophie Calle (b 1953) brazenly exposes her private life in public with eye-catching installations such as *Prenez Soins de Vous* (Take Care of Yourself; 2007), a compelling and addictive work of art in book form exposing the reactions of 107 women to an email Calle received from her French lover, dumping her. Her *Rachel, Monique* (2010) evoked the death and lingering memory of her mother in the form of a photographic exhibition first shown at Paris' Palais de Tokyo, later as a live reading performance at the Festival d'Avignon, and most recently in a chapel in New York. In 2015 *Suite Vénitienne* was published, a beautiful hardback edition, on gilt-edged Japanese paper, of her first art book in 1988 in which she followed Henri B around Venice for two weeks, anonymously photographing the enigmatic stranger. The publication of *Sophie Calle: My All* (2017), a photo-book documenting all 54 of her artworks to date, confirmed her reputation as France's most famous conceptual artist.

Street art is big, thanks in part to the pioneering work of Blek Le Rat (<http://bleklerat.free.fr>) in the 1980s. The Parisian artist, born as Xavier Prou, began by spraying tiny rats in hidden corners of the streets of Paris, went on to develop stencil graffiti as a recognised form, and notably inspired British street artist Banksy. Other blockbuster names to look out for include Gregos ([www.gregosart.com](http://www.gregosart.com)) whose 3D clay faces protrude out of walls and other unexpected places all over France; Jérôme Mesnager (b 1961) known for his stencilled white figures; and Monsieur Chat (aka Thoma Vuille) who leaves cartoon cats with huge Cheshire-cat grins all over the place.

Then there is digital art. In 2013 the world's largest collective street-art exhibition, La Tour Paris 13, opened in a derelict apartment block in Paris' 13e *arrondissement*. Its 36 apartments on 13 floors showcased works by 100 international artists. The blockbuster exhibition ran for one month, after which the tower was shut and demolished. Itself an art work, the three-day demolition was filmed and streamed live on the internet – where the street artworks remain. This initial foray into digital art was followed in 2018 by the Paris opening of EP7 – a cultural cafe showcasing a vast interactive pixel screen as its main façade – and L'Atelier des Lumières ([www.atelier-lumieres.com](http://www.atelier-lumieres.com)), the capital's first digital-art centre inside a 19th-century smelting factory.

### Best Modern Art

Monet's garden  
(Giverny)

Musée d'Orsay  
(Paris)

Musée Renoir  
(Cagnes-sur-Mer)

Musée Picasso  
(Paris & Antibes)

Musée Matisse  
& Musée Chagall  
(Nice)

Atelier Cézanne  
(Aix-en-Provence)

Chemin du  
Fauvisme  
(Collioure)

### Setting the Trends

Centre Pompidou  
(Paris)

Palais de Tokyo  
(Paris)

Fondation Louis  
Vuitton  
(Paris)

Fondation Maeght  
(St-Paul de Vence)

Centre  
Pompidou-Metz  
(Metz)

Musée d'Art  
Moderne et d'Art  
Contemporain  
(Nice)

# Architecture

From prehistoric megaliths around Carnac in Brittany to Vauban's 33 star-shaped citadels dotted around France to defend its 17th-century frontiers, French architecture has always been of *grand projet* proportions. In the capital, the skyline shimmers with Roman arenas, Gothic cathedrals, postmodernist cubes and futuristic skyscrapers, while provincial France cooks up the whole gamut of mainstream architectural styles along with regional idiosyncrasies.

## Prehistoric to Roman

No part of France better demonstrates the work of the country's earliest architects than Brittany, which has more megalithic menhirs (monumental upright stones), tombs, cairns and burial chambers than anywhere else on earth. Many date from around 3500 BCE and the most frequent structure is the dolmen, a covered burial chamber consisting of vertical menhirs topped by a flat capstone. Interestingly, Brittany's ancient builders had different architectural tastes from their European neighbours – rather than the cromlechs (stone circles) commonly found in Britain, Ireland, Germany and Spain, they were much keener on building arrow-straight rows of menhirs known as *alignements*. And, indeed, Carnac's monumental Alignements de Carnac is the world's largest known prehistoric structure.

The Romans left behind a colossal architectural legacy in Provence and the Côte d'Azur. Thousands of men took three to five years to haul the 21,000 cu metres of local stone needed to build the Pont du Gard near Nîmes. Other fine pieces of Roman architecture, still operational, include amphitheatres in Nîmes and Arles, open-air theatres in Orange and Fréjus, and Nîmes' Maison Carrée.

## Romanesque

A religious revival in the 11th century led to the construction of Romanesque churches, so called because their architects adopted many architectural elements (eg vaulting) from Gallo-Roman buildings still standing at the time. Romanesque buildings typically have round arches (some with elaborate carving), heavy walls, few windows and besides the carvings, a minimalist ornamentation that borders on the austere.

Romanesque masterpieces include the Loire Valley's Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud, Toulouse's Basilique St-Sernin, Poitiers' Église Notre-Dame-la-Grande, the exquisitely haunting Basilique St-Rémi in Reims, Caen's twinset of famous Romanesque abbeys, and Provence's trio in the Luberon (Sénanque, Le Thoronet and Silvacane). In Normandy the nave and south transept of the abbey-church on Mont St-Michel are beautiful examples of Norman Romanesque.

Then there is Burgundy's astonishing portfolio of Romanesque work, from Autun's Cathédrale St-Lazare and Vézelay's Basilique Ste-Madeleine to two among the world's finest abbeys: Abbaye de Pontigny and Abbaye de Cîteaux.

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Catch up with southern France's prehistoric architects at Marseille's Centre de la Vieille Charité, Quinson's Musée de Préhistoire des Gorges du Verdon, and the beehive-shaped huts called *bories* at the Village des Bories near Gordes in the Luberon.

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## Gothic

Avignon's pontifical palace is Gothic architecture on a gargantuan scale. The Gothic style originated in the mid-12th century in northern France, where the region's great wealth attracted the finest architects, engineers and artisans. Gothic structures are characterised by ribbed vaults carved with great precision, pointed arches, slender verticals, chapels (often built or endowed by the wealthy or by guilds), galleries and arcades along the nave and chancel, refined decoration and large stained-glass windows. If you look closely at certain Gothic buildings, however, you'll notice minor asymmetrical elements introduced to avoid monotony.

The world's first Gothic building was the Basilique de St-Denis near Paris, which combined various late-Romanesque elements to create a new kind of structural support in which each arch counteracted and complemented the next. The basilica served as a model for many other 12th-century French cathedrals, including Notre Dame de Paris and Chartres' cathedral – both known for their soaring flying buttresses. No Gothic belfry is finer to scale than that of Bordeaux' Cathédrale St-André.

In the 14th century, the Radiant Gothic style developed, named after the radiating tracery of the rose windows, with interiors becoming even lighter thanks to broader windows and more translucent stained glass. One of the most influential Rayonnant buildings was Paris' Sainted-Chapelle, whose stained glass forms a curtain of glazing on the 1st floor.

## Renaissance

The Renaissance, which began in Italy in the early 15th century, set out to realise a 'rebirth' of classical Greek and Roman culture. It had its first impact on France at the end of that century, when Charles VIII began a series of invasions of Italy, returning with some new ideas.

To trace the shift from late Gothic to Renaissance, travel along the Loire Valley. During the very early Renaissance period, châteaux were used for the first time as pleasure palaces rather than defensive fortresses. Many edifices built during the 15th century to early 16th century in the Loire Valley – including Château d'Azay-le-Rideau and Château de Villandry – were built as summer or hunting residences for royal financiers, chamberlains and courtiers. Red-patterned brickwork – such as that on the Louis XII wing of Château Royal de Blois – adorned the façade of most châteaux dating from Louis XII's reign (1498–1515).

The quintessential French Renaissance château is a mix of classical components and decorative motifs (columns, tunnel vaults, round arches, domes etc) with the rich decoration of Flamboyant Gothic. It ultimately showcased wealth, ancestry and refinement. Defensive towers (a historical seigniorial symbol) were incorporated into a new decorative architecture, typified by its three-dimensional use of pilasters and arched loggias, terraces, balconies, exterior staircases, turrets and gabled chimneys. Heraldic symbols were sculpted on soft stone façades, above

### Architect- Buff Sleeps

Hôtel Molitor  
(Paris)

Hôtel Le Corbusier  
(Marseille)

Oscar Hôtel  
(Le Havre)

Hôtel Sôzô  
(Nantes)

La Fabrique  
(Moustiers-Ste-  
Marie)

Renaissance architecture stamped châteaux with a new artistic form: the monumental staircase. The most famous of these splendid ceremonial (and highly functional) creations are at Azay-le-Rideau, Blois, and Chambord in the Loire Valley.

### FRANCE'S MOST BEAUTIFUL VILLAGES

One of French architecture's signature structures popped up in rural France from the 13th century, 'up' being the operative word for these *bastides* or *villages perchés* (fortified hilltop villages), built high on a hill to afford maximum protection for previously scattered populations. Provence and the Dordogne are key regions to hike up, down and around one medieval hilltop village after another, but you can find them in almost every French region. Many of the most dramatic and stunning are among Les Plus Beaux Villages de France (The Most Beautiful Villages in France; [www.les-plus-beaux-villages-de-france.org](http://www.les-plus-beaux-villages-de-france.org)).

No single museum presents a finer overview of French architecture than Paris' Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine inside the 1937-built Palais de Chaillot.

doorways and fireplaces, and across coffered ceilings. Symmetrical floor plans broke new ground and heralded a different style of living: Château de Chambord contained 40 self-contained apartments, arranged on five floors around a central axis. This ensured easy circulation in a vast edifice that many rank as the first modern building in France.

## Mannerism

Mannerism, which followed the Renaissance, was introduced by Italian architects and artists brought to France around 1530 by François I, whose royal château at Fontainebleau was designed by Italian architects. Over the following decades, French architects who had studied in Italy took over from their Italian colleagues.

The mannerist style lasted until the early 17th century, when it was subsumed by the Baroque style.

## Baroque

During the Baroque period (the tail end of the 16th to late 18th centuries), painting, sculpture and classical architecture were integrated to create structures and interiors of great subtlety, refinement and elegance. Architecture became more pictorial, with the painted ceilings in churches illustrating the Passion of Christ to the faithful, and palaces invoking the power and order of the state.

Salomon de Brosse, who designed Paris' Palais du Luxembourg in 1615, set the stage for two of France's most prominent early Baroque architects: François Mansart (1598–1666), who designed the classical wing of Château Royal de Blois, and his younger rival Louis Le Vau (1612–70), who worked on France's grandest palace at Versailles.

## Neoclassicism

Nancy's place Stanislas in northern France is the country's loveliest neoclassical square. Neoclassical architecture, which emerged in about 1740 and remained popular until well into the 19th century, had its roots in the renewed interest in the classical forms and conventions of Greco-Roman antiquity: columns, simple geometric forms and traditional ornamentation.

Among the earliest examples of this style is the Italianate façade of Paris' Église St-Sulpice, designed in 1733 by Giovanni Servandoni, which took inspiration from Christopher Wren's St Paul's Cathedral in London; and the Petit Trianon at Versailles, designed by Jacques-Ange Gabriel for Louis XV in 1761. France's greatest neoclassical architect of the 18th century was Jacques-Germain Soufflot, the man behind the Panthéon in Left Bank Paris.

Neoclassicism peaked under Napoléon III, who used it extensively for monumental architecture intended to embody the grandeur of imperial France and its capital: the Arc de Triomphe, La Madeleine, the Arc du Carrousel at the Louvre, the Assemblée Nationale building and the Palais Garnier. It was during this period, moreover, that urban planner Baron Haussmann, between 1850 and 1870 as Prefect of the Seine, completely redrew Paris' street plan, radically demolishing the city's maze of narrow, cramped medieval streets and replacing it with wide boulevards, sweeping parks and attractive *passages couverts* (covered passages).

The true showcase of this era, though, is Casino de Monte Carlo in Monaco, created by French architect Charles Garnier (1825–98) in 1878.

## Art Nouveau

Art nouveau (1850–1910) combined iron, brick, glass and ceramics in ways never before seen. The style emerged in Europe and the USA under various names (Jugendstil, Sezessionstil, Stile Liberty) and caught on

### Art Nouveau in Paris

Hector Guimard's noodle-like metro entrances

The interior of the Musée d'Orsay

Department stores Le Bon Marché and Galeries Lafayette

The glass roof over the Grand Palais

quickly in Paris. The style was characterised by sinuous curves and flowing asymmetrical forms reminiscent of creeping vines, water lilies, the patterns on insect wings and the flowering boughs of trees. Influenced by the arrival of exotic objets d'art from Japan, its French name came from a Paris gallery that featured works in the 'new art' style. The Piscine Saint-Georges (1923–26) in Rennes is a perfect example. True buffs should make a beeline for the art nouveau tourist trail in Nancy.

## The Belle Époque

The glittering Belle Époque, hot on the heels of art nouveau, heralded an eclecticism of decorative stucco friezes, *trompe l'œil* paintings, glittering wall mosaics, brightly coloured Moorish minarets and Turkish towers. Immerse yourself in its fabulous and whimsical designs with a stroll along promenade des Anglais in Nice, where the pink-domed Hôtel Negresco (1912) is the icing on the cake; or, up north, around the colourful Imperial Quarter of Metz. Or flop in a beautiful Belle Époque spa like Vichy.

## Modern

The Fondation Victor Vasarely, by the father of op art Victor Vasarely (1908–97), was an architectural coup when unveiled in Aix-en-Provence in 1976. Its 14 giant monumental hexagons reflected what Vasarely had already achieved in art: the creation of optical illusion and changing perspective through the juxtaposition of geometrical shapes and colours.

France's best-known 20th-century architect, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (better known as Le Corbusier; 1887–1965), was born in Switzerland but settled in Paris in 1917 at the age of 30. A radical modernist, he tried to adapt buildings to their functions in industrialised society without ignoring the human element, thus rewriting the architectural style book with his sweeping lines and functionalised forms adapted to fit the human form. No single building has redefined urban living more than Le Corbusier's vertical 337-apartment 'garden city' known as La Cité Radieuse (the Radiant City) – today Hôtel Le Corbusier fills part of it – which he designed in Marseille in 1952.

Most of Le Corbusier's work was done outside Paris, though he did design several private residences and the Pavillon Suisse, a dormitory for Swiss students at the Cité Internationale Universitaire in the 14e *arrondissement* of the capital. Elsewhere, Chapelle de Notre-Dame du Haut in the Jura and Couvent Ste-Marie de la Tourette near Lyon are 20th-century architectural icons.

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Interesting and alarming were Le Corbusier's plans for Paris that thankfully never left the drawing board. Called Plan Voisin (Neighbour Project; 1925), it envisaged wide boulevards linking the Gare Montparnasse with the Seine and lined with skyscrapers. The project would have required bulldozing much of the Latin Quarter.

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### GRANDS PROJETS

For centuries French political leaders sought to immortalise themselves through the erection of huge public edifices (aka *grands projets*) in Paris. Georges Pompidou commissioned the once reviled, now much loved Centre Pompidou (1977) in which the architects – in order to keep the exhibition halls as uncluttered as possible – put the building's insides out. His successor, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, was instrumental in transforming the derelict Gare d'Orsay train station into the glorious Musée d'Orsay (1986).

François Mitterrand commissioned the capital's best-known contemporary architectural landmarks (taxpayers' bill: a whopping €4.6 billion), including the Opéra Bastille, the Grande Arche in La Défense, the four glass towers of the national library, and IM Pei's glass pyramid at the hitherto sacrosanct and untouchable Louvre (an architectural cause célèbre that paved the way, incidentally, for Mario Bellini and Rudy Ricciotti's magnificent flying carpet roof atop the Louvre's Cour Visconti in 2012).



## JEAN NOUVEL

Arguably France's leading architect, Jean Nouvel (b 1945) is the creative talent behind both Paris' ambitious Gare d'Austerlitz project and a succession of landmark buildings in Paris: the Institut du Monde Arabe (1987), successfully mixing modern and traditional Arab and Western elements; riverside Musée du Quai Branly, an iconic glass, wood-and-sod structure; and experimental concert hall Philharmonie de Paris (2015).

Nouvel also designed Périgueux' glass-and-steel Musée Gallo-Romain Vesunna (2003) in the Dordogne. Ycone (2018) is a dazzling, 14-storey residential block of coloured glass with modular apartments and digital concierge in Lyon's Confluence district. His complex for the National Museum of Qatar opened in 2019.

Until 1968, French architects were still being trained almost exclusively at the conformist École des Beaux-Arts, reflected in most of the acutely unimaginative and impersonal 'lipstick tube' structures erected in the Parisian skyscraper district of La Défense, the Unesco building (1958) in the 7e, and Montparnasse's ungainly 210m-tall Tour Montparnasse (1973).

## Contemporary

Glass has been a big feature of millennial architecture in the capital. Canadian architect Frank Gehry used 12 enormous glass sails to design the Fondation Louis Vuitton (2014) in the Bois de Boulogne. The transformation of Forum des Halles (2016) by architects Patrick Berger and Jacques Anziutti saw the 1970s eyesore shopping centre crowned with a spectacular gold-coloured canopy made of 18,000 glass shingles. One-third of the €600 million budget to restore Gare d'Austerlitz, due for completion in 2021, will be used to restore the historic train station's amazing glass roof.

At Porte de Versailles, the Tour Triangle will be a glittering triangular glass tower designed by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. It will be the first skyscraper in Paris since 1973's eyesore Tour Montparnasse, itself set to get a new reflective façade and green rooftop. Both are targeting completion in time for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Glass will be likewise combined with green architecture in the Mille Arbres (Thousand Trees) project. Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto and French architect Manal Rachdi will transform Porte Maillot into a spectacular tree-topped glass structure by 2022.

Notable pieces of architecture in the provinces include Lyon's Confluence project on the confluence of the Rhône and Saône Rivers, begun in 2016, which will add a notable residential district, market and new bridges to the former wasteland; Strasbourg's European Parliament; Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas' Euralille and a 1920s art deco swimming pool turned art museum in Lille; and the fantastic Louvre II in Lens, 37km south of Lille.

In Strasbourg, Italian architect Paolo Portoghesi designed France's biggest mosque, large enough to seat 1500 worshippers. Topped by a copper dome and flanked by wings resembling a flower in bud, the riverside building took 20 years of political to-ing and fro-ing for the groundbreaking project – a landmark for Muslims in France – to come to fruition.

Looking south, Frank Gehry is the big-name architect behind Arles' innovative new cultural centre: all ashimmer in the bright southern sun, rock-like Luma Fondation (2018) evokes the nearby Alpilles mountain range with its two linked towers topped with aluminium. Nearby in Roman Nîmes, architect Elizabeth de Portzamparc is the creative talent behind the Roman city's striking €59.4 million archaeological museum, the Musée de la Romanité (2018).

Renowned French architect Dominique Perrault (b 1953) is designing the Olympic and Paralympic Village for the 2024 Paris Games. The complex, 7km north of the city centre and spanning the Seine, will include 119,000 sq metres for leisure, offices and services and 2400 units of housing.

# Landscapes & Wildlife

France is a land of art. Fantastic portraits adorn the walls of galleries, villages resemble oil paintings plucked from a bygone rural age, and the people are naturally stylish. But as gorgeous as the art of France is, it fades when compared to the sheer beauty of the countryside itself.

## The Land

Hexagon-shaped France, Europe's third-largest country (after Russia and Ukraine), is fringed by water or mountains along every side except in the northeast. The country's 3427km-long coastline is incredibly diverse, ranging from white-chalk cliffs (Normandy) and treacherous promontories (Brittany) to broad expanses of fine sand (Atlantic Coast) and pebbly beaches (the Mediterranean Coast).

Western Europe's highest peak, Mont Blanc (4807m) spectacularly crowns the French Alps, which stagger along France's eastern border. North of Lake Geneva, the gentle limestone Jura Mountains run along the Swiss frontier to reach heights of around 1700m, while the rugged Pyrenees guard France's 450km-long border with Spain and Andorra, peaking at 3404m.

Five major river systems criss-cross the country: the Garonne (which includes the Tarn, the Lot and the Dordogne) empties into the Atlantic; the Rhône links Lake Geneva and the Alps with the Mediterranean; Paris is licked in poetic verse by the Seine, which slithers through the city en route from Burgundy to the English Channel; and tributaries of the North Sea-bound Rhine drain much of the area north and east of the capital. Then there's France's longest river, the château-studded Loire, which meanders through history from the Massif Central to the Atlantic.

Follow the progress of France's precious wolf, bear and lynx populations with Ferus ([www.ferus.org](http://www.ferus.org)). France's conservation group for these protected predators.

## Wildlife

France is blessed with a rich variety of flora and fauna, although few habitats have escaped human impacts: intensive agriculture, wetland draining, urbanisation, hunting and the encroachment of industry and tourism infrastructure menace dozens of species.

## Animals

France has more mammal species (around 135) than any other European country. Couple this with around 500 bird species (depending on which rare migrants are included), 40 types of amphibian, 36 varieties of reptile and 72 kinds of fish, and wildlife-watchers are in seventh heaven. Of

### BEARS, OH MY!

The brown bear disappeared from the Alps in the mid-1930s. The 150-odd native bears living in the Pyrenees a century ago had dwindled to one orphaned cub following the controversial shooting of its mother – the last female bear of Pyrenean stock – by a hunter in 2004. Today an estimated 50 bears of Slovenian origin live in the Pyrenees. Government plans, announced in 2018, to release two more female bears into the wild were paused in the face of opposition from local shepherds and farmers. Another bear was shot in 2020; if the killer is caught they face a three-year jail term and a fine of €150,000.

From butterfly-spotting in the Cévennes to exploring bird-rich wetlands in the Camargue, UK-based tour company Nature Trek ([www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)) organises inspirational wildlife-watching holidays.

France's 40,000 identified insects, 10,000 creep and crawl in the Parc National du Mercantour in the southern Alps.

High-altitude plains in the Alps and the Pyrenees shelter the marmot, which hibernates from October to April and has a shrill and distinctive whistle; the nimble chamois (mountain antelope), with its dark-striped head; and the *bouquetin* (Alpine ibex), seen in large numbers in the Parc National de la Vanoise. Mouflons (wild mountain sheep), introduced in the 1950s, clamber over stony sunlit scree slopes in the mountains, while red and roe deer and wild boar are common in lower-altitude forested areas. The Alpine hare welcomes winter with its white coat, while 19 of Europe's 29 bat species hang out in the dark in the Alpine national parks.

The *loup* (wolf), which disappeared from France in the 1930s, returned to the Parc National du Mercantour in 1992 – much to the horror of the mouffon (on which it preys) and local sheep farmers. Dogs, corrals and sound machines have been used as an effective, nonlethal way of keeping the growing free-roaming wolf population of the Mercantour and other Alpine areas from feasting on domesticated sheep herds. The wolf is a government-protected species, hence farmers are not meant to shoot an encroaching wolf.

A rare but wonderful treat is the sighting of an *aigle royal* (golden eagle): 40 pairs nest in the Mercantour, 20 pairs nest in the Vanoise, 30-odd in the Écrins and some 50 in the Pyrenees. Other birds of prey include the peregrine falcon, the kestrel, the buzzard and the bearded vulture – Europe's largest bird of prey, with an awe-inspiring wingspan of 2.8m. More recently, the small, pale-coloured Egyptian vulture has been spreading throughout the Alps and Pyrenees.

Even the eagle-eyed will have difficulty spotting the ptarmigan, a chicken-like species that moults three times a year to ensure a foolproof seasonal camouflage (brown in summer, white in winter). It lives on rocky slopes and in Alpine meadows above 2000m. The nutcracker, with its loud, buoyant singsong and larch-forest habitat, the black grouse, rock partridge, the very rare eagle owl and the three-toed woodpecker are among the other 120-odd species keeping birdwatchers glued to the skies in highland realms.

Elsewhere, there are now around 2700 pairs of white storks; 10% of the world's flamingo population migrates through the Camargue; giant black cormorants – some with a wingspan of 1.7m – reside on an island off Pointe du Grouin on the north coast of Brittany; and there are unique seagull and fishing-eagle populations in the Réserve Naturelle de Scandola on Corsica. The *balbuzard pêcheur* (osprey), a migratory hunter that flocks to France in February or March, today only inhabits two regions of France: Corsica and the Loire Valley.

## WILDLIFE WATCH

The national parks and their regional siblings are great for observing animals in their natural habitat. The following are also worth a gander:

**Flamingos** The Camargue, France's best-known wetland site, attracts 10,000 pink flamingos and over 400 other bird species including rollers and glossy ibises.

**Vultures** Found in the Pyrenees at Falaise aux Vautours, the Vallée d'Ossau and in Languedoc at the Belvédère des Vautours in the Parc Naturel Régional des Grands Causses.

**Storks** In Alsace at the NaturOparC in Hunawirh and at the Parc des Oiseaux outside Villars-les-Dombes near Lyon.

**Dolphins and whales** Playful bottlenose dolphins splash around in the Mediterranean, and whales are sometimes sighted too. Prime viewing from boat trips on the Côte d'Azur and Corsica.

## LIFE & DEATH OF THE IBEX

Often spotted hanging out on sickeningly high crags and ledges, the nippy *bouquetin des Alpes* (Alpine ibex), with its imposingly large, curly-wurly horns, is the animal most synonymous with the French Alps. Higher altitudes were loaded with the handsome beast in the 16th century but, three centuries on, its extravagant horns had become a must-have item in any gentleman's trophy cabinet, and within a few years it had been hunted to the brink of extinction. In 1963 the Parc National de la Vanoise was created in the Alps to stop hunters in the massif from shooting the few Alpine ibex that remained. The creation of similar nature reserves and rigorous conservation campaigns have seen populations surely and steadily recover – to the point where today the Alpine ibex is thriving. Not that you're likely to encounter one: the canny old ibex has realised that some mammals are best avoided.

## Plants

About 140,000 sq km of forest – beech, oak and pine in the main – covers 20% of France, and there are 4900 different species of native flowering plants countrywide (2250 alone grow in the Parc National des Cévennes).

The Alpine and Pyrenean regions nurture fir, spruce and beech forests on north-facing slopes between 800m and 1500m. Larch trees, mountain and arolla pines, rhododendrons and junipers stud shrubby subalpine zones between 1500m and 2000m; and a brilliant riot of spring and summertime wildflowers carpets grassy meadows above the treeline in the alpine zone (up to 3000m).

Alpine blooms include the single golden-yellow flower of the arnica, long used in herbal and homeopathic bruise-relieving remedies; the flame-coloured fire lily; and the hardy Alpine columbine, with its delicate blue petals. The protected 'queen of the Alps' (aka the Alpine eryngo) bears an uncanny resemblance to a purple thistle but is, in fact, a member of the parsley family (to which the carrot also belongs).

Corsica and the Massif des Maures, west of St-Tropez on the Côte d'Azur, are closely related botanically: both have chestnut and cork-oak trees and are thickly carpeted with garrigues and maquis – heavily scented scrubland, where dozens of fragrant shrubs and herbs find shelter.

## National Parks

The proportion of protected land in France is surprisingly low: seven *parcs nationaux* ([www.parcsnationaux.fr](http://www.parcsnationaux.fr)) fully protect just 0.8% of the country. But the government is making a push to get 30% of its land territory under special environmental protection and lands in metropolitan France and its overseas territories are also protected by 56 *parcs naturels régionaux* ([www.parcs-naturels-regionaux.fr](http://www.parcs-naturels-regionaux.fr)). The two most recent to be protected, in 2020, are Baie de Somme on the coast of Picardy and Mont Ventoux in Provence. A further 321 smaller *réserves naturelles* ([www.reserves-naturelles.org](http://www.reserves-naturelles.org)), some of them under the eagle eye of the Conservatoire du Littoral, protect a fraction of the land.

Select pockets of nature – the Pyrenees, Mont St-Michel and its bay, part of the Loire Valley, the astonishingly biodiverse Cévennes, a clutch of capes on Corsica and vineyards in Burgundy and Champagne – have been declared Unesco World Heritage Sites.

## Environmental Issues

As elsewhere in the world, wetlands in France – incredibly productive ecosystems that are essential for the survival of birds, reptiles, fish and amphibians – are shrinking. France sports 50 Ramsar Convention wetland sites ([www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)), covering more than 30,000 sq km, but not much of the country's wetlands are currently protected.

Of France's 150 orchids, the black vanilla orchid is one to look out for – its small red-brown flowers exude a sweet vanilla fragrance.

Green initiatives in Paris include the creation of 100 hectares of green roofs, façades and vertical walls in the capital, a third of which will be devoted to urban agriculture.

