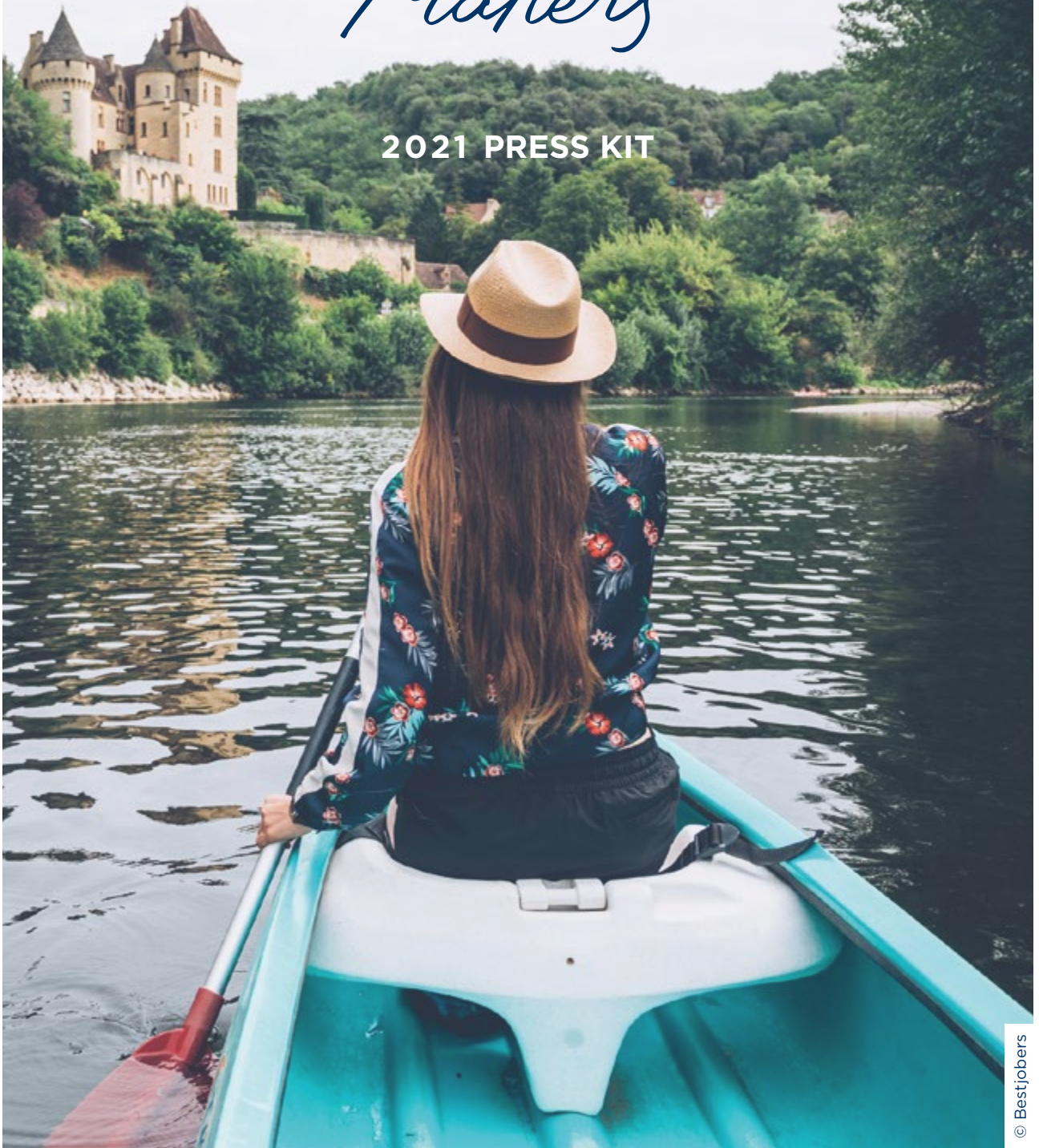


What really Matters

2021 PRESS KIT



© Bestjobs

#ExploreFrance

Explore
France™



Contents

Key figures	p.5
Sustainable tourism	p.6
Highlights 2021	p.8
22 reasons to visit France in 2022	p.40
We are Rugby: Join the scrum at the Rugby World Cup 2023	p.41
Websites and contacts	p.42
Partners' logos	p.43



p.10-19 Nature Admire its beauty

Highlights 2021	p.12
The classics 2021	p.16
Interview	p.18
Where to stay	p.19



p.20-29 Culture Share simple pleasures

Highlights 2021	p.22
The classics 2021	p.26
Interview	p.28
Where to stay	p.29

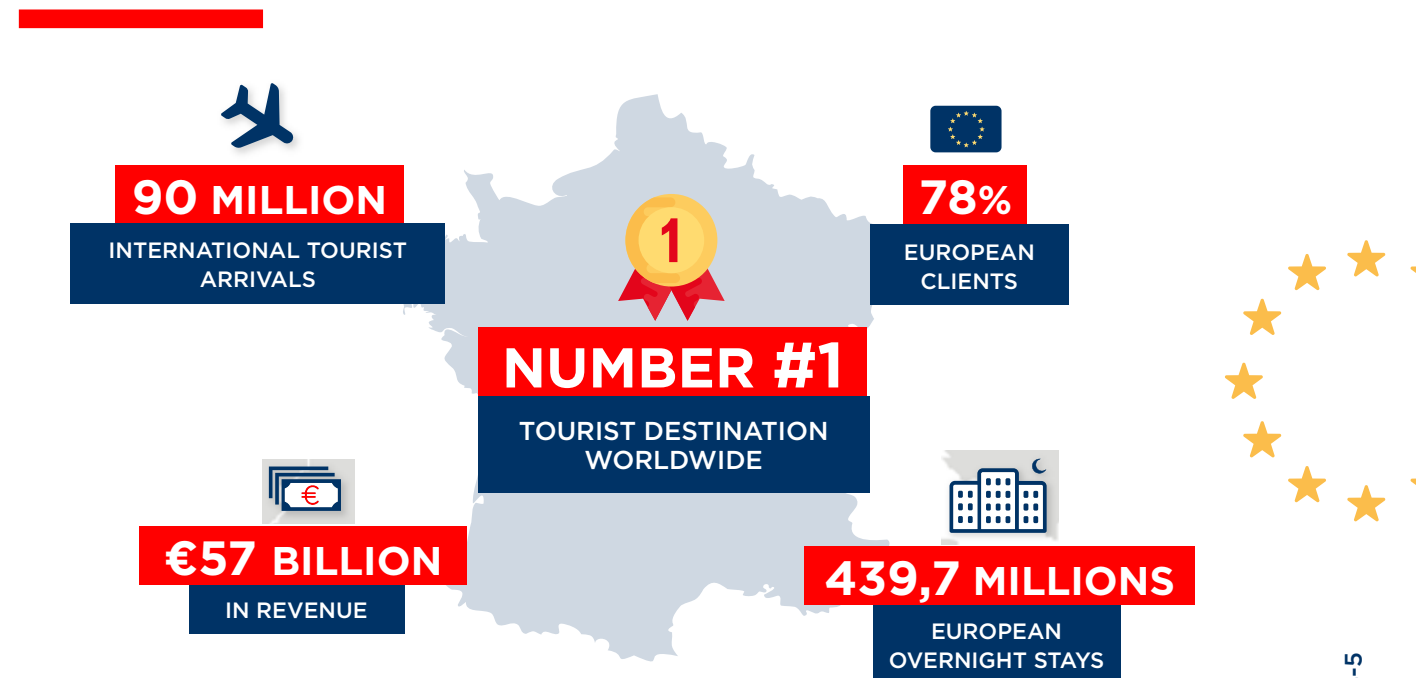


p.29-38 Art de vivre Make lasting memories

Highlights 2021	p.32
The classics 2021	p.36
Interview	p.38
Where to stay	p.39

Key figures

Tourism in France before Covid-19



A new tourism push across Europe

Based on shared ambitions and values

What Really Matters

#ExploreFrance



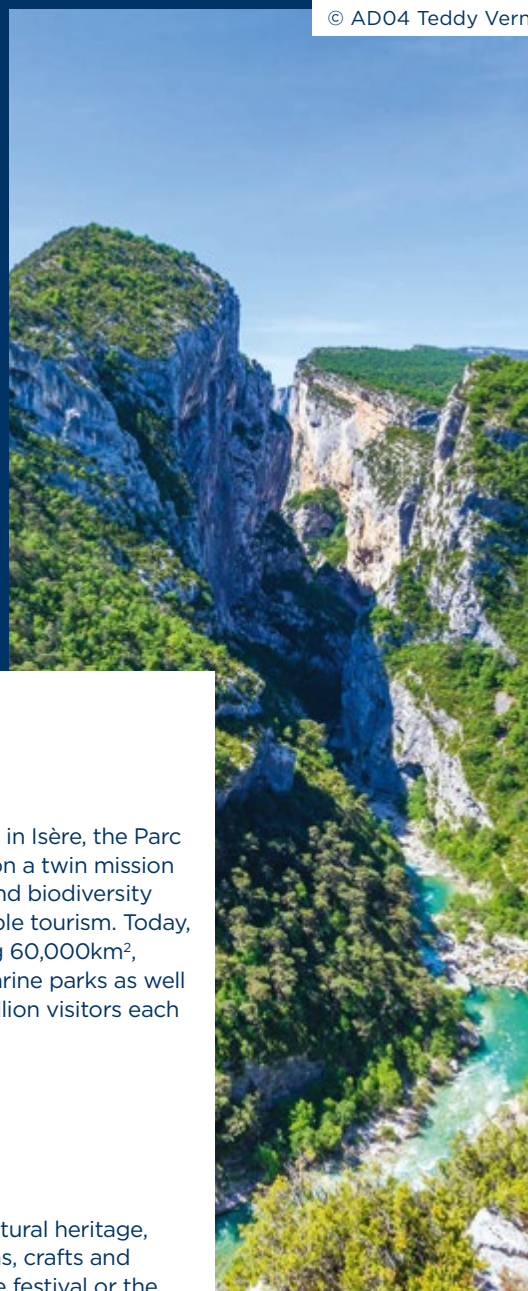
Goals

- Inform and reassure
- Inspire
- Encourage people to book

Sustainable tourism

Experience the wonders of France's unspoilt forests and nature reserves, discover its wealth of historic treasures and cultural heritage and delve into its authentic savoir-faire

© AD04 Teddy Verneuil



1/ Protected natural habitats

Since the launch of its very first national park in Isère, the Parc de la Bérarde, in 1913, France has embarked on a twin mission to safeguard and revive its natural habitats and biodiversity and boost local economies through sustainable tourism. Today, the country counts 11 national parks spanning 60,000km², 54 natural regional parks and nine natural marine parks as well as 47 'Grands Sites' welcoming around 32 million visitors each year.

2/ UNESCO-listed savoir-faire

France's wealth of natural wonders is second only to its cultural heritage, history and traditions. No fewer than 23 French celebrations, crafts and customs – among them alpinism, Brittany's Fest-noz dance festival or the perfume-making techniques of Grasse – take pride of place on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

3/ Slow tourism

A boon for eco-tourists and lovers of the great outdoors, France is criss-crossed by no fewer than 369 GR (Sentier de Grande Randonnée) hiking trails, including the iconic Chemin de Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle and the tour du Mont Blanc trek. The playground of seasoned cyclists, the Hexagon is also bisected by nine (out of 15) trans-European cycle routes; chief among them the Vélodyssée, Loire à Vélo and Viarhõna.

4/ Sustainable accommodation

A total of 191 hotels, B&Bs and guesthouses across the country have been awarded the EU Ecolabel for environmental excellence to date. A further 644 are members of the Clef Verte (Green Key), the very first international network of environmentally-friendly tourism facilities. Additionally, 40 establishments have been recognised for their sustainable credentials by the Green Globe association. No fewer than 280 rentals hold Gites Panda status while 320 holiday lets across the country are Ecogite-certified.

5/ Must-try produce and local specialities

France isn't nicknamed the "land of a thousand cheeses" for nothing. Every last corner of the country is brimming with homegrown produce and its *art de la table* is the envy of the world. From the red label and 'Organic Agriculture' stamp to the AOP and AOC appellations, countless designations ensure the protection and guarantee the origin and traceability of its cheeses, renowned wines and other gourmet staples.

6/ Sustainable gastronomy

An increasing number of restaurateurs are now adopting a more sustainable approach to gastronomy by reducing food miles and waste and serving up locally-sourced, seasonal and authentic fare. In a bid to recognise their efforts, the Michelin Guide launched a new Sustainable Gastronomy label in 2020, singling out eateries with outstanding environmental practices. Around 50 restaurants have been awarded the green-dining accolade to date.