Great tracts of forest burn each summer, often because of careless day trippers but more often than not by arson, which accounts for 39% of forest fires. Since the mid-1970s, between 31 sq km and 615 sq km of land has been reduced to black stubble each year by an average of 540 fires. Soaring summer temperatures combined with no rain saw 2017 go down as one of the worst years on record: thousands of residents in Provence and Corsica were evacuated from their homes, with 12,000 locals and tourists in Bormes-les-Mimosas spending one night in July in emergency shelters as forest fires spread dangerously close to the seaside resort. Some 70 sq km of forest in all were destroyed.

Dogs and guns also pose a threat to French animal life, brown bears included. While the number of hunters has fallen by more than 20% in the last decade, there are still a lot more hunters in France (1.2 million) than in any other Western European country. Despite the 1979 Brussels Directive for the protection of wild birds, their eggs, nests and habitats in the EU, the French government has been very slow to make its provisions part of French law, meaning birds that can fly safely over other countries can still be hunted as they cross France. In 2020, because of French hunters continuing to trap birds using sticks covered in glue, the European Commission threatened legal action and fines – France is set to outlaw the practice.

The state-owned electricity company, *Electricité de France* (EDF), has an enviable record on minimising greenhouse-gas emissions – fossil-fuel-fired power plants account for just 1% of its production. Clean, renewable hydropower, generated by 220 dams, comprises 8% of the company's generating capacity but this does affect animal habitats. And no less than 78% (the highest in the world) of France's electricity comes from another controversial carbon-zero source: nuclear power, generated by 56 nuclear reactors at 20 sites. In 2012 François Hollande's socialist government had promised to reduce France's reliance on nuclear energy to 50% by 2025, but under President Emmanuel Macron's centrist government this target date has been pushed back to 2035.

Once Europe's largest solar-powered electricity-generating farm (Spain opened a larger one in 2019), France's Cestas Solar Park is a 300MW photovoltaic power station on a 250-hectare site south of Bordeaux. In late 2020 a new alternative biofuel storage facility opened in La Rochelle, on the Atlantic Coast. In an attempt to give truckers an alternative to diesel, the company is following a directive from the European Parliament that requires new trucks to reduce their carbon-dioxide emissions by 30% by 2030 (calculated from 2019 levels).

Global warming might translate as an increasingly shorter, uncertain and riskier season for ski enthusiasts in the French Alps as snowfall becomes more erratic and avalanches occur more often. But for Alpine flora and fauna, it is even more serious. Alpine plants are fleeing up their warming mountainsides at between 0.5m and 4m per decade, reports the WWF, making way for invasive species and the pathogens and animal life that come with them. Meanwhile, France's largest glacier, the Mer de Glace near Chamonix, is retreating over 5m each year (800m in the last 30 years).

## COASTAL PROTECTION

Over 10% of the coastline of mainland France and Corsica is managed by the *Conservatoire du Littoral* ([www.conservatoire-du-littoral.fr](http://www.conservatoire-du-littoral.fr)), a public coastal-protection body. Among the *conservatoire's* rich pageant of *espaces naturels protégés* (protected natural areas) are the rare-orchid-dotted sand dunes east of Dunkirk, the Baie de Somme with its ornithological park, several wet and watery pockets of the horse-studded Camargue, and a Corsican desert.



# Survival Guide

## **DIRECTORY A-Z ... 972**

Accessible Travel . . . . .	972
Accommodation . . . . .	972
Customs Regulations . . . . .	975
Climate . . . . .	976
Discount Cards . . . . .	976
Electricity . . . . .	976
Embassies & Consulates . . . . .	977
Food . . . . .	977
Health . . . . .	977
Insurance . . . . .	978
Internet Access . . . . .	978
Language Courses . . . . .	978
Legal Matters . . . . .	979
LGBTIQ+ Travellers . . . . .	979
Money . . . . .	979
Opening Hours . . . . .	980
Post . . . . .	980
Public Holidays . . . . .	980
Safe Travel . . . . .	980
Taxes & Refunds . . . . .	981
Telephone . . . . .	981

Time . . . . .	982
Toilets . . . . .	982
Tourist Information . . . . .	982
Visas . . . . .	982
Volunteering . . . . .	983
Work . . . . .	985

## **TRANSPORT . . . . . 986**

GETTING THERE & AWAY . . . . .	986
Entering the Country . . . . .	986
Air . . . . .	986
Land . . . . .	986
Sea . . . . .	988
GETTING AROUND . . . . .	988
Air . . . . .	988
Bicycle . . . . .	988
Boat . . . . .	989
Bus . . . . .	989
Car & Motorcycle . . . . .	989
Local Transport . . . . .	994
Train . . . . .	994

## **LANGUAGE . . . . . 998**

# Directory A-Z

## Accessible Travel

Download Lonely Planet's free Accessible Travel guides from <https://shop.lonelyplanet.com/categories/accessible-travel>

France presents constant challenges for *visiteurs à mobilité réduite* (visitors with reduced mobility) and *visiteurs handicapés* (visitors with disabilities) – cobblestones, sidewalks crowded with cafe tables, a lack of kerb ramps, budget hotels without elevators – but don't let that deter you from visiting. The French government is making significant strides in improving the situation and, with a little careful planning, an accessible stay is eminently possible.

► Paris' tourist office provides ample information for travellers with disabilities; see [www.parisinfo.com](http://www.parisinfo.com) (click on the UK flag, then 'Visit' and finally 'Visiting Paris with a Disability').

► The Paris metro, some of it built more than a century ago, is hopeless. Line 14 was built to be wheelchair-accessible, although in

reality it remains challenging to navigate in a wheelchair – unlike Paris buses, which are 100% accessible.

► The Parisian taxi company **Taxis G7** (☎01 47 39 00 91 for travellers with disabilities; [www.g7.fr/en/discover-our-services/g7-access-taxi](http://www.g7.fr/en/discover-our-services/g7-access-taxi)) has vehicles especially adapted to carry wheelchairs and drivers trained in helping passengers with disabilities.

► Countrywide, many SNCF train carriages are accessible to people with disabilities. If you use a wheelchair, you and a person accompanying you may qualify for discounts. For information in English, see [www.sncf.com/en/passenger-offer/travel-for-everyone/accessibility](http://www.sncf.com/en/passenger-offer/travel-for-everyone/accessibility).

## Resources

**Accès Plus** (☎36 35, 09 69 32 26 26; [www.accessibilite.sncf.com](http://www.accessibilite.sncf.com); ☎phone staffed 7am-10pm) The SNCF assistance service for rail travellers with disabilities (the website is in French) can advise on station accessibility and arrange a wheelchair or help getting on/off a train.

**Île de France Mobilités** (☎09 70 81 83 85; [www.iledefrance-mobilites.fr/le-reseau/transports-faciles-d-acces](http://www.iledefrance-mobilites.fr/le-reseau/transports-faciles-d-acces); ☎phone staffed 7am-10pm) Comprehensive information on accessible travel in Paris and the surrounding Île-de-France area.

**Mobile en Ville** (Map p72; ☎06 52 76 62 49; [www.mobileenville.org](http://www.mobileenville.org); 8 rue des Mariniers, 14<sup>e</sup>, Paris) Association that works to make independent travel within Paris easier for people in wheelchairs. Among other things it organises some great *randonnées* (walks) in and around Paris.

**Tourisme et Handicaps** (Map p86; ☎01 44 11 10 41; [www.tourisme-handicaps.org](http://www.tourisme-handicaps.org); 15 av Carnot, 17<sup>e</sup>, Paris) Issues the blue 'Tourisme et Handicap' label to tourist sites, restaurants and hotels that comply with strict accessibility and usability standards. Different symbols indicate the sort of access afforded to people with physical, mental, hearing and/or visual disabilities.

**Access Travel** (☎UK 07973 114 365; [www.access-travel.co.uk](http://www.access-travel.co.uk)) Specialised UK-based agency for accessible travel.

## Accommodation

Be it a fairy-tale château, a boutique hideaway or a floating pod on a lake, France has accommodation to suit every taste and pocket. If you're visiting in high season (especially early July to late August), reserve well

### BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews by Lonely Planet authors, check out [lonelyplanet.com/france/hotels](http://lonelyplanet.com/france/hotels). You'll find independent reviews, as well as recommendations on the best places to stay.

## BOOKING SERVICES

### B&Bs

**Bienvenue à la Ferme** ([www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com](http://www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com)) Farmstay accommodation options for a taste of French rural life.

**Chambres d'Hôtes France** ([www.chambresdhotefrance.com](http://www.chambresdhotefrance.com)) Comprehensive, France-wide B&B listings.

**Fleurs de Soleil** ([www.fleursdesoleil.fr](http://www.fleursdesoleil.fr)) Selective collection of stylish *maisons d'hôte*, mainly in rural France.

**Gîtes de France** ([www.gites-defrance.com](http://www.gites-defrance.com)) France's primary umbrella organisation for B&Bs and self-catering properties (*gîtes*). Search by region, theme, activity or facilities.

**iGuide** ([www.iguide-hotels.com](http://www.iguide-hotels.com)) Gorgeous presentation of France's most charming and often most upmarket B&Bs, organised by region and/or theme.

**Samedi Midi** ([www.samedimidi.com](http://www.samedimidi.com)) Country, mountain, seaside... Choose your *chambre d'hôte* by location, theme or activities.

### Camping

Websites with campsite listings searchable by location, theme and facilities:

**Bienvenue à la Ferme** ([www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com](http://www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com))

**Camping en France** ([www.camping.fr](http://www.camping.fr))

**Camping France** ([www.campingfrance.com](http://www.campingfrance.com))

**Gîtes de France** ([www.gites-de-france.com/en/campsite-camper-mobile-home](http://www.gites-de-france.com/en/campsite-camper-mobile-home))

**HPA Guide** ([www.hpaguide.fr](http://www.hpaguide.fr))

ahead – the best addresses in tourist areas fill up months in advance.

### Costs

Accommodation costs vary wildly between seasons and regions: what will buy you a night in a romantic *chambre d'hôte* (B&B) in the countryside may get you a dorm bed in a major city or high-profile ski resort.

### Categories

As a rule of thumb, budget covers everything from spartan hostels to small family-run places; midrange means a few extra creature comforts, generally including an elevator; and top-end places stretch from luxury five-star palaces with swimming pools and Michelin-starred restaurants to boutique-chic Alpine chalets.

### Reservations

Virtually all French hotels, hostels, B&Bs, *châteaux* etc have websites that allow you

to reserve a room; they also work with online booking services such as Booking.com. Small family-run hotels, especially, appreciate reservations made directly as this saves them the significant fees they must pay to booking sites.

Some tourist offices, if you drop by, can help find same-day accommodation in their area; their websites often list places to stay. In the Alps, ski-resort tourist offices run central reservation services for booking accommodation.

### Seasons

- ♦ In most of France except the cities, high season is summer, particularly from early July to late August.
- ♦ In ski resorts, high season is around Christmas and New Year and during France's February/March school holidays.
- ♦ Hotels in inland cities often charge low-season rates in summer.

- ♦ Rates often drop significantly outside the high season – in some cases by as much as 50%.
- ♦ In business-oriented hotels in cities, rooms are most expensive from Monday to Thursday and cheaper over the weekend.
- ♦ In the Alps, hotels usually close between seasons, from around May to mid-June and from mid-September to early December; many addresses in Corsica only open Easter to October.

### B&Bs

For charm, a heartfelt *bienvenue* (welcome) and solid home cooking, it's hard to beat France's privately run *chambres d'hôte* (B&Bs) – rare in cities but as common as mistletoe in rural areas. By law a *chambre d'hôte* must have no more than five rooms and breakfast must be included in the price; some hosts prepare an evening meal (*table d'hôte*) including

## GLAMPING

Farewell clammy canvas and muddy nylon, adieu inflatable mattress... Glamping in France is cool and creative, with *écoco chic* (ecochic) and adventurous alternatives springing up all the time. If you fancy doing a Robinson Crusoe by staying in a tree house with an incredible view over the treetops, visit Cabanes de France ([www.cabanes-de-france.com](http://www.cabanes-de-france.com)), which covers leafy options between branches all over France. Prefer to keep your feet firmly on the ground? Keep an eye out for eco-conscious campsites where you can snooze in a *tipi* (tepee) or in a giant hammock.

wine for an extra charge of around €30. Pick up lists of *chambres d'hôte* at tourist offices, or find one to suit online.

## Camping

Camping is hugely popular in France so thousands of well-equipped campgrounds dot the country, many near rivers, lakes and the sea.

- ➔ Most campgrounds open from March or April to late September or October; popular spots fill up fast in summer so book well ahead.
- ➔ The price of an *emplacement* (site) includes lodging for two people, space for a tent and parking for a car. Some campgrounds present the price per adult/tent/car. Factor in a few extra euros per night for *taxe*

## HI CARDS

Official *auberges de jeunesse* (youth hostels) affiliated to the Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse ([www.hifrance.org](http://www.hifrance.org)) or Ligue Française pour les Auberges de la Jeunesse ([www.auberges-de-jeunesse.com](http://www.auberges-de-jeunesse.com)) require guests to have an annual Hostelling International (HI) card (€7/11 for those under/over 26 years).

*de séjour* (holiday tax) and electricity.

- ➔ Euro-economisers should look out for no-frills *campings municipaux* (municipal campgrounds).
- ➔ Many campgrounds rent mobile homes, cabins and cottages with mod cons like heating, fitted kitchen and TV.
- ➔ Pitching your tent in non-designated spots (*camping sauvage*) is illegal in France.
- ➔ Campground offices often close during the day.
- ➔ Accessing many campgrounds without your own transport can be slow and costly, or simply impossible.

## Homestays

One of the best ways to brush up your *français* and immerse yourself in local life is by staying with a French family under an arrangement known as *hôtes payants* or *hébergement chez l'habitant*. Popular among students and young people, this set-up means you rent a room and usually have access (sometimes limited) to the bathroom and the kitchen; meals may also be available. If you are sensitive to smoke or pets, make sure you mention this.

## Hostels

Traditional hostels in France range from spartan to funky, although with a wave of

design-driven, uber-hip hostels opening in Paris, Lille, Marseille, Strasbourg, Tours and other cities – and even in the Alps – designer hang-outs with perks aplenty seem to be the trend of the future.

- ➔ A dorm bed in an *auberge de jeunesse* (youth hostel) costs €20 to €50 in Paris, and anything from €15 to €40 in the provinces, depending on location, amenities and facilities; sheets are always included, breakfast more often than not.
- ➔ To prevent outbreaks of bed bugs, sleeping bags are not permitted.
- ➔ Hostels by the sea or in the mountains sometimes offer seasonal outdoor activities.
- ➔ Designer hostels of the new generation are run by companies such as The People Hostel ([www.thepeoplehostel.com](http://www.thepeoplehostel.com)), Generator ([www.staygenerator.com](http://www.staygenerator.com)) and Hiphophostels ([www.hiphophostels.com](http://www.hiphophostels.com)).
- ➔ In university towns, *foyers d'étudiant* (student dormitories) are sometimes converted for use by travellers during summer. Conditions are very basic.

## Hotels

Hotels in France are rated with one to five stars based on strictly objective criteria (eg the size of the entry hall), which may not reflect the quality of the service, the decor or the warmth of the welcome.

- ➔ French hotels almost never include breakfast in their rates. Unless specified otherwise, prices quoted do not include breakfast, which costs around €8/12/25 in a budget/midrange/top-end hotel.
- ➔ When you book, hotels usually ask for a credit-card number; some require a deposit.

## FRENCH-CHIC SLEEPING

**Alistair Sawday's** ([www.sawdays.co.uk](http://www.sawdays.co.uk)) Boutique retreats and *chambres d'hôte* (B&Bs), placing the accent on originality and authentic hospitality.

**Grandes Étapes Françaises** ([www.grandesetapes.fr](http://www.grandesetapes.fr)) Beautiful châteaux-hotels and multifar residences.

**iGuide** ([www.iguide-hotels.com](http://www.iguide-hotels.com)) Abbeys, manors, châteaux – a great mix of charming hotels.

**Les Collectionneurs** ([www.chateauxhotels.com](http://www.chateauxhotels.com)) Châteaux and other historic properties, now boutique hotels, with a thousand tales to tell.

**Logis de France** ([www.logishotels.com](http://www.logishotels.com)) A huge network of small, often family-run hotels with charm and a warm welcome.

**Relais & Châteaux** ([www.relaischateaux.com](http://www.relaischateaux.com)) Seductive selection of top-end villas, châteaux and historic hotels.

**Small Luxury Hotels of the World** ([www.slh.com](http://www.slh.com)) Super-luxurious boutique hotels, chalets and resorts.

➔ A double room generally has one double bed (sometimes two singles pushed together); a room with twin beds (*deux lits*) is usually a bit more expensive, as is a room with a bathtub instead of a shower.

### Refuges & Gîtes d'Étape

➔ *Refuges* (mountain huts or shelters) are basic cabins established along walking trails in uninhabited mountainous areas and operated by national-park authorities, the Fédération Française des Clubs Alpins et de Montagne (formerly the Club Alpin Français; [www.ffcam.fr](http://www.ffcam.fr)) or other private organisations.

➔ *Refuges* are marked on hiking and climbing maps.

➔ A bunk in a dorm generally costs €10 to €25. Hot meals are sometimes available (and, in a few cases, mandatory), pushing the price up to €30 or beyond.

➔ Advance reservations and a weather check are essential before setting out.

➔ *Gîtes d'étape*, better equipped and more comfortable than *refuges* (some even have showers), are situated along walking trails in less remote areas, often in villages.

➔ Check out [www.gites-refuges.com](http://www.gites-refuges.com), an online listing of 3200 *gîtes d'étape* and *refuges* in France.

### Rental Accommodation

If you are planning on staying put for more than a few days or are travelling in a group, renting a furnished studio, apartment or villa can be an economical alternative. You will have the chance to live like a local, with trips to the farmers market and the *boulangerie* (bakery). Short-term rentals can be arranged through home-sharing services such as Airbnb.

Finding an apartment for long-term rental can be gruelling. Landlords, many of whom prefer locals to foreigners, usually require substantial proof of financial responsibility and sufficient funds in France; many ask for a *caution* (guarantee) and a hefty deposit.

➔ Ads for longer-term rentals can be found online via PAP ([www.pap.fr](http://www.pap.fr)) and other real-estate listings.

➔ For apartments outside Paris it's best to search at your destination.

➔ Check places like bars and *tabacs* (tobacconists) for free local newspapers (often named after the number

of the *département*) with classified listings.

➔ Cleaning, linen rental and electricity fees usually cost extra.

### Customs Regulations

Goods brought into France from countries within the EU incur no additional taxes provided duty has been paid somewhere within the EU and the goods are for personal consumption. Duty-free shopping is available only if you are leaving the EU.

Duty-free allowances (for people aged 16 and over) coming from non-EU countries (including the UK and the Channel Islands):

➔ 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g tobacco

➔ 1L spirits or 2L of sparkling wine and other alcoholic drinks with less than 22% alcohol

➔ 4L still wine

➔ 16L beer

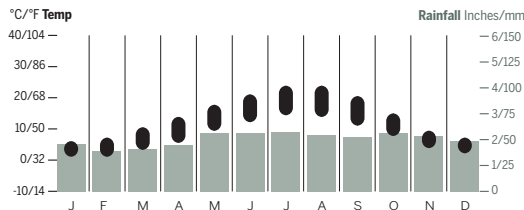
➔ other goods up to the value of €300/430 when entering by land/air or sea (€150 for young people aged 15 and under)

Higher limits apply if you are coming from Andorra; anything over these limits must

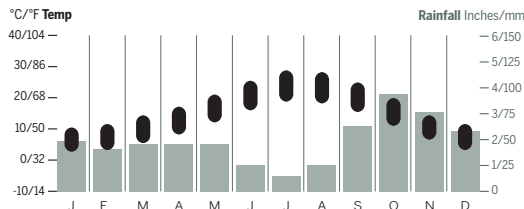


## Climate

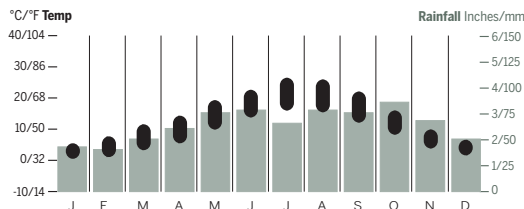
### Paris



### Nice



### Lyon



be declared. For further details, see [www.douane.gouv.fr](http://www.douane.gouv.fr) (partly in English).

### EATING PRICE RANGES

Price indicators refer to the average cost of a two-course à la carte meal, be it an *entrée* (starter) and *plat* (main course) or main and dessert, or a two- or three-course *menu* (set meal at a fixed price).

€ less than €20

€€ €20–40

€€€ more than €40

## Discount Cards

Discount cards easily pay for themselves. To apply, in addition to the fee, you'll generally need a passport-sized photo and some form of ID with proof of age (eg passport or birth certificate) or status as a student or teacher.

People over 60 or 65 are entitled to discounts on things like public transport, museum admission fees and theatres. Young people aged 25 and under also qualify for discounts without a special card (eg at museums).

Discount card options:

**Camping Card International** ([www.campingcardinternational.com](http://www.campingcardinternational.com);

€10) An annual card used as ID for checking into campsites; includes third-party liability insurance. Can yield up to a 25% discount. Available from automobile associations, camping federations and campgrounds.

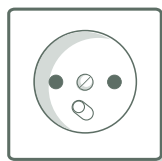
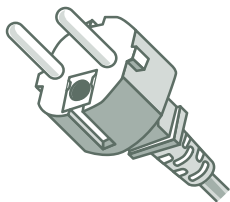
**European Youth Card** (EYCA; [www.eyca.org](http://www.eyca.org) and [www.carte-jeunes.fr](http://www.carte-jeunes.fr); €14) Wide range of discounts for anyone (not just Europeans) aged 30 and under. Available online; has an app. Known as the *Carte Jeunes Européenne* in French.

**International Student Identity Card** ([www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org); €13) Discounts on travel, shopping, attractions and entertainment for full-time students. Not as useful as it once was, as discounts are now given based mainly on age.

**International Teacher Identity Card** ([www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org); €18) Discounts for full-time teachers.

**International Youth Travel Card** ([www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org); €13) Available if you're aged 30 or under.

## Electricity



**Type E**  
220V/50Hz

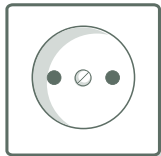
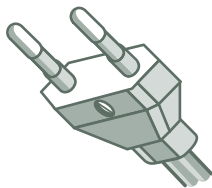
## HEALTH INSURANCE

Citizens of the EU, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein receive free or reduced-cost, state-provided health-care cover with the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for medical treatment that becomes necessary while in France. Each family member will need a separate card.

Starting in 2021, Brexit has changed the way UK residents receive health insurance coverage while travelling in the EU. Contact the National Health Service ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) for the latest updates.

The EHIC does not cover private health care, so make sure that you are treated by a state health-care provider (*conventionné*). At private facilities you will need to pay directly and fill in a treatment form (*feuille de soins*); keep the form to claim any refunds. In general, you can claim back around 70% of the standard treatment cost.

Citizens of non-EU countries (eg Canada) should check if there is a reciprocal arrangement for free medical care between their country and France.



**Type C**  
220V/50Hz

## Embassies & Consulates

All foreign embassies are in Paris.

➔ Many countries – including Canada, Japan, the UK, the USA and most European countries – also have consulates in other major cities such as Bordeaux, Lyon, Nice, Marseille, Rennes and Strasbourg.

➔ To find a consulate or an embassy, look up *ambassade* or *consulat* in the user-friendly Pages

Jaunes (Yellow Pages; [www.pagesjaunes.fr](http://www.pagesjaunes.fr)).

## Food

This guide includes options for a wide variety of tastes and budgets, listed by price category (from € to €€€) and, within each category, in preference order. Places to eat are also categorised according to type of cuisine.

For the complete taste-bud tour of France's varied regional cuisines and accompanying tipples, read *The French Table* (p950). To understand how to eat and drink like a local, see that front-loaded section at the front of this book (p39).

## Health

France is a healthy place, so your main risks are likely to be sunburn, foot blisters, insect bites and mild stomach problems from eating and drinking with too much gusto.

No vaccinations are required for travel to France, but the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centres for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommend that all travellers be covered for chickenpox, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella,

polio and flu (influenza), regardless of their destination.

## Before You Go

- ➔ Bring your medications in their original, clearly labelled, containers.
- ➔ Bringing a signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names (French medicine names are often completely different from those in other countries), is also a good idea.
- ➔ Dental care in France is usually good; however, it is sensible to have a dental check-up before a long trip.


## Availability & Cost of Health Care

For basic requirements, chemists (*pharmacies*) in France are extremely helpful and sell a wide range of medicines not requiring a prescription (*ordonnance*).

As a visitor, you can either make an appointment or sit in line (depending on the doctor's practice) to see a *médecin généraliste* (primary-care doctor or general practitioner). Expect to pay between €25 and €50 upfront.

If you can demonstrate that you have valid EU health insurance, you shouldn't have to pay upfront to receive emergency treatment

## WHAT THE ICON MEANS

In this book, we use the wi-fi icon  to indicate anywhere with wi-fi access; assume it's free unless otherwise specified. Only accommodation providers that have an actual computer which guests can use to access the internet are flagged with a computer icon.

at a hospital. Some travel insurance policies require that you pay for emergency services and then file a claim for reimbursement later.

## Tap Water

Tap water countrywide is drinkable.

Some fountains in villages and towns also spout drinking water (*eau potable* means 'drinking water', *non potable* means 'undrinkable'). To refill your water bottle in Paris, keep an eye out for dark green, cast-iron 'Wallace fountains', financed – caryatids and all – by the Englishman Richard Wallace in the late 1800s.

## Insurance

- ➔ Comprehensive travel insurance to cover theft, loss and medical treatment is highly recommended.
- ➔ Some policies specifically exclude dangerous activities such as scuba diving, motorcycling, skiing and even trekking, so read the fine print.
- ➔ Check that the policy covers ambulances and an emergency flight home.
- ➔ Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you

later for overseas health expenditures.

- ➔ If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation.
- ➔ Paying for your airline ticket with a credit card often provides limited travel accident insurance – ask your credit-card company what it is prepared to cover.

## Internet Access

- ➔ Wi-fi (pronounced 'wee-fee' in French) is available at airports, hotels, cafes, many restaurants, museums and tourist offices.
- ➔ Free public wi-fi hotspots are available in cities and many towns; Paris alone has 250 different locations city-wide ([www.paris.fr/pages/paris-wi-fi-152](http://www.paris.fr/pages/paris-wi-fi-152)), including parks, libraries and municipal buildings. In parks look for a purple 'Zone Wi-Fi' sign near the entrance; select the 'Paris Wi-Fi' network.
- ➔ To search for free wi-fi hotspots in France, visit [www.wifimap.io](http://www.wifimap.io).
- ➔ Tourist offices in some larger cities, including Lyon and Bordeaux, rent out pocket-sized mobile wi-fi modems that you carry around with you, ensuring a fast wi-fi connection while roaming the city.
- ➔ Alternatively, rent a mobile wi-fi device online before leaving home and arrange for it to be delivered by post to your hotel in France through HipPocketWifi ([www.hippocketwifi.com](http://www.hippocketwifi.com)), Travel WiFi ([www.travelwifi.com](http://www.travelwifi.com)) or My Webspot ([www.my-webspot.com](http://www.my-webspot.com)).
- ➔ Internet cafes are increasingly rare, though most cities still have a handful whose main business is providing immigrants with cheap international phone calls.

- ➔ Co-working cafes providing unlimited, fast internet access can be found in Paris ([www.hubsy.fr](http://www.hubsy.fr)) and other cities. Expect to pay about €5 per hour for a desk, plug and unlimited hot drinks and snacks.

## Language Courses

- ➔ The website [www.studyabroad.com](http://www.studyabroad.com) can help you find specific courses and summer programmes.
- ➔ All manner of French-language courses are available in Paris and provincial towns and cities; most also arrange accommodation.
- ➔ Prices and courses vary greatly; the content can often be tailored to your specific needs (for a fee).
- ➔ The website [www.europa-pages.com/france](http://www.europa-pages.com/france) lists language schools in France.

## Language Schools

**Aix-Marseille Université** (Université de Provence; ☎04 13 55 32 23; <https://sufle.univ-amu.fr>; 29 av Robert Schumann) A hot choice, also known as Université de Provence, in lovely Aix. The Service Universitaire de Français Langue Étrangère (SUFLE) offers semester-long language courses as well as shorter summer and winter sessions.

**Alliance Française** (Map p128; ☎01 42 84 90 00; [www.alliancefr.org](http://www.alliancefr.org); 101 bd Raspail, 6e; intensive/extensive courses per week for €253/113;  St-Placide) French courses (minimum one week) for all levels in Paris. *Intensif* courses meet for four hours a day five days a week; *extensif* courses involve nine hours' tuition a week.

**Centre Méditerranéen d'Études Françaises** ([www.cmf-monaco.fr](http://www.cmf-monaco.fr); av Prince Rainier III de Monaco, chemin des Oliviers, Cap d'Ail) Legendary French Riviera school around since 1952, with a stunning open-air

amphitheatre, designed by Jean Cocteau and overlooking the sparkling blue Med.

**Eurocentres** ([www.eurocentres.com](http://www.eurocentres.com)) Has schools in Paris and La Rochelle.

## Legal Matters

### Police

→ French police have wide powers of search and seizure and can ask you to prove your identity (ie show your documents) at any time – whether or not there is 'probable cause'.

→ Foreigners must be able to prove their legal status in France (eg with a passport, visa or residency permit) without delay.

→ If the police stop you for any reason, be polite and remain calm. Verbally (and of course physically) abusing a police officer can lead to a hefty fine, and even imprisonment.

→ You may refuse to sign a police statement, and have the right to ask for a copy.

→ People who are arrested are considered innocent until proven guilty, but can be held in custody until trial.

### Drugs & Alcohol

→ French law does not distinguish between 'hard' and 'soft' drugs.

→ The penalty for any personal use of *stupéfiants* (including cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy and heroin) can be a one-year jail sentence and a €3750 fine but, depending on the circumstances, it might be anything from a stern word to a compulsory rehab program.

→ Importing, possessing, selling or buying drugs can get you up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to €500,000.

→ *Ivresse* (drunkenness) in public is punishable by a fine.

## LGBTIQ+ Travellers

The rainbow flag flies high in France, a country that allowed its LGBTIQ+ citizens out of the closet long before many of its European neighbours. *Laissez-faire* perfectly sums up France's liberal attitude towards homosexuality and people's private lives in general, in part because of a long tradition of public tolerance towards unconventional lifestyles.

→ Paris has been a thriving gay and lesbian centre since the late 1970s, and most major organisations are based there today.

→ Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Montpellier, Toulouse and many other towns also have an active queer scene.

→ Attitudes towards homosexuality tend to be more conservative in the countryside and villages.

→ France's lesbian scene is less public than its gay male counterpart and is centred mainly on women's cafes and bars.

→ Same-sex marriage has been legal in France since 2013.

→ Gay Pride marches are held in major French cities from mid-May to early July.

### Publications

**Damron** ([www.damron.com](http://www.damron.com)) Has published English-language travel guides, including *Damron Women's Traveller* for lesbians and *Damron Men's Travel Guide* for gays, since 1964.

**Les Mots à la Bouche** ([www.motsbouche.com](http://www.motsbouche.com)) Based in Paris, one of France's oldest gay and lesbian bookshops was founded in 1980.

**Spartacus International Gay Guide** ([www.spartacusworld.com](http://www.spartacusworld.com)) A male-only guide to just about every country in the world, with more than 70 pages devoted to France, almost half of which cover Paris. There's a smartphone app too.

**Tasse de Thé** ([www.tassedethe.com](http://www.tassedethe.com)) A lesbian webzine with lots of useful links.

## Money

### ATMs

Automated teller machines (ATMs) – known as *distributeurs automatiques de billets* (DAB) or *points d'argent* in French – are the cheapest and most convenient way to get euros. ATMs connected to international networks are situated in all cities and towns and usually offer among the best exchange rates around.

### Cash

You always get a better exchange rate in-country, but it's a good idea to arrive in France with enough euros to take a taxi to a hotel if you have to.

### Credit & Debit Cards

→ Credit and debit cards, accepted almost everywhere in France, are convenient and relatively secure and usually offer a pretty good exchange (often something pretty close to the interbank rate minus 2%). They're the best way to pay in shops and supermarkets and for train travel, car hire and motorway tolls.

→ Cash advances are a supremely convenient way to stay stocked up with euros for situations in which *espèces* (cash) is required. Exchange rates are generally good but there are often daily withdrawal limits.

### LOST CARDS

To report lost cards, log into your online account or call these 24/7

French numbers:

**Amex** ☎01 47 77 72 00

**MasterCard** ☎08 00 90 13 87

**Visa** ☎08 00 90 11 79

## PRACTICALITIES

**Classifieds** Visit FUSAC ([www.fusac.fr](http://www.fusac.fr)) for classified ads about housing, babysitting, jobs and language exchanges in and around Paris.

**Laundry** Virtually all French cities and towns have at least one *laverie libre-service* (self-service laundrette) where washing your clothes costs a fraction of hotels' per-piece rates. Machines run on coins; *lessive* (laundry detergent) is usually available in single-wash quantities. Instructions are often in English.

**Newspapers and magazines** Locals read their news in centre-left *Le Monde* ([www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr)), right-leaning *Le Figaro* ([www.lefigaro.fr](http://www.lefigaro.fr)) or left-leaning *Libération* ([www.liberation.fr](http://www.liberation.fr)).

**Radio** For news, tune in to the French-language France Info (around 105.5MHz FM all over France; [www.france.tvinfo.fr](http://www.france.tvinfo.fr)) and multi-language RFI (89MHz FM in Paris; [www.rfi.fr](http://www.rfi.fr)). Popular national FM music stations include NRJ ([www.nrj.fr](http://www.nrj.fr)), Virgin ([www.virginradio.fr](http://www.virginradio.fr)), La Radio Plus ([www.laradioplus.com](http://www.laradioplus.com)) and Nostalgie ([www.nostalgie.fr](http://www.nostalgie.fr)).

**Weights and measures** France uses the metric system.

and per-transaction fees (sometimes US\$10 or more) can add up, as can interest – ask your credit-card issuer for details and compare fees. Debit-card fees are usually much lower.

- ➔ French credit cards have embedded chips (a technology pioneered in France in the 1980s) and PINs. If you have a card issued elsewhere (eg North America) you're less likely to find yourself unable to pay – eg after hours at unstaffed self-pay petrol stations – if your card has a chip and, if available, a PIN too.
- ➔ Don't assume that you can pay for a meal or a budget hotel with a credit card – enquire first.

## Money Changers

- ➔ Commercial banks charge up to €5 per foreign-currency transaction – if they even bother to offer exchange services any more.
- ➔ In Paris and major cities, *bureaux de change* (exchange bureaus) are faster and easier, open

longer hours and often give better rates for cash than banks.

## Opening Hours

**Banks** 9am–noon and 2–5pm  
Monday to Friday or Tuesday to Saturday

**Bars** 7pm–1am

**Cafes** 7am–11pm

**Clubs** 10pm–3am, 4am or 5am  
Thursday to Saturday

**Restaurants** Noon–2.30pm and 7–9pm or later six days a week

**Shops** 10am–noon and 2–7pm  
Monday to Saturday; longer, and including Sunday, for shops in defined ZTIs (international tourist zones)

## Post

French post offices are flagged with a yellow or brown sign reading 'La Poste'. Since La Poste ([www.laposte.fr](http://www.laposte.fr)) also has banking, finance and bill-paying functions, queues can be long, but automatic machines dispense postage stamps.

## Public Holidays

The following *jours fériés* (public holidays) are observed in France:

**New Year's Day** (Jour de l'An) 1 January

**Easter Sunday & Monday** (Pâques & Lundi de Pâques) Late March/April

**May Day** (Fête du Travail) 1 May

**WWII Victory Day** (Victoire des Alliés 1945) 8 May

**Ascension Thursday** (Jeudi de l'Ascension) May; on the 40th day after Easter

**Pentecost/Whit Sunday & Whit Monday** (Pentecôte & Lundi de Pentecôte) Mid-May to mid-June; on the seventh Sunday after Easter

**Bastille Day/National Day** (Fête Nationale) 14 July

**Assumption Day** (Assomption) 15 August

**All Saints' Day** (Toussaint) 1 November

**Remembrance Day** (Armistice 1918) 11 November

**Christmas** (Noël) 25 December

The following are *not* public holidays in France: Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras; the first day of Lent); Maundy (or Holy) Thursday and Good Friday, just before Easter; and Boxing Day (26 December).

Note: Good Friday (Vendredi Saint) and Boxing Day (Saint Étienne) are public holidays in Alsace and the Moselle *département* of Lorraine.

## Safe Travel

France is generally a safe place, despite a spate of recent Islamist terrorist attacks and a (perceived) rise in crime.

- ➔ Never leave baggage unattended, especially at airports or train stations.
- ➔ At museums and monuments, bags are routinely checked on entry.



→ Sporadic train strikes and striking taxi drivers can disrupt travel.

→ France's hunting season is September to February; if you see signs reading *chasseurs* or *chasse gardée* tacked to trees, don't enter the area.

→ In the Alps and Pyrenees, check the day's avalanche report and stick to groomed pistes. Summer thunderstorms can be sudden and violent.

→ On the Atlantic Coast watch for powerful tides and undertows; don't swim on beaches with lifeguards.

## Taxes & Refunds

Value-added tax (VAT, ie sales tax), known in French as TVA (*taxe sur la valeur ajoutée*), is levied on most goods and services in France at a rate of 20% (5.5% for most food). Restaurants (5.5% or 10%) and hotels (10%, in Corsica 2.1%) are required by law to include VAT in their prices.

Non-EU residents aged over 16 can claim a VAT refund on purchases of over €100 (lowered from €175 in 2020) on a single receipt, providing the goods are for personal consumption and are being personally transported home; retailers offering tax-free shopping have details. When leaving France, you may need to drop by a

VAT desk at the airport and show them that you are taking your purchases out of the country (don't put them in checked luggage first).

## Telephone

### Mobile/Cell Phones & Smartphones

→ Most late-model mobile/cell phones from overseas will work in France.

→ Under EU law, if you have a mobile phone from any EU country you will be billed at home-country rates if you use it while visiting France (or any other EU country).

→ If you live outside the EU, check with your mobile-phone company about roaming plans, which aren't cheap but cost *much* less than using a North American or other overseas mobile phone in France without a plan (some US companies charge plan-less travellers US\$2 for 1 minute of voice communication or 1MB – not 1GB! – of data).

→ French mobile-phone companies Bouygues Telecom, Iliad (Free Mobile), Orange and SFR are promising fast 5G services in most parts of the country by the end of 2021.

→ The cheapest way to get mobile phone, SMS/text and data access in France is to buy a prepaid French SIM card. For about

€20, you get a local phone number, making it easy for French contacts to call you; a generous allocation of domestic calls and texts/SMSs; free international calls to certain countries (including the US and Canada); and oodles of data – more than enough to drive around with your phone's GPS app running. Prepaid SIM chips are usually available at major airports, either at desks run by providers (eg Lebara and Orange) or from newsagents such as Relay. They can also be ordered from a variety of online companies for pre-trip delivery to your home country.

→ In order to use a French SIM, you'll need a phone that is both unlocked and compatible with French mobile frequencies, which for 2G, 3G and 4G still use 900/1800MHz, along with 2100MHz and 2600MHz. Most older cell phones sold in North America won't work here unless they have tri-band or other international capabilities. Cheap France-compatible smartphones are available around the world from online retailers, and in France from both mobile-phone companies and retailers such as FNAC ([www.fnac.com](http://www.fnac.com)) and Darty ([www.darty.com](http://www.darty.com)).

→ Recharge cards for French SIMs are sold at most *tabacs* (tobacconists/newsagents),

## CHARGING DEVICES

Carrying your own charger (and, if necessary, plug adapter) and cable is the only sure way of ensuring you don't run out of juice. In cafes and restaurants don't be shy to ask if you can plug in and charge. In Paris the odd cafe lends cables to customers, savvy taxi drivers stock a selection of smartphone-compatible cables and chargers for passengers to use, and in Paris newer RATP bus stops are equipped with USB ports (bring your own cable).

On TGV trains, all 1st-class carriages (and occasionally 2nd-class depending on how new the car is) have plugs. On every TGV irrespective of age, there is at least one 'office' space between carriages with mini-desk and double plug. Otherwise, upon arrival, an increasing number of train stations have charging stations: in Paris, Gare du Nord, Gare Montparnasse and Gare St-Lazare all have pedal-powered charging stations, as do several other stations countrywide including Lille, Lyon, Strasbourg and Avignon TGV.

supermarkets and online through websites such as Topengo ([www.topengo.fr](http://www.topengo.fr)).

➔ French mobile phone numbers begin with 06 or 07.

## Phone Codes & Directory Enquiries

**Calling France from abroad** Dial your country's international access code, then 33 (France's country code), then the 10-digit local number without the initial zero.

**Calling internationally from France** Dial 00 (the international access code), the *indicatif* (country code), the area code (without the initial zero if there is one) and the local number.

**Directory enquiries** For national service *des renseignements* (directory enquiries) dial 11 87 12, or use the service for free online at [www.118712.fr](http://www.118712.fr).

## International Phone Cards

➔ Prepaid calling cards with codes (*tickets téléphones*), sold at *tabacs* (tobacconists) and international calling shops, are the cheapest way to call abroad (eg from a phone in your hotel room), costing only cents per minute. Ask staff which type is best for the countries you want to call (because of demand, more cards cover North Africa than, for instance, North America).

➔ Hotels, *gîtes*, hostels and *chambres d'hôte* are free to meter their calls as they like. The surcharge is usually around €0.30 per minute but can be higher.

## Time

France uses the 24-hour clock and is on Central European Time, which is one hour ahead of GMT/UTC. During daylight-saving time, which runs from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October, France is two hours ahead of GMT/UTC. EU plans to scrap daylight-saving time in 2021, voted by the Europe-

an Parliament in 2019, have been postponed.

The following times do not take daylight saving into account:

Paris	noon
Auckland	11pm
Berlin	noon
Cape Town	noon
London	11am
New York	6am
San Francisco	3am
Sydney	9pm
Tokyo	8pm

## Toilets

Public toilets, signposted WC (short for 'water closet'; pronounced veh-seh) or *toilettes*, are not always plentiful in France, especially outside the big cities. Cafes reserve their facilities for patrons but buying an inexpensive *café* is always a ticket in.

Love them (as a sci-fi geek) or loathe them (as a claustrophobe), France's self-cleaning toilet pods (*sansisettes*) are usually open 24 hours; almost all (including in Paris) are free. There's no time for dawdling: you have precisely 20 minutes before being exposed to passers-by. Green means *libre* (vacant) and red means *occupé* (occupied).

Paris' *vespasiennes* (green metal kerbside urinals) are long gone – except for one on av Arago – but in 2020 the city is planning to install sleek new stainless-steel 'Urilifts' that rise up out of the sidewalk at 7pm, providing both men and women on a night out with a place to pee.

Some campgrounds and a few older buildings still have hole-in-the-floor *toilettes à la turque* (squat toilets). Provided you hover, these are actually very hygienic, but take care not to get soaked by the flush.

Keep some loose change handy for tipping toilet attendants, who keep a hawk-like eye on many of France's public toilets.

The French are completely blasé about unisex toilets, so save your blushes when tiptoeing past the urinals to reach the ladies' loo.

## Tourist Information

Almost every city, town and village has an *office de tourisme* (a tourist office run by some unit of local government) or *syndicat d'initiative* (a tourist office run by an organisation of local merchants). Both are excellent resources and can supply you with local maps as well as details on accommodation, restaurants and activities. If you have a special interest such as walking, cycling, architecture or wine sampling, ask about it.

➔ Many tourist offices make local hotel and B&B reservations, sometimes for a small fee.

➔ *Comités régionaux de tourisme* (CRTs; regional tourist boards), their *départemental* analogues (CDTs) and their websites are a superb source of information and links. Useful websites include the following:

### Explore France ([www.france.fr](http://www.france.fr))

This French government website gives you the low-down on sights, activities, cultural events and festivals in all of France's regions, and offers brochures for downloading.

### French Tourist Offices Portal

([www.tourisme.fr](http://www.tourisme.fr)) Mountains of inspirational information organised by theme and region.

## Visas

### Visa Requirements

➔ For up-to-date details on visa requirements, see the website of the Ministère des

Affaires Étrangères ([www.diplomatique.gouv.fr](http://www.diplomatique.gouv.fr)) and click 'Coming to France'.

- ➔ EU nationals and citizens of Iceland, Norway and Switzerland need only a passport or a national identity card to enter France.
- ➔ Citizens of the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and many Latin American countries do not need visas to visit France as tourists for up to 90 days. For stays of more than 90 days (eg to study), contact your nearest French embassy or consulate and begin your application well in advance as it can take months.
- ➔ Other people wishing to come to France as tourists have to apply for a Schengen Visa, named after the agreements that have abolished passport controls between 26 European countries. It allows unlimited travel throughout the entire zone for a 90-day period. Apply to the consulate of the country you are entering first, or your main destination. Among other things, you'll need travel and repatriation insurance and must be able to show that you have sufficient funds to support yourself.
- ➔ Tourist visas cannot be changed into student visas after arrival. However, short-term visas are available for students sitting university-entrance exams in France.
- ➔ Tourist visas cannot be extended except in emergencies (such as medical problems). When your visa expires, you'll need to reapply from outside France.

### Carte de Séjour

- ➔ EU passport holders and citizens of Switzerland, Iceland and Norway do not need a *carte de séjour* (residence permit) to reside or work in France.

### NEW FOR 2022: ETIAS AUTHORISATION

Starting in 2022, visitors to France (or any other Schengen Zone country) from visa-exempt countries, including the US, Canada and the UK, will need to obtain electronic travel authorization (€7; free if you're aged under 18 or over 70) online in advance through the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS; [www.etias.com](http://www.etias.com)). A background security check (like ESTA for travel to the US) rather than a visa, it will be valid for three years.

- ➔ Nationals of other countries who have been granted long-stay visas must contact the local *mairie* (city hall) or *préfecture* (prefecture) to apply for a *carte de séjour*. Usually, you are required to do so within eight days of arrival in France. Make sure you have all the necessary documents before you arrive.
- ➔ Students of all nationalities studying in France need a *carte de séjour*.

### Working Holiday Visa

Citizens of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and a number of South American countries aged between 18 and 30 (35 for Argentines, Australians and Canadians) are eligible for a 12-month, multiple-entry Working Holiday Visa (*Permis Vacances-Travail*), allowing combined tourism and employment in France.

- ➔ Apply to the French embassy or consulate in your home country (Australians can do this online). Do this early as there are annual quotas.
- ➔ You must be applying for a Working Holiday Visa for France for the first time.
- ➔ You will need comprehensive travel insurance for the duration of your stay.
- ➔ You must meet all health and character requirements.
- ➔ You will need a return plane ticket and proof of sufficient funds (usually around

€2500) to get you through the start of your stay.

- ➔ Once you have arrived in France and have found a job, you must apply for an *autorisation provisoire de travail* (temporary work permit), which will only be valid for the duration of the employment offered. The permit can be renewed under the same conditions up to the limit of the authorised length of stay.
- ➔ You can also study or do training programmes but the visa cannot be extended, nor can it be turned into a student visa.
- ➔ After one year you must go home.

### Volunteering

Online resources like Go Abroad ([www.goabroad.com](http://www.goabroad.com)) and Transitions Abroad ([www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com)) present a colourful selection of volunteering opportunities in France: helping out on a family farm in the Alps, restoring a historic monument in Provence or participating in a summer-time archaeological excavation are but some of the golden opportunities awaiting those keen to volunteer their skills and services.

Some interesting volunteer organisations:

- Club du Vieux Manoir** ([www.clubduvieuxmanoir.fr](http://www.clubduvieuxmanoir.fr)) Restore a medieval fortress, an abbey or a historic château at a summer work camp.

## Régions &amp; Départements



## NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE

- 16 Charente
- 17 Charente-Maritime
- 19 Corrèze
- 23 Creuse
- 24 Dordogne
- 33 Gironde
- 40 Landes
- 47 Lot-et-Garonne
- 64 Pyrénées-Atlantiques
- 79 Deux-Sèvres
- 86 Vienne
- 87 Haute-Vienne

AUVERGNE-  
RHÔNE ALPES

- 01 Ain
- 03 Allier
- 07 Ardèche
- 15 Cantal
- 26 Drôme
- 38 Isère
- 42 Loire
- 43 Haute-Loire
- 63 Puy-de-Dôme
- 69 Rhône
- 73 Savoie
- 74 Haute-Savoie

BOURGOGNE-  
FRANCHE-COMTÉ

- 14 Calvados
- 25 Doubs
- 39 Jura
- 50 Manche
- 61 Orne
- 70 Haute-Saône
- 90 Territoire de Belfort

## BRETAGNE

- 22 Côtes-d'Armor
- 29 Finistère
- 35 Ille-et-Vilaine
- 56 Morbihan

## CENTRE-VAL DE LOIRE

- 18 Cher
- 28 Eure-et-Loir
- 36 Indre
- 37 Indre-et-Loire
- 41 Loir-et-Cher
- 45 Loiret

## CORSE

- 2A Corse-du-Sud
- 2B Haute-Corse

## GRAND-EST

- 08 Ardennes
- 10 Aube
- 51 Marne
- 52 Haute-Marne
- 54 Meurthe-et-Moselle
- 55 Meuse
- 57 Moselle
- 67 Bas-Rhin
- 68 Haut-Rhin
- 88 Vosges

## HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

- 02 Aisne
- 59 Nord
- 60 Oise
- 62 Pas-de-Calais
- 80 Somme

## ÎLE-DE-FRANCE

- 91 Essonne
- 92 Haut-de-Seine
- 75 Paris
- 77 Seine-et-Marne
- 93 Seine-St-Denis
- 94 Val-de-Marne
- 95 Val-d'Oise
- 78 Yvelines

## OCCITANIE

- 09 Ariège
- 11 Aude
- 12 Aveyron
- 30 Gard
- 31 Haute-Garonne
- 32 Gers
- 34 Hérault
- 46 Lot
- 48 Lozère
- 65 Hautes-Pyrénées
- 66 Pyrénées-Orientales
- 81 Tarn
- 82 Tarn-et-Garonne

## NORMANDIE

- 21 Côte-d'Or
- 27 Eure
- 58 Nièvre
- 71 Saône-et-Loire
- 76 Seine-Maritime
- 89 Yonne

## PAYS DE LA LOIRE

- 44 Loire-Atlantique
- 49 Maine-et-Loire
- 53 Mayenne
- 72 Sarthe
- 85 Vendée

## PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR

- 04 Alpes-de-Haute-Provence
- 06 Alpes-Maritimes
- 13 Bouches-du-Rhône
- 05 Hautes-Alpes
- 83 Var
- 84 Vaucluse

- International Boundary
- Région Boundary
- Département Boundary
- Regional Capital

Note: the département numbers serve as the first two digits of French postal codes and may be useful in distinguishing between towns of the same name on GPS devices.



**GeoVisions** ([www.geovisions.org](http://www.geovisions.org)) Volunteer 15 hours a week to teach a French family English in exchange for room and board.

**Rempart** ([www.rempart.com](http://www.rempart.com)) Brings together 179 organisations countrywide committed to preserving France's religious, military, civil, industrial and natural heritage.

**Volunteers For Peace** ([www.vfp.org](http://www.vfp.org)) US-based nonprofit organisation. Can link you up with a voluntary service project dealing with social work, the environment, education or the arts.

**World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms** (WWOOF; [www.woof.org](http://www.woof.org)) Work on a small farm or other organic venture (harvesting chestnuts, renovating an abandoned olive farm near Nice etc).

## Work

- ➔ EU nationals have an automatic right to work in France.
- ➔ Most others will need a hard-to-get work permit, issued at the request of your employer, who will have to show that no one in France – or the entire European Economic Area – can do your job.
- ➔ Exceptions may be made for artists, computer engineers and translation specialists.
- ➔ Some travellers aged between 18 and 30 may be eligible for a 12-month, multiple-entry Working Holiday Visa (p983), which

allows combined tourism and employment in France.

- ➔ Working 'in the black' (ie without documents) is difficult and risky.
- ➔ The only instance in which the government might turn a blind eye to workers without documents is during fruit harvests (mid-May to November) and the *vendange* (grape harvest; late August to mid- or late October). Of course, undocumented workers harvest at their own risk.
- ➔ Au pair work is also very popular and can be done legally even by non-EU citizens. To apply, contact a placement agency at least three months in advance.



# Transport

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Flights, cars and tours can be booked online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/bookings](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bookings).

### Entering the Country

Entering France from nearby countries is usually a breeze – no border checkpoints and no customs – thanks to the Schengen Agreement, signed by all of France's neighbours except the UK, the Channel Islands and Andorra. For these three entities, old-fashioned document and customs checks are still the norm, at least when exiting France (when entering France in the case of Andorra).

## Air

### Airports & Airlines

Air France ([www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com)) – part of the Air France-KLM group – is the national carrier, with plenty of domestic and international flights in and out of major French airports, including Charles de Gaulle and Orly near Paris, Lyon-St-Exupéry, Marseille-Provence and Nice-Côte d'Azur.

Both full-service airlines and low-cost carriers such as Ryanair ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) and easyJet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) link about two dozen regional French airports with the UK, Ireland, continental Europe and North Africa.

**Aéroport de Charles de Gaulle, Paris** (☎01 70 36 39 50; [www.parisaeroport.fr](http://www.parisaeroport.fr); Roissy)

**Aéroport d'Orly, Paris** (☎01 70 36 39 50; [www.parisaeroport.fr](http://www.parisaeroport.fr); Orly)

### EuroAirport Basel & Mulhouse

(☎03 89 90 31 11; [www.euroairport.com](http://www.euroairport.com))

**Aéroport de Bordeaux (BOD)**; ☎Information 05 56 34 50 50; [www.bordeaux.aeroport.fr](http://www.bordeaux.aeroport.fr); Mérignac)

**Aéroport Strasbourg (SXB)**; ☎03 88 64 67 67; [www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr](http://www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr))

**Aéroport Lyon-St-Exupéry (LYS)**; [www.lyonaeroports.com](http://www.lyonaeroports.com))

**Aéroport Marseille-Provence (Aéroport Marseille-Marignane)**; MRS; ☎08 20 81 14 14; [www.marseille.aeroport.fr](http://www.marseille.aeroport.fr))

**Aéroport Nice-Côte d'Azur (NCE)**; ☎08 20 42 33 33; [www.nice.aeroport.fr](http://www.nice.aeroport.fr); ☎98, 99, ☎2)

**Aéroport Toulouse-Blagnac (TLS)**; ☎08 25 38 00 00; [www.toulouse.aeroport.fr](http://www.toulouse.aeroport.fr))

## Land

### Bicycle

Transporting a bicycle to France is a breeze.

## CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Every form of transport that relies on carbon-based fuel generates CO<sub>2</sub>, the main cause of human-induced climate change. Modern travel is dependent on aeroplanes, which might use less fuel per kilometre per person than most cars but travel much greater distances. The altitude at which aircraft emit gases (including CO<sub>2</sub>) and particles also contributes to their climate change impact. Many websites offer 'carbon calculators' that allow people to estimate the carbon emissions generated by their journey and, for those who wish to do so, to offset the impact of the greenhouse gases emitted with contributions to portfolios of climate-friendly initiatives throughout the world. Lonely Planet offsets the carbon footprint of all staff and author travel.

On **Eurotunnel Le Shuttle** (📍France 08 10 63 03 04, UK 03443 35 35 35; [www.eurotunnel.com](http://www.eurotunnel.com)) trains through the Channel Tunnel, the fee for a bicycle, including its rider, starts at £21 one way; reservations must be made at least 48 hours ahead.

A bike that's been dismantled to the size of a suitcase can be carried on board a **Eurostar** (📍France 08 10 63 03 04, UK 03432 186 186; [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)) train from London or Brussels just like any other luggage. Otherwise, there's a £40 charge and you'll need advance reservations.

On ferries, foot passengers – where allowed – can usually (but not always) bring along a bicycle for no charge.

**European Bike Express** (📍UK 01430 422 111; [www.bike-express.co.uk](http://www.bike-express.co.uk)) transports cyclists and their bikes from the UK to places around France.

## Bus

**FlixBus** ([www.flixbus.fr](http://www.flixbus.fr)), which has taken over Eurolines, links France (including Paris' Bercy coach station) with London and cities all over continental Europe. Their comfy buses are equipped with a toilet, snacks, plug sockets to keep devices charged and free wi-fi; some services are overnight. Book as far ahead as possible to bag the cheapest ticket.

## Car & Motorcycle

A right-hand-drive vehicle brought to France from the UK or Ireland must have deflectors affixed to the headlights to avoid dazzling oncoming traffic.

A foreign motor vehicle entering France must display a sticker or licence plate identifying its country of registration. To drive in some parts of France your car must have a Crit'Air environmental sticker (p991).