7/ The rural heartland

France's rolling countryside, its spellbinding landscapes and slower pace of life have always held a near magnetic attraction for tourists in search of authenticity. Thanks to such initiatives as 'Accueil Paysan' and 'Bienvenue à la ferme', holidaymakers can now get a taste of the simple life, hop on a whistle-stop tour of local farms and meet the gatekeepers of ancestral traditions and savoir-faire.

8/ Picture-perfect towns and villages

The Hexagon's quaint towns and villages are the perfect antidote to mass tourism; a chance to discover picturesque nooks away from the madding crowd. The best way to start your exploration is by checking out the various labels and designations signposting France's historic villages and most remarkable towns. The 'Plus Beaux Villages de France' association counts 159 member villages and aims to promote and protect the country's most enchanting hamlets. A total of 107 unmissable towns and villages have been recognised as 'Plus Beaux Détours de France' thanks to their unique character, host of attractions and charming accommodation. Finally, the 'Petites Cités de Caractère' label champions outstanding rural towns paving the way for sustainable tourism.

9/ Green cities

France counts some of the most eco-friendly cities in the world, chief among them Nantes, which was voted European Green Capital in 2013. Following hot on its heels, Dijon and Grenoble recently reached the finals of the 2022 European Green Capital Award. While Lyon narrowly missed out on a place in the shortlist, its commitment to sustainability and green-living track record have been recognised time and again over the years. Not only was Lyon named French Diversity Capital in 2019, it holds the coveted title of European Smart City.

10/ Accessible tourism for all

From 'Destinations pour tous' to 'Tourisme & Handicap', a growing number of nationwide campaigns and labels strive to improve accessibility for and cater to the less-able-bodied. No fewer than 5,536 tourist attractions, hotels and B&Bs across the country are now wheelchair-friendly including 337 in Charente-Maritime alone and 205 in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques.

© G. Deschamps - CRT Occitanie



The Bourse de Commerce, Paris's new contemporary art Mecca

Good news: the Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection is now officially open to the public.

Housed in the former stock exchange, painstakingly converted into a state-of-the-art venue by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, Paris's new flagship museum showcases the extensive contemporary art collection of businessman François Pinault. Spread across 7,700m², including 3,000m² of dedicated galleries, the breathtaking Bourse offers themed displays and monographic exhibitions featuring some of the finest pieces gathered by the keen art collector over the past four decades, as well as commissioned works and loans. Going forward, the contemporary art centre will also host events, takeovers and performances. After marvelling at the financier's collection, visitors are invited to head on up to the top floor for a bite at the capital's hottest new restaurant-café, La Halle aux grains, helmed by Michelin-starred father-son team Michel and Sébastien Bras. From this lofty vantage point, they will enjoy eye-popping views of the museum's rotunda, not to mention Paris's sea of rooftops and some of its top landmarks, including Saint-Eustache Church, the Halles' glass canopy and the Tour Saint-Jacques.

pinaultcollection.com/en



© Wallis - Msm-3455

Just add water

France's first underwater museum is set to make waves in Marseille.

From this summer, bathers, snorkellers and divers will get to plunge into the Musée subaquatique's submerged gallery and goggle, for free, at its 10 sculptures anchored to the seabed 100m off the plage des Catalans. More than an underwater sculpture park, this sunken museum will aim to raise awareness of environmental issues and protect marine ecosystems. To cause minimum disruption to the ocean floor, each 2m artwork, eight of which have already been installed 5m deep, is made from pH-neutral cement and doubles up as an "artificial reef", providing shelter and habitat for marine life. One of these installations, *Résilience* by artist Thierry Trivès, will even be fitted with a camera and sensors offering a fascinating porthole into Mediterranean sea life in real time.

musee-subaquatique.com

Normandy's first British war memorial

The wait for the new British Normandy Memorial is nearly over.

Perched on a gently sloping hillside above Gold Beach with commanding views of the D-Day Landing areas, this unique remembrance site spearheaded by the Normandy Memorial Trust will be unveiled by the end of the year. The first memorial of its kind in the region, it will pay tribute to the 22,442 Commonwealth soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Battle of Normandy. Also honoured will be the tens of thousands of French civilians who lost their lives during the liberation of Normandy's towns and villages. The memorial is only phase one of the Trust's major remembrance project. Plans are now well under way to create an interactive education centre charting the Allies' efforts to defeat the Nazis, the D-Day preparations and shedding fresh light on the key role played not only by the Resistance in France and the Home Front in Britain but by French civilians too. The inauguration of this ambitious complex is earmarked for 2024 to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings.

normandymemorialtrust.org



© Normandy Memorial Trust

© Louis Brunet



Modern art takeover at Fontevraud Abbey

It's made an indelible mark on the history of France – now Fontevraud Abbey has its sights set on the history of art.

Following the donation of some 900 masterpieces by private collectors Martine and Léon Cligman, the medieval monastic complex, which is the final resting place of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Richard the Lionheart, is now home to Pays de la Loire's new flagship modern art museum. A rare domestic scene by Camille Corot, a self-portrait by Toulouse-Lautrec, a set of paintings by Eugène Carrière, a bust signed by Rodin, Degas sculptures, 300 drawings including 36 original illustrations for Petronius's *Le Satyricon* by André Derain, 88 glassworks by Maurice Marinot, as well as a unique array of non-European ancient and ethnographic artefacts all feature among the highlights of the museum, which opened on May 19. Keen to keep the Cligmans front and centre, the sprawling art complex, set in the royal abbey's former stables, draws attention not only to the breadth of the collection they lovingly assembled over more than 60 years but to the insatiable quest which led them to make fascinating connections between these works.

fontevraud.fr/en

© akg-images Photo
© Lefevre Fine Art Ltd., London
© Bridgeman Images



Digital art in the spotlight at the Bassins de Lumières

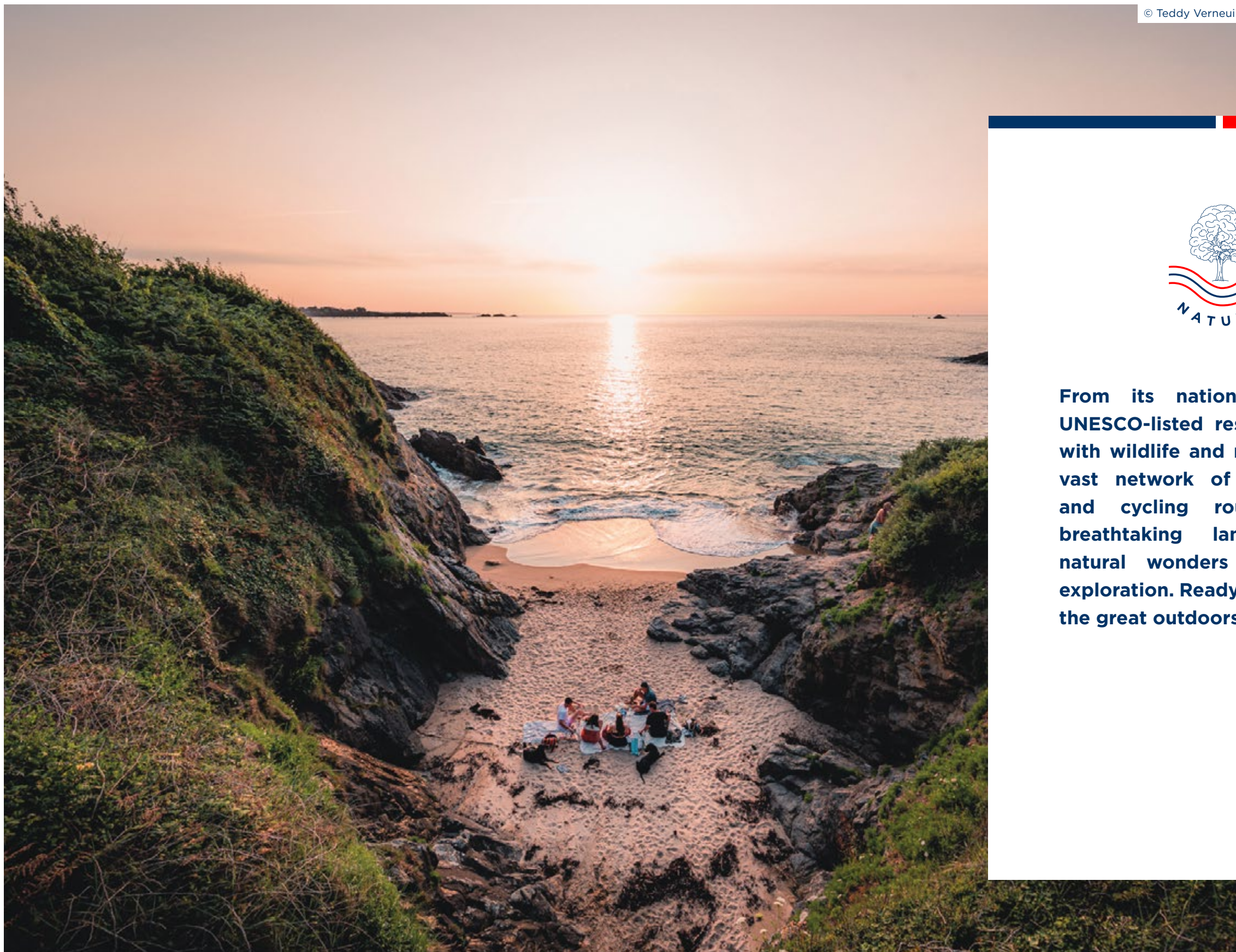
After the success of its sell-out Klimt show, the Bassins de Lumières in Bordeaux is back for round two with 'Monet, Renoir, Chagall: Journeys Around the Mediterranean'.

From Impressionism to Pointillism via Fauvism, the former submarine base-turned-world's largest digital art centre will quite literally bring to light artists' enduring fascination with the Mediterranean's sun-drenched coastline through some 500 paintings projected on to every last inch of its concrete shell. Thanks to the magic of technology, each artwork will burst from its frame and glide across the Bassins' walls and shimmering water pools, in an explosion of colour and sound. A feast for the eyes.

bassins-lumieres.com/en/home

Nature

Admire its beauty



© Teddy Verneuil



From its national parks and UNESCO-listed reserves teeming with wildlife and rare flora to its vast network of coastal paths and cycling routes, France's breathtaking landscapes and natural wonders are ripe for exploration. Ready to venture into the great outdoors?



© Somme Tourisme

Spotlight on France's new regional parks

Calling all nature lovers: France has unveiled four new regional parks. From Mont-Ventoux's hair-pin bends and the dunes-speckled Baie de Somme to the ribbons of walking paths winding through Corbières-Fenouillèdes and the Doubs Horloger's mountainous terrain, these protected havens are ripe for discovery – and adventure.

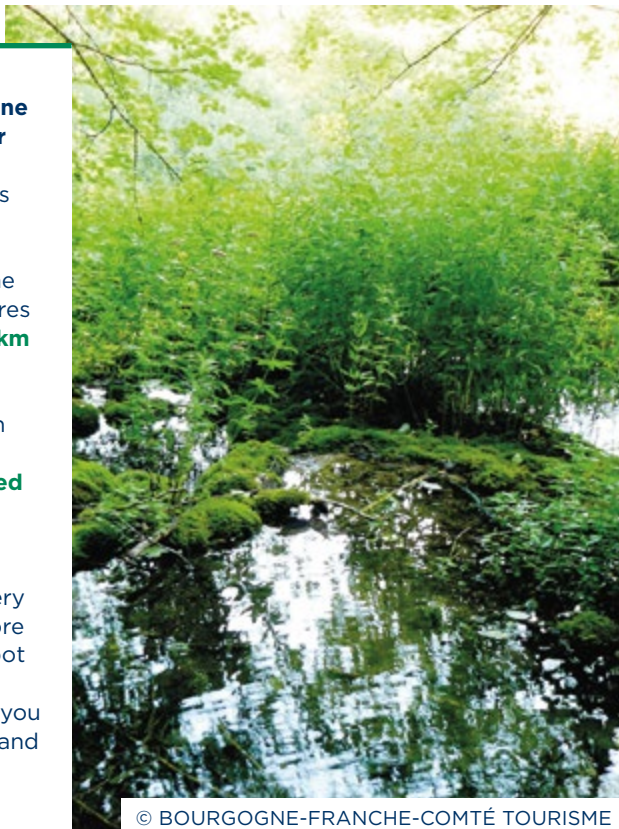
Stretching around the highest peak in Vaucluse, le Parc naturel régional du Mont-Ventoux is a Mecca for cycling enthusiasts. Buffeted by the mistral, Mont-Ventoux stands at a dizzying **1,912m** and is a treasure trove of rare flora and blink-and-you'll-miss-it fauna. Positively brimming with wildlife, the Parc naturel régional Baie de Somme Picardie Maritime's sweeping coastline is a sanctuary for colonies of grey seals. Nestled in the eastern Pyrenees, the Parc naturel régional Corbières-Fenouillèdes is a biodiversity hotspot, home to an impressive **16 species of birds of prey** such as eagles and vultures. As if this weren't quite enough, the nature reserve is dotted with a handful of Cathar castles. The new playground of thrillseekers, the Parc naturel régional du Doubs Horloger spans **100,000** hectares, **40 per cent** of it woodland, up in the Jura. Its mountain passes, gentle slopes and twin rivers are just the ticket for a range of activities, from skiing and hiking to cycling and canoeing.