## EUROTUNNEL

High-speed **Eurotunnel Le Shuttle** (📍France 08 10 63 03 04, UK 03443 35 35 35; [www.eurotunnel.com](http://www.eurotunnel.com)) trains whisk bicycles, motorcycles, cars and coaches in 35 minutes from Folkestone through the Channel Tunnel to Coquelles, 5km southwest of Calais. Shuttles run 24 hours a day, with up to three departures an hour during peak periods. LPG and CNG tanks are not permitted, meaning natural-gas-powered cars and many campers and caravans have to travel by ferry.

Eurotunnel sets its fares the way budget airlines do: the further in advance you book and the lower the demand for a particular crossing, the less you pay; same-day bookings can cost a small fortune.

## Train

Rail services link France with virtually every country in Europe.

- ➔ Book tickets and get train information from Rail Europe ([www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com)).
- ➔ High-speed rail links between France and the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, northern Italy and Austria are covered by Railteam ([www.railteam.eu](http://www.railteam.eu)).
- ➔ A very useful train-travel resource is the information-packed website The Man in Seat 61 ([www.seat61.com](http://www.seat61.com)).

Certain rail services between France and its continental neighbours are marketed under particular brand names:

**TGV Lyria** ([www.tgv-lyria.fr](http://www.tgv-lyria.fr)) High-speed trains to Switzerland.

**Thalys** ([www.thalys.com](http://www.thalys.com)) Links Paris' Gare du Nord with Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.

**Thello** ([www.thello.com](http://www.thello.com)) Links France with Italy.

## EURAIL PASS

Rail passes are worthwhile only if you plan to really clock up the kilometres.

Available only to people who don't live in Europe, the Eurail Pass ([www.eurail.com](http://www.eurail.com)) is valid in up to 33 countries, including France. People 27 and under get the best deals. Passes must be validated at a train-station ticket window before you begin your first journey.

## EUROSTAR

The **Eurostar** (📍France 08 10 63 03 04, UK 03432 186 186; [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)) whisks you roughly hourly from London's St Pancras International to Paris' Gare du Nord (2¼ hours), stopping three times daily at Calais-Fréthun (one hour) and eight times a day at Lille-Europe (1½ hours). A few weekly options also serve Disneyland Resort Paris (2½ hours) and Lyon Part-Dieu; 4¾ hours). Limited services departing from Ebbsfleet and Ashford in Kent may resume in 2022. Weekend ski trains

## SAMPLE INTERNATIONAL TRAIN FARES

ROUTE	CHEAPEST FULL FARE (€)	DURATION (HR)
Paris-Amsterdam	122	3¼
Paris-Berlin	99	8½
Paris-Brussels	55	1½
Paris-Venice	138	11¾
Bordeaux-London	121	7
Dijon-Milan	79	7
Marseille-Barcelona	52	7¼
Strasbourg-Vienna	171	9

connect England with the French Alps from late December to mid-April. There are plans to launch a direct London–Bordeaux service (five hours) by 2022.

Eurostar offers a bewildering array of fares. A standard one-way ticket from Paris to London starts at €57 if ordered well ahead but €241 for next-day travel.

For the best deals, buy a return ticket, stay over a Saturday night and book in advance (up to 120 days). Cheap tickets are usually non-exchangeable and non-refundable.

## Sea

Many ferry companies set fares the way budget airlines do: the longer in advance you book and the lower the demand for a particular sailing, the less you pay. Seasonal demand is a crucial factor (Christmas, Easter, UK and French school holidays, and July and August are especially busy), as is the time of day (an early-evening ferry can cost much more than one at 4am).

To get the best fares, check Ferry Savers ([www.ferrysavers.com](http://www.ferrysavers.com)).

Foot passengers are not allowed on Dover–Dunkirk or Dover–Calais car ferries except for daytime (and, from Calais to Dover, evening) crossings run by P&O Ferries.

Several ferry companies ply the waters between Corsica and Italy.

## GETTING AROUND

Driving is the simplest way to get around France, but a car is a liability in traffic-plagued, parking-starved city centres, and petrol bills and *autoroute* (dual carriageway/divided highway) tolls add up quickly.

France is famous for its technologically advanced public transport network, which does a generally excellent job of connecting cities with each other. Travel within *départements*, handled by a combination of short-haul trains, SNCF buses and public bus companies, can be patchy, especially in rural areas.

## Air

France's high-speed train network renders rail travel between some cities (eg from Paris to Lyon, Marseille and Bordeaux) faster and easier than flying.

Air France ([www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com)), including its subsidiary Air France Hop, controls the lion's share of France's domestic airline industry.

Budget carriers offering flights within France include Air Corsica ([www.aircorsica.com](http://www.aircorsica.com)), easyJet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)), Ryanair ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)), Twin Jet ([www.twinjet.net](http://www.twinjet.net)) and Volotea ([www.volotea.com](http://www.volotea.com)).

## Bicycle

France is great for cycling. Much of the countryside is drop-dead gorgeous and the country has a growing number of urban and rural *pistes cyclables* (bike paths and lanes; see [www.francevelotourisme.com](http://www.francevelotourisme.com)) and an extensive network of secondary and tertiary roads with relatively light traffic (though, often, very narrow shoulders/*verges*).

In recent years *vélos électriques* (electric bicycles) have become all the rage in France, with lots of rental companies setting up shop. A few rules: the speed limit is 25km/h; riding on sidewalks is forbidden; use bike paths wherever possible; and children under 12 must wear a helmet (highly recommended for everyone else, too).

French law requires that bicycles have two functioning brakes, a bell, a red reflector on the back and yellow reflectors on the pedals. After sunset and when visibility is poor, cyclists must turn on a white headlamp and a red tail lamp. When being overtaken by a vehicle, cyclists must ride in single file. Towing children in a bike trailer is permitted.

## INTERNATIONAL FERRY COMPANIES

COMPANY	CONNECTION	WEBSITE
Brittany Ferries	England-Normandy, England-Brittany, Ireland-Brittany, Ireland-Normandy	<a href="http://www.brittany-ferries.co.uk">www.brittany-ferries.co.uk</a> ; <a href="http://www.brittanyferries.ie">www.brittanyferries.ie</a>
Condor Ferries	England-Brittany, Channel Islands-Brittany	<a href="http://www.condorferries.co.uk">www.condorferries.co.uk</a>
Corsica Linea	Algeria-France, Sardinia-France, Tunisia-France	<a href="http://www.corsicalinea.com">www.corsicalinea.com</a>
CTN	Tunisia-France	<a href="http://www.ctn.com.tn">www.ctn.com.tn</a>
DFDS Seaways	England-Normandy, England-Channel Ports	<a href="http://www.dfdsseaways.co.uk">www.dfdsseaways.co.uk</a>
Irish Ferries	Ireland-Normandy	<a href="http://www.irishferries.com">www.irishferries.com</a>
Manche Îles Express	Channel Islands-Normandy	<a href="http://www.manche-iles.com">www.manche-iles.com</a>
P&O Ferries	England-Channel Ports	<a href="http://www.poferries.com">www.poferries.com</a>
Stena Line Ferries	Ireland-Normandy	<a href="http://www.stenaline.ie">www.stenaline.ie</a>

Never leave your bicycle locked up outside overnight if you want to see it – or at least most of its parts – again. Some hotels offer enclosed bicycle parking.

## Bicycle Transport

The SNCF ([www.sncf.com](http://www.sncf.com)) does its best to make travelling with a bicycle easy; search for 'bicycle' on the website.

Bicycles (not disassembled) can be taken along – that is, hung up in a special part of the car – on virtually all intraregional TER trains and most long-distance intercity trains, without a reservation but subject to space availability. The charge for TER, Ouigo and Intercités trains is either free, €5 or €10 depending on the route; TGV trains require a reservation and a €10 fee that must be paid when you purchase your passenger ticket. When you book via [www.oui.sncf](http://www.oui.sncf), look for the '+ un vélo' or 'add bikes' box.

Bicycles that have been partly disassembled and put in a box (*houssé*), with maximum dimensions of 120cm by 90cm, can be taken along for no charge in baggage compartments, where available.

In the Paris area, bicycles are allowed aboard Transilien ([www.transilien.com](http://www.transilien.com)) and RER trains:

- ➔ All day on Saturday, Sunday and holidays
- ➔ Before 6.30am, from 9.30am to 4.30pm and after 7.30pm Monday to Friday

With precious few exceptions, bicycles are not allowed on metros, trams and local, intra-département and SNCF buses (the latter replace trains on some runs).

## Hire

Most French cities and towns have at least one bike shop that rents out *vélos tout terrains* (mountain bikes; around €16 a day), known as VTTs, as well as more road-oriented *vélos tout*

*chemin* (VTCs) and cheaper city bikes. You usually have to leave ID and/or a deposit (often a credit-card slip of €250) that you forfeit if the bike is damaged or stolen.

A growing number of cities have automatic bike-rental systems intended to encourage cycling as a form of urban transport, with computerised pick-up and drop-off sites all over town. In general, you have to sign up, providing credit-card details, and can then use the bikes for no charge for the first half-hour; after that, hourly charges rise very quickly.

## Boat

There are boat services along France's coasts and to its offshore islands (and the Channel Islands), and ferries aplenty to/from Corsica.

## Canal Boating

Transport and tranquility are usually mutually exclusive – but not if you rent a houseboat and cruise along France's canals and navigable rivers, stopping at whim to pick up supplies, dine at a village restaurant or check out a local château by bicycle. Changes in altitude are taken care of by a system of *écluses* (locks).

Boats generally accommodate from two to 12 passengers and are fully outfitted with bedding and cooking facilities. Anyone over 18 can pilot a riverboat, but first-time skippers are given a short instruction session so they qualify for a *carte de plaisance* (temporary cruising permit). The speed limit is 6km/h on canals and 8km/h on rivers.

Prices start at around €650 a week for a small boat and easily top €3500 a week for a large, luxurious craft. Except in July and August, you can often rent over a weekend.

Advance reservations are essential for holiday periods, over long weekends and in

July and August, especially for larger boats.

Rental agencies include the following:

**France Afloat** ([www.franceafloat.com](http://www.franceafloat.com)) Anglophone canal-boat specialist in France.

**Freewheel Afloat** ([www.free-wheelafloat.com](http://www.free-wheelafloat.com)) UK-based self-drive barge specialist.

## Bus

Bus/coach companies now compete with the SNCF's intercity rail services, offering cheaper but generally slower services. These include BlaBlaCar ([www.blablacar.fr/bus](http://www.blablacar.fr/bus) and [www.oui.sncf](http://www.oui.sncf)), which took over the SNCF's Ouibus; and FlixBus ([www.flixbus.com](http://www.flixbus.com)), which took over Eurolines and Isilines services in France.

Buses are widely used for short-distance travel within *départements*, especially in rural areas with relatively few train lines (eg Brittany and Normandy). Unfortunately, services in some regions are infrequent and slow, in part because their main purpose is to get children to and from schools in the towns rather than transport visitors around the countryside. Services are often reduced or non-existent on Saturday, Sunday and during school holidays.

Some less busy train lines have been replaced by SNCF buses, which, unlike regional buses, are free if you have a rail pass.

## Car & Motorcycle

Having your own wheels gives you exceptional freedom and makes it easy to visit more-remote parts of France. Depending on the number of passengers, it can also work out cheaper than the train. For example, by autoroute, the 930km drive from Paris to Nice (nine hours of driving) in a small car costs about €52





- valid driving licence (*permis de conduire*; most foreign licences can be used in France for up to a year)
- car-ownership papers, known as a *carte grise* (grey card)
- proof of third-party liability insurance (*assurance au tiers*)

## Fuel

*Essence* (petrol), also known as *carburant* (fuel), costs between €1.30 and €1.67 per litre for 95 unleaded (Sans Plomb 95 or SP95, usually available from a green pump) – that's about US\$5.85 to US\$7.52 per US gallon – and €1.17 to €1.57 for diesel (*diesel, gazole* or *gasoil*, usually available from a yellow pump). Check and compare current prices countrywide at [www.prix-carburants.gouv.fr](http://www.prix-carburants.gouv.fr).

Filling up (*faire le plein*) is most expensive at autoroute rest stops, and usually cheapest at super- and hypermarkets such as Carrefour, Intermarché, Leclerc and Super U.

Many small petrol stations close on Sunday afternoons and, even in cities, it can be hard to find a staffed station open late at night. In general, after-hours purchases (eg at hypermarkets' fully automatic, 24-hour stations) can only be made with a credit card that has an embedded PIN chip and/or was issued in France (or the EU), so if all you have is cash or a foreign credit card you could be stuck.

## Hire

To hire a car in France, you'll generally need to be over 21 years old, have had a driving licence for at least a year, and have an international credit card. Drivers under 25 usually have to pay a surcharge (*frais jeune conducteur*) of €25 to €35 per day.

Car-hire companies provide mandatory third-party liability insurance, but things such as collision-damage waivers (CDW, or *assurance tous risques*) vary greatly from company to company. When comparing rates and conditions (ie the fine print),

the most important thing to check is the *franchise* (deductible/excess), which for a small car is usually around €600 for damage and €800 for theft. With many companies, you can reduce the excess by half, and perhaps to zero, by paying a daily insurance supplement of up to €20. Your credit card may cover CDW if you use it to pay for the rental, but the car-hire company won't know anything about this – verify conditions and details with your credit-card issuer to be sure.

Arranging your car hire or fly-drive package before you leave home is usually considerably cheaper than a walk-in rental, but beware of website offers that don't include a CDW or you may be liable for up to 100% of the car's value.

International car-hire companies:

**Avis** ([www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com))

**Budget** ([www.budget.com](http://www.budget.com))

**EasyCar** ([www.easycar.com](http://www.easycar.com))

**Europcar** ([www.europcar.com](http://www.europcar.com))

## CRIT'AIR ENVIRONMENTAL ZONES

If you'll be bringing your own car, motorcycle, van or camping car into France (eg from the UK), you'll need to make sure that it has the proper Certificat Qualité de l'Air (air-quality certificate) displayed on the windscreen. For details, see [www.certificat-air.gouv.fr](http://www.certificat-air.gouv.fr) or [www.green-zones.eu](http://www.green-zones.eu), where you can download the Green Zone App.

Two types of environmental zones aim to reduce the road-traffic pollution in heavily built-up or busy areas of France by permanently or temporarily restricting road traffic.

In ZFEs (zones à faibles émissions; ie low-emissions zones, or LEZs), which are permanent, all vehicles must display a Crit'Air sticker to enter. This applies to the city of Paris within the Périphérique (ring road) between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday.

ZPAs (zones de protection de l'air), which can cover an entire metropolitan area or *département*, are temporary and usually only apply for a few days, often during hot or bad weather, when air pollution peaks. They are usually announced the day before they come into force.

Stickers come in six types, each with a different number/letter and colour depending on your car's year of registration, engine type, fuel efficiency and emissions level. The older your car (especially if it's been on the road for more than about 10 years) and the more polluting your engine, the more restrictions will apply. Stickers can be ordered from [www.certificat-air.gouv.fr](http://www.certificat-air.gouv.fr); you'll need to upload a copy of your vehicle's registration certificate and allow time for it to be mailed to you. Prices start at €3.62 (plus postage outside France).

The fine for not having the proper *vignette* (sticker) in the lower right-hand corner of your windscreen – something that the French government sometimes checks by camera – is €68 to €375.

## WHO HAS PRIORITY AT INTERSECTIONS?

Under France's venerable *priorité à droite* ('priority to the right') rule, any car entering an intersection (including a T-junction) from a road (including a tiny village backstreet) on your right has the right of way unless street signs indicate otherwise. Locals assume every driver knows this, so don't be surprised if they courteously cede the right of way when you're about to turn from an alley onto a highway – and boldly assert their rights when you're the one zipping down a main road.

*Priorité à droite* is suspended (eg on arterial roads) when you pass a sign showing an upended yellow square with an upended black square in the middle. The same sign with a horizontal bar through the square reinstates the *priorité à droite* rule.

When you arrive at a roundabout (traffic circle), cars already in the roundabout, not you, have the right of way. You'll often see signs reading *vous n'avez pas la priorité* (you do not have right of way) or *cédez le passage* (give way).

**Hertz** ([www.hertz.com](http://www.hertz.com))

**Sixt** ([www.sixt.com](http://www.sixt.com))

French car-hire companies:

**ADA** ([www.ada.fr](http://www.ada.fr))

**DLM** ([www.dlm.fr](http://www.dlm.fr))

**France Cars** ([www.francecars.fr](http://www.francecars.fr))

**Renault Rent** ([www.renault-rent.com](http://www.renault-rent.com))

**Rent a Car** ([www.rentacar.fr](http://www.rentacar.fr))

Deals can be found on the internet and through companies such as:

**Auto Europe** ([www.autoeurope.com](http://www.autoeurope.com))

**DriveAway Holidays** ([www.driveaway.com.au](http://www.driveaway.com.au))

**Holiday Autos** ([www.holidayautos.co.uk](http://www.holidayautos.co.uk))

Rental cars with automatic transmissions are the exception in France, though less so than a few years back. They may need to be ordered in advance and are more expensive than manual cars.

For insurance reasons, it is usually forbidden to take rental cars on ferries, eg to Corsica.

Never leave anything of value in a parked car, even in the boot (trunk).

### ELECTRIC CARS

In 2020 several rental companies, including Avis, Europcar and Sixt, began renting out electric cars (eg the Renault Zoe), making it possible to reduce your trip's carbon

footprint considerably (90% of France's electricity production is either nuclear or renewable).

Electric charging, which costs around a quarter of the price of petrol or diesel, is possible at about 40,000 charging stations. To find them (and details on the types of connectors available), see [Openchargemap](http://Openchargemap.org) ([www.openchargemap.org](http://www.openchargemap.org)), [Izivia](http://Izivia.com) ([www.izivia.com](http://www.izivia.com)) or Google maps (search for 'charging station'). To pay for a charge, options include [KiWhi](http://KiWhi.com) ([www.kiwhipass.fr](http://www.kiwhipass.fr)) and [Izivia](http://Izivia.com).

### Insurance

Third-party liability insurance (*assurance au tiers*) is compulsory for all vehicles in France, including cars brought from abroad. Normally, cars registered and insured in other European countries can circulate freely. Contact your insurance company before leaving home to make sure you're covered, and to verify whom to call in case of a breakdown or accident.

French-registered cars have their insurance-company details printed on a little green square affixed to the windscreen. If you're in an accident, that's where to find the other driver's insurance information.

### WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN ACCIDENT

In a minor accident with no injuries, the easiest way for drivers to sort things out with their insurance companies is to fill out a *Constat Amiable d'Accident Automobile* (accident report), a standardised way of recording important details about what happened. In rental cars it's usually in the packet of documents in the glove compartment. Make sure the report includes any proof that the accident was not your fault. If it was your fault, you may be liable for a hefty insurance deductible/excess. Don't sign anything you don't fully understand. If necessary, contact the police (☎17).

It's a good idea to take photographs of both cars (including close-ups of the damage), the site and layout of the collision, and the other driver's documents.

### Short-Term Leasing

If you don't live in the EU and need a car in France (or Europe) for 21 days to six months (up to a year if you'll be studying), by far the cheapest option is to 'purchase' a brand new one and then 'sell' it back at the end of your trip. In reality, you pay only for the number of days you have the vehicle but the 'temporary transit' (TT) paperwork means that the car is registered under your

name – and thus the whole deal is exempt from all sorts of taxes.

Companies offering 'purchase-repurchase' or 'buy-back' (*achat-rachat*) plans:

**Citroën Car-2-Europe** ([www.eurocartt.com](http://www.eurocartt.com))

**Peugeot Car-2-Europe** ([www.car2europe.com](http://www.car2europe.com))

**Renault Eurodrive** ([www.renault-eurodrive.com](http://www.renault-eurodrive.com))

Eligibility is restricted to people who are not residents of the EU (citizens of EU countries are eligible if they live elsewhere); the minimum age is 18 (in some cases 21). Pricing and special offers depend on your home country. All the plans include unlimited kilometres, 24-hour roadside assistance for breakdowns and accidents, and comprehensive insurance with absolutely no deductible/excess, so returning the car is hassle-free, even if it's damaged. Reservations must be made at least four weeks before you pick up your car. Because of Brexit, cars can no longer be taken to the UK.

Extending your contract (up to a maximum of 175 days) after you start using the car is possible, but you'll end up paying considerably more than the prepaid per-day rate.

Purchase-repurchase cars, which have special red licence plates, can be picked up at about 30 cities and airports all over France and dropped off at the agency of your choosing. For a fee, you can also pick up or return your car in certain cities outside France.

## Parking

Parking in French city centres, especially Paris, is a nightmare and an expensive one at that.

In city centres, most on-street parking places are *payant* (metered) from about 9am to 7pm (sometimes with a break from noon to 2pm) Monday to Saturday, except

public holidays. *Stationnement* (parking), also known in French as *parking*, is often limited to two hours. Pay at a *horodateur* (parking meter) and place the printed ticket on your dashboard on the side nearest the sidewalk.

Many medium-sized towns have concentric parking zones, with the highest per-hour fees and shortest time limits in the city centre and cheaper, less restricted parking a bit farther out. For details (generally in French) on zones, *tarifs* (rates), underground lots in the centre, free (*gratuit*) parking further out and seasonal regulations (eg in ski resorts), including maps, search online for the name of the town plus the French words *parking* or *stationnement*. Watch out for market days, when a spacious public car park can turn into a sea of food stalls – any cars not moved before the posted time (look for signs) will be towed away. Urban hotels often offer reduced-price parking in nearby underground garages.

In some town centres, parking in a *zone bleue* (blue zone) – marked with blue lines on the pavement – is free but time-limited so drivers place a blue *disque de stationnement* (parking disk) indicating the *heure d'arrivée* (time of arrival) on the dashboard. These are available, often for free, at supermarkets and car-accessory shops.

## Road Rules

Enforcement of French traffic laws (see [www.securite-route.gouv.fr](http://www.securite-route.gouv.fr)), including speed limits, has been stepped up considerably in recent years. Speed cameras are common, as are radar traps and unmarked police vehicles. Fines for many infractions are given on the spot (serious violations can lead to the confiscation of your driving licence and car), or may be sent to your home address (provided by your car-rental company, for which they'll

charge your credit card about €25) months after your trip ends. Savvy French drivers avoid exceeding the speed limit by using cruise control.

Speed limits outside built-up areas (unless signposted otherwise):

**Undivided highways** 80km/h (subject to some local control so watch for signs)

**Undivided highways with at least two lanes in each direction** 90km/h (80km/h when raining)

**Non-autoroute divided highways** 110km/h (100km/h when raining)

**Autoroutes** 130km/h (110km/h when raining)

To reduce carbon emissions, autoroute speed limits have recently been reduced to 110km/h in some areas.

Unless otherwise signposted, a limit of 50km/h applies in all areas designated as built up, no matter how rural they may appear. You must slow to 50km/h the moment you come to a white sign with a red border and a place name written on it; the speed limit applies until you pass an identical sign with a horizontal bar through it. In recent years more and more places have lowered local speed limits to 30km/h – keep an eye out for signs.

## RIDE-SHARING

*Covoiturage* (ride sharing) has been around for decades in France but is now much easier to arrange thanks to smartphone apps. Organisations that put people looking for rides in touch with drivers going to the same destination include BlaBlaCar ([www.blablacar.fr](http://www.blablacar.fr)). Passengers help defray costs such as fuel.

You're expected to already know the speed limit for various types of roads – that's why most speed-limit signs begin with the word *rappel* (reminder). You can be fined for going as little as 10km over the speed limit.

Other important driving rules:

- Cars from the UK and Ireland must have deflectors affixed to their headlights to avoid blinding oncoming motorists.
- The blood-alcohol limit is 0.05% (0.5g per litre of blood). Police often conduct random breathalyser tests and penalties can be severe, including imprisonment.
- All passengers must wear seat belts.
- Children under 10 are not permitted to ride in the front seat.
- A child under 13kg must travel in a backward-facing child seat.
- Up to age 10, children must use a size-appropriate, front-facing child seat or booster.
- Mobile phones may be used only if they are equipped with a hands-free kit or speakerphone.
- Turning right on a red light is always illegal.
- Radar detectors, even if they're switched off, are illegal; fines are hefty.
- All vehicles driven in France must carry a high-visibility reflective safety vest (stored inside the vehicle, not in the boot/trunk), a reflective triangle, and a portable, single-use breathalyser kit.
- If you'll be driving on snowy roads, make sure you have snow chains (*chaînes neige*), required by law wherever the police post signs.
- Riders of any type of two-wheeled vehicle with a motor (except motor-assisted bicycles) must wear a helmet. No special licence is required to ride a motorbike

whose engine is smaller than 50cc, which is why rental scooters are often rated at 49.9cc.

## Local Transport

France's urban public-transport systems mix *métros* (underground/subway systems), *tramways* (electric trams/streetcars) and buses. In addition to a *billet à l'unité* (single ticket), you can purchase a *carte* (booklet or bunch) of 10 tickets or a *pass journée* (all-day pass). You generally have to *composter* (validate) the ticket before or right after boarding, especially if you intend to use it later on to transfer. Tram drivers do not sell tickets, so buy one before you board from a machine at the stop. Paris' public-transport system will move to paperless tickets by 2022.

## Car Sharing

*Autopartage* (car sharing) is a kind of short-term car rental in which you find, gain access to and rent a car, owned either by a company or a private individual, using a smartphone app. To find a 'free-floating' car and arrange rental (including insurance), try Ouicar ([www.ouicar.fr/car-sharing](http://www.ouicar.fr/car-sharing)) and, in Paris, [www.free2move.com](http://www.free2move.com) or [www.share-now.com](http://www.share-now.com).

## Electric Scooters

In Paris about a dozen companies rent out some 30,000 free-floating *trottinettes électriques* (electric-powered scooters) using smartphone apps. In 2020 three companies were granted official authorisation by the City of Paris: Dott ([www.ridedott.com](http://www.ridedott.com)), Lime ([www.li.me](http://www.li.me)) and TIER ([www.tier.app](http://www.tier.app)). The charge is generally €1 and then €0.15 to €0.25 a minute. The scooters should be ridden only on bike paths and lanes, and riders must wear a yellow vest at night; a helmet is highly recommended. The

city is setting up 2500 parking areas.

Other cities with plans to expand electric-scooter rental include Lyon, Bordeaux and Marseille.

## Taxi

All medium and large train stations – and many small ones – have a taxi rank out the front. The absence of cabs is a sure sign that you'll need to phone to order one; look for a posted phone number and pray the driver knows at least a bit of English. Cabs can also be ordered online including, in many cities, via [www.g7.fr](http://www.g7.fr) (also has an app).

In small cities and towns, where taxi drivers are unlikely to find another fare anywhere near where they let you off, one-way and return trips often cost the same. Tariffs are about 30% higher at night and on Sundays and holidays. You'll usually have to pay surcharge if you're picked up at a train station or airport, and there's a small additional fee for a fourth passenger and/or for suitcases.

Uber ([www.uber.com](http://www.uber.com)) can be a cheaper alternative to regular city taxis providing you're able to connect to the app on your smartphone. While Uber fares in Paris are not dramatically cheaper than an official taxi, fares in about 20 other French cities can cost up to one-third less. A 2020 French court decision that Uber must recognise its drivers as employees could impact the company's business model in France.

There are preliminary plans to launch a 'flying water taxi' service in Paris using French-developed SeaBubble electric hydrofoils.

## Train

Travelling by train in France is a comfortable and environmentally sustainable way to see the country. Since many

## Trains &amp; Ferries



larger train stations have car-hire agencies, it's easy to combine rail travel with rural exploration by car.

Almost all of France's extensive rail network is run by the heavily indebted, state-

owned rail operator **SNCF** (Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Français; ☎ France 36 35, abroad +33 1 84 94 36 35; www.sncf.com), kept supplied with public funds thanks in part to its militant unions. The SNCF

employs the most advanced rail technology in the world but its network reflects the country's centuries-old Paris-centric nature: most of the principal rail lines radiate out from Paris like the



spokes of a wheel, so services between provincial towns situated on different spokes can be infrequent and slow.

Since its inauguration in the 1980s, the pride and joy of the SNCF is the TGV (*train à grande vitesse*, ie 'high-speed train'), pronounced 'teh zheh veh', which zips passengers along at speeds of up to 320km/h.

The main TGV lines (or LGVs, short for *lignes à grande vitesse*, ie 'high-speed rail lines') head north, east, southeast and southwest from Paris (trains use slower conventional tracks to get to destinations off the main line):

**LGV Nord** Links Paris Gare du Nord with Arras, Lille, Calais, Brussels (Bruxelles-Midi), Amsterdam, Cologne and, via the Channel Tunnel (Eurostar trains), Ashford, Ebbsfleet and London St Pancras.

**LGV Est Européenne** Connects Paris Gare de l'Est with Reims, Nancy, Metz, Strasbourg, Zurich and Germany, including Frankfurt and Stuttgart. The super-high-speed track stretches as far east as Strasbourg.

**LGV Sud-Est, LGV Rhône-Alpes and LGV Méditerranée** Link Paris Gare de Lyon with the southeast, including Dijon, Lyon, Geneva, the Alps, Avignon, Marseille, Nice and Montpellier.

**LGV Bretagne-Pays de la Loire** Links Paris Gare Montparnasse with Rennes and Nantes.

**LGV Atlantique and LGV Sud Europe Atlantique** Link Paris Gare Montparnasse with western and southwestern France, including Tours, Poitiers and Bordeaux.

**LGV Rhin-Rhône** France's first province-to-province high-speed rail route links Alsace (Mulhouse) with Dijon and Lyon.

TGV tracks are interconnected east of Paris, making it possible to go directly from, for example, Lyon to Nantes (4¾ hours) or Lille (three hours) without having to switch trains in Paris or transfer from one of Paris'

six main train stations to another. Stops on the link-up, which runs east and south of Paris, include Charles de Gaulle airport and Disneyland Resort Paris.

Long-distance trains sometimes split at a station – ie, each half of the train heads off for a different destination. Check the destination panel on your car as you board or you could wind up very far from where you intended to go.

Other types of train:

**TER** (Train Express Régional) A train that is not a TGV is often referred to as a *corail* or, for intraregional services, a TER.

**Transilien** ([www.transilien.com](http://www.transilien.com)) SNCF services in the Île de France area in and around Paris.

## Tickets & Reservations

Train travel can be reserved and ticketed online via the SNCF's easy-to-use booking website, [www.oui.sncf](http://www.oui.sncf). The SNCF's smartphone app, [OUI.sncf](http://OUI.sncf), which lets you buy and store your tickets, is available from Google Play and the App Store.

Large stations often have separate ticket windows for *international*, *grandes lignes* (long-haul) and *banlieue* (suburban) lines, and for people whose train is about to leave (*départ immédiat* or *départ dans l'heure*). Nearly every SNCF station has at least one *borne libre-service* (self-service terminal) or *billetterie automatique* (automatic ticket machine) that accepts both cash and PIN-chip credit cards. Select the Union Jack for instructions in English.

Before boarding the train, paper tickets must be validated (*composter*) by time-stamping them in a *composteur*, a yellow post located on the way to the platform. If you forget (or don't have a ticket for some other reason), find a conductor on the train before they find you – otherwise you can be fined.

## REIMBURSEMENTS

The SNCF's cheapest tickets are non-reimbursable. To change your departure time, permitted up to 30 minutes before your scheduled departure, you may have to pay a fee of €5 (less than 30 days before your scheduled departure) or €15 (less than two days). Full-price tickets can be changed or reimbursed in full, with no fees, up to 30 minutes before departure. A *billet dématérialisé* (ticket bought online) can be reimbursed online, with funds returned to your credit card within three to five days.

## SNCF Fares & Discounts

Full-fare tickets can be quite expensive. Fortunately, all sorts of discounts are available and the SNCF booking website, [www.oui.sncf](http://www.oui.sncf), makes it easy to find the very best fare. Station staff can also help. But first, the basics:

- ➔ Ticket prices for some trains, including most TGVs, are pricier during peak periods.
- ➔ The further in advance you reserve, the lower the fares.
- ➔ Children under four travel for free, or pay €9 for a *forfait bambin* to any destination if they need a seat.
- ➔ Children aged four to 11 travel for half-price.
- ➔ Some French *régions* offer special discounts; see [www.ter.sncf.com](http://www.ter.sncf.com) (scroll down and click on the map) for offers, including family and group tickets (eg in Alsace).
- ➔ First-class travel, where available, gives you more space and costs 20% to 40% extra.

## OUIGO DISCOUNT FARES

Ouigo ([www.ouigo.com](http://www.ouigo.com)) is an online-only service of the SNCF that lets you travel on high-speed TGVs *à petit prix* (for a 'small price') to 41 destinations in France, including

many major cities. The Ouigo app is available from Google Play and the App Store.

- ➔ Tickets can only be purchased online up to 1½ hours before departure.
- ➔ The minimum single fare is €10. Children under 12 pay a flat €5 fare (€8 for Paris stations or trips over 2¾ hours).
- ➔ Each passenger is allowed to bring on board one piece of cabin luggage (44cm x 35cm x 25cm) and one piece of hand luggage (36cm x 27cm x 15cm); an extra bag and/or a larger bag costs €5 (€20 if you rock up at the train without registering the bag online in advance).
- ➔ If you want to plug in while aboard, be sure to reserve a seat with electric plug socket for an additional €2.

### DISCOUNT CARDS

Several discount cards (valid for one year) offer reductions of 30% or more on TGV Inoui and Intercités travel.

#### Carte Avantage Jeune (€49)

For travellers aged 12 to 27.

#### Carte Avantage Sénior (€49)

For travellers over 60.

#### Carte Avantage Famille (€49)

An adult and up to three children aged four to 11 get discounts for return travel that includes a weekend night, or only involves travel on a Saturday or Sunday.

#### Carte Avantage Weekend (€49)

For people aged 27 to 59. Offers discounts on return weekend journeys that include either a night away or only involve travel on a Saturday or Sunday.

### Left-Luggage Facilities

Because of security concerns, only 13 big-city train stations have *consignes*

*automatiques* (left-luggage lockers). In Dijon, Nice and Lille (Lille-Europe) you can leave your bags in a *consigne manuelle* (staffed left-luggage facility) where items are handed over in person and X-rayed before being stowed. Charges are €5.50 to €9.50 for 24 hours, depending on size.

### Rail Passes

Residents of Europe who do not live in France can purchase an InterRail One Country Pass ([www.interrail.eu](http://www.interrail.eu)) that entitles its bearer to unlimited travel on SNCF trains for three to eight days over the course of a month. Prices for adults for three/five/eight days of travel are €146/197/258; travellers aged 12 to 27 pay €127/170/224. You need to really rack up the kilometres to make this pass worthwhile.

# Language

Standard French is taught and spoken throughout France. This said, regional accents and dialects are an important part of identity in certain regions, but you'll have no trouble being understood anywhere if you stick to standard French, which we've also used in this chapter.

The sounds used in spoken French can almost all be found in English. There are a couple of exceptions: nasal vowels (represented in our pronunciation guides by **o** or **u** followed by an almost inaudible nasal consonant sound **m**, **n** or **ng**), the 'funny' *u* (**ew** in our guides) and the deep-in-the-throat *r*. Bearing these few points in mind and reading our pronunciation guides below as if they were English, you'll be understood just fine.

## BASICS

French has two words for 'you' – use the polite form *vous* unless you're talking to close friends, children or animals in which case you'd use the informal *tu*. You can also use *tu* when a person invites you to use *tu*.

All nouns in French are either masculine or feminine, and so are the adjectives, articles *le/la* (the) and *un/une* (a), and possessives *mon/ma* (my), *ton/ta* (your) and *son/sa* (his, her) that go with the nouns. In this chapter we have included masculine and female forms where necessary, separated by a slash and indicated with 'm/f'.

### WANT MORE?

For in-depth language information and handy phrases, check out Lonely Planet's *French Phrasebook*. You'll find it at [shop.lonelyplanet.com](http://shop.lonelyplanet.com), or you can buy Lonely Planet's iPhone phrasebooks at the Apple App Store.

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>Bonjour.</i>	bon-zhoor
<b>Goodbye.</b>	<i>Au revoir.</i>	o-rer-vwa
<b>Excuse me.</b>	<i>Excusez-moi.</i>	ek-skew-zay-mwa
<b>Sorry.</b>	<i>Pardon.</i>	par-don
<b>Yes.</b>	<i>Oui.</i>	wee
<b>No.</b>	<i>Non.</i>	non
<b>Please.</b>	<i>S'il vous plaît.</i>	seel voo play
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Merci.</i>	mair-see
<b>You're welcome.</b>	<i>De rien.</i>	der ree-en

<b>How are you?</b>	<i>Comment allez-vous?</i>	ko-mon ta-lay-voo
<b>Fine, and you?</b>	<i>Bien, merci. Et vous?</i>	byun mair-see ay voo
<b>You're welcome.</b>	<i>De rien.</i>	der ree-en
<b>My name is ...</b>	<i>Je m'appelle ...</i>	zher ma-pel ...
<b>What's your name?</b>	<i>Comment vous appelez-vous?</i>	ko-mon voo-za-play voo
<b>Do you speak English?</b>	<i>Parlez-vous anglais?</i>	par-lay-voo ong-glai
<b>I don't understand.</b>	<i>Je ne comprends pas.</i>	zher ner kom-pron pa

## ACCOMMODATION

<b>Do you have any rooms available?</b>	<i>Est-ce que vous avez des chambres libres?</i>	es-ker voo za-vay day shom-brer lee-brer
<b>How much is it per night/person?</b>	<i>Quel est le prix par nuit/personne?</i>	kel ay ler pree par nwee/per-son
<b>Is breakfast included?</b>	<i>Est-ce que le petit déjeuner est inclus?</i>	es-ker ler per-tee day-zher-nay ayt en-klew

## KEY PATTERNS

To get by in France, mix and match these simple patterns with words of your choice:

**Where's (the entry)?**

Où est (l'entrée)? oo ay (lon-tray)

**Where can I (buy a ticket)?**

Où est-ce que je peux (acheter un billet)? oo es-ker zher per (ash-tay un bee-yay)

**When's (the next train)?**

Quand est (le prochain train)? kon ay (ler pro-shun trun)

**How much is (a room)?**

C'est combien pour (une chambre)? say kom-buyn poor (ewn shom-brer)

**Do you have (a map)?**

Avez-vous (une carte)? a-vay voo (ewn kart)

**Is there (a toilet)?**

Y a-t-il (des toilettes)? ee a teel (day twa-let)

**I'd like (to book a room).**

Je voudrais (réserver une chambre). zher voo-dray (ray-ser-vay ewn shom-brer)

**Can I (enter)?**

Puis-je (entrer)? pweezh (on-tray)

**Could you please (help)?**

Pouvez-vous (m'aider), s'il vous plaît? poo-vay voo (may-day) seel voo play

**Do I have to (book a seat)?**

Faut-il (réserver une place)? fo-teel (ray-ser-vay ewn plas)

campsite	camping	kom-peeng
dorm	dortoir	dor-twar
guest house	pension	pon-syon
hotel	hôtel	o-tel
youth hostel	auberge de jeunesse	o-berzh der zher-nes
a ... room	une chambre ...	ewn shom-brer ...
single	à un lit	a un lee
double	avec un grand lit	a-vek un gron lee
twin	avec des lits jumeaux	a-vek day lee zhew-mo
with (a)...	avec ...	a-vek ...
air-con	climatiseur	klee-ma-tee-zer
bathroom	une salle de bains	ewn sal der bun
window	fenêtre	fer-nay-trer

## DIRECTIONS

**Where's ...?**

Où est ...? oo ay ...

**What's the address?**

Quelle est l'adresse? kel ay la-dres

**Could you write the address, please?**

Est-ce que vous pourriez écrire l'adresse, s'il vous plaît? es-ker voo poo-ryay ay-keer la-dres seel voo play

**Can you show me (on the map)?**

Pouvez-vous m'indiquer (sur la carte)? poo-vay-voo mun-dee-kay (sewr la kart)

**at the corner** au coin o kwun

**at the traffic lights** aux feux o fer

**behind** derrière dair-ryair

**in front of** devant der-von

**far (from)** loin (de) lwun (der)

**left** gauche gosh

**near (to)** près (de) pray (der)

**next to ...** à côté de ... a ko-tay der ...

**opposite ...** en face de ... on fas der ...

**right** droite drwat

**straight ahead** tout droit too drwa

## EATING &amp; DRINKING

**What would you recommend?**

Qu'est-ce que vous conseillez? kes-ker voo kon-say-yay

**What's in that dish?**

Quels sont les ingrédients? kel son lay zun-gray-dyon

**I'm a vegetarian.**

Je suis végétarien/ végétarienne. zher swee vay-zhay-ta-ryun/ vay-zhay-ta-ryen (m/f)

**I don't eat ...**

Je ne mange pas ... zher ner monzh pa ...

**Cheers!**

Santé! son-tay

**That was delicious.**

C'était délicieux! say-tay day-lee-syer

**Please bring the bill.**

Apportez-moi l'addition, s'il vous plaît. a-por-tay-mwa la-dee-syon seel voo play

**I'd like to reserve a table for ...** Je voudrais réserver une table pour ... zher voo-dray ray-zair-vay ewn ta-bler poor ...

**(eight) o'clock** (vingt) heures (vungt) er

**(two) people** (deux) personnes (der) pair-son

## Key Words

<b>appetiser</b>	<i>entrée</i>	on-tray
<b>bottle</b>	<i>bouteille</i>	boo-tay
<b>breakfast</b>	<i>petit déjeuner</i>	per-tee day-zher-nay
<b>children's menu</b>	<i>menu pour enfants</i>	mer-new poor on-fon
<b>cold</b>	<i>froid</i>	frwa
<b>delicatessen</b>	<i>traiteur</i>	tray-ter
<b>dinner</b>	<i>dîner</i>	dee-nay
<b>dish</b>	<i>plat</i>	pla
<b>food</b>	<i>nourriture</i>	noo-ree-tewr
<b>fork</b>	<i>fourchette</i>	foor-shet
<b>glass</b>	<i>verre</i>	vair
<b>grocery store</b>	<i>épicerie</i>	ay-pees-ree
<b>highchair</b>	<i>chaise haute</i>	shay zot
<b>hot</b>	<i>chaud</i>	sho
<b>knife</b>	<i>couteau</i>	koo-to
<b>local speciality</b>	<i>spécialité locale</i>	spay-sya-lee-tay lo-kal
<b>lunch</b>	<i>déjeuner</i>	day-zher-nay
<b>main course</b>	<i>plat principal</i>	pla prun-see-pal
<b>market</b>	<i>marché</i>	mar-shay
<b>menu (in English)</b>	<i>carte (en anglais)</i>	kart (on ong-glay)
<b>plate</b>	<i>assiette</i>	a-syet
<b>spoon</b>	<i>cuillère</i>	kwee-yair
<b>wine list</b>	<i>carte des vins</i>	kart day vun
<b>with/without</b>	<i>avec/sans</i>	a-vek/son

## Meat & Fish

<b>beef</b>	<i>bœuf</i>	berf
<b>chicken</b>	<i>poulet</i>	poo-lay
<b>crab</b>	<i>crabe</i>	krab
<b>lamb</b>	<i>agneau</i>	a-nyo
<b>oyster</b>	<i>huître</i>	wee-trer
<b>pork</b>	<i>porc</i>	por
<b>snail</b>	<i>escargot</i>	es-kar-go
<b>squid</b>	<i>calmar</i>	kal-mar
<b>turkey</b>	<i>dinde</i>	dund
<b>veal</b>	<i>veau</i>	vo

## Fruit & Vegetables

<b>apple</b>	<i>pomme</i>	pom
<b>apricot</b>	<i>abricot</i>	ab-ree-ko
<b>asparagus</b>	<i>asperge</i>	a-spairzh
<b>beans</b>	<i>haricots</i>	a-ree-ko
<b>beetroot</b>	<i>betterave</i>	be-trav

<b>cabbage</b>	<i>chou</i>	shoo
<b>cherry</b>	<i>cerise</i>	ser-reez
<b>corn</b>	<i>maïs</i>	ma-ees
<b>cucumber</b>	<i>concombre</i>	kong-kom-brer
<b>grape</b>	<i>raisin</i>	ray-zun
<b>lemon</b>	<i>citron</i>	see-tron
<b>lettuce</b>	<i>laitue</i>	lay-tew
<b>mushroom</b>	<i>champignon</i>	shom-pee-nyon
<b>peach</b>	<i>pêche</i>	pesh
<b>peas</b>	<i>petit pois</i>	per-tee pwa
<b>(red/green) pepper</b>	<i>poivron (rouge/vert)</i>	pwa-vron (roozh/vair)
<b>pineapple</b>	<i>ananas</i>	a-na-nas
<b>plum</b>	<i>prune</i>	prewn
<b>potato</b>	<i>pomme de terre</i>	pom der tair
<b>prune</b>	<i>pruneau</i>	prew-no
<b>pumpkin</b>	<i>citrouille</i>	see-troo-yer
<b>shallot</b>	<i>échalote</i>	eh-sha-lot
<b>spinach</b>	<i>épinards</i>	eh-pee-nar
<b>strawberry</b>	<i>fraise</i>	frez
<b>tomato</b>	<i>tomate</i>	to-mat
<b>vegetable</b>	<i>légume</i>	lay-gewm

## Other

<b>bread</b>	<i>pain</i>	pun
<b>butter</b>	<i>beurre</i>	ber
<b>cheese</b>	<i>fromage</i>	fro-mazh
<b>egg</b>	<i>œuf</i>	erf
<b>honey</b>	<i>miel</i>	myel
<b>jam</b>	<i>confiture</i>	kon-fee-tewr
<b>lentils</b>	<i>lentilles</i>	lon-tee-yer
<b>pasta/noodles</b>	<i>pâtes</i>	pat
<b>pepper</b>	<i>poivre</i>	pwa-vrer
<b>rice</b>	<i>riz</i>	ree
<b>salt</b>	<i>sel</i>	sel
<b>sugar</b>	<i>sucré</i>	sew-krer
<b>vinegar</b>	<i>vinaigre</i>	vee-nay-grer

## SIGNS

<b>Entrée</b>	Entrance
<b>Femmes</b>	Women
<b>Fermé</b>	Closed
<b>Hommes</b>	Men
<b>Interdit</b>	Prohibited
<b>Ouvert</b>	Open
<b>Renseignements</b>	Information
<b>Sortie</b>	Exit
<b>Toilettes/WC</b>	Toilets



## Drinks

<b>beer</b>	<i>bière</i>	bee-yair
<b>coffee</b>	<i>café</i>	ka-fay
<b>(orange) juice</b>	<i>jus (d'orange)</i>	zhew (do-ronzh)
<b>milk</b>	<i>lait</i>	lay
<b>tea</b>	<i>thé</i>	tay
<b>(mineral) water</b>	<i>eau (minérale)</i>	o (mee-nay-ral)
<b>(red) wine</b>	<i>vin (rouge)</i>	vun (roozh)
<b>(white) wine</b>	<i>vin (blanc)</i>	vun (blong)

## EMERGENCIES

### Help!

*Au secours!* o skoor

### I'm lost.

*Je suis perdu/perdue.* zhe swee-pair-dew (m/f)

### Leave me alone!

*Fichez-moi la paix!* fee-shay-mwa la pay

### There's been an accident.

*Il y a eu un accident.* eel ya ew un ak-see-don

### Call a doctor.

*Appelez un médecin.* a-play un mayd-sun

### Call the police.

*Appelez la police.* a-play la po-lees

### I'm ill.

*Je suis malade.* zher swee ma-lad

### It hurts here.

*J'ai une douleur ici.* zhay ewn doo-ler ee-see

### I'm allergic to ...

*Je suis allergique ...* zher swee za-lair-zheek ...

## SHOPPING & SERVICES

### I'd like to buy ...

*Je voudrais acheter ...* zher voo-dray ash-tay ...

### May I look at it?

*Est-ce que je peux le voir?* es-ker zher per ler vwar

### I'm just looking.

*Je regarde.* zher rer-gard

### I don't like it.

*Cela ne me plaît pas.* ser-la ner mer play pa

### How much is it?

*C'est combien?* say kom-byun

### QUESTION WORDS

<b>How?</b>	<i>Comment?</i>	ko-mon
<b>What?</b>	<i>Quoi?</i>	kwa
<b>When?</b>	<i>Quand?</i>	kon
<b>Where?</b>	<i>Où?</i>	oo
<b>Who?</b>	<i>Qui?</i>	kee
<b>Why?</b>	<i>Pourquoi?</i>	poor-kwa

### It's too expensive.

*C'est trop cher.* say tro shair

### Can you lower the price?

*Vous pouvez baisser le prix?* voo poo-vay bay-say ler pree

### There's a mistake in the bill.

*Il y a une erreur dans la note.* eel ya ewn ay-rer don la not

### ATM

*guichet automatique de banque* gee-shay o-to-ma-teek der bonk

### credit card

*carte de crédit* kart der kray-dee

### internet cafe

*cybercafé* see-bair-ka-fay

### post office

*bureau de poste* bew-ro der post

### tourist office

*office de tourisme* o-fees der too-rees-mer

## TIME & DATES

### What time is it?

*Quelle heure est-il?* kel er ay til

### It's (eight) o'clock.

*Il est (huit) heures.* il ay (weet) er

### It's half past (10).

*Il est (dix) heures et demie.* il ay (deez) er ay day-mee

### morning

*matin* ma-tun

### afternoon

*après-midi* a-pray-mee-dee

### evening

*soir* swar

### yesterday

*hier* yair

### today

*aujourd'hui* o-zhoor-dwee

### tomorrow

*demain* der-mun

### Monday

*lundi* lun-dee

### Tuesday

*mardi* mar-dee

### Wednesday

*mercredi* mair-krer-dee

### Thursday

*jeudi* zher-dee

### Friday

*vendredi* von-drer-dee

### Saturday

*samedi* sam-dee

### Sunday

*dimanche* dee-monsh

### January

*janvier* zhon-vyay

### February

*février* fayv-ryay

### March

*mars* mars

### April

*avril* a-vreeel

### May

*mai* may

### June

*juin* zhwon

### July

*juillet* zhwee-yay

### August

*août* oot

### September

*septembre* sep-tom-brer

### October

*octobre* ok-to-brer

### November

*novembre* no-vom-brer

### December

*décembre* day-som-brer

# TRANSPORT

## Public Transport

<b>boat</b>	<i>bateau</i>	ba-to
<b>bus</b>	<i>bus</i>	bews
<b>plane</b>	<i>avion</i>	a-vyon
<b>train</b>	<i>train</i>	trun

### I want to go to ...

*Je voudrais aller à ...* zher voo-dray a-lay a ...

### Does it stop at (Amboise)?

*Est-ce qu'il s'arrête à (Amboise)?* es-kil sa-ret a (om-bwaz)

### At what time does it leave/arrive?

*À quelle heure est-ce qu'il part/arrive?* a kel er es kil par/a-reev

### Can you tell me when we get to ...?

*Pouvez-vous me dire quand nous arrivons à ...?* poo-vay-voo mer deer kon noo za-ree-von a ...

### I want to get off here.

*Je veux descendre ici.* zher ver day-son-drer ee-see

<b>first</b>	<i>premier</i>	prer-myay
<b>last</b>	<i>dernier</i>	dair-nyay
<b>next</b>	<i>prochain</i>	pro-shun
<b>a ... ticket</b>	<i>un billet ...</i>	un bee-yay ...
<b>1st-class</b>	<i>de première classe</i>	der prer-myay klas
<b>2nd-class</b>	<i>de deuxième classe</i>	der der-zyem las
<b>one-way</b>	<i>simple</i>	sum-pler
<b>return</b>	<i>aller et retour</i>	a-lay ay rer-toor

<b>aisle seat</b>	<i>côté couloir</i>	ko-tay kool-war
<b>delayed</b>	<i>en retard</i>	on rer-tar
<b>cancelled</b>	<i>annulé</i>	a-new-lay
<b>platform</b>	<i>quai</i>	kay
<b>ticket office</b>	<i>guichet</i>	gee-shay
<b>timetable</b>	<i>horaire</i>	o-rair
<b>train station</b>	<i>gare</i>	gar
<b>window seat</b>	<i>côté fenêtre</i>	ko-tay fe-ne-trer

## Driving & Cycling

<b>I'd like to hire a ...</b>	<i>Je voudrais louer ...</i>	zher voo-dray loo-way ...
<b>4WD</b>	<i>un quatre-quatre</i>	un kat-kat
<b>car</b>	<i>une voiture</i>	ewn vva-tewr
<b>bicycle</b>	<i>un vélo</i>	un vay-lo

## NUMBERS

<b>1</b>	<i>un</i>	un
<b>2</b>	<i>deux</i>	der
<b>3</b>	<i>trois</i>	trwa
<b>4</b>	<i>quatre</i>	ka-trer
<b>5</b>	<i>cinq</i>	sungk
<b>6</b>	<i>six</i>	sees
<b>7</b>	<i>sept</i>	set
<b>8</b>	<i>huit</i>	weet
<b>9</b>	<i>neuf</i>	nerf
<b>10</b>	<i>dix</i>	dees
<b>20</b>	<i>vingt</i>	vung
<b>30</b>	<i>trente</i>	tront
<b>40</b>	<i>quarante</i>	ka-ront
<b>50</b>	<i>cinquante</i>	sung-kont
<b>60</b>	<i>soixante</i>	swa-son
<b>70</b>	<i>soixante-dix</i>	swa-son-dees
<b>80</b>	<i>quatre-vingts</i>	ka-trer-vung
<b>90</b>	<i>quatre-vingt-dix</i>	ka-trer-vung-dees
<b>100</b>	<i>cent</i>	son
<b>1000</b>	<i>mille</i>	meel

<b>motorcycle</b>	<i>une moto</i>	ewn mo-to
<b>child seat</b>	<i>siège-enfant</i>	syezh-on-fon
<b>diesel</b>	<i>diesel</i>	dyay-zel
<b>helmet</b>	<i>casque</i>	kask
<b>mechanic</b>	<i>mécanicien</i>	may-ka-nee-syun
<b>petrol/gas</b>	<i>essence</i>	ay-sons
<b>service station</b>	<i>station-service</i>	sta-syon-ser-vees

### Is this the road to ...?

*C'est la route pour ...?* say la root poor ...

### (How long) Can I park here?

*(Combien de temps) Est-ce que je peux stationner ici?* (kom-byun der tom) es-ker zher per sta-syo-nay ee-see

### The car/motorbike has broken down (at ...).

*La voiture/moto est tombée en panne (à ...).* la vva-tewr/mo-to ay tom-bay on pan (a ...)