King of the forest(s)

Inaugurated at the tail end of 2019, the Parc national de forêts en Champagne et Bourgogne is one France's best-kept secrets – but not for much longer.

Straddling the Haute-Marne and Côte-d'Or, this green oasis is not only the country's newest national park but one of the largest areas of protected lowland forest in Europe, no less. The numbers speak for themselves: **241,000** hectares criss-crossed by **2,000km** of hiking trails, **700km** of meandering rivers and babbling brooks and a whopping **50 million** trees – 80 per cent of which have stood here since before the French Revolution. This ancient woodland is also the refuge of more than **3,000 rare and endangered species** including black storks and wildcats. Culture vultures won't be disappointed, with a volley of historical monuments – churches, abbeys and even châteaux – to discover at every turn. And there are many more surprises in store for open-minded wanderers, starting with a spot of 'forest bathing'. Book a session and venture through the woods where an expert will show you how to harness the restorative power of trees and be at one with the natural world.

forets-parcnational.fr



© BOURGOGNE-FRANCHE-COMTÉ TOURISME



© Emmanuel Berthier

La Vélomaritime, a ride on the wild side

Saddle up for a journey to remember along the shiny new Vélomaritime cycling route.

Inaugurated in June, the sprawling coastal path unspools over **1,500km** of wave-lapped shoreline from Brittany to Belgium, opening up a vast network of wild trails and previously inaccessible scenery to keen pedal-pushers. Fringed with dramatic capes, clusters of dunes, cliffs and a smattering of monuments and other architectural treasures – not to mention a volley of restaurants to carbo-load along the way – the Vélomaritime is sure to hit the spot with outdoorsy types, history buffs and foodies alike. Peppered along the attraction-rich route, between Roscoff and Dunkirk, are no fewer than five Grands Sites de France, chief among them the Baie of Somme, the twin Cap Gris-Nez and Cap Blanc-Nez and the wind-knocking cliffs of Étretat; three of France's 'Plus Beaux Villages'; four national monuments; and three iconic UNESCO-listed sites including Mont-Saint-Michel. A breathtaking route in more ways than one, it also clocks up a mighty **50 lighthouses**. Ready, steady, get pedalling.

lavelomaritime.com

Chase the waves in Brittany

With its vast swathes of sandy beaches, consistent swell and steady stream of barrelling waves, Brittany is a surfer's paradise.

The gateway to the Quiberon Peninsula, the sprawling plage de Kerhillio is the stomping ground of seasoned pros. From surfers and windsurfers to kite surfers and bodyboarders, keen wave-chasers flock to its wind-lashed shores year-round for their adrenaline fix. But there's ample opportunity for novices to cut their teeth too. A stone's throw from Brest, the dunes of the Pays des Abers' blend of breakers and gentle waves offers thrills and spills for all abilities. While veterans make a beeline for the more challenging dunes of Tréompan in Ploudalmézeau, beginners can ease themselves into a range of water sports and tame the waves at their own pace amid the Sainte-Marguerite dunes' shallow lagoon in Landéda.



© PIRIOU-Jacqueline

It takes a village

Ready to play peekaboo with a pod of seals, fly a kite and go horseback riding in the Bay of Authie?

There's no shortage of adventures to keep little ones busy – and buzzing – in Berck-sur-Mer. On a mission to fend off half-term boredom, during every school break the seaside resort's My Holiday Village initiative offers a jam-packed bill of thrills and spills. From water sports and nature hikes to cultural activities, there's something for every taste, age and ability. The only question is: where to begin? Kick off your half-term adventures with a wander (or canter – horse riding is available for kids aged 10 and over) round the Bay of Authie's unspoilt sand dunes and see the colonies of grey seals and rich birdlife. A jaunt to the home of the International Kite Festival and Championships would not be complete without a coaching session in the volatile art of *cerf-volant*. Following in the footsteps of legends, kiddywinks as young as six will learn how to unspool their string, nail that first lift-off and brace against oncoming gusts like seasoned pros.

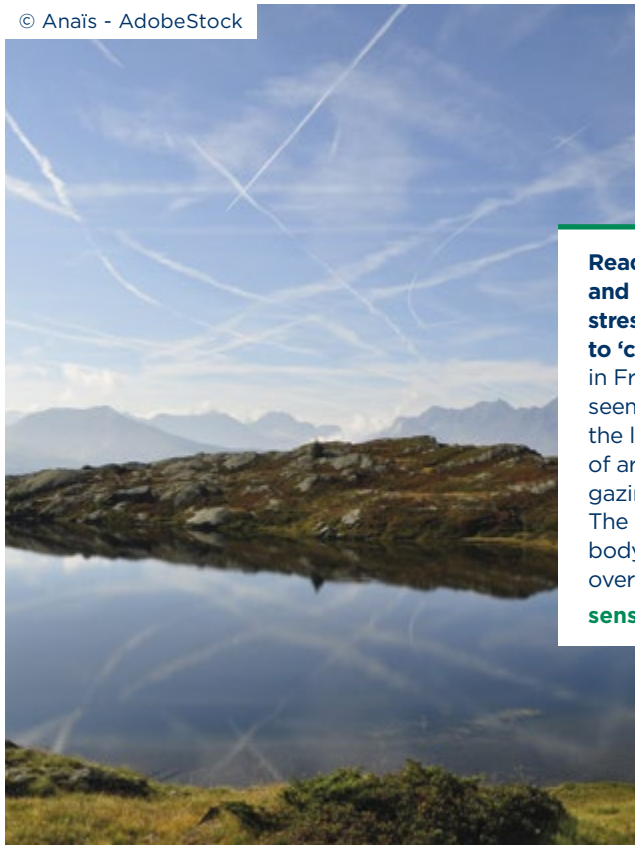
monvillagevacances.ellohaweb.com



© Kevin Wimez



© Anaïs - AdobeStock



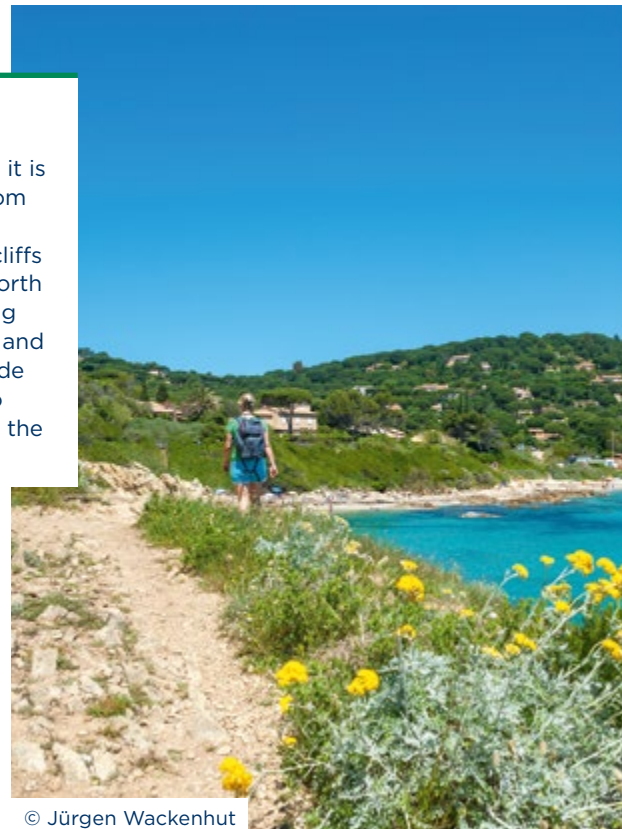
Shake off your troubles in the Alps

Ready to give ice-floating a shake? Born in Finland and designed to wash city-frazzled denizens' stress away, this pastime gives new meaning to 'chilling out'. Now available for the first time in France in the Haute Maurienne-Vanoise, this seemingly bonkers 'therapy' involves drifting on the lac de Val-Cenis Sollières-Sardières (in waters of around 5°C!) in a wetsuit filled with air, while gazing at the surrounding snow-capped mountains. The cold quickly works its soothing magic on both body and mind, filling participants with a sense of overwhelming calm.

sensationsvanoise.com

The Basque coastal path gains new ground

Good news for keen ramblers: the Basque coastal path will soon connect Donostia to Anglet, thanks to a 15km extension. Talaia, as it is known locally, currently unfolds over 54km from San Sebastián to Bidart, taking in a mosaic of sandy beaches, wild coves and wave-lapped cliffs along the way. This new 15km stretch to the north of the Basque country will see the iconic hiking trail link up the beaches of Erretegia in Bidart and La Barre in Anglet via the sun-drenched seaside resort of Biarritz, allowing veteran ramblers to walk from Donostia Bay to the Adour river for the very first time.



© Jürgen Wackenhut

Auvergne's sleeping giants

Awaken your sense of adventure in the land of sleeping giants. A UNESCO-listed natural wonder of epic scale, the Chaîne des Puys - Limagne fault tectonic arena in the heart of Auvergne counts no fewer than 80 dormant volcanoes spread across just 45km. From the Puy Pariou's plunging crater to the Puy des Gouttes' undulating rockscape, the wind-buffed chain is the playground of hikers, cyclists and paragliders. Not quite ready to break a sweat up (or down) these snoozing behemoths? Hop aboard the Panoramique des Dômes electric cog train, sit back and let this sea of volcanic cones as well as the outlines of Clermont-Ferrand and the Massif du Sancy unfold before your eyes as you wind your way up the Puy de Dôme, the Chaîne des Puys' highest summit. For the lowdown on Auvergne's millennia-old pyramids, drop by Vulcania, the only theme park dedicated to volcanos. Get to grips with the science with fun activities and displays and enjoy a blow-by-blow account of the chain's fascinating past through explosions-packed 3D films. The park's new earthquake-themed roller-coaster is sure to rock your world.

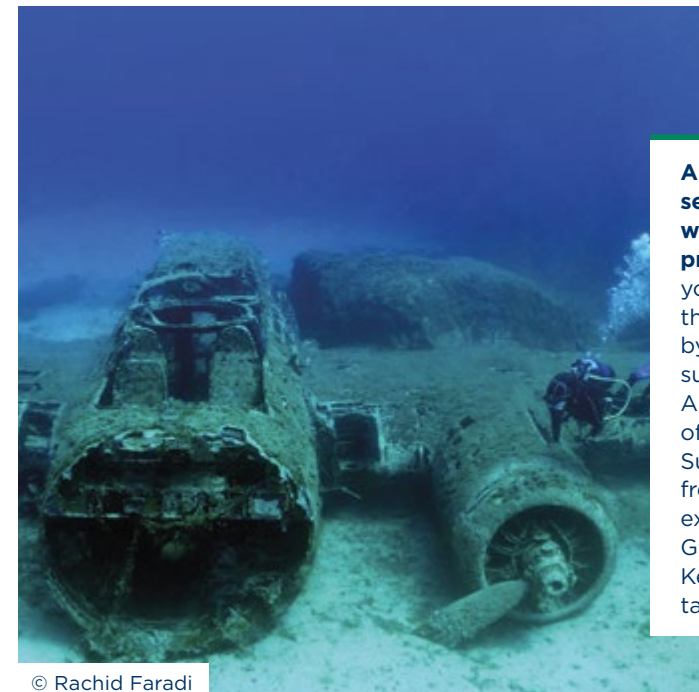
vulcania.com/en/



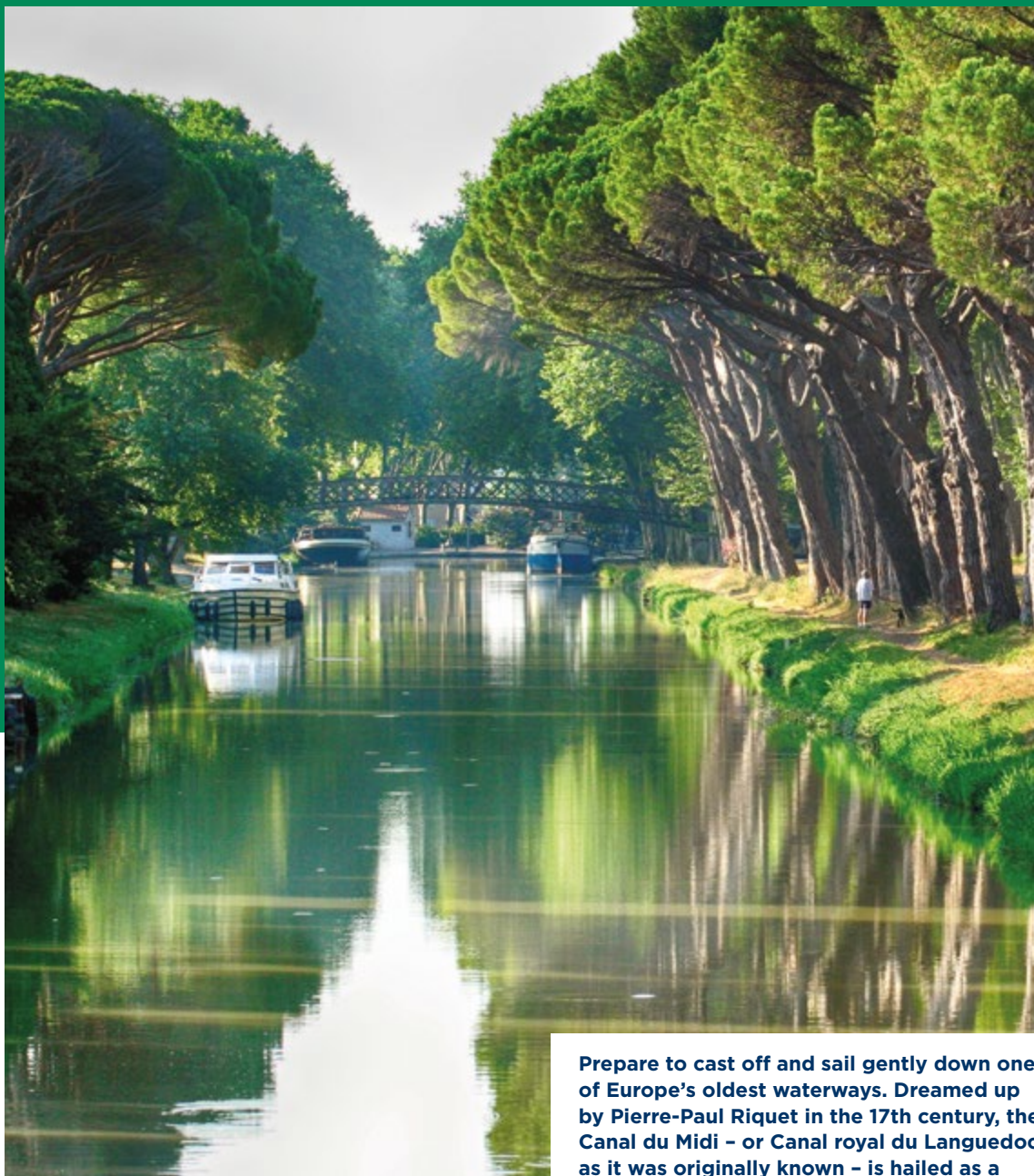
© F. Cormon - Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme

Dive into Corsican history

A dream come true for wreck divers, Corsica's seabed is an eerie underwater museum teeming with shipwrecks, crashed aircraft and remarkably preserved WWII debris ripe for exploration. Start your hunt for the Isle of Beauty's sunken relics off the coast of Calvi, where a B-17 bomber shot down by German fighters in 1944 now lies 28m below the surface. Then track down the colossal skeleton of the Alcione on the east coast, widely regarded as one of the most impressive wrecks in the Mediterranean. Submerged 35m deep, this torpedoed Italian petrol freighter now serves as a refuge for an array of fish and exceptional sea life. Finally, take a 30m plunge in the Gulf of Sagone to survey the wreckage of the Canadair. Keep your eyes peeled for the giant lobster which has taken up residence in its fuselage.



© Rachid Faradi



© C. Deschamps - CRT Occitanie

Anchors aweigh on the Canal du Midi

Prepare to cast off and sail gently down one of Europe's oldest waterways. Dreamed up by Pierre-Paul Riquet in the 17th century, the Canal du Midi – or Canal royal du Languedoc as it was originally known – is hailed as a remarkable feat of engineering and design to this day.

Recognised by UNESCO since 1996, it stretches 240km from the city of Toulouse to the Étang de Thau on the Mediterranean, taking in a roster of architectural gems and world-renowned attractions along the way. Cruise down its placid waters, marvel at the Malpas tunnel, keep your eyes peeled for the canal-bridge at Béziers, swing by the fortified city of Carcassonne and brace yourself for its daisy-chain of locks (65 and counting). Natural wonders abound too making each trip truly magical. From the cereal fields of Lauragais to the sun-soaked foothills of Corbières and Minervois and the rows of plane trees, umbrella pines and cypresses standing sentinel over the waterway, a mosaic of ever-changing scenery unspools throughout the journey.

Monet's gardens at Giverny



© E. Tessier Normandy Tourism

Step into the beguiling world of Claude Monet at Giverny. Nestled in the Eure, in the leafy heart of Normandy, this floral dreamscape inspired some of the artist's most remarkable and evocative paintings. Carpeted with tulips in spring and flush with fragrant roses in summer, Giverny's vibrant planted walkways, bloom-dusted arbour and ever-changing colour palette, have turned the heads of generations of flâneurs and art aficionados. Guided by the heady scents of this blossoming wonderland, meander around the iconic lily-studded pond, cross the Japanese bridge and revel in the timeless beauty of the world-famous gardens that so vividly captured the imagination of the father of Impressionism.

fondation-monet.com/en

TOP 3:

- Discover Monet's home and studio
- Visit Giverny gardens
- Explore the Eure département

The Loire Valley by bike



© D. Darrault - CRT Centre-Val de Loire

One of France's most popular and lengthiest cycle routes, La Loire à Vélo hugs the iconic river for 900km between Cuffly (Centre-Val de Loire) and Saint-Brévin-les-Pins (Pays de la Loire).

The gateway to the UNESCO-listed region's historic châteaux and award-winning gardens, vineyard-studded villages and world-class gastronomy, this vast trail alternates between picturesque country roads, towpaths and purpose-built cycle lanes. Hands down its most stunning stretch, the 300km linking Sully-sur-Loire in the Loiret to Chalonnes-sur-Loire in Anjou offer a never-ending parade of natural and man-made gems, from cave dwellings and limestone manors to water meadows and islands nestling in the arms of the river.

loirebybike.co.uk



© Florence Guérin

Fancy a spot of forest bathing?

Born in Japan, forest therapy is becoming increasingly popular with city-frazzled denizens keen to unwind and reconnect with nature. We head to the new Parc national de forêts en Champagne et Bourgogne to meet 'forest bathing' pioneer Florence Guérin and discover the manifold benefits of harnessing the healing power of trees.

What are the benefits of forest therapy?

Forest therapy is an alternative medicine that is both preventative and healing. It can, for example, reduce blood pressure and help to alleviate stress. Trees are also highly effective in preventing breakdowns and can help us deal with many life events such as redundancy, grief, or divorce. Forest therapy can also help with anything from team building to boosting one's confidence.

How does 'forest bathing' work?

First there is the energy side of it. I give people copper energy rods and ask them to pick a tree. It's up to them to determine what they want from the tree and what they are willing to give back to the tree – it's a very intimate exchange.

If a tree rejects them, the rods split apart. If the tree accepts them, the rods move forward or cross over. The key is then to treat a tree as you would another human – with care and consideration. You can touch it with one or two hands (after first asking permission), embrace it, lean against it. Some people don't feel anything, they are just at peace. Those who are electrosensitive might feel a strong surge of energy. They may even feel light-headed, dizzy, or feel their heart pounding in their chest. Then there is the healing side of forest therapy. Trees release essential oils called terpenes and chemicals called phytoncides, which have an anti-microbial effect on human bodies, boosting the immune system. These help to lower cortisol (the stress hormone) and trigger the production of melatonin and serotonin. Colours are also very important. Green is fantastic: it's a blend of blue, which is soothing, and yellow, which is invigorating.

Are certain types of trees better suited to healing or preventing specific conditions or issues?

Generally speaking, coniferous trees are more invigorating while deciduous trees are more soothing. Beeches are very useful to boost confidence and help people to tap into their inner strength. But beeches are the teenagers of the forest; they're very moody and tend to reject people. Oaks are the grandfathers of the forest: they are comforting, reassuring and connections work almost every time.

bourgogne-tourisme.com/sit/florence-guerin-sylvotherapie

Where to stay



© Pas-de-Calais Tourisme

Eco-friendly retreat

Pas-de-Calais's newest eco-retreat, Natureza, is poised to welcome nature-starved holidaymakers this summer.

From the 'hobbit hole' and cabins to the 'love nest' tree-house accessible via a rope bridge, every accommodation dotted around the six-hectare park in Roeux will be equipped with a kitchen, bathroom and energy-efficient heating, showing that sustainability and luxury are far from mutually exclusive. As per the domaine's stringent low-miles policy, all meals (delivered right to your front door) will be sourced locally. Just picture yourself waking up to the gentle tweets of birds and ducks' quacks, carp-fishing from the comfort of your terrace or gazing at the sunset from your own mini-spa...

pas-de-calais-tourisme.com/en

Cliffhanger

Fancy getting some shuteye hanging off the Tarn or Dourbie Gorge? Climb a via ferrata, abseil down the rockface to your portaledge, have dinner with your feet dangling over the void, gaze at the breathtaking (in more ways than one) landscape and watch griffon vultures soar by before drifting off to sleep with your head in the stars.

millau-viaduc-tourisme.fr



© Millau Viaduc tourisme



© Loire Valley Llamas

Creature comforts in Sarthe

The brainchild of English expats, Loire Valley Llamas invites animal lovers to bed down within sniffing distance of a woolly herd.

Whether you opt for the glamping option – a luxury tent overlooking the llama farm – or a cosy stay in the coveted Llama Lodge, a former wine press complete with shower and kitchenette, you're guaranteed a wild time. Guests will have a chance to take the pack animals for a walk and little ones will even get to moonlight as wranglers for the day, muck in, feed the herd and receive a llama farmer certificate for their hard graft.

loirevalleyllamas.com

Culture

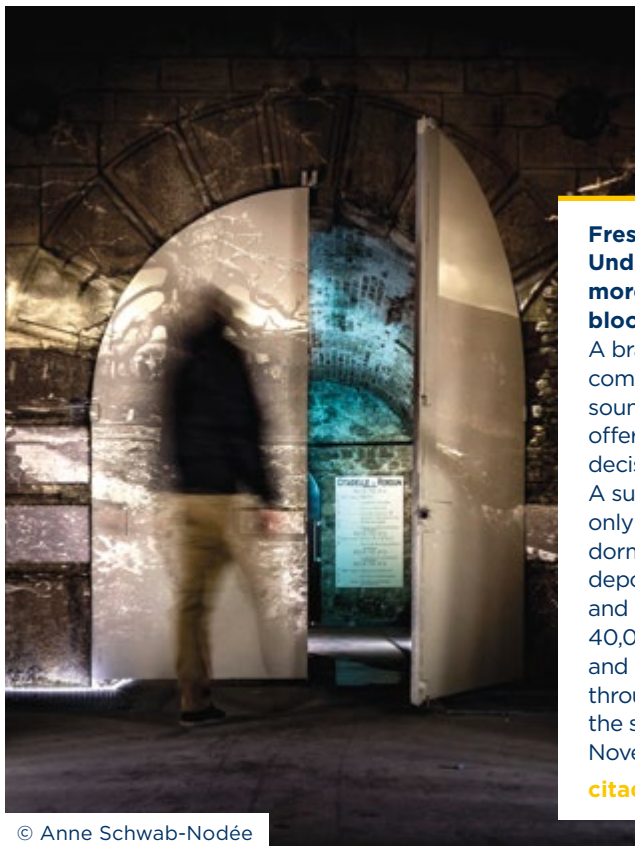
Share simple pleasures



© akg-images Photo
© Lefevre Fine Art Ltd., London
© Bridgeman Images



Strap in: 2021 promises to be a year to remember. From Normandy to Occitanie via Grand Est, countless museums, landmarks and art centres are getting ready to (re)launch and unveil shiny new concepts and a host of digital exhibitions and VR tours.



© Anne Schwab-Nodée

Verdun Citadel gets an upgrade

Freshly kitted out for the 21st century, the Underground Citadel of Verdun paints an even more poignant picture of WWI's longest and bloodiest stalemate.