### I have a flat tyre.

*Mon pneu est à plat.* mom pner ay ta pla

### I've run out of petrol.

*Je suis en panne d'essence.* zher swee zon pan day-sons

### I've lost my car keys.

*J'ai perdu les clés de ma voiture.* zhay per-dew lay klay der ma vva-tewr

## GLOSSARY

(*m*) indicates masculine gender,  
(*f*) feminine gender and (*pl*) plural

**accueil** (m) – reception

**alignements** (m pl) – a series of standing stones, or menhirs, in straight lines

**AOC** – Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée; system of French wine and olive oil classification showing that items have met government regulations as to where and how they are produced

**AOP** – Appellation d'Origine Protégée; Europe-wide equivalent to AOC

**arrondissement** (m) – administrative division of large city; abbreviated on signs as 1er (1st arrondissement), 2e (2nd) etc

**atelier** (m) – workshop or studio

**auberge** – inn

**auberge de jeunesse** (f) – youth hostel

**baie** (f) – bay

**bassin** (m) – bay or basin

**bastide** (f) – medieval settlement in southwestern France, usually built on a grid plan and surrounding an arcaded square; fortified town; also a country house in Provence

**belle époque** (f) – literally 'beautiful age'; era of elegance and gaiety characterising fashionable Parisian life in the period preceding WWI

**billet** (m) – ticket

**billetterie** (f) – ticket office or counter

**bouchon** – Lyonnais bistro

**boulangerie** (f) – bakery or bread shop

**boules** (f pl) – a game similar to lawn bowls played with heavy metal balls on a sandy pitch; also called *pétanque*

**brasserie** (f) – restaurant similar to a *café* but usually serving full meals all day (original meaning: brewery)

**bureau de change** (m) – exchange bureau

**bureau de poste** (m) – post office

**carnet** (m) – a book of five or 10 bus, tram or metro tickets sold at a reduced rate

**carrefour** (m) – crossroad

**carte** (f) – card; menu; map

**cave** (f) – wine cellar

**chambre** (f) – room

**chambre d'hôte** (f) – B&B

**charcuterie** (f) – butcher's shop and delicatessen; the prepared meats it sells

**cimetière** (m) – cemetery

**col** (m) – mountain pass

**consigne** or **consigne manuelle** (f) – left-luggage office

**consigne automatique** (f) – left-luggage locker

**correspondance** (f) – linking tunnel or walkway, eg in the metro; rail or bus connection

**cour** (f) – courtyard

**crémèrie** (f) – dairy or cheese shop

**dégustation** (f) – tasting

**demi** (m) – 330mL glass of beer

**demi-pension** (f) – half board (B&B with either lunch or dinner)

**département** (m) – administrative division of France

**donjon** (m) – castle keep

**église** (f) – church

**épicerie** (f) – small grocery store

**ESF** – École de Ski Français; France's leading ski school

**fest-noz** or **festoù-noz** (pl) – night festival

**fête** (f) – festival

**Fnac** – retail chain selling entertainment goods, electronics and tickets

**forêt** (f) – forest

**formule** or **formule rapide** (f) – lunchtime set similar to a *menu* but with two of three courses on offer (eg starter and main or main and dessert)

**fromagerie** (f) – cheese shop

**FUAJ** – Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse; France's major hostel association

**funiculaire** (m) – funicular railway

**galerie** (f) – covered shopping centre or arcade

**gare** or **gare SNCF** (f) – railway station

**gare maritime** (f) – ferry terminal

**gare routière** (f) – bus station

**gendarmérie** (f) – police station; police force

**gîte d'étape** (m) – hikers accommodation, usually in a village

**golfe** (m) – gulf

**GR** – *grande randonnée*; long-distance hiking trail

**grand cru** (m) – wine of exceptional quality

**halles** (f pl) – covered market; central food market

**halte routière** (f) – bus stop

**horaire** (m) – timetable or schedule

**hostellerie** – hostelry

**hôtel de ville** (m) – city or town hall

**hôtel particulier** (m) – private mansion

**intra-muros** – old city (literally 'within the walls')

**jardin** (m) – garden

**jardin botanique** (m) – botanic garden

**laverie** (f) or

**lavomatique** (m) – laundrette

**libre** – vacant, available

**mairie** (f) – city or town hall

**maison du parc** (f) – a national park's headquarters and/or visitors centre

**marché** (m) – market

**marché aux puces** (m) – flea market

**marché couvert** (m) – covered market

**mas** (m) – farmhouse in southern France

**menu** (m) – fixed-price meal with two or more courses

**mistral** (m) – strong north or northwest wind in southern France

**musée** (m) – museum

## GLOSSARY

**navette** (f) – shuttle bus, train or boat

**occupé** – occupied

**palais de justice** (m) – law courts

**parapente** – paragliding

**parlement** (m) – parliament

**parvis** (m) – square

**pâtisserie** (f) – cake and pastry shop

**pétanque** (f) – a game similar to lawn bowls played with heavy metal balls on a sandy pitch; also called *boules*

**petit déjeuner** – breakfast

**place** (f) – square or plaza

**plage** (f) – beach

**plan** (m) – city map

**plan du quartier** (m) – map of nearby streets (hung on the wall near metro exits)

**plat du jour** (m) – daily special in a restaurant

**pont** (m) – bridge

**porte** (f) – gate in a city wall

**poste** (f) – post office

**préfecture** (f) – prefecture (capital of a *département*)

**presqu'île** (f) – peninsula

**puy** (m) – volcanic cone or peak

**quai** (m) – quay or railway platform

**quartier** (m) – quarter or district

**refuge** (m) – mountain hut, basic shelter for hikers

**région** (f) – administrative division of France

**rond point** (m) – roundabout

**salon de thé** – tearoom

**sentier** (m) – trail

**service des urgences** (f) – casualty ward

**ski de fond** – cross-country skiing

**SNCF** – Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer; state-owned railway company

**SNCM** – Société Nationale Maritime Corse-Méditerranée; state-owned ferry company linking Corsica and mainland France

**sortie** (f) – exit

**square** (m) – public garden

**tabac** (m) – tobacconist (also selling bus tickets, phonecards etc)

**table d'hôte** – set menu at a fixed price

**taxe de séjour** (f) – municipal tourist tax

**télécarte** (f) – phonecard

**télécabine** – gondola

**téléphérique** (m) – cableway or cable car

**téleski** (m) – chairlift

**téleski** (m) – ski lift or tow

**terroir** – land

**TGV** – *Train à Grande Vitesse*; high-speed train or bullet train

**tour** (f) – tower

**vallée** (f) – valley

**VF** (f) – *version française*; a film dubbed in French

**vieille ville** (f) – old town or old city

**ville neuve** (f) – new town or new city

**VO** (f) – *version originale*; a nondubbed film with French subtitles

**VTT** – *vélo tout terrain*; mountain bike

**winstub** – traditional Alsatian eatery

# Behind the Scenes

## SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We love to hear from travellers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-travelled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to your submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition – the most useful submissions are rewarded with a selection of digital PDF chapters.

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## OUR READERS

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## THIS BOOK

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# Index

## A

abbeys, see churches & cathedrals  
 absinthe 426  
 accessible travel 972  
 accommodation 24, 28-9, 972-4, see also *individual locations*  
*hotels particuliers* 758  
 internet resources 29, 135, 973  
 language 998-9  
 activities 21, 30-3, 52-8, see also *individual activities*  
 Agde 764  
 Aigues-Mortes 821  
 Aiguilles de Port Coton 314  
 air travel 986, 988  
 Aix-en-Provence 808-13, **810, 16**  
 Ajaccio 913-16, **914**  
 Albi 735-8, **736**  
 Algajola 909  
 Alpe d'Huez 549-50  
 Alpes-de-Haute-Provence 845-9  
 Alsace 61, 351-91, **352-3**  
 accommodation 350  
 climate 350  
 food 41-2  
 highlights 350, 352-3  
 travel seasons 350  
 Alsatian language 362  
 Amboise 415-17  
 Amiens 235-8, **236**  
 amusement parks  
 Disneyland Park 189  
 Les Machines de l'Île de Nantes 641, **4**  
 Vulcania 577  
 Walt Disney Studios Park 189  
 animals, see wildlife  
 Angers 428-31, **430**  
 Anjou 422-31  
 Annecy 523-8, **524**

Antibes 871-4  
 aperitifs 953  
 Apt 838-40  
 aquariums  
 Aquarium de Biarritz 680  
 Aquarium du Grand Lyon 485  
 Aquarium La Rochelle 650-1  
 Biodiversarium 784-5  
 Cité de la Mer 271  
 Grand Aquarium 285  
 Musée Océanographique de Monaco 890  
 Nausicaâ 223  
 Océanopolis 297-8  
 Arbois 556-7  
 Arc de Triomphe (Paris) 84-5, **84**  
 Arcachon 667-8  
 Arc-et-Senans 556  
 archaeological sites  
 Alignements de Kerlescan 312  
 Alignements de Kermario 312  
 Alignements du Méneac 312  
 Bibracte 467  
 Cairn de Gavrinis 315  
 Cairn de Petit Mont 315  
 Géant du Manio 312  
 Locmariaquer Megaliths 315  
 MuséoParc Alésia 453  
 Temple de Janus 469  
 Théâtre Romain (Autun) 468  
 Théâtre Romain (Lyon) 483  
 Tumulus de Kercado 312  
 Tumulus St-Michel 312  
 architecture 962-6  
 Cabanon Le Corbusier 894  
 Chapelle du Rosaire 877  
 Escalier Monumental 742  
 La Croisette 865  
 Languedoc-Roussillon 786-7, **786-7**  
 Medieval Burgundy 474-5, **474-5**  
 Promenade des Anglais 454  
 Villa E-1027 894  
 area codes 23, 981-2  
 Arles 813-18, **814**

Armagnac (brandy) 741  
 Armagnac (region) 740-3  
 Arras 217-19  
 Arromanches-les-Bains 261  
 art II, 960-1  
 Artois 216-19  
 arts 955-61  
 Atlantic Coast 62, 638-69, **640**  
 climate 638  
 highlights 638, 640  
 travel seasons 638  
 ATMs 979  
 Aubusson 602-3  
 Auch 742-3  
 Autoire 627  
 Autun 468-9  
 Auvergne 62, 564-91, **566**  
 climate 564  
 highlights 564, 566  
 travel seasons 564  
 Auxerre 456-9, **457**  
 Avallon 463-4  
 Avignon 825-31, **826-7**  
 Avize 339-40  
 Avoriaz 520, **562**  
 Azay-le-Rideau 418-19

## B

Baccarat 381-2  
 Bagnères de Luchon 718-19  
 Baie de Somme 226-9  
 ballet 168  
 ballooning 234, 447, 616  
 Balzac, Honoré de 422  
 Banyuls-sur-Mer 784-5  
 bargaining 25  
 basilicas, see churches & cathedrals  
 Bas-Languedoc 748-71  
 Basque Country, see French Basque Country  
 Basque culture 696-7  
 Basque language 690  
 Bastia 901-5, **902**  
 Bastille Day 132  
 bathhouses 718-19  
 bathrooms 982  
 Battle of Normandy 260, **259**

Baume-les-Messieurs 558  
 Bayeux 254-7, **256**  
 Bayonne 674-9, **676**  
 beaches 20  
 Agde 764  
 Antibes 872  
 Arcachon 667  
 Belle Île 314  
 Biarritz 681  
 Calais 221  
 Cannes 867  
 Carnac 309  
 Concarneau 307  
 Corniche des Maures 885  
 Corsica 905, 907, 908, 909, 913, 921, 923  
 D-Day beaches 257-62  
 Dieppe 248  
 Dinard 289  
 Fécamp 250  
 Île de Batz 295  
 Île d'Ouessant 299  
 Juan-les-Pins 873  
 Marseille 798  
 Metz 383  
 Monaco 898  
 Montpellier 760  
 Morgat 301  
 Nice 854  
 Omaha Beach 258  
 Quiberon 312  
 St Tropez 882  
 St-Jean de Luz 689  
 St-Malo 285  
 bears 711, 967  
 Beaujolais 497-9, **476-7**  
 Beauieu-sur-Dordogne 628  
 Beaumont-du-Périgord 613  
 Beaune 448-54, **449**  
 beer 130-1, 163, 217  
 Belfort 560-1  
 Belle Époque 934-5  
 Belle Île 313-15, **325**  
 Belvès 613  
 Bergerac 608-11  
 Berghem 365-6, 393  
 Besançon 552-6, **554**  
 Besse-et-St-Anastaise 580-1

Beynac 615-17  
 Béziers 766-7  
 Biarritz 680-5, **682-3, 20**  
 accommodation 681-3  
 activities 681  
 drinking & nightlife 684-5  
 food 683-4  
 sights 680-1  
 tourist information 685  
 travel to/from 685  
 travel within 685  
 bicycle travel, *see* cycling  
 Bielle 714  
 bikinis 939  
 Biot 879  
 bison 774  
 Blésois 402-9  
 Blois 403-7, **404**  
 boat travel 988, 989  
 Amiens 237  
 Annecy 525  
 Arcachon 667-8  
 Auxerre 458  
 Bergerac 609  
 Beynac 616  
 Burgundy 447  
 Colmar 369  
 Côte d'Azur 858  
 Dieppe 248  
 Dordogne River 617  
 Évian-les-Bains 522  
 Les Croisières de  
 St-Cirq-Lapopie 634  
 Loire Valley 398  
 Lyon 486  
 Sète 762  
 St-Malo 285  
 Strasbourg 357  
 St-Tropez 882  
 St-Valery-sur-Somme 228  
 Bonifacio 920-2, **918-19**  
 Bonnieux 842-4  
 books 161, 171  
 Bordeaux 27, 657-64, **658**,  
 638-9  
 accommodation 659-60  
 drinking & nightlife 661-2  
 entertainment 662-3  
 food 660-1  
 shopping 663  
 sights 657-9  
 tourist information 663  
 travel to/from 663-4  
*bouchons* 16, 490, **16**  
 bouillabaisse 801  
 boulangeries 142  
 boules 127, 949  
 Boulogne-sur-Mer 223-5,  
**224-5**  
 Bourdeilles 608  
 Bourg d'Oisans 545-6  
 Bouzigues 763-4

Brantôme 607-8  
 Bréziers 297-9  
 Breton language 307  
 Briançon 550-2  
 Bridges-les-Bains 532  
 bridges  
 Barrage de la Rance 289  
 Pont Alexandre III 83,  
 88, **66-7**  
 Pont d'Arc 503  
 Pont de Normandie 258  
 Pont du Gard 752, **15**  
 Pont St-Bénézet 827  
 Pont Neuf 113, **182-3**  
 Pont Valentré 628  
 Brittany 60, 280-323,  
**282**  
 climate 280  
 coastline 324-5, **324-5**  
 food 43, 280  
 highlights 280, 282  
 history 283  
 travel seasons 280  
 Bruniquel 735  
 budgeting 23, 25  
 Buoux 844-5  
 Burgundy 61, 435-73, **436**  
 architecture 474-5,  
**474-5**  
 climate 434  
 food 41  
 highlights 434, 436  
 travel seasons 434  
 wine 441, 443-56  
 bus travel 987, 989  
 business hours 23, 980  
 buskers 168  
 butter 288

**C**  
 cabarets 165-6  
 cable cars  
 Grenoble 542  
 Megève/St-Gervais 519  
 Cadouin 614  
 Caen 262-6, **264**  
 Cagnes-sur-Mer 868  
 Cahors 628-33, **630-1**  
 Cairn du Barnenez 297  
 Calais 221-3  
 Calvados 254-71  
 Calvi 909-11  
 Camaret-sur-Mer 302-3  
 Camargue, the 813-21, **18**  
 Camargue Wetlands  
 818-19  
 Camembert 270  
 camping 974  
 Canal du Midi 738, **724-5**  
 Canal St-Martin 114  
 Cancale 290-1  
 Candes-St-Martin 427

Cannes 865-71, **866**  
 accommodation 868-9  
 beaches 867  
 drinking & nightlife 870-1  
 festivals & events 867  
 food 869-70  
 sights 865-7  
 tourist information 868  
 tours 867  
 travel to/within 871  
 canoeing, *see* kayaking &  
 canoeing  
 canyoning  
 Carcassonne 772  
 Gorges du Furon 545  
 Cap Blanc-Nez 219  
 Cap Corse 905-6  
 Cap de la Chèvre 301  
 Cap Fagnet 250  
 Cap Ferret 668-9  
 Cap Gris-Nez 219-20  
 car travel 987, 989-94, *see*  
 also driving routes  
 driving licences 990-1  
 hire 991-2  
 insurance 992  
 language 1002  
 road distance chart 990  
 Carcassonne 767-77, **768**,  
**770**  
 accommodation 769  
 activities 768-9  
 food 769-71  
 sights 767-8  
 tourist information 771  
 travel to/within 771  
 Carnac 309-11  
 Carpentras 836-7  
 Casino de Monte Carlo 890,  
**892-3**  
 Cassel 216-17  
 Castelnaud 615-17  
 Castelnaud-de-Montmiral 735  
 Castet 714  
 castles, *see* châteaux, forts &  
 fortresses, palaces  
 Castres 735  
 cathedrals, *see* churches &  
 cathedrals  
 Cauria plateau 917  
 Causse de Sauveterre 775  
 Causse du Larzac 775  
 Causse Méjean 775  
 Causse Noir 775  
 Cauterets 716-18  
 cave art 636-7, **636-7**  
 caves 624  
 Aven Armand 775  
 Château de Brézac 423  
 Gouffre de Padirac 626  
 Gouffre de Proumeyssac  
 622  
 Grotte de Dargilan 776

Grotte de Font de Gaume  
 623  
 Grotte de Glace 510  
 Grotte de  
 l'Apothicaire 314  
 Grotte de l'Ermitage 666  
 Grotte de l'Observatoire  
 890  
 Grotte de la Luire 545  
 Grotte de la Madeleine 503  
 Grotte de Niaux 722  
 Grotte de Rouffignac 623  
 Grotte des Combarelles  
 623  
 Grotte du Mas d'Azil 720  
 Grotte du Pech Merle 633  
 Grottes de Baume 558  
 Grottes de Bétharram 707  
 Grottes de l'Abbaye 608  
 Grottes de Sare 691  
 Grottes du Cornadore 583  
 Lombrives 720  
 Le Mystère des Faluns 423  
 Sanctuaires Notre Dame de  
 Lourdes 705  
 Troglodytes et Sarcophages  
 423  
 Vézère Valley 621-5, 636-7,  
**621, 636-7**  
 cell phones 22, 981-2  
 cemeteries, *see also* war  
 memorials & cemeteries  
 Cimetière du  
 Montparnasse 121  
 Cimetière du Père Lachaise  
 105, 106-7, **106-7**  
 Cimetière du Vieux Château  
 895-6  
 Les Alysamps 815  
 Les Catacombes 121  
 Centuri 906  
 Cérét 779-81  
 Cézanne, Paul 809  
 Chablis 441, 460-1  
 Chalonnaise 441  
 Chambéry 528-30  
 Chamonix 510-18, **512, 21**,  
**506-7**  
 accommodation 514-16  
 activities 511-14  
 drinking & nightlife 517  
 food 516-17  
 sights 510-11  
 tourist information 517  
 travel to/from 517-18  
 travel within 518  
 Champagne (drink) 333, 335,  
 336-40, 341, 342, 954  
 Champagne (region) 60,  
 327-49, **328**  
 climate 326  
 highlights 326, 328  
 history 329  
 travel seasons 326

- Champagne routes  
Côte des Bar 347-9  
Côte des Blancs 339-40  
Montagne de Reims 336-7  
Vallée de la Marne 337-9  
Champs-Élysées 83  
Chantilly 199-201  
Chartres 201-5, **202**  
Chartreuse 530  
Châteauneuf-du-Pape 830  
châteaux 12-13, 432-3  
Chantier Médiéval de Guédelon 459  
Château Azay-le-Rideau 418-19, **432**  
Château d'Aguilar 780  
Château d'Ançy-le-Franc 461  
Château d'Angers 428-9  
Château d'Annecy 523-4  
Château de Bazoches 466  
Château de Beynac 615  
Château de Biron 612  
Château de Bonaguil 633  
Château de Brézé 423  
Château de Broidoire 611  
Château de Brissac 429  
Château de Caen 263  
Château de Castelnaud-Bretenoux 627  
Château de Castelnaud 615, **6-7**  
Château de Chambord 407-8, **394-5, 432-3**  
Château de Chantilly 199-200  
Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire 409  
Château de Chenonceau 414, **12-13**  
Château de Cheverny 408-9  
Château de Fontainebleau 196-7  
Château de Foix 720, **13**  
Château de Josselin 318  
Château de La Rocheport 446  
Château de Langeais 417-18  
Château de Maulnes 461  
Château de Menthon-St-Bernard 525  
Château de Montségur 721  
Château de Pau 701  
Château de Peyrepertuse 780  
Château de Pompadour 603  
Château de Puilaurens 780  
Château de Puymartin 619  
Château de Quéribus 780  
Château de Ratilly 459  
Château de Saumur 424  
Château de Serrant 429  
Château de Siane-la-Rotonde 846  
Château de St-Malo 283-4  
Château de Sully 469  
Château de Tanlay 461  
Château de Tournoiël 571  
Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte 198-9  
Château de Versailles 190-4, **13, 186-7, 192-3**  
Château de Villandry 417, **433**  
Château de Vincennes 111  
Château des Baux 824  
Château des Ducs de Bretagne 641  
Château des Ducs de Savoie 528  
Château d'If 793  
Château du Haut Koenigsbourg 365, 393  
Château d'Ussé 418  
Château Gaillard (Amboise) 415  
Château Gaillard (Les Andelys) 245  
Château-Musée 223  
Château Royal 783  
Château Royal d'Amboise 415  
Château Royal de Blois 403-5, **432**  
Duché 753  
Logis Royal 419  
Châtillonais 441  
Châtillon-sur-Marne 338-9  
Châtillon-sur-Seine 455-6  
cheese 952  
Auvergne 575, 583, 585  
Burgundy 455  
Camembert 240, 270  
Fondue 506  
French Alps 553  
Roquefort 776  
Chênehutte-Trèves-Cunault 427  
Cherbourg 271-2  
children, travel with 47-51, 115, 514  
Chinon 420-1  
chocolate 359, 527, 679  
Christmas markets 213  
churches & cathedrals  
Abbatiale de la Ste-Trinité 250  
Abbatiale du Mont-Saint-Michel 273  
Abbatiale Saint-Ouen 245  
Abbatiale St-Austremoine 575  
Abbatiale St-Philibert 469  
Abbatiale St-Pierre 603  
Abbaye-aux-Dames 263  
Abbaye d'Aulps 520  
Abbaye de Brantôme 608  
Abbaye de Cîteaux 452  
Abbaye de Clairvaux Monastery 347  
Abbaye de Flaran 741  
Abbaye de Fontenay 454, **474-5**  
Abbaye de Jumièges 246  
Abbaye de Montbenoit 558  
Abbaye de Paimpont 319  
Abbaye de Pontigny 460  
Abbaye de Valloires 226  
Abbaye du Mont St-Michel 273  
Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud 427  
Abbaye Notre-Dame de Sénanque 840  
Abbaye St-Germain 456  
Abbaye St-St Guénolé 301  
Basilique Collégiale Notre Dame 450  
Basilique du Sacré-Cœur 102-3, **102**  
Basilique Notre Dame (Boulogne-sur-Mer) 223  
Basilique Notre Dame de Fourvière 482  
Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde 792  
Basilique Notre Dame du Port 567  
Basilique Notre-Dame du Roncier 318  
Basilique Ste-Madeleine 465  
Basilique St-Rémi 331  
Basilique St-Sauveur 292  
Basilique St-Sernin 727  
Cathédrale de Monaco 890  
Cathédrale de St-Étienne 730  
Cathédrale Notre Dame (Amiens) 235, **206-7**  
Cathédrale Notre Dame (Bayeux) 255  
Cathédrale Notre Dame (Chartres) 203  
Cathédrale Notre Dame (Grenoble) 541  
Cathédrale Notre-Dame (Le Havre) 252  
Cathédrale Notre Dame (Le Puy-en-Velay) 587  
Cathédrale Notre Dame (Montauban) 739  
Cathédrale Notre Dame (Reims) 329-30  
Cathédrale Notre Dame (Rouen) 243  
Cathédrale Notre-Dame (Strasbourg) 354  
Cathédrale Notre-Dame de l'Assomption 567  
Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Nazareth 834  
Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris 112  
Cathédrale Sainte-Marie-Majeure de Marseille 793  
Cathédrale St-André 657  
Cathédrale St-Apollinaire 501  
Cathédrale Ste-Cécile 736  
Cathédrale Ste-Croix 399  
Cathédrale Ste-Marie 674-5  
Cathédrale St-Étienne (Auxerre) 457-8  
Cathédrale St-Étienne (Cahors) 629  
Cathédrale St-Étienne (Limoges) 597  
Cathédrale St-Étienne (Metz) 382  
Cathédrale St-François de Sales 528  
Cathédrale St-Front 604  
Cathédrale St-Gatien 410  
Cathédrale St-Jean (Besançon) 553  
Cathédrale St-Jean (Perpignan) 777  
Cathédrale St-Jean-Baptiste 479  
Cathédrale St-Just 765  
Cathédrale St-Lazare 468  
Cathédrale St-Pierre (Condom) 740  
Cathédrale St-Pierre (Vannes) 316  
Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul (Nantes) 643  
Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul (Troyes) 343  
Cathédrale St-Siffrein 836  
Cathédrale St-Vincent 284  
Chapelle de Notre-Dame du Haut 560  
Chapelle Impériale 681  
Chapelle Ste-Croix 464  
Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe 586-7, **564-5**  
Cloître de la Cathédrale de Fréjus 880  
Collégiale & Cloître Saint-Salvi 737  
Collégiale St-Lazare 463  
Collégiale St-Martin 371  
Couvent des Jacobins 727  
Église Abbatiale 338, 470  
Église de la Madeleine 88  
Église des Dominicains 370  
Église des Stes-Maries 820  
Église Notre Dame 439  
Église Notre-Dame de Croaz Batz 294



- Église Notre-Dame-la-Grande 648  
 Église St-Aignan 204  
 Église Ste-Blaise 573  
 Église Ste-Catherine 268  
 Église Ste-Jeanne-d'Arc 245  
 Église Ste-Madeleine 345  
 Église St-Étienne de Baigorry 695  
 Église St-Étienne de la Cité 604  
 Église St-Étienne du Mont 114-15  
 Église St-Eustache 96  
 Église St-Germain des Prés 117  
 Église St-Germain l'Auxerrois 95  
 Église St-Hilaire le Grand 648  
 Église St-Jean Baptiste 687  
 Église St-Joseph 252  
 Église St-Maclou 243  
 Église St-Martin de St-Valéry-sur-Somme 228  
 Église St-Michel des Lions 595  
 Église St-Nicolas 339  
 Église St-Pantaléon 345  
 Église St-Pierre 204  
 Église St-Pierre du Queyroix 595  
 Église St-Rémy 382  
 Église St-Ronan 303  
 Église St-Sauveur 635  
 Église St-Sulpice 120-1  
 Église St-Trophime 815  
 Église Vieille du Haut 842  
 Sainte-Chapelle 113  
 St-Etienne Chapel 552  
 cinema 167-8, 955, 957  
 Cirque de Gavarnie 715  
 Cirque de l'Infernet 763  
 Cirque de Mourèze 769  
 Cirque de Navacelles 752, **744-5**  
 Cirque de Troumouse 715  
 Cirque d'Estaubé 715  
 city passes  
 Angers 431  
 Arles 818  
 Arras 218  
 Avignon 825  
 Clermont 567  
 Grenoble 542  
 Lille 212  
 Lyon 479  
 Montpellier 755  
 Nancy 377  
 Nantes 641  
 Orange 833  
 Paris 174  
 Reims 329
- Strasbourg 361  
 Troyes 343  
 Clermont-Ferrand 567-70, **568**  
 climate 22, 30-3, 976  
 clubbing 159  
 Cluny 470-1  
 coffee 156, 492  
 Cognac 656-7  
 Col de Guéry 578  
 Collioure 782-4  
 Collonges-la-Rouge 627  
 Colmar 369-73, 393, **370**  
 Colombey-les-Deux-Églises 348  
 Compiègne 238-9  
 Concarneau 306-8  
 Conchiglio 906  
 Condom 740-2  
 Condrieu 500  
 consulates 977  
 Cordes-sur-Ciel 738-9  
 Corniche de l'Estérel 879-81  
 Corniche des Maures 885-6  
 Corréze 603  
 Corsica 64, 899-926, **900**  
 climate 898  
 food 44  
 highlights 898, 900  
 itineraries 918-19, **918**  
 travel seasons 898  
 Corte 924-6  
 Côte d'Albâtre 249-52, **850-1**  
 Côte d'Azur 19, 64, 851-97, **852-3, 19**  
 climate 850  
 food 42-3  
 highlights 850, 852-3  
 travel seasons 850  
 Côte de Beaune 446-8  
 Côte de Granit Rose 296, **324-5**  
 Côte de Nuits 443-6  
 Côte des Bar Champagne Route 347-9  
 Côte des Blancs Champagne Route 339-40  
 Côte d'Opale 219-26  
 Côte d'Or 437-56  
 Côte d'Or vineyards 443-56  
 Côte Rôtie 500  
 Côte Vermeille 782-5  
 Coulanges-la-Vineuse Wine Country 458  
 Courchevel 532, 533  
 courses  
 brewing 130-1  
 cooking 127-30, 451, 501-2, 950  
 languages 978-9  
 wine tasting 130  
 Coutances 273  
 credit cards 979-80
- Creuse, the 602-3  
 Croix Rousse 484  
 Crozon 301  
 culture 946-9  
 Curemonte 627  
 currency 22  
 customs regulations 975-6  
 cycling 55-7, 986-7, 988-9, *see also* mountain biking  
 Annecy 525  
 Auxerre 458  
 Biarritz 681  
 Bourg d'Oisans 546  
 Burgundy 447  
 Carcassonne 772  
 Chablis 460  
 Chamonix 514  
 Colmar 372  
 Dordogne 616  
 Gorges du Verdon 847  
 Grande Boucle de Bourgogne du Sud 471  
 language 1002  
 Luberon 839  
 Mont Ventoux 835  
 Munster 374  
 Paris 126-7, 131  
 Voie des Vignes 446
- D**  
 Daglan 613  
 Dambach-la-Ville 364, 393  
 Dauphiné 539-52  
 D-Day beaches 257-62  
 D-Day sites 15, 278-9, **278-9**  
 Deauville 266  
 départements 984, **984**  
 Dieppe 247-9  
 Dijon 437-43, **438**  
 Dinan 291-3, **323**  
 Dinard 288-90  
 disabilities, travellers with 972  
 discount cards 409, 976  
 Disneyland Resort Paris 188-90  
 distilleries  
 Cointreau Distillery 431  
 Distillerie Les Agnells 845  
 Moulin des Bouillons 840  
 Dom Pérignon 341  
 Domme 616  
 donkey trekking  
 Carcassonne 772  
 Vallée d'Aspe 712  
 Dordogne 62, 593, 603-28, **594, 621**  
 climate 592  
 food 41  
 highlights 592, 594  
 travel seasons 592  
 Dragon de Calais 27
- drinks 39-46  
 language 999-1001  
 driving routes, *see also* Champagne routes, wine routes  
 Gorges de l'Allier 590  
 Gorges du Verdon 847  
 Route des Crêtes (French Riviera) 885  
 Route des Crêtes (Gorges du Verdon) 847  
 Three Corniches 886  
 Dune du Pilat 666, **20**  
 Dunkirk 220
- E**  
 Eaux-Bonnes 714  
 École Nationale d'Équitation 422-4  
 ecotourism 26-7  
 Eiffel Tower 76-7, **10, 76, 182**  
 electricity 976-7  
 embassies 977  
 emergencies 1001  
 Entrevaux 859  
 environment 967-70  
 environmental issues 970  
 Épernay 341-3  
 Erbalunga 905  
 Espelette 691-2, **696**  
 Essoyes 348-9  
 etiquette 25, 46  
 Étretat 251-2  
 events 30-3  
 Évian-les-Bains 522-3  
 exchange rates 23  
 Èze 886-7
- F**  
 family travel 47-51, 115, 514  
 Fécamp 250-1  
 festivals & events 30-3  
 Bastille Day 132  
 Chartres en Lumières 204  
 Christmas markets 212  
 Féria d'Arles 816  
 Féria du Riz 816  
 Festival d'Aix-en-Provence 809  
 Festival d'Art Pyrotechnique 868  
 Festival d'Avignon 31, 828  
 Festival de Cannes 31, 867  
 Festival Interceltique de Lorient 32, 311  
 Festival Off 828  
 Fête de la Châtaigne 884  
 Fête de la Musique 31, 131  
 Fête de la Violette 731  
 Fête des Gardians 811  
 Fête des Lumières 33, 486, **32**