A brand-new augmented-reality exhibition, complete with interactive displays, evocative soundscapes and extended wagon rides, now offers a vivid insight into the secret complex's decisive logistical role during the Battle of Verdun. A subterranean city of epic scale, it housed not only a web of war rooms and offices but immense dormitories for the troops, powder and ammunition depots to supply the front, a chapel, an infirmary and a bakery providing between 30,000 and 40,000 rations per day. Some 1,500 men worked and lived in the citadel while up to 4,000 passed through its galleries. It's also within its tunnels that the selection of the Unknown Soldier took place in November 1920.

citadelle-souterraine-verdun.fr/en

The Cité du Vitrail reborn

After a major three-year renovation, the new and improved Cité du Vitrail in Troyes is set to reopen its doors in September. Housed in the 18th-century Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte, which was founded by none other than the Count of Champagne, Henry I the Liberal, the sprawling complex is the only museum in France dedicated to stained glass. Its goal is simple: to introduce the public to the little-known art through a varied and exhaustive collection of windows and unique masterpieces spanning centuries, genres and nations. From the ancient to the contemporary, the secular to the religious, the figurative to the abstract, the traditional to the avant-garde, every style and defining period in the artform is duly represented in an engaging and accessible way. This new 3,000m² space will offer a mix of permanent and temporary exhibitions as well as a range of workshops and a packed bill of events. Don't miss the crown jewel of the museum's collection: a 12th-century stained-glass window from Troyes depicting the Transfiguration of Christ. Unearthed by chance after vanishing at the start of the 20th century, it was bought at auction by the Aube département in 2018.

cite-vitrail.fr



© Christophe Deschanel

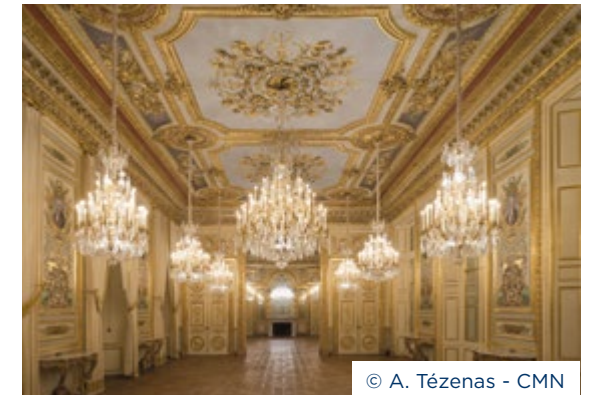


© Villa du Temps retrouvé

In the footsteps of Proust

Delve into Marcel Proust's Belle Époque at the new Villa du Temps retrouvé (Villa of Time found) in Normandy. Housed in Cabourg's historic Villa Bon Abri, this impressive centre, billed as a 'home-museum', explores the acclaimed author's lifelong bond with the coastal town where he spent his summers between 1907 and 1914 and penned part of his *In Search of Lost Time* series. A truly unique concept, the Villa du Temps retrouvé goes one further by using the author and his oeuvre as a starting point to chart the boom of the Côte Fleurie at the turn of the century. Taking a leaf out of his book(s), the exhibits sweep visitors on a multisensory journey back to the heyday of the seaside resort that so fired up his imagination. Guided by the novelist's timeless words and the heady bouquet of the bespoke scent commissioned by the museum, have a nosey round the rooms, make yourself comfortable in the antique furnishings on loan from the Mobilier national, tickle the piano's keys and listen to music before wandering through the gardens and indulging your sweet tooth at the tearoom.

villadutempsretrouve.com/en/



© A. Tézenas - CMN

The Hôtel de la Marine revealed

The Hôtel de la Marine is gearing up to open to the public for the first time in 200 years. Designed in the 18th century by Ange-Jacques Gabriel to house the royal furniture collection, the place de la Concorde's most iconic, and elusive, monument went on to become the naval ministry's headquarter. With the 'confidant' (a connected headset available in eight languages) as their guide, visitors will get a choice of two tours: a 45-minute recce of the state rooms complete with a pit-stop on the loggia overlooking the world-famous place de la Concorde; or a more comprehensive 90-minute visit offering unlimited access to temporary exhibitions and taking in the sumptuously refurbished apartments. Throughout, the magic of binaural audio technology and augmented reality will bring to life centuries of history and intrigue, from the execution of Louis XVI to the addition of the Luxor obelisk on the square.

hotel-de-la-marine.paris

A dragon in the city

Ever since it first prowled along the seafront, the Dragon of Calais has become the coastal resort's hottest ticket. Made out of wood and steel panels, the mighty 25m animatronic fire-breather has all the spine-chilling hallmarks of the creature of legends: plumes of smoke rise from its scaly skeleton; it can bat its eyelids, prick its ears, bare its fanged maw and flick its tongue; it can lie down... and gallop at a speed of 4km per hour. For a unique perspective, climb up its tail to the covered panoramic platform on its winged back 10m above ground and enjoy a hair-raising ride along the seafront. The handiwork of the Compagnie La Machine, the hefty 72-tonne dragon will soon be joined by a fantastical menagerie of Komodo monitors and steel-clad reptiles, starting this year with a 4m-long iguana. Each larger-than-life animatron will be allocated its own nest and given free rein to roam Calais's top historical sites and tourist attractions, including the forts of Risban and Nieulay, the Saint-Pierre Quarter and the Dombunker.

compagniedudragon.com/en/



© Pas-de-Calais Tourisme

© CCJ L. Damelet

Dig into Roman history at Narbo Via



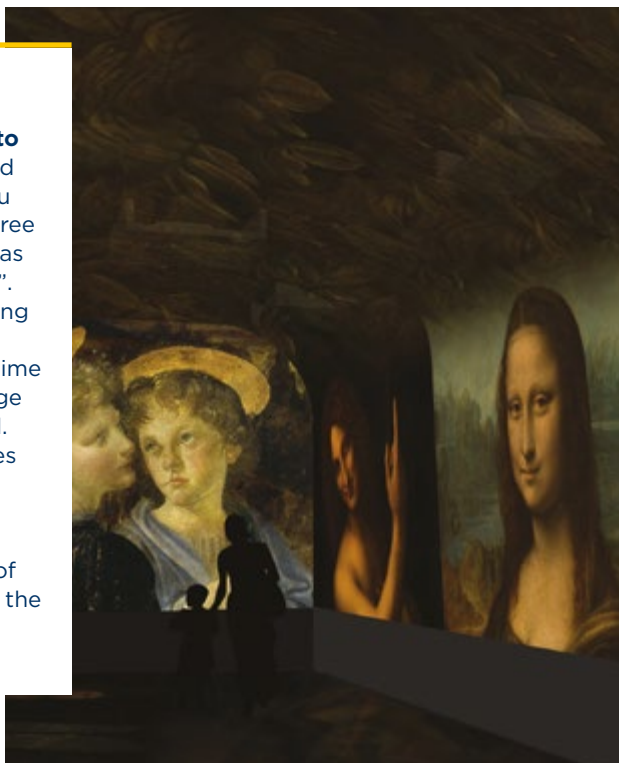
It's almost time to unearth the secrets of Narbonne's Roman past at the new Narbo Via Museum. While sadly devoid of monuments dating back to Antiquity, Narbonne has no shortage of vestiges bearing witness to its legacy as Narbo Martius, the very first Roman colony in Gaul and the richest outside Italy. At long last the southern city's remarkable collection of around 10,000 lapidary works, mosaics and other archaeological finds will go on display at Narbo Via, a state-of-the-art 2,800m² exhibition space designed by Foster+Partners. The new Roman history centre will be split into four areas centred around specific themes: urbanism in Narbonne, the archaeological digs carried out around the Capitole, navigation techniques and the excavations currently under way in the ancient port. Some 800 remnants of funerary monuments will also be displayed on a large modular wall.

narbovia.fr

Da Vinci at Clos Lucé

The Château du Clos Lucé in Amboise will soon unveil Leonardo da Vinci, Painter and Architect, a new immersive space dedicated to the Renaissance master. Housed in a converted textile factory amid the grounds of the château where the legendary inventor spent the last three years of his life, the 500m² complex will serve as the rather quirky backdrop for a "digital mural". The ground floor will host an exhibition featuring 17 of the painter's artworks projected onto the walls and ceiling. 'Displayed' for the very first time in a single space, these masterpieces will plunge visitors headfirst into Da Vinci's pictorial world. Upstairs, an array of life-size models, 3D movies and projections and interactive display tables will shed light on his passion for architecture, mathematics, and geometry. A spine-tingling video game will allow thrill-seekers to fly one of Da Vinci's most iconic machines and soar over the imaginary Royal Palace of Romorantin.

vinci-closluce.com/en



© Château du Clos Lucé - Parc Leonardo da Vinci, Arc-en-Scène, Drôle de Trame 4



© Valentin Pacaut_The Explorers

Vauban's legacy in the southern French Alps

Hailed as two of Vauban's finest works, UNESCO-listed Briançon and the fortifications of Mont-Dauphin are sure to blow military history buffs away. Perched on a rocky outcrop 1,326m above sea level and hemmed in by zigzagging layers of ramparts, these impressive Alpine villages were built in 1692 and embody the inimitable technique and signature approach of Louis XIV's go-to engineer. For a complete overview of Briançon's intricate defence system, stroll along the upper wall path and gaze at the individual forts, each contrasting with the gentle landscape around them.

ville-briancon.fr

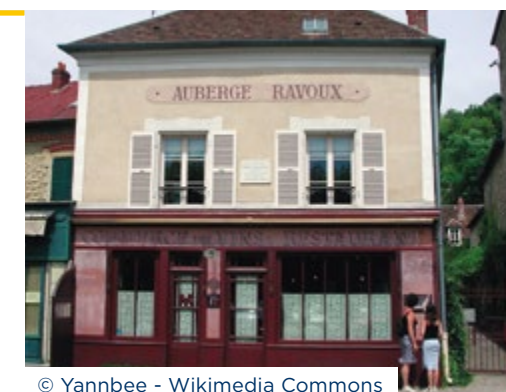
The best artists' homes to visit around Paris

From Vincent Van Gogh and Auguste Rodin to Rosa Bonheur, some of the world's greatest artists sought solace and inspiration in the verdant fold of the Île-de-France region.

Auberge Ravoux

Van Gogh spent his final days at the Auberge Ravoux in Auvers-sur-Oise before taking his own life in July 1890. Within the confines of the modest chambre n°5 the artist enjoyed a period of unprecedented creativity, painting more than 70 works in just over two months. Take a peek at the attic room where he breathed his last before paying your respects at the village cemetery where he is buried alongside his brother Theo.

maisondevangogh.fr/index-en



© Yannbee - Wikimedia Commons



© Fondation du Patrimoine

Château de By

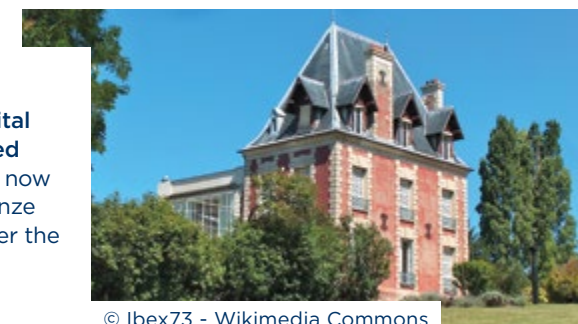
The scents of violet and turpentine waft softly through the air, a hat and ankle boots are plopped casually here and there, a half-finished canvas lingers in a corner: one almost expects Rosa Bonheur to waltz right back into her atelier at the Château de By in Thomery and pick up where she left off. Kept virtually untouched since the death of the acclaimed painter and staunch feminist on May 25, 1899, Bonheur's workshop - and home - offer an intimate glimpse into her life and creative process.

chateau-rosa-bonheur.fr/en-gb

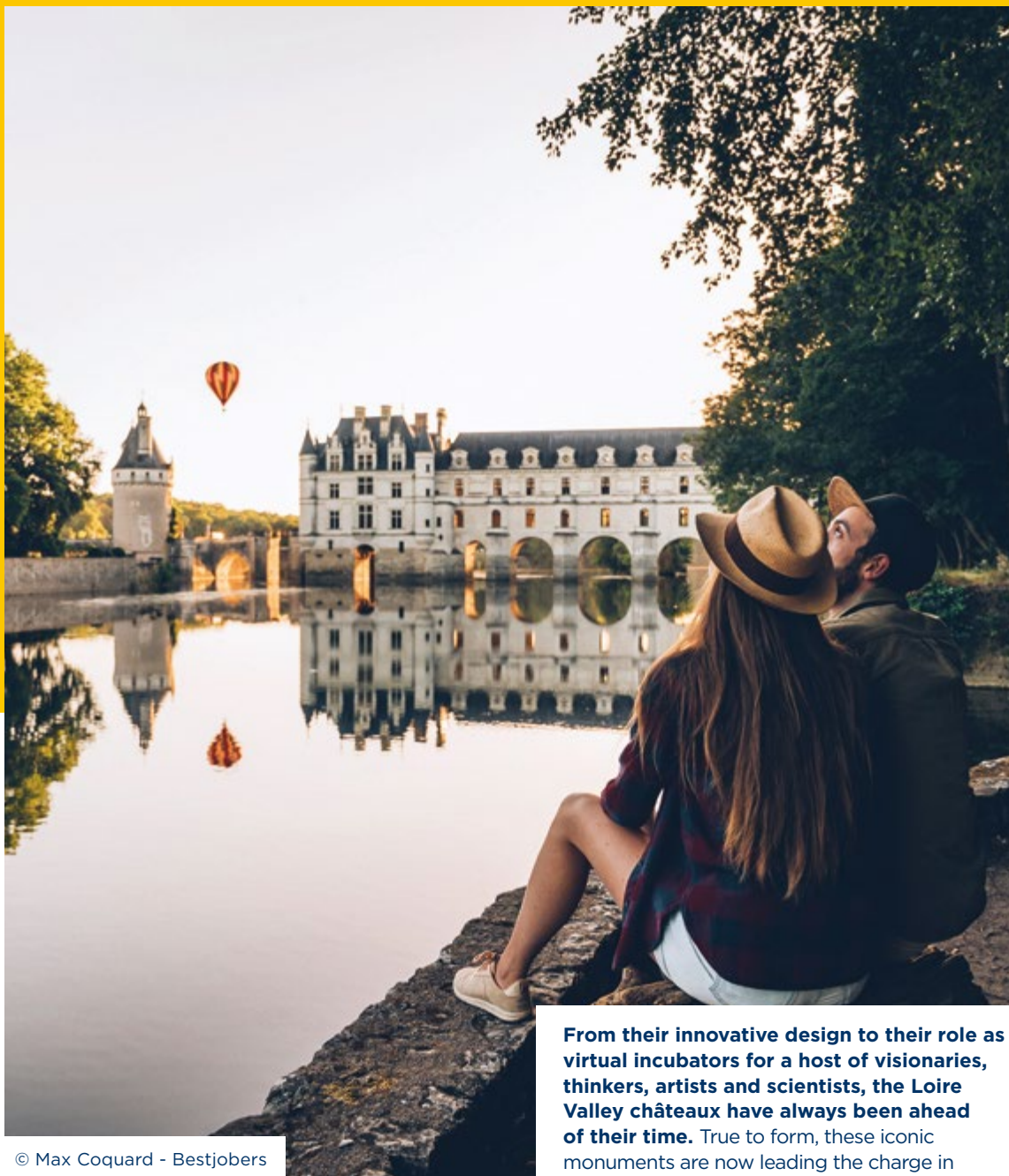
Villa des Brillants

Rodin sought refuge from the hubbub of the capital at the Villa des Brillants in Meudon, where he lived until his death in 1917. This home-turned-museum now houses more than 300 sculptures, including a bronze cast of the iconic 'Thinker' leaning protectively over the artist's tomb in the garden.

meudon.musee-rodin.fr/en



© Ibex73 - Wikimedia Commons



© Max Coquard - Bestjobers

Back to the future in the Loire Valley

From their innovative design to their role as virtual incubators for a host of visionaries, thinkers, artists and scientists, the Loire Valley châteaux have always been ahead of their time.

True to form, these iconic monuments are now leading the charge in the hot new trend of escape games. A fun and thrilling way to discover, and rediscover, these historic landmarks, escape games invite would-be detectives to relive key episodes of their often chequered past and crack their greatest mysteries. So where should you start your riddle-solving spree? First, test out your sleuthing skills at the Château royal de Blois, where you'll be transported back to the madcap escape of Marie de' Medici, who was held captive at the palace, from a window in 1619. This case closed, make for the Royal Fortress of Chinon to release the trapped souls of the Knights Templar rumoured to haunt its halls. Your mission, should you choose to accept it: decipher the secret messages sprinkled across the impregnable citadel and set the spirits free.

en.chateaublois.fr

forteressechinon.fr/en/

Marie Antoinette's secret retreat

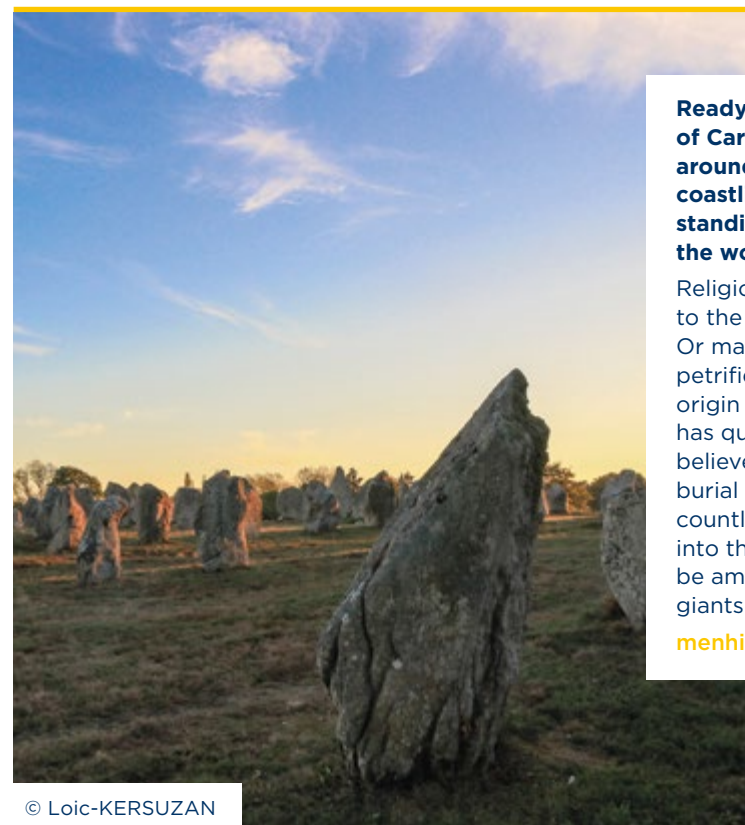


© Ibex73 - Wikimedia Commons

Left to rack and ruin for close to two centuries before being restored to its former glory in 2018, the Hameau de la Reine remains one of the Château de Versailles's best-kept secrets. Built between 1783 and 1786, this model village nestled amid the domaine du Petit Trianon was, for a few short years, Marie Antoinette's refuge from the prying eyes of the Court and all its intrigues. Within its idyllic fold, she fulfilled her longing for a simpler existence – playing out an idealised version of farm life. Follow in the young queen's dainty footsteps through the enchanting retreat, wander round the artificial lake studded with charming half-timbered cottages, stroll past the ornamental windmill, lighthouse, washhouse raised on stilts and dairy before moseying on over (in small groups only) to the impeccably renovated and furnished Queen's House. After your visit, be sure to stop by the spectacular royal chapel, whose freshly-refurbished façade was unveiled last spring.

en.chateauversailles.fr

Carnac, land of mystery



© Loic-KERSUZAN

Ready to unlock the millennia-old secrets of Carnac's mysterious alignments? Erected around 6,000 BC along Brittany's rugged coastline, this dense collection of 3,000 standing stones still puzzles archaeologists the world over to this day.

Religious monuments? A temple of worship to the moon or sun? An agricultural calendar? Or maybe, according to one wild legend, a petrified Roman army? Theories about their origin and significance abound. While no one has quite put their finger on the truth, it is believed they served as some kind of sacred burial space. Wind your way through the countless megaliths, past tumuli and squeeze into the ancient dolmens and you too will be amazed by Carnac's inscrutable granite giants.

menhirs-carnac.fr/en/



© B. Collier

Design your own exhibition at Les Franciscaines

As Deauville prepares to unveil Les Franciscaines, the first cultural centre of its kind in the world, town mayor Philippe Augier gives us an exclusive preview of the trailblazing museum, performance space and media library hybrid dedicated to the seaside resort's rich history and heritage.

What sparked the idea of transforming a former convent into a cultural hub?

I really wanted to create a permanent and multipurpose cultural space; a place where visitors would be actively creating their own journey, not passively looking at a painting or picking up a book from the library.

Tell us more about the concept behind Les Franciscaines.

It's a truly unique 'living' space, unlike anywhere else in the world. This 6,500m² monument now houses a museum dedicated to the work of painter André Hambourg, a media library and themed spaces shining a light on the town's past and cultural heritage. There are five of these spaces centred around the themes of

history, art and entertainment, horse riding (which is in the town's DNA), art de vivre and youth respectively. The building itself is part of the very fabric of the project. A large chapel has been transformed into an auditorium and every room, whether it be the former dining hall or cloister, has been turned into a library, covered with books from floor to ceiling. Visitors will be able to read wherever they are, watch a film, work on their laptop.

Les Franciscaines' inaugural exhibition, 'On the Roads to Paradise', promises to launch the centre on the cultural scene with quite the bang.

I wanted to create a high-impact exhibition with universal appeal. The exhibition will explore the theme of paradise through Islamic, Jewish and Christian artworks. These will range from 8th-century Christian illuminations to a short film by Bill Viola.

What is the cultural centre's most unique feature?

We've designed completely new software, which doesn't exist anywhere else in the world, that allows visitors to create their own bespoke exhibition. All the museum and media library's artworks have been digitalised. This means that visitors will be able to access this large archive by theme on one of the dozen or so interactive touch tables available around the centre. Once they've picked a theme, the relevant works will not only appear on the table but on large screens dotted around all the communal areas. Anyone walking around the centre will be able to enjoy this exhibition and the works displayed on the screen. It will be spectacular.

lesfranciscaines.fr/en

Where to stay

© Lodges de Coucouzac



Happy glampers

Nestled between fields and vineyards in Lagorce, Ardèche, the Lodges de Coucouzac are sure to convert even the most reticent of campers to the joys of glamping and the great outdoors.

Inspired by the African savanna, these spacious safari lodges and wooden stilts cabins are the perfect blend of comfort and escapism. The covered terraces are also just the ticket to enjoy an aperitif. Located five minutes from the Ardèche Gorge, the Domaine de Coucouzac is also the ideal base from which to explore the region's volley of attractions and sights, chief among them the Grotte Chauvet 2, and make the most of its stunning landscape and natural assets, both above and below ground. From potholing and climbing to hiking, there will be something to suit every taste and ability.

campingdecoucouzac.fr

Cheval Blanc takes up residence at the Samaritaine

Finally restored to its former glory after an epic 15-year renovation, Paris's iconic department store, La Samaritaine, will unveil its new shopping concept and stylish in-house hotel, Cheval Blanc, this summer. Designed by acclaimed architect Peter Marino, this no-holds-barred luxury retreat will embrace and celebrate the 19th-century landmark's Art Deco aesthetic and offer 72 rooms with spectacular views over the banks of the Seine. A five-star haunt with all the bells and whistles, and then some, it will feature a Dior spa, a 30m swimming pool, a gourmet restaurant helmed by Michelin-starred chef Arnaud Donckele and a 650m² terrasse.

chevalblanc.com/en

© Pierre-Olivier Deschamps, Agence Vu pour la Samaritaine



Contactless stays in Lyon

Quite the draw post-pandemic, MiHotel offers contactless stays at its three outposts in Lyon. The concept is simple: you won't come across a single soul, not even staff. The boutique hotel chain has even done away with communal areas to prevent chance encounters with fellow guests. You'll receive your front-door and room entry codes by text or email. Everything else, from check-in to room service, will be dealt with through the MiHotel app. A 'digital concierge' will be a phone call away for the duration of your stay.