- festivals & events, *continued*  
 Fête des Vendanges de Montmartre 132  
 Fête du Citron 30, 896, **32**  
 Fête du Fromage d'Etsaut 713  
 Fêtes d'Arlès 815  
 Fêtes de Bayonne 675, **696-7**  
 Fêtes de la St-Jean 688  
 Fêtes Napoléoniennes 915  
 Formula One Grand Prix 890  
 French Open 131  
 Grand Prix Historique de Monaco 890  
 Hestiv'Ôc 701  
 Jazz à Juan 873  
 Jeux de Nîmes 750  
 Joutes Nautiques 762  
 La Nuit de la Sardine 689  
 Le Festival du Merveilleux 132  
 Le Transhumance de Lourdiors 713  
 Les Chorégies d'Orange 832  
 Les Grands Jeux Romains 750  
 Les Journées du Chocolat 679  
 Les Plages Électroniques 868  
 Les Rencontres d'Arlès Photographie 816  
 Les Suds 815  
 Monaco Grand Prix 31  
 Nuit Blanche 132  
 Paris Cocktail Week 131  
 Paris Jazz Festival 131  
 Paris Plages 132, **183**  
 Pèlerinage des Gitans 820  
 Procession du Catenacci 917  
 Rock en Seine 132  
 Rock the Pistes 521  
 Sarmantelles de Beaujeu 497  
 Tour de France 132  
 Figeac 634-5  
 Filitosa 917  
 Finistère 294-309  
 Flanders 60, 207, 216-19, **208**  
 highlights 209  
 history 209  
 travel seasons 206  
 Foix 721  
 Fontainebleau 196-8  
 Fontaine-de-Vaucluse 837-8  
 Fontevraud-l'Abbaye 427-8  
 food 16, 25, 26, 39-46, 950-4, 977, **39, 42, 44, 50**  
 bouchons 16, 490, **16**  
 bouillabaisse 801  
 butter 288  
 chocolate 359, 527, 679  
 cooking courses 127-30, 451, 501-2, 950  
 crêpes 150  
 gluten-free 147  
 internet resources 143  
 language 999-1001  
 mushrooms 425  
 truffles 610  
 vegan 145  
 vegetarian 145  
 football 949  
 Forêt de Chantilly 200  
 Forêt de Fontainebleau 197  
 Forêt de Paimpont 319-20, **18**  
 Formula One Grand Prix 890  
 forts & fortresses  
 Château du Taureau 296  
 Citadelle (Lille) 211  
 Citadelle Vauban 314  
 Fort de Brégaçon 885  
 Fort de Buoux 845  
 Fort de Douaumont 388  
 Fort de la Bastille 539  
 Fort de la Cité d'Alet 284-5  
 Fort de Vaux 388-9  
 Fort du Hackenberg 383  
 Fort du Petit Bé 285  
 Fort Liberia 781  
 Fort St-André 831-2  
 Fort St-Elme 783  
 Forteresse de Polignac 587  
 Forteresse Royale de Chinon 420  
 Forteresse St Vidal 587  
 La Citadelle 693  
 Fourvière 479, 482-3  
 Fréjus 880-1  
 French Alps 62, 507-61, **508-9**  
 climate 506, 535  
 highlights 506, 508-9  
 travel seasons 506  
 French Basque Country 63, 673-95, **674**  
 climate 672  
 food 43-5, 672, 697  
 highlights 672, 674  
 travel seasons 672  
 French culture 946-9  
 French language 998-1004  
 French Revolution 933  
 French Riviera 19, 64, 851-97, **852-3, 19**  
 climate 850  
 highlights 852-3  
 travel seasons 850  
 Funiculaire du Capucin 579  
 Funtanaccia 917
- G**  
 Gaillac 735  
 Galeries Lafayette 169, **11, 184**  
 galleries, see museums & galleries  
 gardens, see parks & gardens  
 géants (giants) 214  
 Gennes 427  
 Gigondas 836  
 Giverny 194-6  
 glaciers 510-11  
 Golfe du Morbihan 309-17, **310**  
 Gorbio 896  
 Gordes 840-1  
 Gorges de Galamus 781  
 Gorges de la Jonte 776  
 Gorges de l'Allier 590  
 Gorges de l'Ardèche 503-5  
 Gorges du Loup 877  
 Gorges du Tarn 773-4  
 Gorges du Verdon 847-9, **55**  
 Gourdon 877  
 Grand Auxerrois 441  
 Grands Causses 774-6  
 Grasse 875-6  
 Grenoble 539-44, **540**  
 Guéthary 685-7  
 guillotine 936
- H**  
 Haut-Lignon 590-1  
 Hautvillers 337-8  
 health 977-8  
 hiking 54-5  
 Alpe d'Huez 549  
 Burgundy 447  
 Carcassonne 772  
 Chablais 460  
 Chaîne des Puys 576  
 Chamonix 515  
 Chemin de Croix 626, 708  
 Cirque du Lys 716  
 Gorges de la Spelunca 912  
 Gorges du Verdon 848  
 GR21 Hiking Trail 249  
 GR70 772  
 Grand Balcon Nord Trail 513  
 Grand Balcon Sud Trail 513  
 Grand Tour de Haute Maurienne 538  
 Lac Blanc 513  
 Le Puy-en-Velay 588  
 Les Deux Alpes 548  
 Marseille Provence Greeters 799  
 Mont Blanc 518, **52**  
 Mont Ventoux 835
- Pont d'Espagne 716  
 Parc National des Pyrénées 710  
 Puy de Sancy 579  
 Sentier Aval des Gorges 504  
 Sentier des Ocres 841-2  
 Sentier du Littoral 687, 879-80, 882, 895  
 Vallée d'Aspe 712  
 Vallée des Saints 576  
 historical buildings & sites, see also Roman sites  
 Abri de Cap Blanc 623  
 Ancienne Douane 371  
 Arc de Triomphe (Orange) 832  
 Arc de Triomphe (Paris) 84-5, **84**  
 Caumont Centre d'Art 808  
 Cryptoportique (Reims) 332  
 Cryptoportiques (Arlès) 815  
 Donjon de Montpeyroux 575  
 Grand Forge du Buffon 454  
 Grotte de Niaux 722  
 Hôtel Grosloot 399-400  
 Hôtel-Dieu des Hospices de Beaune 448, 450, **475**  
 La Maison à Pondalez 296  
 La Merveille 273  
 La Ponche 881  
 La Vieille Charité 792  
 Le Cachot 708  
 Le Clos Lucé 415  
 Le Rocher 889  
 Le Suquet 867  
 Les Alyscamps 815  
 Maison des Têtes 370  
 Maison Louis XIV 687  
 Manoir de Gisson 619  
 Monastère de la Verne 884  
 Moulin de Verzenay 337  
 Pagode de Chanteloup 415  
 Palais du Parlement de Bretagne 320  
 Pifferhüs 366  
 Porte de Mars 331  
 Quartier de la Cité 429  
 Site Archéologique de Glanum 822  
 Socoa 688  
 Thermes du Mont-Dore 579  
 Tour des Voléurs 367  
 Vieil Aix 808  
 Vieux Bassin 268  
 Vieux Pont 292  
 Village des Bories 840  
 Ville Close (Walled City) 307  
 history 15, 928-45  
 Battle of Normandy 260, **259**  
 Belle Époque 934-35

Dieppe Raid, the 248  
 French Revolution 932-3  
 Hundred Years War 929-30  
 Medieval France 929  
 recent history 939-44  
 Roman Gaul 928-9  
 WWI 935-6  
 WWII 936-7  
 holidays 980  
 Hollande, François 941-2  
 Honfleur 268-71  
 hot-air ballooning 234,  
 447, 616  
 Hugo, Victor 105, 552, 955  
*hôtels particuliers* 758  
 hot springs 583  
 Hunawirh 367, 393

## I

ibexes 969  
 ice-cream 860  
 Île aux Moines 315  
 Île d'Arz 315  
 Île de Batz 295  
 Île de Bréhat 293  
 Île-de-France 187-205, **188**  
 climate 186  
 family travel 186  
 food 186  
 highlights 188  
 internet resources 189  
 travel seasons 186  
 walks 186  
 Île de Ré 653-6  
 Île d'Ouessant 299-300, **324**  
 Île Molène 299  
 Îles de Glénan 308  
 Îles de Lérins 869  
 Îles d'Hyères 891  
 Îles Lavezzi 920  
 Île Ste-Marguerite 869  
 Île St-Honorat 869  
 immigration 986  
 insurance 977, 978, 992  
 internet access 978  
 internet resources 23, 27  
 Irancy 458  
 Issigeac 612  
 itineraries 34-8

## J

Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc)  
 930  
 Josselin 318  
 Juno Beach 261-2  
 Jura Mountains 62, 552-61,  
**508-9**  
 climate 506, 535  
 highlights 506, 508-9  
 travel seasons 506

## K

Katzenthal 369, 393  
 kayaking & canoeing 57  
 Bourdeilles 608  
 Languedoc-Roussillon 753  
 Montpellier 760  
 Parc National des  
 Calanques 807, **57**  
 Quiberon 313  
 Sète 762  
 Tarn 773  
 Kayersberg 368-9, 393

## L

La Balagne 907-11  
 La Bourboule 578-9  
 La Chaise-Dieu 585  
 La Clusaz 523  
 La Confluence 484-5  
 La Digue à la Mer 820  
 La Dombes 499-500  
 La Grave 547  
 La Puisaye 459-60  
 La Rhune 690-1  
 La Rochelle 649-53, **650**  
 La Roque Gageac 616  
 Lac Chambon 582-3  
 Lac du Salagou 769  
 Lac Pavin 580  
 La Samaritaine 26  
 La Turbie 887  
 La Vapeur du Trioux 293  
 Lake Annecy 523, **562**  
 L'Alta Rocca 923  
 Landévennec 301  
 Langeais 417-18  
 language 22, 948, 998-1004  
 Alsatian 362  
 Basque 690  
 Breton 307  
 courses 978-9  
 Languedoc-Roussillon 63,  
 745-85, **746-7**  
 architecture 789-7, **786-7**  
 climate 744  
 food 43  
 highlights 744, 746-7  
 travel seasons 744  
 Laon 239  
 Larressingle 741  
 Lascaux 625  
 laundry 980  
 Le Bar-sur-Loup 877  
 Le Buisson 614  
 Le Cannet 868  
 Le Crotoy 226-7  
 Le Dragon de Calais 27  
 Le Grand Bornand 523  
 Le Grand Luberon 844-5  
 Le Havre 252-4  
 Le Lavandou 885

Le Mesnil-sur-Oger 340  
 Le Mont-Dore 578-9  
 Le Palais 313, **325**  
 Le Panier 792  
 Le Petit Luberon 842-4  
 Le Petit Train d'Artouste 714  
 Le Pont du Loup 877  
 Le Puy-en-Velay 585-90,  
**586**  
 Le Touquet 225-6  
 Le Train Jaune 782  
 Lectoure 742  
 legal matters 979  
 Lens 219  
 Les Andelys 245  
 Les Baux-de-Provence 824  
 Les Calanques de Piana 912,  
**898-9**  
 Les Deux Alpes 547-9  
 Les Eyzies 622-4  
 Les Gets 520, **562**  
 Les Jardins Panoramiques de  
 Limeuil 621  
 Les Landes 680, **20**  
 Les Portes du Soleil 520-2,  
**562**  
 Les Riceys 349  
 Les Trois Vallées 531-4  
 Levie 924  
 LGBTQ+ travellers 158, 493  
 806, 979  
 libraries 126  
 Lille 209-16, **210, 213**  
 Limoges 595-600, **596**  
 Limousin 595-603  
 L'Île-Rousse 907-8  
 L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue 838  
 literature 161, 955-7  
 live music 166-7  
 Loches 419-20  
 Locronan 303-4  
 Loire Valley 61, 395-431,  
**396-7**  
 châteaux 432-3  
 highlights 394, 396-7  
 travel seasons 394  
 Longues-sur-Mer 262,  
**278**  
 Lorraine 61, 351, 376-91  
**352-3**  
 accommodation 350  
 climate 350  
 highlights 350, 352-3  
 history 398  
 industrial heritage 386  
 tours 398  
 travel seasons 350  
 Lot Valley, the 628-35  
 Lourdes 705-10, **706**  
 Lourve 89-91, 94-5, **11**,  
**90-1**  
 Lower Vézère 621-2  
 Luberon, the 838-45

Lyon 61, 479-97, **480-1**,  
**16, 32**  
 accommodation 487-9  
 drinking & nightlife 492-3  
 entertainment 493-4  
 festivals & events 486-7  
 food 41, 489-92  
 shopping 494-5  
 sights 479-86  
 tourist information 495  
 tours 486  
 travel to/from 495-6  
 travel within 496-7

## M

Macinaggio 905-6  
 Mâcon 472-3  
 Mâconnais 441  
 Macron, Emmanuel  
 942-3, 947  
 magazines 980  
 Manade des Baumelles 820  
 Manche 271-7  
 Marais Poitevin 648-9, **18**  
 Marché aux Pucés de St-  
 Ouen 172, **184-5**  
 markets  
 Aix-en-Provence 811, **16**  
 Bordeaux 661  
 Dordogne, the 609  
 Lille 211, 212  
 Lyon 496  
 Metz 382  
 Paris 132, 149, 172, 175, **185**  
 Pau 703  
 Marlenheim 393  
 Marne 336-40, **336, 326-7**  
 Marseille 792-808, **796-7**,  
**802-3**  
 accommodation 799-800  
 drinking & nightlife 804-5  
 entertainment 805  
 food 800-4  
 shopping 805-6  
 sights 792-8  
 tourist information 806  
 tours 799  
 travel to/from 806-8  
 Martel 627-8  
 Martyr Village 601  
 Massif des Maures 884-5  
 Massif des Vosges 374  
 measures 980  
 medieval art & architecture  
 474-5  
 medieval France 929  
 Médoc, the 664-5  
 megaliths 312, 315  
 Megève/St-Gervais 518-20  
 Ménéberes 843-4  
 Menton 895-7, **32**

Méribel 532, 533  
 Metz 382-7, **384**  
 Mines de Bruoux 841  
 Mirepoix 722  
 Mittelbergheim 363-4, 393  
 mobile phones 22, 981-2  
 Moissac 740  
 Molsheim 393, **392**  
 Monaco 887-94, **888-9**  
 accommodation 890-1  
 activities 887-90  
 drinking & nightlife 891-4  
 entertainment 894  
 festivals & events 890  
 food 890-1  
 sights 887-90  
 tourist information 894  
 travel to/within 894  
 Monaco Grand Prix 30  
 monasteries  
 Abbaye-aux-Hommes 263  
 Abbaye de Fontfroide 765  
 Abbaye et Jardins de l'Abbaye 831  
 Abbaye Impériale 558  
 Chartreuse du Val de Bénédiction 832  
 Monastère de la Verne 884  
 Monastère St-Paul de Mausole 822  
 Prieuré de Salagon 846  
 Monbazillac 611-12  
 money 22, 23, 25, 979-80  
 discount cards 976  
 Monpezier 612-14  
 Mont Blanc 518, **52**  
 Mont Canigou 781-2  
 Mont St-Michel 272-7, **20, 240-1, 274-5**  
 Mont Ventoux 835-6  
 Montagne de Reims  
 Champagne Route 336-7, **16, 17**  
 Montauban 739-40  
 Monte Carlo Casino 890, **892-3**  
 Montélimar 503  
 Montignac 625  
 Montpellier 755-61, **756**  
 Montricoux 735  
 Monts du Cantal 581-2  
 Morgat 301  
 Morlaix 296-7  
 Morzine 520, **562**  
 mosques 115  
 motorcycle travel 987, 989-94  
 Mouans-Sartoux 874-5

Mougins 874-5  
 Moulins de la Foux 752  
 mountain biking, see also cycling  
 Les Deux Alpes 548  
 Les Portes du Soleil 521  
 Parc National des Pyrénées 710  
 Val d'Isère 535  
 Vallée d'Aspe 712  
 Mulhouse 374-6  
 multiculturalism 948-9  
 Munster 374  
 Murol 582-3  
 museums & galleries  
 1944 Radar Museum 263  
 Abri Cro-Magnon 622  
 Aeroscopia 730-1  
 Apothicairerie de l'Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte 345  
 Art 42 96  
 Asiatica 681  
 Atelier des Lumières 105  
 Bastideum 612  
 Bayeux Tapestry 254  
 Bourse de Commerce 27  
 Bourse de Commerce Pinault Collection 96  
 Carré d'Art - Musée d'Art Contemporain 750  
 Carrières de Lumières 824  
 Cassisium 443-4  
 Centre de la Mémoire 601  
 Centre de la Résistance, de la Déportation et de la Mémoire 406  
 Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation 486  
 Centre d'Interprétation de l'AOP Piment d'Espelette 691  
 Centre International du Vitrail 203-4  
 Centre Mondial de la Paix 388  
 Centre Pompidou 100-1, **2, 100**  
 Centre Pompidou-Metz 382  
 CERCIL - Musée-Mémorial des Enfants du Vel d'Hiv 401  
 Château de Savigny-lès-Beaune 446  
 Château du Clos de Vougeot 443  
 Château et Jardins des Milandes 615  
 Château Fort 707  
 Château-Musée de Dinan 292  
 Citadelle de St-Tropez 882  
 Cité de la Mer 247  
 Cité de l'Automobile 375  
 Cité de l'Espace 731

Cité de l'Océan 680  
 Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie 115  
 Cité du Train 375  
 Cité Internationale de la Dentelle et de la Mode 221  
 Cité Internationale de la Tapiserie 602  
 Conservatoire de la Dentelle 255  
 Crypte Archéologique 112-13  
 Dalí Paris 99  
 Ecomusée d'Alsace 375  
 Écomusée de la Vallée d'Aspe 711-12  
 Écomusée d'Ouessant 299  
 Ecomusée l'Olivier 846-7  
 Espace de l'Art Concret 874  
 Fondation Bemberg 730  
 Fondation du Doute 405  
 Fondation Louis Vuitton 75  
 Fondation Maeght 878  
 Fondation Vincent Van Gogh 813  
 Fragonard's Usine Historique & Musée du Parfum 875  
 Galerie David d'Angers 429-30  
 Galerie des Enfants 115  
 Galerie Itinérance 96  
 Galerie Lympia 864  
 Grand Palais 83  
 Grotte Chauvet 2 503  
 Halle de la Machine 731  
 Historial de la Grande Guerre 230  
 Historial Jeanne d'Arc 243  
 Hôtel de Sade 822  
 Hôtel de Vauluisant 343  
 Hôtel de Ville 104, 120  
 Hôtel des Invalides 117  
 Institut du Monde Arabe 115, 117  
 Juno Beach Centre 261-2  
 La Boisserie 348  
 La Cité du Vin 17, 657, **17**  
 La Cité du Vitrail 345  
 La Fab 126  
 La Maison du Terroir Beaujolais 497  
 La Panacée 757  
 La Piscine Musée d'Art et d'Industrie 209-10  
 L'Aventure Michelin 567  
 Le Magasin 541  
 Le Petit Musée Fantastique de Guignol 479  
 Le Tripostal 211  
 Lens' 14-18 Museum 232  
 L'Envol des Pionniers 731  
 Les Forges de Pyrène 720-1

Les Maisons Satie 268-9  
 Les Pêcheries 250  
 L'Imaginarium 444  
 Louvre 89-91, 94-5, **11, 90-1**  
 Louvre-Lens 219  
 MAAP 604  
 Maison Bonaparte 913  
 Maison de Jeanne d'Arc 400-1  
 Maison de Jules Verne 235-6  
 Maison de la BD 406  
 Maison de la Duchesse Anne 296  
 Maison de la Magie 405  
 Maison de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière 343  
 Maison de Victor Hugo 105  
 Maison des Johnnies et de l'Oignon de Roscoff 294  
 Maison du Vieil Alby 737  
 Maison et Jardins de Claude Monet 195  
 Maison Paternelle de Ste-Bernadette 708  
 Mémorial de la Shoah 105  
 Mémorial de l'Internement et de la Déportation - Camp de Royallieu 238  
 Monnaie de Paris 120  
 Moulin de Boly 707  
 Musée 39-45 220  
 Musée Alpin 511  
 Musée Alsacien 355  
 Musée Angladon 827  
 Musée Archéologique (Dijon) 439  
 Musée Archéologique (Fréjus) 880  
 Musée Archéologique (Grenob) 539  
 Musée Baccarat 382  
 Musée Balzac 422  
 Musée Bartholdi 370  
 Musée Basque et de l'Histoire de Bayonne 674  
 Musée Bernadotte 701  
 Musée Bonnard 868  
 Musée Calvet 828  
 Musée Carnavalet 105  
 Musée Champollion 634-5  
 Musée Colette 460  
 Musée Comtois 552  
 Musée Crozatier 587  
 Musée d'Apt 838-9  
 Musée d'Aquitaine 658-9  
 Musée d'Art Contemporain 486  
 Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie 470  
 Musée d'Art et d'Histoire 832  
 Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Baron Gérard 254-5

- Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Provence 876
- Musée d'Art Moderne 783
- Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux 252
- Musée d'Art Moderne, d'Art Contemporain et d'Art Brut - LaM 209
- Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris 82
- Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (Guéthary) 686
- Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (St-Étienne) 502
- Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (Strasbourg) 355
- Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (Nice) 855
- Musée d'Art Municipal Charles Daniélou 303
- Musée d'Art Roger Quilliot 567
- Musée d'Arts de Nantes 641
- Musée Dauphinois 541
- Musée de Dieppe 247
- Musée de Grenoble 539
- Musée de la Camargue 818
- Musée de la Céramique 243-4
- Musée de la Corse 925
- Musée de la Coutellerie 584
- Musée de la Grande Chartreuse 530
- Musée de la Lavande 840-1
- Musée de la Libération de Paris - Musée du Général Leclerc - Musée Jean Moulin 121
- Musée de la Mer 293-4
- Musée de la Mer et de la Marine 659
- Musée de la Mine 502
- Musée de l'Annonciade 881
- Musée de la Pêche 307
- Musée de Lapérouse 737
- Musée de la Reddition 331
- Musée de la Résistance 597
- Musée de la Résistance en Morvan 467
- Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation 552
- Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère 541
- Musée de l'Armagnac 740
- Musée de la Romanité 748
- Musée de l'Avallonnais 463
- Musée de l'Aventure Peugeot 560
- Musée de la Vie Bourguignonne 439
- Musée de la Vigne et du Vin 340
- Musée de la Vigne et du Vin du Jura 556
- Musée de l'École de Nancy 377
- Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse 211
- Musée de l'Impression sur Étoffes 375
- Musée de l'Imprimerie 484
- Musée de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame 355
- Musée de l'Orangerie 95-6
- Musée de Montmartre 99-181
- Musée de Montségur 721
- Musée de Préhistoire Corse et d'Archéologie 917
- Musée de Valence 501
- Musée de Vence 877
- Musée Départemental Arles Antique 815
- Musée Départemental de Préhistoire de Solutré 472
- Musée des Arts Décoratifs 95
- Musée des Arts et Métiers 105
- Musée des Augustins 727
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Angers) 429
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Bordeaux) 659
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Caen) 263
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Chambéry) 528
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Chartres) 204
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Dijon) 437
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (La Cohue) 316
- Musée des Beaux Arts (Limoges) 595
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Lyon) 483
- Musée des Beaux Arts (Marseille) 793
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Nancy) 376-7
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Orléans) 399
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Pau) 701
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Reims) 331
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Rennes) 320
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Rouen) 243
- Musée des Beaux-Arts (Tours) 410
- Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie 553
- Musée des Blindés 424
- Musée des Charmettes 528-9
- Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée 793, **49**
- Musée des Confluences 485
- Musée des Cristaux 511
- Musée des Impressionnismes Giverny 195
- Musée des Minéraux et de la Faune des Alpes 546
- Musée des Phares et des Balises 299
- Musée des Tissus 484
- Musée des Troupes de Montagne 539
- Musée d'Histoire de Marseille 792
- Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie (Orléans) 401
- Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie (Vannes) 316
- Musée d'Orsay 122-3, **122, 182**
- Musée du Bonbon Haribo 753
- Musée du Chevalier d'Éon 462
- Musée du Compagnonnage 410
- Musée du Débarquement 261
- Musée du Louvre 89-91, 94-5, **11, 90-1**
- Musée du Mur de l'Atlantique 220
- Musée du Pays Châtillonnais - Trésor de Vix 455
- Musée du Petit Palais 826
- Musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac 75, 79
- Musée du Santon 798
- Musée du Tabac 609
- Musée du Temps 553
- Musée du Tire-Bouchon 843-4
- Musée du Vieux Montpelier 757
- Musée d'Unterlinden 369
- Musée en Herbe 115
- Musée Escoffier de l'Art Culinaire 868
- Musée Eugène Boudin 269
- Musée Fabre 755-7
- Musée Fragonard 876
- Musée Franco-Américain 239
- Musée Franco-Australien 232
- Musée Gallo-Romain 500-1
- Musée Gallo-Romain de Fourvière 482
- Musée Gallo-Romain Vesunna 604
- Musée Granet 808
- Musée Historique 355
- Musée Hôtel Le Vergeur 331
- Musée Ingres Bourdelle 739
- Musée International de la Parfumerie 875
- Musée Jacquemart-André 99, 104
- Musée Jacques Cartier 285
- Musée Jean Cocteau - Le Bastion 896
- Musée Jean Lurçat de la Tapisserie Contemporaine 430-1
- Musée Jules Verne 641
- Musée La Cour d'Or 382-3
- Musée Lalique 360
- Musée Le Secq des Tournelles 243
- Musée Lorrain 377
- Musée Lumière 486
- Musée Magnin 439-40
- Musée Mandet 571
- Musée Maritime 650
- Musée Marmottan Monet 82-3
- Musée Masséna 855
- Musée Matisse 855
- Musée Mémoire 1939-45 221
- Musée Mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie 255
- Musée Municipal 629
- Musée National Adrien Dubouché 595
- Musée National de la Marine 298
- Musée National de Préhistoire 622
- Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet 79
- Musée National Eugène Delacroix 121
- Musée National Gustave Moreau 89
- Musée National Marc Chagall 855
- Musée National Picasso-Paris 104
- Musée Naval Maille-Brézé 643
- Musée Parc des Dinosauriens et de la Préhistoire 763
- Musée Paul-Dupuy 730
- Musée Paul Valéry 762
- Musée Picasso 872
- Musée Rabelais 421
- Musée Réattu 813-14
- Musée Renoir 868
- Musée Rodin 117
- Musée Rolin 468
- Musée Savoisien 529
- Musée St-Raymond 730
- Musée Tomi Ungerer 357



museums & galleries  
*continued*  
Musée Toulouse-Lautrec  
737  
Musée Villa Montabello 267  
Musée Yves Saint Laurent  
Paris 82  
Musée Zervos 465  
Musées Gagne 479  
MuséoParc Alésia 453  
Naia Museum 317  
Ōkhra Conservatoire des  
Ocres et de la Couleur  
841-2  
Palais de la Découverte 83  
Palais de Tokyo 79  
Palais des Beaux Arts 209  
Palais du Tau 330-1  
Palais Fesch - Musée des  
Beaux-Arts 913  
Palais Galliera 82  
Panorama XXL 245  
Parc de la Préhistoire 721  
Petit Palais 88  
Romaine '14-'18 390  
Villa Méditerranée 793  
mushrooms 425  
music 957-60  
musketees 740