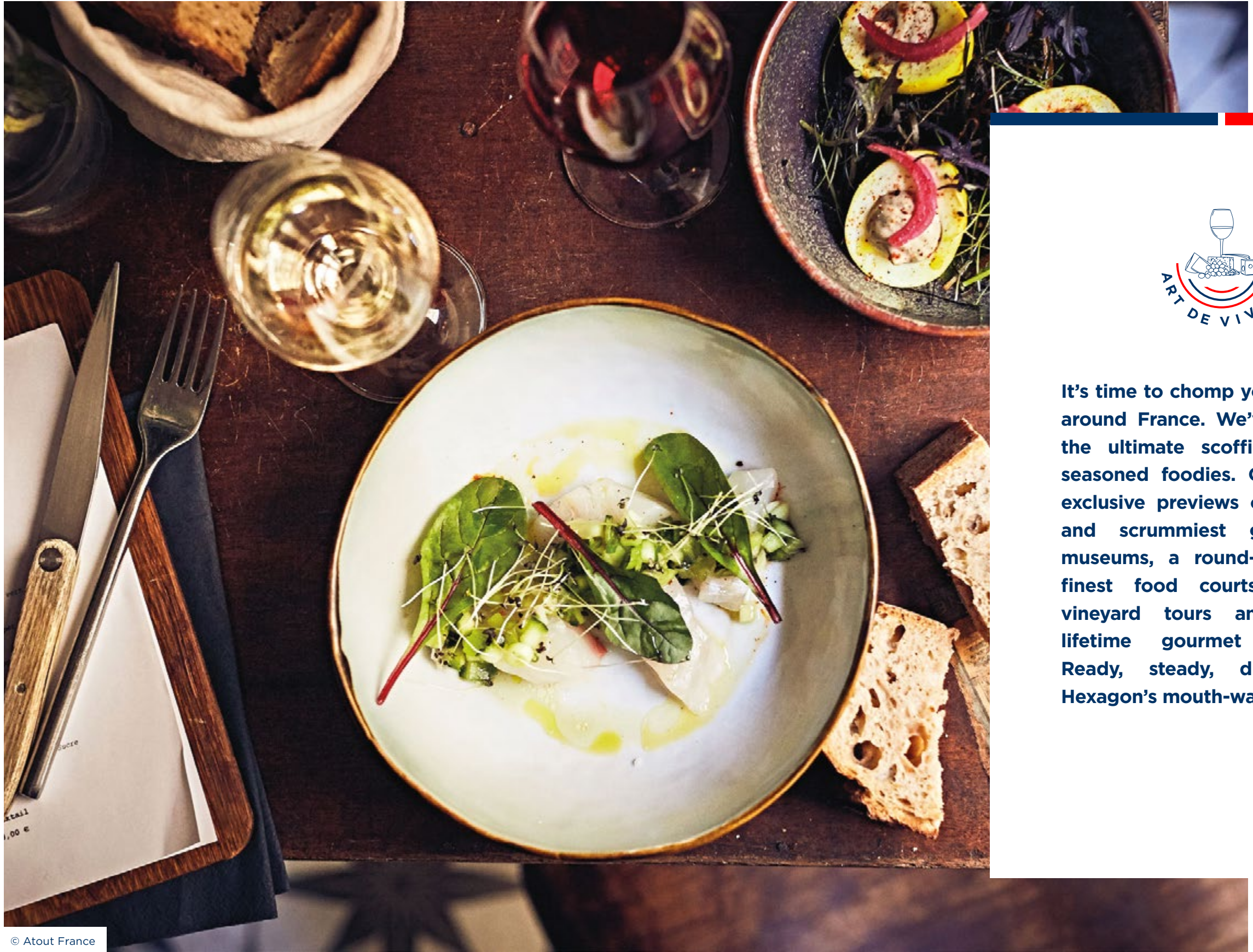
mihotel.fr



© MiHotel

Art de vivre

Make lasting memories



© Atout France



It's time to chomp your merry way around France. We've cooked up the ultimate scoffing spree for seasoned foodies. On the menu: exclusive previews of the newest and scrummiest gastro-themed museums, a round-up of Paris's finest food courts, unmissable vineyard tours and once-in-a-lifetime gourmet experiences. Ready, steady, dig into the Hexagon's mouth-watering terroir.



© Valérie Aubergeon

Vineyard tours with Val

Ready to quaff your way through Pays de la Loire's finest vineyards and hit your daily step count in one fell swoop? Head off the beaten track with Val of Les Vignes Selon Val for a whistle-stop walking tour of the Coteaux de Layon's private estates – with a potted history of the Layon Valley, the lowdown on its coveted appellations and, of course, a tasting thrown in for good measure. Ramblers will get a choice of six hikes, ranging between 4km and 8km, looping round the vineyards of Savennières, Rablay-sur-Layon, Beaulieu and Saint-Aubin-de-Luigné. Cheers! Walks start from 28€ per person.

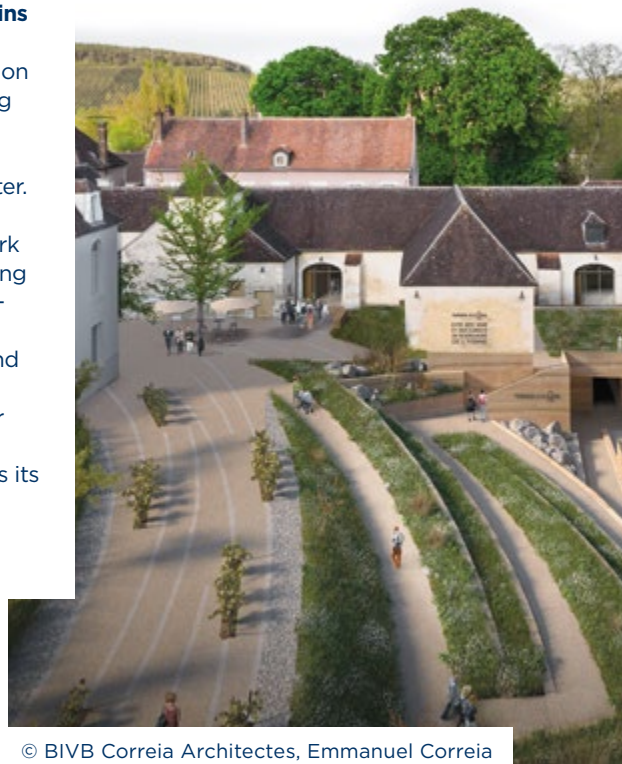
lesvignesselonval.com

Three cheers for the Cité des Vins

The countdown to the launch of the Cité des Vins et des Climats de Bourgogne has begun.

Due to be unveiled in 2022, this new interpretation centre dedicated to the region's rich winemaking heritage and UNESCO-listed vineyards will be split across three sites – Chablis, Mâcon and Beaune – each with its own identity and character. Designed to quench the thirst of novices and connoisseurs alike, each outpost will pop the cork on Burgundy's winegrowing tradition by sweeping visitors on a heady journey through its vineyard-studded landscape and diverse terroirs. Guided by immersive projections, interactive displays and touchscreens, feel your way through the vines, get to grips with the vinification process, master the delicate art of tasting, learn about the finest estates and most coveted vintages and watch as its protected climats spill their ancestral secrets.

cite-vins-bourgogne.fr



© BIVB Correia Architectes, Emmanuel Correia



© Cigc_image_et_associes

Comté us in

Get ready to sniff out the secrets of France's favourite cheese at the new Maison du Comté.

Located in Poligny, aka the capital of Comté, the 3,000m² museum-cheesemonger hybrid has been welcoming lovers of the pongy stuff since May 19. Amateurs and seasoned scarfers alike are invited to nose around the multisensory displays for a step-by-step breakdown of the production and refining processes before a pitstop at the Comté bar for a cheeky tasting and a visit to the eye-popping cheese wheel-shaped shop.

maison-du-comte.com

Say cheese

Gut- and glute-busting in equal measure, the new Vélos & Fromages cycle route takes turophiles on a bumper chomping spree around France. Lending a whole new meaning to food miles, this sprawling gourmet trail spans 6,800km across 45 departments with 87 scrummy itineraries to munch your way through. On the menu: one-on-ones with artisans, meet-and-greets with cheesemongers, a whistle-stop tour of the country's finest markets, visits to dairy farms and cellars, workshops and unlimited tastings.

departements.fr/velo-fromages-france-plateau/



© J. Damase - La Vélo Francette®

Champagne uncorked

Champagne's sparkling new Mecca, Pressoria, is on track to open this summer, and oenophiles the world over are already fizzing with anticipation.

Housed in the legendary Maison Pommery's former pressing complex in Aÿ-Champagne, the new interpretation centre will plunge visitors at the heart of the region's UNESCO-listed vineyards. Kitted out for the 21st century, the state-of-the-art venue will use the latest technology to bring the production cycle of champagne to life and awaken the senses. As they fleet between touchscreens, interactive tables and immersive displays, visitors will feel the change of the seasons and experience first-hand the key stages of winemaking and the harvest. They will then get to sample the fruit of all this painstaking labour at the champagne bar, whose 700m² raised terrace will afford breathtaking views over Aÿ-Champagne's feted vineyards.

tourisme-hautvillers.com/en/

© Phileas Masslab





© Nathalie Baetens

A food court for every taste

From exclusive tasting bars in department stores to old-school market halls and hip canteens in converted hangars, Paris has a food court to suit every palate. So where should you start your scoffing spree? Make a beeline for La Felicità, one of the largest food halls in Europe. Located in Station F, the 13th arrondissement's larger-than-life start-up campus, this "mega restaurant" spans 4,500m², can accommodate 1,000 diners at any one time and comprises five kitchens, a bakery, three bars and a Caffetteria. Still peckish? Mosey on over to Ground Control. Housed in the Halle Charolais, gourmets' new go-to destination is far more than your run-of-the-mill food court. As well as six restaurants/counters and a plane-turned-wine bar, Ground Control features art galleries, a packed bill of DJ sets and offers gardening workshops. Finally, head to Eataly in the Marais to stock up on panettone and pandoro. The capital's answer to a traditional Piedmontese market, this food hall-deli combo is packed to the rafters with hard-to-come-by Italian goodies, fresh fruit and vegetables and boasts one of the city's best-stocked wine cellars.

A taste of the past in the Loire Valley

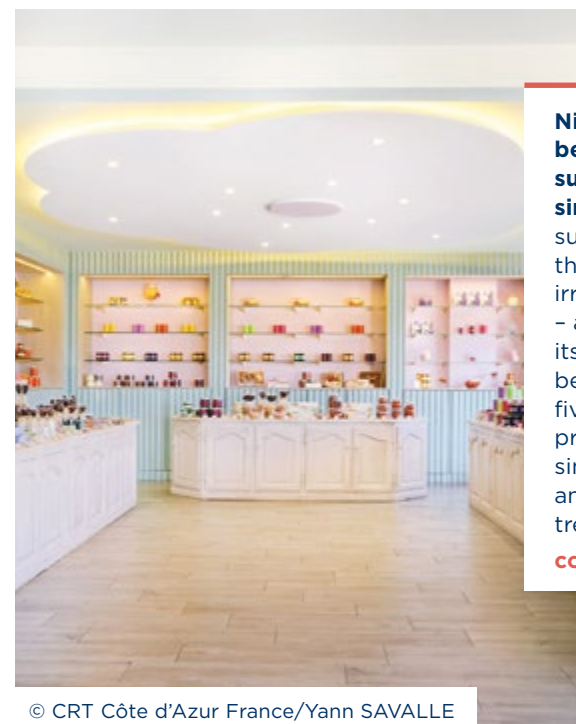
From vinegar to *poires tapées* (beaten pears), the Loire Valley's centuries-old specialities, ancestral recipes and enduring classics will take you back in time. Let's tuck in.

Like so many staples, Orléans owes its famous condiment to a stroke of (bad) luck, when wine transported by boat along the Loire and unloaded on its quays was found to have turned, sparking the idea of transforming the spoiled *cuvées* into vinegar. By the 18th century, some 300 producers were plying their trade in the town. Today, the Maison Martin-Pouret is Orléans' last-surviving *maître vinaigrier*, single-handedly keeping its vinegar-making tradition alive. Ready for something sweet? You can't beat a plateful of *poires*, or *pommes tapées*. Dried in a limestone oven before being flattened with a mallet, they can be enjoyed plain or soaked in wine or syrup. Head to the Troglodés Pommes Tapées in Turquant for some fruit-pounding action and a cheeky tasting.



© Marion Sauvebois

Blooming tasty



© CRT Côte d'Azur France/Yann SAVALLE

Nice's sweetest spot, Confiserie Florian has been turning the Riviera's fragrant flowers and sun-ripened fruit into moreish confectionery since 1949. From crystallised rose petals and sugar-coated verbena leaves to jasmine-flower jam, the sweet-maker's signature edible blooms – and irresistible chocolate-drizzled candied oranges – are sure to satisfy every craving. Keen to share its ancestral savoir-faire, Confiserie Florian runs behind-the-scenes guided tours of its workshop (in five languages), giving gourmands a flavour of the production process all year round. Guests will get to sink their teeth into the delicate art of glazing fruit and transforming dainty petals into scrumptious treats.

confiserieflorian.com

Have your choux and eat it too

The ultimate comfort food, Choucroute is a fixture of dinner tables come winter, and of Alsatian gastronomy generally. Yet, unbeknown to many, this heart-warming dish, or its ancestor anyway, hails not from Alsace but from China. Legend has it that sauerkraut was invented by the builders of the Great Wall, who buried cabbage under the snow to preserve it, where it fermented. The Huns eventually introduced fermented cabbage to Alsace in the 5th century. The locals wasted no time in jazzing it up with some charcuterie and Choucroute as we know it was born. Ready to sample the goods, over and over again? Head to the Bas-Rhin and scarf your way along the Route de la Choucroute.