## N

Najac 739  
Nancy 376-81, **378**  
Nantes 641-69, **642**  
Napoléon 933  
Narbonne 764-6  
national parks & reserves  
969  
Illwald 365  
Parc National de la Vanoise  
537-9  
Parc National des  
Calanques 807  
Parc National des Cévennes  
771-3  
Parc National des Écrins  
546-7, **562**  
Parc National des Pyrénées  
710-18  
Parc National du  
Mercantour 846  
Parc Naturel Interrégional  
du Marais Poitevin 648-9  
Parc Naturel Régional  
d'Armorique 294  
Parc Naturel Régional de  
Chartreuse 530  
Parc Naturel Régional de la  
Montagne de Reims 337

Parc Naturel Régional des  
Marais du Cotentin et du  
Bessin 254  
Parc Naturel Régional des  
Volcans d'Auvergne  
577-83  
Parc Naturel Régional du  
Haut-Jura 558-60  
Parc Naturel Régional du  
Haut-Languedoc 767  
Parc Naturel Régional du  
Massif des Bauges 530  
Parc Naturel Régional du  
Morvan 466-8  
Parc Naturel Régional de  
Vercors 544-5  
Parc Naturel Régional  
Livradois-Forez 583-5  
Réserve Naturelle de  
Scandola 911-12  
Réserve Naturelle des  
Hauts-Plateaux 544  
Natzweiler-Struthof 363  
Neuf-Brisach 374  
newspapers 980  
Nice 854-80, **856-7**  
accommodation 859-60  
activities 858  
drinking & nightlife 862-3  
entertainment 863  
festivals & events 859  
food 860-2  
shopping 863  
sights 854-5  
tourist information 863  
tours 858  
travel to/from 864  
travel within 864-5  
Nîmes 748-52, **749**  
Nonza 906-7  
Normandy 60, 240-77, **242**  
beaches 240  
climate 240  
food 41, 240  
highlights 240, 242  
travel seasons 240  
Nouvel, Jean 966  
Noyers-sur-Serein 462-3

## O

Obernai 362-3, 393  
observatories  
Mont Aigoual  
Observatory 771  
Observatoire de  
Haute-Provence 848  
Œuilly 339  
Oger 340  
Olympics 26, 83  
Omaha Beach 258-61, **278**  
opening hours 23, 980  
opera 168  
Oppède-le-Vieux 844  
Oradour-sur-Glane 600-1

Orange 832-3  
Orcival 578  
Orgues d'Ille-sur-Têt 782  
Orléanais 399-402  
Orléans 399-403, **400**  
**P**  
packing list 24  
Paimpol 293-4  
painting 960-1  
palaces, *see also* château  
forts & fortresses  
Domaine de Trianon 191  
Hôtel de la Marine 83  
Palais de Chaillot 79  
Palais de Compiègne 238  
Palais des Archevêques  
764-5  
Palais des Ducs et des  
États de Bourgogne 437  
Palais des Papes 825  
Palais des Rois de Majorque  
777  
Palais Garnier 88  
Palais Princier de Monaco  
889-90  
Palais Rohan 355  
Palais de l'Isle 524-5  
Panoramique des Dômes 578  
Panthéon 114  
paragliding  
Chamonix 514  
Lake Annecy 562-3  
Les Deux Alpes 548  
Parc National de la Vanoise  
537-9  
Parc National des  
Calanques 807  
Parc National des Cévennes  
771-3  
Parc National des Écrins  
546-7, **562**  
Parc National des Pyrénées  
710-18  
Parc National du Mercan-  
tour 846  
Parc Naturel Régional de  
Chartreuse 530  
Parc Naturel Régional de la  
Montagne de Reims 337  
Parc Naturel Régional des  
Volcans d'Auvergne  
577-83  
Parc Naturel Régional du  
Haut-Jura 558-60  
Parc Naturel Régional du  
Haut-Languedoc 767  
Parc Naturel Régional du  
Massif des Bauges 530  
Parc Naturel Régional du  
Morvan 466-8  
Parc Naturel Régional de  
Vercors 544-5  
Parc Naturel Régional  
Livradois-Forez 583-5

Paris 10-11, 59, 67-181, **68**,  
**70-1, 72-3**  
accommodation 66, 132-40  
activities 126-7  
arrondissements 180  
Bastille & Eastern Paris  
area 71, 110-11, 137-8,  
148-51, 162-3, 175,  
**108-9, 112**  
bistros 66  
buskers 168  
Champs-Élysées & Grands  
Boulevards area 70, 83-9,  
133, 140-1, 157, 169-71,  
**80-1, 86-7**  
climate 66  
courses 127  
cruises 114, 131  
day trips 187-205  
drinking & nightlife 156-65  
Eiffel Tower & Western Paris  
area 69-83, 70, 132-3,  
140, **156, 78**  
entertainment 165-9  
festivals & events 131-2, 158  
food 140-56  
highlights 66, 68  
history 69  
Islands, the 71, 111-14, 138,  
151-2, 175, **116**  
itineraries 69  
Latin Quarter 71, 114-17,  
138, 152-3, 163-4, 175,  
**118-19**  
Le Marais, Mémilmontant &  
Belleville area 71, 104-10,  
136-7, 146-8, 160-2, 174-  
5, **108-9**  
Louvre & Les Halles area  
70, 89-99, 133-4, 141-4,  
157-9, 171-2, **92-3**  
markets 66, 149, 185  
Montmartre & Northern  
Paris area 70-1, 97,  
99-104, 134-6, 144-6,  
159-60, 172-4, **97, 98**  
Montparnasse & Southern  
Paris area 71, 121-6, 139-  
40, 155-6, 165, **128-9**  
neighbourhoods 70-1  
rooftops 160  
safety 177  
Seine 182-3, **182-3**  
shopping 11, 169-77, 184-5,  
**184-5**  
sights 69-126  
souvenirs 172  
St-Germain & Les Invalides  
71, 117-21, 138-9, 153-5,  
164-5, 176-7, **128-9**  
street art 96  
tourist information 177  
tourist passes 181  
tours 96, 131, 132, 158  
travel seasons 66

- travel to/from 177-8  
travel within 178-81  
walking tours 97, 170,  
**97, 170**
- Paris Pages 132, **183**
- parks & gardens  
Beaujolais Greenway 497  
Bois de Boulogne 75  
Bois de Vincennes 111, **25**  
Château de Chantilly  
Gardens 200  
Château de Fontainebleau  
Gardens & Park 197  
Château de Versailles  
Gardens & Park 190-1  
Colline du Château 855  
Colline St-Eutrope 832  
Domaine de Campagne 622  
Domaine de la Palissade  
818  
Domaine du Rayol 885  
Jardin Botanique 410  
Jardin Botanique de  
l'Arquebuse 440  
Jardin Botanique Exotique  
du Val Rahmeh 896  
Jardin d'Acclimatation 75  
Jardin des Arènes 604-5  
Jardin des Deux Rives 357  
Jardin des Plantes  
(Montpellier) 756  
Jardin des Plantes (Nantes)  
643  
Jardin des Plantes (Paris)  
115  
Jardin des Plantes  
(Toulouse) 730  
Jardin des Plantes de  
Coutances 273  
Jardin des Serres  
d'Auteuil 75  
Jardin des Tuileries 95  
Jardin du Luxembourg  
124-5, **11, 124**  
Jardin du Palais 737  
Jardin du Palais Royal 96  
Jardin Exotique 890  
Jardin Médieval 753  
Jardins de la Fontaine  
749-50  
Jardins de Marquessac  
615-16  
Jardins Georges Delaselle  
295  
Jardins Suspendus 252  
Les Jardins du MIP 874  
L'Oasis d'Aboukir 95  
Parc de Bagatelle 75  
Parc de la Pépinière 377  
Parc de la Villette 104  
Parc de Merlet 514  
Parc des Sources 572  
Parc du Champ de Mars  
74-5  
Parc Floral de Paris 111
- Parc Monceau 104  
Place Royale du Peyrou 757  
Pré Catelan 75  
Promenade du Clair de  
Lune 289  
Promenade Plantée 110  
Riverside Park 383  
Square du Vert-Galant 113-14  
Passage Jouffroy 170, **184**  
passports 986  
Pau 701-5, **702**  
Pays Cathare 780  
Pays d'Auxois 454-5  
Pays de Forcalquier 846-7  
Pays d'Issoire 575-7  
perfume 58  
Périgueux 604-7, **606**  
Péruges 485  
Perpignan 777-9, **778**  
pétanque 127, 949  
Pic du Midi 718, **21**  
Pic St-Loup 761  
Pigna 910  
*pinxtos* 684, 686  
Place de la Concorde 83  
planning  
accommodation 28-9  
budgeting 23, 25  
Burgundy 61  
calendar of events 30-3  
climate 22, 30-3, 976  
first-time visitors 24-5  
food 39-46  
France basics 23, 27  
France's regions 59-64  
internet resources 22-3  
itineraries 34-8  
repeat visitors 26-7  
travel seasons 22, 30-3  
Plateau de Gergovie 571  
Pointe de Dinan 301  
Pointe de la Revellata 911  
Pointe des Poulains 314  
Pointe du Grouin 290  
Pointe du Raz 304  
Poitiers 647-8  
Poitou 647-9  
Poligny 557  
Pont-Aven 308-9  
Pont Alexandre III 83, 88,  
**66-7**  
Pont d'Arc 503  
Pont de Normandie 258  
Pont du Gard 752, **15**  
Pont Neuf 113, 182-3  
Pont St-Bénézet 827  
Pont Valentré 628  
*porcelaine* (porcelain) 598  
Porticcio 913  
Porto 911-13  
Porto-Vecchio 922  
postal services 980
- Presqu'île de Crozon 301-3  
Provence 64, 789-849, **790-1**  
climate 788  
food 42-3  
highlights 788, 790-1  
weather 788  
public holidays 980  
puppets 495  
Puy de Dôme 21, 577-8  
Puyceyls 735  
Pyrenean brown bear 711, 967  
Pyrenees, the 63, 699-723,  
**700**  
climate 698  
highlights 698, 700  
road passes 704  
travel seasons 698
- Q**  
Quiberon 312-13, **324**  
Quimper 304-6, **305**
- R**  
Rabelais, François 421  
radio 980  
Rébénacq 714  
*régions* 984  
Reims 329-35, **330**  
Renaghju 917  
Rennes 320-2, **321**  
République du Saugeais 558  
Rhône Valley 61, 477-505,  
**478**  
climate 476  
highlights 476, 478  
travel seasons 476  
Ribeauville 366-7, 393  
Riom 571-2  
Riviera, *see* French Riviera  
Riquewih 367-8, 393  
Rocamadour 625-6  
Rochefort-en-Terre 317  
rollerblading 525  
Romagne-sous-Montfaucon  
390-1  
Roman sites  
Arc de Triomphe 832  
Arc Romain 836  
Cryptoportiques 815  
Gallo-Roman Ruins 833-4  
La Cité Souterraine de  
Naours 233  
Les Arènes (Arles) 813  
Les Arènes (Fréjus) 880  
Les Arènes (Nîmes) 748  
Maison Carrée 748-9  
Musée de Site  
Gallo-Romain Villa  
Loupian 763  
Porte Noire 553  
Pont du Gard 752, **15**  
Pont Julien 843
- Site Archéologique de  
Glanum 822  
Temple d'Auguste et de  
Livie 500  
Théâtre Antique (Arles) 815  
Théâtre Antique (Orange)  
832  
Théâtre Romain 500  
Ronchamp 560  
Roquebrune-Cap Martin  
894-5  
Roquefort 776  
Roquefort-sur-Soulzon 776  
Roscoff 294-6  
Rosheim 393  
Rouen 243-7, **244**  
Roussillon (region) 776-85  
Roussillon (town) 841-2, **14**  
Route des Crêtes (French  
Riviera) 885  
Route des Crêtes (Gorges du  
Verdon) 847  
Route des Grands Crus  
445, **445**  
Route des Vins d'Alsace 362-  
9, 392-3, **393, 392**  
Route Pasteur 559  
Ruat 571  
Rue Montorgueil 144
- S**  
Saché 422  
safety 980-1  
road 993-4  
Saignon 845  
Salers 582  
Sant'Antonino 910  
Saône-et-Loire 468-73  
Sarkozy, Nicolas 941  
Sarlait-la-Canéda 617-20, **618**,  
**592-3**  
Sartène 916-20  
Saumur 422-6  
Savoie 510-39  
scenic flights  
Somme battlefields 234  
Seine 182-3, **182-3**  
Seine-Maritime 243-54  
Sélestat 364-5  
Semur-en-Auxois 454-5,  
**2, 475**  
Senlis 201  
Sète 761-3  
skating 127  
skiing & snowboarding 53-4  
Alpe d'Huez 549  
Bagnères de Luchon 719  
Briançon 550  
Chamonix 511-13, **21, 54**  
Les Deux Alpes 547-8  
Les Portes du Soleil 520  
Les Trois Vallées 531  
lift passes 511

skiing & snowboarding  
*continued*  
Megève/St-Gervais 519  
Parc National des Pyrénées  
710-11  
Val Cenis 538  
Val d'Isère 534-5  
snorkelling 785  
Solignac 600  
Somme Battlefields &  
Memorials 229-35, **230**  
spas  
Bains du Rocher 716  
Thermes des Dômes 573-4  
Val d'Isère 535  
sports 949  
St-Guilhem-Le-Desert 763  
stables  
Grandes Écuries 200  
Versailles Royal Stables 191  
stand-up paddleboarding 58  
Stantari 917  
Station F 121  
St-Bertrand de Comminges  
719  
St-Cirq-Lapopie 633-4  
Ste-Alvère 613  
St-Émilien 665-7, **14**, **670-1**  
Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer 819-21  
St-Étienne 502  
St-Étienne de Baïgorry 694-5  
St-Florent 907  
St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat 865  
St-Jean de Luz 687-90, **688**  
St-Jean Pied de Port 692-4  
St-Léonard-de-Noblat 601-2  
St-Malo 283-8, **284**  
St-Martin-de-Ré 654  
St-Paul de Vence 868, 878-9  
St-Pompont 613  
Strasbourg 354-62, **356**,  
**350-1**  
St-Rémy-de-Provence 822-4  
St-Tropez 881-4, **19**, **672-3**  
St-Valery-en-Caux 249-50  
St-Valery-sur-Somme 228-9  
surfing 58, 303, 685, **20**  
sustainable tourism 26-7  
synagogues 836

## T

Tarn 735-40  
taxes 981  
tea 162, 492  
telephone services 22, 981-2  
terrorist attacks 943-4  
Têt Valley 781-2  
theatre 168-9

Thiers 584-5  
Three Corniches, the 886-7  
time 982, 1001  
tipping 25  
tobogganing 531  
toilets 982  
tombs 319  
Tonnerre 462  
Toulouse 63, 725-35, **726**,  
**728-9**  
accommodation 731-2  
activities 727-31  
climate 724,  
drinking & nightlife 733-4  
entertainment 734  
festivals & events 731  
food 732-3  
highlights 726  
history 727  
sights 727-31  
tourist information 734  
travel seasons 724  
travel to/from 734  
travel within 734-5  
Tour de France 949  
Tour Philippe-le-Bel 832  
Touraine 410-21  
tourist information 982  
Tournus 469-70  
Tourettes-sur-Loup 877  
Tours 410-15, **412-13**  
*traboules* (secret passages)  
483  
Train des Pignes 859  
train travel 987-8, 994-7  
Transhumance 712  
transport  
language 1002  
travel to/from France 986-8  
travel within France 23,  
988-97  
trekking, see hiking  
Trémolat 613  
troglodyte (cave-dwelling  
culture) 423  
Trouville-sur-Mer 267-8  
Troyes 343-7, **344**  
truffles 610  
Turenne 627  
Turquant 426-7

## U

Upper Dordogne Valley 625-8  
Usson 576  
Utah Beach 262  
Uzerche 603  
Uzès 753-5

## V

Vaison-la-Romaine 833-5  
Val d'Isère 534-7  
Val Thorens 532-3, 533-4

Valence 501-3  
Vallée d'Aspe 711-13  
Vallée de Garonne 718-19  
Vallée de la Marne Cham-  
pagne Route 337-9  
Vallée de la Restonica 926  
Vallée de la Têt 781-2  
Vallée de l'Ariège 720-3  
Vallée de l'Authie 226  
Vallée des Gaves 718  
Vallée d'Ossau 713-16  
Vallée du Tavignano 926  
Vannes 316-17, **280-1**  
Vaucluse 824-38  
Vaux-le-Vicomte 198-9  
Vence 876-8  
Verdun 387-90  
Versailles 190-4, **13**, **186-7**,  
**192-3**  
Verzenay 337  
Veules-les-Roses 251  
Vézelay 464-6  
Vézère Valley 621-5, **621**  
Viaduc de Millau 775  
Vichy 572-5, **573**  
Vienna 500-1  
Vieux Lille 215  
Vieux Lyon 479  
Vieux Port 792, **794-5**  
Village des Bories 840  
villages 14  
Villandry 417, **433**  
Ville Close 307  
Villefranche-sur-Mer 886, **14**  
Villeneuve-lès-Avignon 831-2  
Villeneuve-Loubet 868  
*vin jaune* (yellow wine) 557  
visas 22, 982-3  
Vizzavona 926  
Volcan de Lemptégy 577  
volunteering 983-5

## W

walking, see hiking  
walking tours  
Lille 213, **213**  
Paris 97, 170, **97**, **170**  
war memorials & cemeteries  
Australian National War  
Memorial 233-4  
Ayette Indian & Chinese  
Cemetery 233  
Bayeux War Cemetery 255  
Beaumont-Hamel  
Newfoundland Memorial  
230-1  
Bény-sur-Mer Canadian  
War Cemetery 262  
Butte de Montfaucon 391  
Caen-Normandie  
Mémorial 263, **278-9**  
Dieppe Canadian War  
Cemetery 248

Fricourt German  
Cemetery 234  
Fromelles (Pheasant Wood)  
Cemetery & Museum 231  
Le Mémorial Falaise - La  
Guerre des Civils 265  
Mémorial de l'Armistice 238  
Mémorial de Verdun 388  
Mémorial Sud-Africain  
Delville Wood 233  
Meuse-Argonne American  
Cemetery 390  
Neuve-Chapelle  
Memorial 232  
Normandy American  
Cemetery & Memorial  
258, 260, **279**  
Ossuaire de Douaumont  
388  
Ring of Remembrance 231  
Somme American  
Cemetery 232  
Thiepval Memorial &  
Museum 232  
Tranchée des Baionnettes  
389  
Ulster Memorial Tower 232  
Vimy Ridge Canadian  
National Historic Site 231  
waterfalls 558  
water sports  
Annecy 525  
Aquamotion 531  
Base Nautique du Pont  
d'Arc 504  
Parc National des Pyrénées  
710  
Vallée d'Aspe 713  
weather 22, 30-3, 976  
weights 980  
wildlife 967-70  
wildlife sanctuaries &  
reserves 709  
Falaise aux Vautours 174  
Le Donjon des Aigles 718  
Parc du Marqueterre Bird  
Sanctuary 227  
Parc Ornithologique du  
Pont de Gau 820  
Réserve Africaine de  
Sigean 765  
Village des Tortues 884  
Volière des Cigognes  
Altavilloises 338  
wine 17, 670-1, 952-4, see  
*also* Champagne (drink)  
Arbois 556  
Beaujolais 497-8, **476-7**  
Bergerac 609  
Bordeaux 657, 664-6,  
**670**, **671**  
Burgundy 441, 443-56  
Cahors 629  
Chablis 460  
Château-neuf-du-Pape 830

Châtillon-sur-Seine 455-6  
Côte d'Or 443-56  
Coulanges-la-Vineuse 458  
Gigondas 836  
Irancy 458  
Languedoc 764  
Loire Valley 403  
Mâcon 472  
Médoc, the 664-5

Monbazillac 611  
Rhône Valley 497-8, 500  
St-Émilion 666, **670-1**  
*vin jaune* (yellow wine) 557  
wine routes, *see also*  
  Champagne routes  
  Route des Grands Crus  
  445, 445  
  Route des Vins d'Alsace  
  362-9, 392-3, **393, 392**

wolves 774  
working 985  
WWI 935-6  
WWII 936-7

**Y**  
Yonne 456-66  
Yvoire 522

**Z**

Zonza 923-4, **918-19**  
zoos 111





# Map Legend

## Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

## Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

## Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

## Eating

- Eating

## Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

## Entertainment

- Entertainment

## Shopping

- Shopping

## Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

## Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

## Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

## Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

## Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

## Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

## Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

## Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



### **Christopher Pitts**

#### **French Alps & the Jura Mountains**

Born in the year of the Tiger, Chris's first expedition in life ended in failure when he tried to dig from Pennsylvania to China at the age of six. Hardened by reality but still infinitely curious about the other side of the world, he went on to study Chinese in university, living for several years in Kunming, Taiwan and Shanghai. A chance encounter in an elevator led to a Paris relocation, where he lived with

his wife and two children for over a decade before the lure of Colorado's sunny skies and outdoor adventure proved too great to resist.



### **Daniel Robinson**

#### **Burgundy, The Loire Valley, Survival Guide chapters**

Over the past three decades, Daniel has worked on scores of Lonely Planet projects, including the first editions of *Vietnam*, *Cambodia* and *Paris* (the latter two co-authored with Tony Wheeler) and 13 of the 14 editions of France, researched in rain, sleet, snow and – when he's lucky – the kind of luminous sunlight that inspired the post-Impressionists. Daniel's travel writing has appeared in *National Geographic Traveler*, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* and has been translated into

10 foreign languages. His twitter handle is @RobinsonEnRoute.



### **Ryan Ver Berkmoes**

#### **Normandy, Lille, Flanders & the Somme**

Ryan Ver Berkmoes has written more than 110 guidebooks for Lonely Planet. He grew up in Santa Cruz, California, which he left at age 17 for college in the Midwest, where he first discovered snow. All joy of this novelty soon wore off. Since then he has been travelling the world, both for pleasure and for work—which are often indistinguishable. He has covered everything from wars to bars. He definitely prefers

the latter. Ryan calls New York City home. Read more at [ryanverberkmoes.com](http://ryanverberkmoes.com) and at @ryanvb.



### **Regis St Louis**

#### **Lyon & the Rhône Valley, Provence**

Regis grew up in a small town in the American Midwest – the kind of place that fuels big dreams of travel – and he developed an early fascination with foreign dialects and world cultures. He spent his formative years learning Russian and a handful of Romance languages, which served him well on journeys across much of the globe. Regis has contributed to more than 50 Lonely Planet titles, covering

destinations across six continents. His travels have taken him from the mountains of Kamchatka to remote island villages in Melanesia, and to many grand urban landscapes. When not on the road, he lives in New Orleans. Follow him on [www.instagram.com/regisstlouis](http://www.instagram.com/regisstlouis).



### **Nicola Williams**

#### **Atlantic Coast, French Basque Country, Plan Your Trip chapters**

Border-hopping is way of life for British writer, runner, foodie, art aficionado and mum-of-three Nicola Williams who has lived in a French village on the southern side of Lake Geneva for more than a decade. Nicola has authored more than 50 guidebooks on Paris, Provence, Rome, Tuscany, France, Italy and Switzerland for Lonely Planet and covers France as a destination expert for the *Telegraph*. She

also writes for the *Independent*, *The Guardian*, [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com), *Lonely Planet Magazine*, *French Magazine*, *Cool Camping France* and others. Catch her on the road on Twitter and Instagram at @triplalong.

**Stuart Butler****The Pyrenees**

Stuart has been writing for Lonely Planet for a decade and during this time he's come eye to eye with gorillas in the Congolese jungles, met a man with horns on his head who could lie in fire, huffed and puffed over snow bound Himalayan mountain passes, interviewed a king who could turn into a tree, and had his fortune told by a parrot. Oh, and he's met more than his fair share of self-proclaimed

Gods. When not on the road for Lonely Planet he lives on the beautiful beaches of Southwest France with his wife and two young children.

**Jean-Bernard Carillet****Alsace & Lorraine**

Jean-Bernard is a Paris-based freelance writer and photographer who specialises in Africa, France, Turkey, the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean and the Pacific. He loves adventure, remote places, islands, outdoors, archaeological sites, food and of course Paris, his home. His insatiable wanderlust has taken him to 119 countries across six continents, and it shows no sign of waning. It has inspired lots of

articles and photos for travel magazines and some 100 Lonely Planet guidebooks, both in English and in French.

**Gregor Clark****Corsica**

Gregor Clark is a US-based writer whose love of foreign languages and curiosity about what's around the next bend have taken him to dozens of countries on five continents. Chronic wanderlust has also led him to visit all 50 states and most Canadian provinces on countless road trips through his native North America.

**Mark Elliott****Dordogne, Limousin & the Lot, Toulouse**

Mark Elliott had already lived and worked on five continents when, in the pre-Internet dark ages, he started writing travel guides. He has since authored (or co-authored) around 70 books including dozens for Lonely Planet. He also acts as a travel consultant, occasional tour leader, video presenter, public speaker, art critic, wine taster, interviewer and blues harmonicist.

**Steve Fallon****Brittany**

Steve, who worked on the first nine editions of *France*, returned to the 'the Hexagon' for this edition to update the Brittany chapter, where he drank copious amounts of *sistr* (cider), ate lots of *kouign-amann* (calorific 'butter cake') and added basic *brezhoneg* (Breton) to his list of languages.

**Anita Isalska****Auvergne**

Anita Isalska is a travel journalist and digital content strategist. After several merry years as a staff writer and editor – a few of them in Lonely Planet's London office – Anita now works freelance between California, the UK, and any French mountain lodge with wi-fi. Anita specialises in Eastern and Central Europe, Australia, France, and her adopted home, San Francisco. Read her stuff on [www.anitaisalska.com](http://www.anitaisalska.com).

[www.anitaisalska.com](http://www.anitaisalska.com).

**Catherine Le Nevez****Paris**

Catherine's wanderlust kicked in when she roadtripped across Europe from her Parisian base aged four, and she's been hitting the road at every opportunity since, travelling to some 60 countries and completing her Doctorate of Creative Arts in Writing, Masters in Professional Writing, and postgrad qualifications in Editing and Publishing along the way. Over the past decade-and-a-half she's written scores of Lonely Planet guides and articles covering Paris, France, Europe and far beyond. Her work has also appeared in numerous online and print publications. Topping Catherine's list of travel tips is to travel without any expectations.

ten scores of Lonely Planet guides and articles covering Paris, France, Europe and far beyond. Her work has also appeared in numerous online and print publications. Topping Catherine's list of travel tips is to travel without any expectations.



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Tennessee, Dublin and Beijing, with a network of over 2000 contributors in every corner of the globe. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Alexis Averbeck

**Around Paris, Champagne, Understand chapters**

Alexis Averbeck has travelled and lived all over the world, from Sri Lanka to Ecuador, Zanzibar and Antarctica. In recent years she's lived on the Greek island of Hydra, in the wilds of NYC, and on the California coast. For Lonely Planet she explores the cobbled lanes of Rome and the azure seas of Sardinia, samples oysters in Brittany and careens through hill-top villages in Provence; and adventures

along Iceland's surreal lava fields, sparking fjords and glacier tongues. She's also a painter – visit [www.alexisaverbeck.com](http://www.alexisaverbeck.com) – and promotes travel and adventure on video and television.



### Joel Balsam

**Lyon & the Rhône Valley**

Joel Balsam is a Montreal-based freelance journalist and travel guidebook writer who has spent years living and working remotely across the globe (51 countries and counting). For Lonely Planet, he has worked on guidebooks for *France, Armenia and Morocco*. He has also written for *National Geographic, TIME, the Guardian, BBC Travel, Travel + Leisure, Thrillist* and more. When in Canada and

the US, Joel and his partner, photographer Stephanie Foden, love road tripping in their 1987 Chevy RV and exploring lesser-known places.



### Oliver Berry

**Languedoc-Roussillon**

Oliver Berry is a writer and photographer from Cornwall. He has worked for Lonely Planet for more than a decade, covering destinations from Cornwall to the Cook Islands, and has worked on more than thirty guidebooks. He is also a regular contributor to many newspapers and magazines, including *Lonely Planet Traveller*. His writing has won several awards, including The Guardian Young

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### Celeste Brash

**The Côte d'Azur & Monaco**

Like many California natives, Celeste now lives in Portland, Oregon. She arrived however after 15 years in French Polynesia, a year and a half in Southeast Asia and a stint teaching English as a second language (in an American accent) in Brighton, England – among other things. She's been writing guidebooks for Lonely Planet since 2005 and her travel articles have appeared in publications from

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