© Danielle Bonardelle



© Ariane FORNIA / Itinera Magica

The sweet taste of anis

Did you know that Anis de Flavigny are among France's oldest sweets? Records show these sugar-coated drops were being produced by Benedictine monks at the Abbaye de Flavigny-sur-Ozerain as a welcome gift to visiting Popes and bishops as early as 1591.

Over the centuries, these moreish bonbons garnered quite the cult following and legions of illustrious devotees, not least Louis XIV. According to French lore, keen to persuade George III, King of England, to sign a peace treaty in 1763, Louis XV's spy, the Knight of Éon, sweetened the deal with some Anis de Flavigny. Jean Troubat eventually took over the enterprise in 1923, turning what was then a cottage industry into an international brand. A marketing whizz, he dreamed up the Anis' now iconic oval tin box and was the first confectioner to stock his sweets in the Paris metro's newfangled vending machines. Upon taking over, his son bumped up production from 80 to 250 tons, supplying every petrol station in the country with his "bon bonbon". Today some 250 million aniseed-flavoured pearls are sold in more than 30 countries each year. Mosey on over to the former abbey-turned-confectionery and museum, breathe in the heady botanical scent wafting through the air and discover the history of France's favourite sweetie. While you're there, have a pootle round the village of Flavigny, which in 2000 lent its picturesque backdrop to the movie *Chocolat*, starring Juliette Binoche and Johnny Depp.

anis-flavigny.com

In the tyre tracks of the Onion Johnnies



© A. Lamoureux

For close to two centuries, Onion Johnnies have travelled the length and breadth of Great Britain, peddling their strings of sweet onions door to door. But how did these humble Breton labourers come to sell their homegrown produce in old Blighty? The very first to hop across the Channel, or so the story goes, was one Henri Ollivier, an enterprising grower at the Ferme du Raz in Roscoff. Along with three fellow farmers, he loaded a boat with the town's sought-after *oignons rosés* and sailed to Plymouth in 1828. The pink-hued onions were a hit with the locals. Keen to get in on this lucrative trade, an army of would-be Johnnies jumped on the onion-hawking bandwagon the following year. Three decades later, more than 200 sellers were wending their way round the British isles, onion strings slung across their shoulders or draped over their handlebars. Many of them were called Yann and Yannick, the Breton equivalent of John, and thus they became known as "Johnnies". Today only a handful of die-hard sellers still keep the tradition alive, but the legacy of these savvy farmers lives on at the Maison des Johnnies et de l'Oignon in Roscoff. Join the town in honouring its star vegetable and its cross-Channel success story at the annual Fête de l'oignon rosé held at the tail end of August.

roscoff.fr

Corsica on a plate



© JPC-PROD Adobe Stock

From charcuterie and cheese to sinful desserts, Corsica's larder is well-stocked indeed. Whether you're a pudding addict or a meat lover, the Isle of Beauty's bountiful terroir and indulgent gastronomy are sure to set your tastebuds aflutter on your next visit. Seasoned carnivores will feel right at home in the land of pork: from figatellu (pork sausage) and coppa (dry-cured pork) to lonzu (smoked cured pork fillet), Corsicans sure know their way around a pig. A favourite with discerning turophiles, brocciu – a little round number made from ewe's or goat's milk – is the Mediterranean island's star cheese. Awarded AOC designation in 1998, it is the centrepiece of countless local specialities, chief among them brocciu beignets and fiadone, Corsica's answer to cheesecake and one of its most decadent desserts. And let's not forget its staple, all-round secret weapon and proud holder of a coveted double-whammy AOC and AOP protected status: chestnut flour. Its subtle and oh-so moreish flavour is used to zhuzh up a range of sweets and breakfast treats, from cakes to gateaux.



© Sophie Brard Blanchard

Domaine Brard Blanchard, Charente's organic cognac pioneer

Trailblazing *vigneron* Jacques Brard Blanchard was one of the very first cognac producers in Charente to switch to organic in 1972. Despite a wobbly start, his gamble more than paid off. Four decades on, his daughter and fourth-generation winemaker Sophie Brard Blanchard is carrying on the family legacy, proudly flying the flag for organic cognac.

What prompted your father to make the switch to organic winegrowing at a time when no-one was remotely interested in organic agriculture?

Every summer he would get chronic chest infections while treating the vines. He had two choices: either change jobs or change his method. He switched to organic and never looked back. The first few years were difficult. He had no help, no information, no framework to rely on. He lost a lot of crops and he faced animosity from neighbouring producers too. He went organic in 1972 and started selling organic grape juice in 1976. He produced his first white pineau in 1977 and his first cognac in 1978.

What are the biggest challenges of organic winemaking?

It's a lot more complicated. You can't use artificial or synthetic pesticides and chemicals. Instead, we use natural pesticides, copper sulphate, plant-based formulations. The key thing is to make sure the vine is protected at all times. You need to be hypervigilant, react quickly and treat the vine with copper sulphate whenever issues arise. Three years ago, we lost three quarters of our crops to mildew despite having nearly 50 years of experience in organic winegrowing under our belts.

Is the production of organic wine and cognac widespread in Charente today?

No, it's still quite niche. There are about 50 organic winegrowers out of nearly 5,000 producers in Charente. It stems from a fear of losing crops or smaller harvests. That being said, producers are steadily following the lead of big cognac houses and embracing slightly more natural methods and looking for sustainable solutions.

Do organic wines and cognacs have a more distinctive flavour or subtler aroma?

I certainly hope so. Because of the way we work on the vines, the roots penetrate deeper into the soil; so you get a stronger expression of the terroir.

Where to stay

The palais de Biarritz reborn



© Hôtel du Palais

Fresh from a three-year revamp and more exquisite than ever, the legendary **Hôtel du Palais in Biarritz is set to reign supreme over the Atlantic Coast once again.** From its 56 antiques-festooned suites to the classic elegance of the tapestries, Second Empire-style furnishings and paintings elevating its 142 rooms, the opulent décor promises to pay tribute to the palace's illustrious past as the summer residence of Napoleon III and Eugenie. A sybarite's dream, the sprawling 2,500m² Spa Impérial will take pampering to brave new heights with its pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, hammam, solarium and range of indulgent Guerlain beauty treatments and wellness therapies. Young chef Aurélien Largeau will head up the hotel's quartet of eateries: La Rotonde, the Bar Napoléon III, Lounge and Terrasse.

hyatt.com

Sleep of the just

Loches's historic courthouse will soon get a new lease of life as the four-star **Hôtel de la Cité Royale**, courtesy of Best Western Plus. From this summer, guests seeking luxury with a side of history – and plenty of period features to boot – will get to nosy round the grand entrance hall, have supper in the courtroom and spend the night in the judges' chamber. A retreat fit for 21st-century epicureans, the 45-room hotel will feature a spa, heated indoor pool and fine-dining restaurant as well as a terrace affording sweeping vistas of the Royal City of Loches.

hotel-citeroyale.com



© Hôtel de la Cité Royale

Go green in Corsica



© Hôtel Calavita

Looking for a green escape in the sun-dappled fold of Corsica? Look no further than **Hôtel Calavita on the edge of Cap Corse**, a pioneer in sustainable tourism and a card-carrying member of the RISPETTU network, which sets out to reduce hospitality businesses' carbon footprint on the island. A cosy getaway with a modern, pared-back style a stone's throw from Bastia, it comprises 32 bedrooms, a rooftop bar and pool with stunning sea views and a restaurant serving locally-sourced and seasonal fare.

hotelcalavita.com/en/

© Melinda Nagy - AdobeStock



January

- 1/ Grande Odyssée Savoie Mont Blanc

© Carnaval de Nice

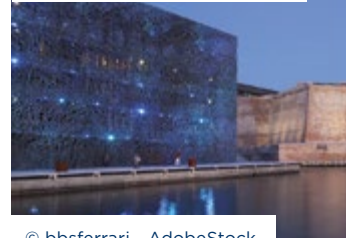


February

- 2/ Menton Lemon Festival
- 3/ Nice Carnival

May

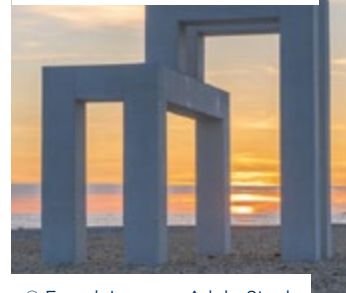
- 10/ European Museum Night



© bbsferrari - AdobeStock

June

- 11/ A Summer in Le Havre (all summer)



© Franck Legros - AdobeStock

© Rachel Johnston



July

- 12/ Cannes Film Festival
- 13/ The Voyage à Nantes art festival (until September)
- 14/ Rencontres de la Photographie festival in Arles (until September)

© Phil_Good - AdobeStock



September

- 15/ La Braderie flea market in Lille
- 16/ Deauville American Film Festival
- 17/ Paris Design Week
- 18/ European Heritage Days

October

- 19/ Nuit Blanche (White Night)

December

- 20/ Strasbourg Christmas Market

Date to be confirmed

- 21/ Opening of the Musée des Collectionneurs in Angers
- 22/ Opening of the Maison LVMH Arts - Talents - Patrimoine in Paris

April

- 4/ Opening of the Cité des Métiers d'Art et du Design in Sèvres and Saint-Cloud
- 5/ European Artistic Crafts Days
- 6/ International Monuments and UNESCO World Heritage Sites Day
- 7/ Opening of the Cité Francophonie at the Château de Villers-Cotterêts
- 8/ The 'Rome' exhibition at the Louvre-Lens (April 6 to July 25)
- 9/ International Garden Festival at the Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire (until November)



© scaliger - AdobeStock

We are rugby

Join the scrum at the Rugby World Cup 2023

It's official: France will host the 10th Rugby World Cup from September 8 to October 21, 2023.

The hotly-anticipated tournament will be staged across the cities of Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Nantes, Nice, Paris-Saint-Denis, Saint-Etienne and Toulouse, kicking off with a blockbuster clash between the French team and New Zealand at the Stade de France.

Marking the 200th anniversary of the creation of the sport, the milestone competition will be contested by 20 teams, 12 of which automatically qualified after finishing in the top three in their respective Rugby World Cup 2019 pools. They are: South Africa, England, New Zealand, Wales, Ireland, France, Australia, Japan, Scotland, Argentina, Fiji, and Italy.

With 48 matches scheduled and 450,000 fans expected to descend on France's nine host cities for a bumper 45 days, this 10th edition promises to go down in history - in more ways than one. The organising committee has vowed to usher in a new era in the sport by delivering the most socially responsible, inclusive and sustainable World Cup to date.

France 2023 Rugby World Cup chief executive Claude Atcher said: "France 2023 has adopted a vision: to have a positive impact for rugby, the planet and France by offering a responsible event that responds to the challenges of today and tomorrow."

The event will also be a chance to fly the flag for and introduce international fans to the wealth and breadth of France's cultural and natural heritage, traditions and world-class cuisine.

Follow [#WeAre2023](#) for all the latest updates on the Rugby World Cup 2023.



Rugby2023 ©

YOUR ATOUT FRANCE PRESS CONTACTS:

AUSTRIA

Ilona PERROT
ilona.perrot@atout-france.fr

BELGIUM

Annemie DECOMMER
annemie.decommer@atout-France.fr

DENMARK

Henriette LETH
henriette.leth@atout-france.fr

GERMANY

Monika FRITSCH
monika.fritsch@atout-france.fr

ITALY

Barbara LOVATO
barbara.lovato@atout-france.fr

NETHERLANDS

Marieke DE JONGE - SMITS
marieke.smits@atout-france.fr

SPAIN

Valérie WATINE
valerie.watine@atout-france.fr

SWEDEN

Anna LUNDEN
anna.lunden@atout-france.fr

SWITZERLAND

Olivia BOSSHART
Olivia.Bosshart@atout-france.fr

UNITED KINGDOM

Anne PEDERSEN
anne.pedersen@atout-france.fr



France.fr



francefr



@FR_FranceFR



Atout France



inauvergnerhonealpes.com/en

Designed by
Bourgogne



Montagnes du Jura

TOUT UN MONDE DEHORS

bourgognefranche-comte.com

VISIT.CORSICA

visit-corsica.com/en



hautetfort-hautsdefrance.com



nouvelle-aquitaine-tourisme.com/en



provence-alpes-cotedazur.com/en



brittanytourism.com



loirevalley-france.co.uk



art-grandest.fr



en.normandie-tourisme.fr



tourism-occitanie.co.uk



visitparisregion.com/en

atlantic-loire-valley.com

BRIMMING WITH HOLIDAY IDEAS

atlantic-loire-valley.com

*What
really
Matters*

#ExploreFrance

**Explore
France™** 